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THE FLIGHT OF THE BLACKBIRDS: black students as intellectuals

O voo das graúnas: estudantes negras/os como intelectuais
El vuelo de los mirlos: los estudiantes negros como intelectuales

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Abstract: Analyzing the paths of black students in the second half of the 19th century is the horizon of this work. What is the place of black students in the History of Education? What footprints did they leave? What institutions did you attend? How did they position themselves on the main social debates of their time? Why is it important to give visibility to the trajectories of these subjects? From conversations with the bibliography and the crossing of sources, such as memories and notes published in the press, based on the combination of the Social History of Education and Micro-history, the article seeks to indicate the engagement of black students in the struggle for emancipation and for the expansion of citizenship rights.

Keywords: black students; emancipation; intellectuals; black diaspora; student fight.

Resumo: Analisar os percursos de estudantes negros e negras na segunda metade do século XIX é o horizonte deste trabalho. Qual é o lugar dos estudantes negros na História da Educação? Que pegadas deixaram? Que instituições frequentaram? De que forma se posicionaram sobre os principais debates sociais de sua época? Por que é importante dar visibilidade às trajetórias desses sujeitos? A partir de conversas com a bibliografia e do cruzamento de fontes, tais como memórias e notas publicadas na imprensa, tendo como base a conjugação da História Social da Educação e a Micro-história, o artigo procura indicar o engajamento de estudantes negros e negras na luta pela emancipação e pela ampliação dos direitos de cidadania.

Palavras-chave: estudantes negras/os; emancipação; intelectuais; diáspora negra; luta estudantil.

Resumen: Este artículo analiza las trayectorias de los estudiantes negros en la segunda mitad del siglo XIX en Brasil. ¿Dónde encajan los estudiantes negros en la historia de la educación? ¿Qué huellas han dejado? ¿A qué instituciones asistieron? ¿Cuál era su posición con respecto a los principales problemas sociales de su época? ¿Por qué es importante hacer visibles sus trayectorias? Examinando lo que se ha publicado sobre el tema, cotejando información biográfica y notas publicadas en la prensa de la época, y combinando la microhistoria y la historia social de la educación, nuestro objetivo es arrojar luz sobre el compromiso de los estudiantes negros en la lucha por la emancipación y la expansión de los derechos civiles en el Brasil del siglo XIX.

Palabras clave: estudiantes negros; emancipación; intelectuales; diáspora negra; pelea de estudiantes.

INTRODUCTION

Racism's mystifying powers often emanate from its irrational and confused logic. According to the dominant ideology, the black population was supposedly incapable of intellectual progress. After all, these people had been considered as property, naturally inferior when compared to the white epitome of humanity. But, if they are really inferior in biological terms, black people would never manifest neither a will nor the capacity to acquire knowledge. Therefore, it would not have been necessary to forbid them to learn. In reality, of course, the black population always demonstrated fierce impatience regarding the acquisition of education¹ (Davis, 2016, p. 109).

This article understands the student struggle of black people in the second half of the 19th century as an expression of black protagonism in the causes of emancipation and citizenship, as well as the subversion of the means of social exclusion presented in the slave society and in the post-abolition period. The trajectories of black female and male students, from different social and enslaved classes (free, freed and enslaved), demonstrate the many coping strategies of these subjects in a slave society, but with some social mobility.

Which footprints did they leave behind? Which institutions did they attend? Why is it important to make them visible, especially their trajectories? To meet the challenge of writing about the black student experience in the 19th century, we carried out a mapping based on the bibliography on imperial school institutions, compiled in Table 1 (next page).

¹ Com frequência, os poderes mistificadores do racismo emanam de sua lógica irracional e confusa. De acordo com a ideologia dominante, a população negra era supostamente incapaz de progressos intelectuais. Afinal, essas pessoas haviam sido propriedade, naturalmente inferiores quando comparadas ao epítome branco da humanidade. Mas, se fossem realmente inferiores em termos biológicos, as pessoas negras nunca teriam manifestado desejo nem capacidade de adquirir conhecimento. Portanto, não teria sido necessário proibi-las de aprender. Na realidade, é claro, a população negra sempre demonstrou uma impaciência feroz no que se refere à aquisição de educação (freely translated from Portuguese).

Table 1.
Black students in educational institutions

Name	Educational institutions	Education	Beginning (year)	Conclusion (year)	Student trajectory
José Ferreira de Menezes	Law School - São Paulo	Law Bachelor	1862	1866	He performed several translations of plays, wrote plays, was a feuilleton writer and critic, participating in several academic journals.
José do Patrocínio	Externato Aquino	Medical School Prep	1868	1871	He was already a member of the Republican Party, he wrote the poem 'The memory of Tiradentes', which already shows his ardor as an abolitionist.
	Medical School	Chemist	1872	1874	Work in the Republican Party and in its periodical <i>A República</i> , of which he became a reviewer in 1874; he produced the section entitled <i>Ritmos Selvagem</i> , with abolitionist and republican poetry; he participated in the student serials <i>O Lábaro Acadêmico</i> and <i>Os Ferrões</i> .
Vicente de Souza	Baiano Colégio Abílio High School	Primary education / Preparatory courses for Pharmacy and Medicine	??	c. 1872	Participation in the literary festivities of these colleges, festivities that had an abolitionist character. He published the book <i>Lost Sons</i> , which brought together a series of love and patriotic poems.
	Medical School	Pharmacy Medicine	1873	1875 1879	Participation in <i>Atheneu Pedagógico</i> , <i>Instituto dos Acadêmicos</i> , <i>Alpha Literário</i> and <i>Club Republicano</i> . He wrote the theatrical drama <i>Horrors of the Inquisition</i> . He combined studies for the medical sciences with teaching. He held some conferences on various topics, including slavery and labor.

Name	Educational institutions	Education	Beginning (year)	Condução (year)	Student trajectory
Cacilda F. de Souza	Highschool and Escola Normal da Corte Highschool	Teaching	1875 (?)	1887 (?)	Held conferences and several abolitionist clubs, such as the <i>Clube Abolicionista José do Patrocínio</i> , being part of its provisional board.
Estevão Roberto da Silva	Imperial Academy of Fine Arts	Painting	1863	1880 (?)	Participation in AIBA General Exhibitions and awards.
Antônio Firmino Monteiro	Imperial Academy of Fine Arts	Painting	1873	1880 (?)	Participation in AIBA General Exhibitions and outside the institution. He received several awards. He made study trips in Europe.
Antônio Rafael Pinto Bandeira	Imperial Academy of Fine Arts	Painting	1879	1887 (?)	Exhibition by AIBA students. Receipt of awards.

Source: Organized by the authors.

We situate some student trajectories within prominent educational institutions of the Brazilian imperial society, such as the Escolas Normais of the Province of Rio de Janeiro and the Court, the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts, the Largo de São Francisco Law School and the Medical School. From the individual trajectories of black people, we seek to understand the paths taken by them in the sense of intellectual and academic training, taking into account class, race and gender markers.

ESCOLAS NORMAIS AS A TRAINING PLACE FOR BLACK FEMALE TEACHERS

The presence of black teachers at the Escola Normal from Niterói was evidenced by Heloísa Villela (2018, p. 347) in an investigation about the Alberto family, in which the author argues that “[...] the presence of blacks in this profession in the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century may be more significant than common sense admits, as suggested by recent researchers involved with the subject”. Phillipe José Alberto Junior, a black teacher trained at the Escola Normal from Bahia, directed the Escola from Niterói between 1862 and 1868. Two of his daughters, Izabel Alberto and Lucinda Alberto, graduated there, and became public teachers in Niterói and Cachoeiras de Macacu (Villela, 2018).

We can also highlight the performance of Cacilda Francioni, another black woman who graduated from the Escola Normal from the Court and had a remarkable role in the abolitionist movement. Unlike Izabel and Lucinda, Cacilda's name appears actively in various abolitionist conferences and institutions, at the time she attended normal school. Analyzing the insertion of women in the American abolitionist movement, Angela Davis quotes Frederick Douglass: "When the true history of the antislavery cause is written, women will occupy a vast space in its pages; because the cause of slave people has been particularly a cause of women²" (Douglass apud Davis, 2016, p. 43).

Cacilda Francioni was born in Rio de Janeiro on June 18, 1858. We cannot find details about her parents and her social origins. In 1880, she married Vicente de Souza and began to attend, alongside her husband, the abolitionist sessions, performing in the musical part of these conferences. In the inscription of her book, *Resumo da história literária*, Cacilda highlights that she had worked as a teacher since 1875, when she was just 17 years old. In the search for a space for teacher training, Cacilda attended the Escola Normal Livre, in 1875, and later the Escola Normal from the Court until approximately 1887 (Souza, 1902).

The name of the normalist becomes recurrent in the musical presentation of the Conferências Emancipadoras, being recognized as the first woman to get involved in the abolitionist cause by the movement itself. At Conference Number 28, conceived with the aim of recognizing and giving visibility to female participation, speaker Vicente de Souza, her husband, thanked the involvement of mothers, wives, sisters and daughters who were in the abolitionist struggle, highlighting the participation of her: "Faust's Phantasia for violin and piano by Mrs. D. Cacilda de Souza, the first of her sex to help the Holy Cause of Abolition, was interrupted several times by the violinist Cantalice and crowned by flowers and applause³" (Emancipação..., 1881, p. 1).

However, Cacilda's role in the movement, like that of other women, is not restricted to music, ornamentation or tasks that would be understood as belonging to the feminine universe. Cacilda participated in several mixed and female associations, coming to assume the executive board of the Club Abolicionista José do Patrocínio, an all-female organization created under the protection of Captain Emiliano Rosa Senna (Moraes, 1986). This organization held events, begged for the cause, delivered letters of freedom, among other actions. In their activities, women took on leadership positions, such as directorships and the delivery of speeches:

² "Quando a verdadeira história da causa antiescravista for escrita, as mulheres ocuparão um vasto espaço em suas páginas; porque a causa das pessoas escravas tem sido particularmente uma causa das mulheres" (freely translated from Portuguese).

³ "A Phantasia do Fausto para violino e piano pela Sra. D. Cacilda de Souza, a primeira do seu sexo a prestar auxílio à Santa Causa da Abolição, e pelo violinista Cantalice foi interrompida várias vezes por bravos e coroadas por flores e geraes aplausos" (freely translated from Portuguese).

The day before yesterday, at teatro Gymnasio, the grand session of the Club Abolicionista José do Patrocinio took place. At 8 o'clock, the party began with the symphony of Guarany at four hands: followed by a brilliant speech, delivered by the Hon. Mrs. D. Adelina Santos⁴ (A handful of news, 1881, p. 2).

In 1882, at the inauguration of the Club Central dos Libertos, Cacilda Francioni, along with Julia Regadas, received the title of meritorious partner, a title that demonstrates recognition for her actions (Festa da Liberdade, 1882). Despite the recognition that the abolitionist movement gave to female participation, and especially that of Cacilda Francioni, we are aware that this does not represent equality, since, when the Abolitionist Confederation was created in 1884, no woman was part of the board.

Cacilda Francioni de Souza became an outstanding woman in teaching, directed girls' schools, wrote textbooks and had her name remembered in the literary world. Although her husband Vicente de Souza was a prominent black intellectual in his time, Cacilda found her own paths, excelling in her area of interest. We believe that her performance within the abolitionist movement, as a normalist, helped in the construction of a political conscience and in her professional and intellectual independence.

THE ARTS IN SEARCH OF DISTINCTION AND EMANCIPATION

The arts were important in the training of young people in the 19th century. Cacilda Francioni herself attended the Conservatory of Music, of which we have records from 1869 to 1874. This allowed her to effectively participate in abolitionist events in the 1880s and, in this way, she entered the most important political debate of her time. She was not the only one: other young black people participated, such as Guilherme Cantalice and Professor Viriato, who were by her side in several participations (Alves, 2020).

In the visual arts, within the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts, an institution whose main objective was the formation of an elite of artists who would transmit the values of the Empire under European molds (Silveira, 2019), we highlight Firmino Monteiro, Estevão Silva, Rafael Pinto Bandeira and the brothers João and Arthur Thimóteo da Costa. All of them were inserted in an extremely selective place, having art as a means of expression, subsistence and social distinction.

⁴ Realizou-se ante-hontem, no teatro Gymnasio, a sessão magna do Club Abolicionista José do Patrocinio. A's 8 horas deu-se começo á festa com a symphonia do Guarany a quatro mãos: seguindo-se um brilhante discurso, pronunciado pela Exma. Sra. D. Adelina Santos (Um punhado de notícias, 1881, p. 2). (freely translated from Portuguese).

Estevão Roberto da Silva's trajectory is very significant. Born on December 26, 1845, of 'African' origin, as recorded in his baptism (Pessôa, 2002), he entered the Academy in 1863, remaining there for a long period, until approximately 1880, the year of his suspension. To maintain himself in the institution, Estevão painted mainly portraits, but also still life, used at the time as decorative objects. Perhaps due to the need to survive, he stood out in this genre of painting.

The Academy's statutes prewise a series of awards through private and public competitions, in which Estevão, from his second year of study, was decorated: in 1864 he received a silver medal in the figurative drawing category; in 1865 he received a small gold medal in figurative design; in 1866 he received mention in figurative drawing; in 1868 he received mention in history painting; in 1869 he received a silver medal in history painting; in 1872 he received a silver medal in historical painting and a live model mention; in 1876 he received a silver medal in landscape; in 1877 he received a silver medal in landscape; in 1878 he received a silver medal in historical painting (Galvão apud Pessôa, 2002).

The Academy also promoted a series of Exposições Gerais de Belas Artes (*Exhibitions of Fine Arts*, freely translated), which were foreseen in its statutes, since the 1840s. Estevão participated in the exhibitions, mainly in the 1870s; of the five held in that decade, he was present in three of them, in 1872, 1876 and 1879.

In 1884, when there was the only exhibition of the decade and the last of the Second Reign, and when the abolitionist debate was already heated, Estevão presented twenty-four works. In this exhibition, Estevão won the second gold medal for his still life art. The historical work, whose theme was the *Lei do Ventre Livre* ("Free Womb Law", freely translated), was called 'The law of September 18, 1871, esboceto', showing that Estevão was not oblivious to the debates on slavery that were taking place. What would be the meanings of a black man making a canvas about the abolitionist law?

But Estevão's performance, which impressed everyone, was to publicly protest for disagreeing with the award given to him at the XXV Exposição, in 1879, in front of Emperor D. Pedro II. According to Antônio Parreiras, a painter and his friend, all the students believed that Estevão would be the winner, given the superiority of his work. According to Parreiras:

It was with absolute confidence that Estevão waited for the day when the prizes were to be distributed, certain that he would be the greatest.

This solemnity was presided over by Pedro II.

It took place in a large hall where, on a kind of platform, the Emperor sat in a rich chair, surrounded by the Congregation.

The hall was usually full.

The students had a specific place in it.

After the Director's thanks to the Emperor for his presence, the calling of the students who were going to be awarded began.

We were convinced that the first prize would go to Estevão Silva.

He, trembling, moved, waited. But another was awarded by the Congregation.

Stephen was as if annihilated. His head lolled, his eyes filled with tears.

He retreated, and went to stay behind everyone, we were going to revolt.

— Silence! I know what I should do.

So imperiously were these words spoken by that weeping man that we obeyed.

One by one other winners were called.

Finally, Estevão Silva's name echoed in the room.

Calm, passed between us. Slowly, he crossed the hall. He approached the dais where the Emperor was.

Then, beautifully, oh! very beautifully that black man arrogantly raised his head, and loudly shouted:

— I refuse!⁵... (Parreias apud Pessôa, 2002, p. 103-104).

⁵ Foi com a mais absoluta confiança que Estevão esperou o dia da distribuição de prêmios, certo de que seria dele o maior.

Essa solenidade era presidida por Pedro II.

Realizava-se num grande salão onde, em uma espécie de palanque, se sentava em uma rica cadeira o Imperador, rodeado pela Congregação.

O salão em geral ficava repleto.

Os alunos tinham nele um lugar determinado.

Depois do agradecimento do Diretor ao Imperador, pela sua presença, começava a chamada dos alunos que iam ser premiados.

Estávamos convencidos de que o primeiro prêmio seria conferido a Estevão Silva.

Ele, trêmulo, comovido, esperava. Mas foi outro o distinguido pela Congregação.

Estevão ficou como aniquilado. A sua cabeça pendeu, seus olhos se encheram de lágrimas.

Recuou, e foi ficar atrás de todos, íamos nos revoltar.

— Silêncio! eu sei o que devo fazer.

Tão imperiosamente foram ditas estas palavras, por aquele homem que chorava, que obedecemos.

Um por um foram sendo chamados outros premiados.

Finalmente, o nome de Estevão Silva ecoou na sala.

Calmo, passou entre nós. A passos lentos atravessou o salão. Aproximou-se do estrado onde estava o Imperador.

Depois, belo, oh! muito belo aquele negro ergueu arrogantemente a cabeça, e forte gritou:

— Recuso!... (freely translated from Portuguese).

A commission was set up to investigate the fact and define a punishment for the student. Only in the following year, in 1880, an opinion was released, in which the commission recognized the student's contempt towards the congregation and the breach of school discipline. Leite (1988) states that, in order to save him from more severe punishment, the commission reported that the 'delinquent' acted out of 'diminished intelligence' and 'shortage of understanding', applying the punishment of one year of suspension from the studies at the Academy. Would the use of these terms have a racial connotation?

The acceptance of black people in the Academy had already been questioned since the 1830s, when João Maximiano Mafra, a student at the institution, tried to organize an association to bring European models to serve as living models for the artists. Due to their subaltern status in the nineteenth-century society and low pay, black people occupied this task. In this way, Mafra argued that black people did not have the necessary ideal of aesthetic beauty, which had classical Greece as a reference (Silveira, 2019).

Among the awards distributed by the Academy, the most coveted was the prize for traveling abroad, which financed the winner's studies, mainly at the Universities of Fine Arts in France and Italy. In addition to the official Academy Award, the Emperor himself subsidized the travel of some artists through private funds. Estevão was unable to improve abroad, even with the awards he won, which may be due to the low prestige of still life within the institution, compared to historical painting. In fact, few black artists were able to travel abroad, such as Antônio Firmino Monteiro, the husband of Izabel Alberto.

Antônio was born in Rio de Janeiro on February 22, 1855, and died very early in 1888, at just 33 years old. From a humble family, Antônio Firmino worked as a bookbinder in a workshop, of which he became in charge at the age of 20. Always believing in education, he became a student at the Instituto Comercial, the Instituto Farmacêutico, the Conservatory of Music and finally the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (Dast, 1882). He participated in several exhibitions, not only within the Academy but also in other exhibition spaces. Firmino Monteiro made some trips to Europe, going to Italy for the first time in 1880 (Noticiário, 1880). On August 15, 1882, he left for Italy again, staying there for about a year and a half and returning on February 8, 1884 (O Fluminense, 1884). In the same year, he had a solo exhibition at the Academy – which received several criticisms, but had the illustrious presence of the emperor – , obtaining the degree of imperial knight of the Order of the Rose. The following year, he traveled to Europe again, and his last trip was in March 1887. Despite frequent trips to Europe, Firmino Monteiro did not receive a travel award from the Academy, being responsible, with his own efforts, for all his stays, according to the newspapers of the time (Moreira, 2016; Antônio Firmino Monteiro, 1888). Before he died, he was hired by the city of Niterói to produce a canvas commemorating the Abolition of Slavery.

His last connection with the Academy was in 1887, as a member of a committee for the General Exhibition, another event in which black students were featured.

Elizabeth Leal (2008, p. 199) argues that “[...] the nonconformity and the desire for a change in the Imperial Academy had been displayed since the mid-1880s, exemplified in the Free Exhibition of students in 1886 and 87⁶”. These events were a student mobilization in response to the lack of Exhibitions, which, as mentioned, were foreseen in their statutes and included some awards, such as the travel award. The initiative was supported by the press, which questioned the imperial government's lack of investment in the arts. Thus, on August 1, 1886, the exhibition organized by the students was inaugurated, with the right to an opening party and a speech:

On behalf of the commission, the student Pinto Bandeira prayed, who, enhancing the advantage of the exhibitions of the academy's works, said that the one that was inaugurated was due exclusively to the efforts of the exhibitors and those of Messrs. Counselor Nicolau Tolentino and Commander Francisco de Sá, who, seeing the indifference of the public authorities, who should have contributed most to those contests, helped them, so that this year it could be done an exhibition worthy of the academy's students and credits.

He ended up asking not only for the animation of the public but also for their benevolence, and severe criticism to encourage new and more profitable artistic commitments⁷ (Exhibition of Fine Arts, 1886, p. 1).

Antônio Rafael Pinto Bandeira, also of humble origins and slave descent, was born in the city of Niterói in 1863. He joined the Academy in 1879 and, like Estevão Silva and Firmino Monteiro, received awards, such as the honorable mention in living models in 1883, the great gold medal in historical painting in 1884 and, in the following year, the Empress of Brazil award. We did not find any information about awards for traveling abroad, but it is significant that a black student was the representative of the student body to start the exhibition that questioned the lack of investment in Exhibitions, which were specified in the Academy's statutes.

⁶ “[...] o inconformismo e desejo de reforma da Academia Imperial vinha se mostrando desde meados da década de 1880, exemplificado na Exposição Livre de alunos em 1886 e 87”. (freely translated from Portuguese).

⁷ Em nome da comissão orou o alumno Pinto Bandeira, que encarecendo a vantagem das exposições dos trabalhos da academia, disse que a que se inaugurava era devida exclusivamente aos esforços dos expositores e aos dos Srs. Conselheiro Nicolau Tolentino e commendador Francisco de Sá, que, vendo a indiferença dos poderes públicos, que mais deviam concorrer para aquelles certameus, auxiliaram-os, a fim de que se pudesse este anno fazer uma exposição digna dos alumnos e dos créditos da academia. Terminou pedindo não só a animação do publico como a sua benevolência, e critica severa para incentivo de novos e mais proveitosos commettimentos artísticos (freely translated from Portuguese).

According to Leal (2008), the lack of public exhibitions facilitated personal favors to the detriment of technical quality, both in student awards and in hiring teachers, as well as in the acquisition of works and in granting scholarships for trips to Europe. In early 1887, the Minister of the Empire had already ruled on the cancellation of travel awards due to a lack of budget (Bellas Artes, 1887). Perhaps due to public pressure, at the end of that same year, the contest took place, in addition to a great favoritism scandal: “Another proof that Brazil is a great country with glorious fates, is in the result of the contest of the Academia de Bellas Artes” ⁸(Aos sabbados, 1887, p. 1). Professor Rodolpho Bernardelli defended the students, against the award given to one of them, and criticized the capacity of the Imperial Academy's commission to evaluate works in historical painting, elaborating with Zeferino da Costa a resource that was published in the press (Academia de Bellas Artes, 1887). Despite not having the expected result – the travel scholarship was granted to a particular student –, this act put pressure on the imperial government and the sponsorship system. It is interesting to point out that the student mobilization that began in 1886 continued throughout 1887, and on December 20, 21 and 22, another exhibition by the Academy's students was held (Gazeta de Notícias, 1887).

Though few, black artists at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts rose to prominence during the 19th century. They won spaces, awards, took positions on important issues – such as the lack of investment in the institution –, demanded compliance with the statutes that provided for Exhibitions, denounced personal favoritism and racial and abolitionist issues.

In addition to music and visual arts, literary and dramatic arts were performed by other young black people, such as Ferreira de Menezes, José do Patrocínio and Vicente de Souza, as we will see later.

BETWEEN RACE AND RACISM: CONFRONTATIONS AT THE LARGO DE SÃO FRANCISCO LAW ACADEMY

A young man defined by his black ancestry arrived in the capital of São Paulo in 1861, aboard a vessel that transported enslaved people, and which could bring not only some reflections but also apprehensions:

⁸ “Ainda uma outra prova de que o Brazil é uma grande paiz a gloriosos destinos fadado, está no resultado do concurso da Academia de Bellas Artes” (freely translated from Portuguese).

After all, descending from people who had left slavery and built a life in freedom, he faced the challenge of continuing to change the course of history of those who had preceded him, and that in the capital of a province that still prospered thanks to the compulsory labor of Africans, their children and grandchildren⁹ (Pinto, 2018, p. 38).

José Ferreira de Menezes, the son of the 'black' José Joaquim Ferreira de Menezes, from humble origins, graduated in Law from one of the main Academies of the Empire. Born in Rio de Janeiro between 1841 and 1846, Ferreira de Menezes died young, under the age of 40, but left an undeniable contribution with the foundation of the main abolitionist newspaper of his time, *Gazeta da Tarde* (Pinto, 2018). In this section, the focus is on Ferreira de Menezes' performance as a student at one of the main training centers for the imperial elite.

Ferreira de Menezes attended the School of Law of São Paulo between 1862 and 1866 and was a student with a busy life. Pinto (2018) highlights the bohemian life of Ferreira de Menezes alongside his childhood friend Luís Nicolau Fagundes Varela, which almost led him to fail for absences in the last four years of his studies. The second explanation would be the involvement in the cultural life of the city, as a translator and author of plays, poetry and chronicles and as a feuilleton writer and critic, publishing in academic and commercial newspapers. In the book *Pantheon fluminense*, Lery Santos (1880) argues:

While still a student, Mr. Ferreira de Menezes already enjoyed of high consideration, as a litterateur and poet. He then writes not only newspapers and academic journals, but also others of greater importance. [...] At that time his literary activity was great. He wrote several short stories and short novels, which attest to his merits as a writer. [...] he also applied his talents to dramatic compositions for which he showed great aptitude. [...] Mr. Ferreira de Menezes proves to be a distinguished orator and an estimable poet. [...] However, he did not publish his poetry in volume, nor any other literary works¹⁰ (Santos, 1880, p. 460).

⁹ Afinal, descendendo de gente que saíra da escravidão e construía a vida na liberdade, tinha diante de si o desafio de seguir mudando o rumo da história daqueles que o haviam precedido, e isso na capital de uma província que ainda prosperava graças ao trabalho compulsório de africanos, seus filhos e netos (freely translated from Portuguese).

¹⁰ Ainda estudante, já gozava o Sr. Ferreira de Menezes de subida consideração, como litterato e poeta. Redigio então não somente jornaes e revistas académicas, como outros de maior importância. [...] Grande era nesse tempo a sua actividade litteraria. Escreveu vários contos e pequenos romances, que attestam o seu mérito como escriptor. [...] Applicou também seus talentos às composições dramáticas para as quais revelou muita aptidão. [...] O Sr. Ferreira de Menezes revela-se orador distincto e poeta estimável. [...]

In 1880, the author already mentions the academic experience of Ferreira de Menezes, highlighting his artistic performance, whether in the literary arts or in the journalistic activity. According to a survey by Pinto (2018), Menezes participated in *Revista Popular* (1862), *Annaes do Ensino Acadêmico*, *Revista da Associação Club Acadêmico* and *Jornal das Famílias* (1863), *Imprensa Acadêmica* (1864), *Arquivo Literário* (1865) and the *Correio Paulistano* in several issues, writing short stories, poetry, chronicles, theater reviews and essays.

In 1863, on stage at the Teatro de São Paulo, the play *A filha do lavrador*, written by Auguste Anicert-Bourgeois and Adolphe d'Ennery, with a translation by Ferreira de Menezes, premiered. His credibility and performance in the dramatic arts was not restricted to São Paulo: at the Atheneu Dramático da Corte, in January of the same year, the play *De um argueiro, um cavaleiro*, from Théodore Barrière and Lambert Thiboust, translated by the young academic, premiered. In addition to these plays, still in 1863, his translation of *A galinha e os pintos* took the stage at the Atheneu Dramático.

However, his performance in the theater was not only as a translator. *A mancenilha*, a one-act comedy, premiered that same year, earning praise in newspapers of the time, such as *Correio Mercantil*: “Without a doubt, practice and study developed Mr. Ferreira de Menezes' natural gifts, who we shall expect much more from¹¹” (Notícias diversas, 1863, p. 1). He was also the author of the pieces *Aurora dos artistas*, *Os novos campanologos* and *Entre primos* (Santos, 1880).

In the production of short stories, we can mention: *Poverino* and *O tropeiro* (1861); *Jacques Seraphim, o músico* and *O punhal de marfim* (1862); *A flor do baile* and *Sinhazinha* (1863); and *Os envenenadores* (1865). About his writings in the 1860s, Ana Flávia Pinto (2018) highlights

[...] the narrator's nationalist effort to guarantee the representation of the 'local color' in the literature he produced, even though, in some cases, he approached themes such as the will of the powerful, poverty and slavery in a more direct way than the conventional, and from conceptions that are also unusual among the canons¹² (Pinto, 2018, p. 47, author's emphasis).

Entretanto não publicou em volume as suas poesias, nem quaesquer outros trabalhos litterarios (freely translated from Portuguese).

¹¹ “Sem dúvida que a prática e o estudo desenvolveram dotes naturais do Sr. Ferreira de Menezes, de quem é direito de esperar ainda muito” (freely translated from Portuguese).

¹² [...] empenho nacionalista do narrador em garantir a representação da ‘cor local’ na literatura que produzia, ainda que, em alguns casos, abordasse temas como o arbítrio dos poderosos, a pobreza e a escravidão de um modo mais direto que o convencional, e a partir de concepções também pouco habituais entre os cânones (freely translated from Portuguese).

Ferreira de Menezes wrote about prostitutes, about poverty – portraying it as an evil, but humanizing the poor – and about slavery. He used fantasy to talk about reality. In the short story *Os envenenadores*, published in parts in *Correio Paulistano* in December 1865, the author talks about several cases of poisoning on the farm of a severe commander of slaves. The lord showed tenderness only for his daughter and his nephew, whom he desired as a son-in-law. The sequence of poisonings begins with the enslaved, who, despite being the main victims – of the poisonings and punishments inflicted by the master – remained firm in their pact of silence. The commander was also affected and died. Finally, the farmer's young daughter falls ill and an enslaved takes over his act and unravels the mystery in time to save the girl. According to Pinto (2018), this short story

[...] impels the reader to reflect on the moral of the story: slavery, as a poison and poisoner, corrodes the sanity and character of masters and enslaved. Such social subjects were put to support a system of such brutality, capable of putting both their lives forfeit. [...] José Ferreira de Menezes faced, therefore, the challenge of approaching the controversial issue of the 'dangerous slave', the poisoning sorcerer, and established a matrix of understanding something different from that commonly seen in discourses on legitimacy and viable paths for emancipation¹³ (Pinto, 2018, p. 60, author's emphasis).

Still as a 4th year student, Ferreira de Menezes acted legally defending an enslaved named Sebastião, accused of using some type of weapon without a license. The lawyer was successful in his defense and the defendant was acquitted. Despite the approximations with Luís Gama, Ferreira de Menezes did not become a great defender of the enslaved, like his friend.

It is necessary to point out that his placements and performances were made while a student of one of the main imperial academies, responsible for the formation of a ruling elite, in which men with their social and racial origins were not wanted. The author Cristina Yokaichiya (2008) demonstrates how the creation of the college significantly modified the cultural dynamics of the city, attracting students from different Brazilian provinces (Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Bahia, Rio Grande do Sul, etc.) which not only bring the signs of a slave society but also

¹³ [...] impele o leitor a refletir sobre a moral da estória: a escravidão, na condição de veneno e envenenadora, corrói a sanidade e o caráter de senhores e escravizados. Tais sujeitos sociais eram postos a sustentar um sistema de tamanha brutalidade, capaz de colocar perdida a vida de ambos. [...] José Ferreira de Menezes enfrentava, portanto, o desafio de abordar o tema polêmico do 'escravo perigoso', do feiticeiro envenenador, e estabelecia uma matriz de entendimento algo distinta da comumente verificada nos discursos sobre a legitimidade e os caminhos viáveis para a emancipação (freely translated from Portuguese).

abolitionist thoughts. In addition, the institution became a center of varied intellectual production, with academic and literary magazines, journalistic articles, poetry, plays, among others, progressing, as the work of Ferreira de Menezes attests, a new way of thinking about slavery. Over the years, students and jurists have publicly positioned themselves more forcefully, especially in the legislative process, in favor of libertarian ideals.

However, several authors (Pinto, 2018; Yokaichiya, 2008; Nogueira, 1907) indicate racist thinking within the institution, such as the case of Professor Prudêncio Geraldes Tavares da Veiga Cabral. In the Civil Law chair, Veiga Cabral was a demanding man who did not hesitate to fail his students or to clearly show his prejudice against black students. In a highly publicized episode, Veiga Cabral refused to greet a student because he was black:

He once walked up to one of them, who wanted to greet him.

– Disappointment! – He said. – A black cannot be a doctor. There are so many suitable professions: cook, coachman, shoemaker...

In the two years of the Civil [Law] course, he took a student named Fogaça, an ugly and ragged mulatto, to the side, because the carelessness in his toilet was also, for Councilor Cabral, a case for hanging the man!

Sometimes, when Fogaça was present, Cabral would not even look at him, but would ask the beadle:

– Mr. Mendonça, have you set the black man apart?

– But, Mr. Counselor, Fogaça respectfully protested, I'm present!...

– Whether the Negro is absent or the Negro is present, set the Negro apart!¹⁴ (Nogueira apud Pinto, 2018, p. 65).

Another professor at the institution who showed rejection of the intellectual development of black people was Dr. Avellar Brotero. According to Pinto, Brotero was irritated by the fact that a college servant known as 'Zé Quietinho' ('Quiet John Doe', freely translated), a black man, dedicated himself to reading newspapers in the library

¹⁴ Uma vez deu o pé a um deles, que o queria cumprimentar.

– Desaforo! – Dizia. – Negro não pode ser doutor. Há tantas profissões apropriadas: cozinheiro, cocheiro, sapateiro...

Nos dois anos do curso de [Direito] Civil, levou de canto chorado um estudante de nome Fogaça, mulatto feio e maltrapilho, pois o descuido na toilette era também, para o conselheiro Cabral, caso de força!

Às vezes, estando presente o Fogaça, o Cabral nem olhava para o lado dele, mas perguntava ao bedel:

– Senhor Mendonça, já marcou ponto no negro?

– Mas, Sr. Conselheiro, protestava respeitosamente o Fogaça, eu estou presente!...

– Quer o negro esteja ausente, quer o negro esteja presente, marque ponto no negro! (freely translated from Portuguese).

after finishing his work. Whenever he noticed this situation, the teacher complained and found another job to occupy his time (Nogueira apud Pinto, 2018).

However, this attitude should not be restricted to the teaching staff, since the students who came from wealthy families had their origins stained by slave labor. Thinking from this perspective, we have the report by Raul Pompeia on the two-year anniversary of the death of Luís Gama, in which he argues that Gama had intended to enter the legal course and even attended some classes as a listener, but was discouraged by living with young academics (Pompeia apud Pinto, 2018).

These cases make us think about the situations experienced by so many black students at the Academy that may be related to the experience of Ferreira de Menezes, experiences that must have been essential for the construction of a racial conscience, for his perception of slavery and his struggle for the sake of freedom. After graduating, Ferreira de Menezes' influence in the journalistic environment grew. In *Gazeta de Notícias*, he opposed to the electoral reform of the Sinimbú cabinet, which led to his departure from that newspaper and the creation of the abolitionist *Gazeta da Tarde*. He also became close to other black intellectuals, such as José do Patrocínio and Vicente de Souza.

CHALLENGING INSTITUTIONS: THE STRUGGLE FOR RIGHTS IN THE MEDICAL SCHOOL

Son of the religious João Carlos Monteiro and the enslaved Justina, José Carlos do Patrocínio was born in Campos on October 9, 1853, bearing the signs of slavery since birth. The young Justina was only 13 years old and João Carlos, 54 years old, who was an influential man in the camper society. Patrocínio was baptized as an outcast (son of unknown parents), inheriting his father's first name and, from his mother, the surname Patrocínio, in honor of the patronymic saint of the day. He received the care of the vicar and his mother until his departure for the Court.

Alessandra Schueler (2016) draws the attention to Patrocínio's training aimed at learning a profession, even under the tutelage of his father, unlike his half-brother, who inherited his paternal name and went to study in Coimbra. In a conference in 1884, he recounts his experience as a clerk: for only six days he worked at the counter, but he could not remain at the job, because, according to his employer – which Patrocínio defends, describing him as an excellent person –, the public did not like to be attended by a black person (Patrocínio, 1884). After a disagreement with his father, with only 14 years old, he is sent to the Court and begins training as a pharmacy apprentice at Santa Casa de Misericórdia in Rio de Janeiro. With the support of Dr. Cristóvão dos Santos, he did everything from sweeping the floor to learning to mix drugs, an experience that would lead him to become a practical pharmacist (Magalhães Junior, 1972).

That same year, 1868, he began to study at Externato Aquino as a scholarship student, with the help of Dr. João Pedro de Aquino, to prepare for the Pharmacy and Medicine course. He started in 1871, at the age of 18: while he was preparing for the exams, Patrocínio revealed himself as a republican, writing the poem 'A memória de Tiradentes' ('The memory of Tiradentes'), published in *A República*. In the poem, he does not stop talking about slavery and freedom, expressing in verses his abolitionist and republican point of view:

Rise on the shores of the horizon
 And say, to the parasites that crawl
 [...] It is time to wake up from drowsiness,
 Which on the map of progress hides us.
 Great Tamandaré hits the compass,
 [Hits] the course to the ship that wanders
 By the grip of filthy slavery,
 To the sublime sea of utopia
 Where the boiled titania wave
 Waves of progress and freedom¹⁵.
 (Patrocínio apud Silva, 2006, p. 70).

According to Magalhães Junior (1972, p. 21, author's emphasis), "Patrocínio, perhaps convinced himself that he would be like a continuation of Castro Alves, and began to fill a notebook with verses, in which he placed, in capricious handwritten letters, the title of *Ritmos selvagens*¹⁶". Although, according to Magalhães Junior, he had a great appraisal in the newspaper *A República*, in 1871, Patrocínio stopped collaborating in that newspaper, since the periodical had taken a position against the *Lei do Ventre Livre*.

¹⁵ Levanta-te nas orlas do horizonte
 E dize, aos parasitas que rastejam
 [...] Que é tempo de acordar da sonolência,
 Que no mapa do progresso nos oculta.
 Tamandaré gigante acerta a bússola,
 [Acerta] o curso à nau que vaga errante
 Pelo pego d'imunda escravidão,
 Para o sublime mar da utopia
 Onde marulham fervidos, titânios
 Vagalhões de progresso e liberdade. (freely translated from Portuguese)

¹⁶ "Patrocínio, convencido talvez de que seria um continuador de Castro Alves, começou a encher de versos um caderno, em que colocara, em caprichosas letras manuscritas, o título de *Ritmos selvagens*" (freely translated from Portuguese).

In 1872, he entered the Pharmacy course at the Medical School of Rio de Janeiro, with only 19 years old. To help pay for the studies, Patrocínio got involved with teaching practice:

Entering the Medical School, as a pharmacy student, I received a grant of 20\$000 from the charity. On the other hand, I had some first-literate students, and, above all, I did not have to pay rent and food, because of my colleague Sebastião Catão Callado¹⁷ (Patrocínio..., 1884, p. 1).

He was a critical of the teaching of Pharmacy within the Medical School, denouncing the precariousness and unequal ways in which the students of this course were treated, the vast majority of which were poorer students, who had to work to survive. Published in the *Semana Política* column under the pseudonym Proudhomme, after graduating, he defends the need to reform the regulations of the faculties of Medicine and criticizes, mainly, the faculty of the *Faculdade da Corte* and the exams to fill the vacancies from this university. He complains that Pharmacy students, although they paid the same tuition fee, were not even entitled to a chair to attend classes and, in the early years, they attended practical classes in a building far from the main building. In addition, classes were held from 6 pm to 6 pm, which directly interfered the poorest students routine, who had to work to pay for their studies. Patrocínio also denounces the large number of failures in the year 1870, the abuses of the professors who argued the first-year students about unexplained subjects and the partiality of the professors: “The reader could be partial; to razz the face, the manners of the students, as often happens¹⁸” (*Semana Política*, 1881, p. 1). He ends up defending the public character of the university, in favor of the proposal of an academic password, which, according to him, would be unconstitutional and would close the doors to the people.

In 1873, Patrocínio became a contributor to the student newspaper *O Lábaro*, in which he published some of the verses written in his notebook:

Let's break these handcuffs
Which oppress our brothers, [...]
Let's shout freely:
'Slaves, you are citizens!'¹⁹ (Patrocínio apud Alonso, 2015, p. 115, author's emphasis).

¹⁷ Entrando para Faculdade de Medicina, como alumno de pharmacia, recebi da sociedade beneficinete um auxilio de 20\$000. Por outro lado eu tinha alguns alumnos de primeiras letras e sobretudo recebia casa e comida de graça do meu colega Sebastião Catão Callado (freely translated from Portuguese)

¹⁸ “O lente pôde ser parcial; implicar com a cara, com os modos dos alunos, como muitas vezes acontece” (freely translated from Portuguese)

¹⁹ Quebreemos essas algemas
Que oprimem nossos irmãos, [...]

Patrocínio returned to the newspaper *A República* in 1874 as a proofreader and, in the following year, 1875, he debuted the column *A Vida Fluminense*. In the university environment, Patrocínio expands his cycle of friendships. It was with Demerval da Fonseca, a medical student, that he began to work at *Lábaro Acadêmico* and *Os Ferrões*, in which he already took a stand against the parties, the Church and the barbarism of the slave system.

According to Mario de Alencar's speech when he took up his chair at the Academia Brasileira de Letras in 1906, Patrocínio intended to study Medicine, but faced the arrogance of a philosophy professor:

Patrocínio wanted to continue with the medical course, for which he made every effort, doing his best to learn the necessary in the preparatory courses. He managed to overcome the barriers, except one: the philosophy exam. There, he encountered the obstinate opposition of a friar who was a professor of this subject. Friar Saturnino did not like the student and used to tell him that his cassock knew more philosophy than all the textbooks he could unravel. And Patrocínio stopped in the face of the hostility he had to abandon clinical aspirations and follow the more modest course²⁰ (Andrade apud Pinto, 2018, p. 120).

According to Angela Alonso (2015, p. 116), he “[...] experienced in the Court the subordination by the race that had prevented him from being a clerk in Campos²¹ [...]”, and this professor would have failed him ‘for veiled reasons’ without mentioning his color or social standing, just saying he didn’t like the student.

Even though he was unable to complete his medical course, we noticed that Patrocínio was a dedicated and politically engaged student. He did not stop defending, since the first publications, the abolitionist and republican cause and was critical of the Church and other institutions of domination from that period, such as the Medical School itself.

Brademos aos quatro ventos:

‘Escravos, sois cidadãos!’ (freely translated from Portuguese).

²⁰ Patrocínio desejava seguir o curso médico, para o que envidava todos os esforços, esmerando-se no aprendizado dos preparatórios necessários. Conseguiu vencer as barreiras, menos uma: o exame de filosofia. Encontrou aí a oposição obstinada de um frade professor dessa matéria. Frei Saturnino não gostava do estudante e costumava dizer-lhe que sua batina sabia mais filosofia do que todos os compêndios que ele pudesse desvendar. E Patrocínio estancou ante a hostilidade que teve de abandonar as aspirações clínicas e seguir o curso mais modesto. (freely translated from Portuguese).

²¹ “[...] vivenciou na Corte a subordinação pela raça que o impedira de ser caixeiro em Campos [...]” (freely translated from Portuguese).

In fact, in 1879, a student mobilization took a stand against the abuses of the Medical School's faculty, with the significant participation of a young black student, Vicente Ferreira de Souza.

Vicente, like Patrocínio, entered as a student of the Pharmacy course, but went further, also managing to graduate in Medicine. The student's trajectory is defined by the influence of the educator Abílio Borges, not only in his training as a doctor but also in his dedication to teaching. We do not find much information about Vicente de Souza's social origins, but we do know that he was born in Bahia in 1852 and that, as recorded in his obituary, he came from a humble family (Dr. Vicente de Souza, 1908). He attended primary school and part of the preparatory studies at the Ginásio Baiano de Abílio Borges, reaching the point of having the experience of teaching at that institution.

At the age of 18, he came to the Court, under the protection of Abílio, attending the preparatory courses at Colégio Abílio to enter the Pharmacy and Medicine courses and definitively entering the teaching profession to subsist and continue in his studies (Pinto, 2019). His experience with writing allowed him to publish his first book in 1873, entitled *Sons perdidos* ("Lost Sounds", freely translated) which, according to critics, brought together a series of amorous and patriotic poems (*Sons perdidos*, 1873).

He enrolled at the Medical School to attend the Pharmacy course in 1873, completing it in 1875. Vicente continued his studies for Medicine, graduating in 1879 and receiving the diploma from the Faculdade da Bahia. As mentioned, Vicente de Souza paid for his studies and his life at the Court through teaching, obtaining, from the directorate of public instruction, authorization to teach several subjects, including French, Philosophy and Portuguese, reaching the point of directing the Externato das Laranjeiras (1876).

His experience with writing reached the theater in August 1875, when Vicente de Souza presented a drama entitled *Horrores da inquisição* ("Horrors of the Inquisition", freely translated). According to critics, the dramatic essay had some defects that should be corrected, but it held great promise (Diniz, 1875). The same text was presented on March 26, 1878 at the Cassiano Theater, this time read by the author himself, but it can be inferred that the text was reworked to be exposed to the public again, because, according to *O Cruzeiro*, o "Mr. Vicente de Souza was skillful enough to escape the common declamation and write a drama that, in addition to being a protest against so many crimes committed in the name of religion, has an undeniable literary merit"²² (Theatro, 1878, p. 3).

²² "Sr. Vicente de Souza foi bastante hábil para fugir à declamação comum e escrever um drama que, além de ser um protesto contra tantos crimes cometidos em nome da religião, tem incontestável merecimento literário" (freely translated from Portuguese).

Vicente de Souza combined the tasks of a medical student with teaching. In the area of education, he gained respect and recognition: he was a professor of Portuguese at the Escola Normal Livre da Corte, in its first year of operation, and headed several conferences on teaching. As a student at the Medical School, he was in some student and literary associations such as the Atheneu Pedagógico, the Instituto dos Acadêmicos, the Alpha Literário, the Club Republicano. As a member of these organizations, he had an active participation, especially presenting speeches, such as the one he opened the series of Pedagogical Conferences at the Atheneu in 1877, in which he addressed the topic of Sensitivity Education (*Gazeta de Notícias*, 1877). In February 1878, at the inaugural conference of the Liga Operária, a mutual association aimed at workers or artistis, he spoke on the theme 'The worker before the centuries', indicating his involvement with the workers' cause (Pinto, 2018; *O Globo*, 1878).

On March 23, 1879, the *Gazeta de Notícias* announced: “[...] the illustrious friend, Dr. Vicente de Souza, currently occupies the tribune of the conferences, in order to address the following important thesis: 'The Empire and Slavery: the parliament and the death penalty²³’” (*Gazeta de Notícias*, 1879, p. 1, emphasis added by the author). The event was held at the São Luiz Theater at twelve o'clock, for the benefit of the Imperial Associação Tipográfica Fluminense, another organization aimed at workers, which later published his speech (Souza, 1879). According to Mattos (2009), in Vicente de Souza's thesis,

[...] the specific object was to denounce the retrograde nature of the proposal by Deputy Martin Francisco, who, under the pretext of avoiding slave crimes, which he attributed to a conscious option of slaves for the galley penalty (forced labor), proposed the adoption of the death penalty for murders carried out by slaves. Although defining Africans as 'brutal like the savagery of the hippopotamus, savage like the brutality of their wars', Vicente de Souza attributed the crimes committed by slaves to the fact that the possibility of a recourse to the Law was not open to them, under an argument of defense of the masters' right to property, which was based on a conquest, a theft of the captives' own humanity (Mattos, 2009, p. 59, author's emphasis).

Thus, even as an academic, he approached abolitionism. The involvement with the anti-slavery struggle brought some consequences for his teaching practice. The schools in which he worked, mainly the boarding schools, received most of the children of farmers, who paid “[...] the monthly fees with the product of the sweat of

²³ “[...] o ilustrado amigo Dr. Vicente de Souza ocupa hoje a tribuna das conferências, a fim de tratar da seguinte e importante tese: ‘O Império e a Escravidão: o parlamento e a pena de morte’” (freely translated from Portuguese).

the slave labour²⁴” (Dr. Vicente de Souza, 1908, p. 1), and the black professor's involvement with the abolitionist conferences did not please these gentlemen. According to the obituary, his words 'reached the slave quarters', shocking the slave system and leading a group of officials to look for the director of the school where he was a teacher; however, Vicente de Souza was an even greater example for the youth by remaining firm in his convictions (Dr. Vicente de Souza, 1908, p. 1).

Within the Medical School, it is possible to say although this young black man had great prominence in his speeches and theses, he attracted a different gaze, even from the faculty, which, as Patrocínio's experience indicates, might not perceive with kindness young people from other social and racial classes.

However, a student mobilization challenged the faculty, with effective participation of Vicente de Souza. Due to a disagreement with the faculty from the University of Rio de Janeiro, especially with Dr. Souza Leite and Ezequiel C. dos Santos, all sixth year students from 1879 had to complete their course in the Province of Bahia (Vicente de Souza, 1913). The event had great repercussion and was recorded in the newspapers of the time. On November 2, 1879, sixth-year students at the Medical School published an article in which they denounced the way they were treated on the basis of 'insults', 'indecencies' and 'challenges' (Faculdade de Medicina, 1879a). The initial impasse was due to a simple photograph, in which the sixth year students wanted to register their ties of friendship in the last year of graduation; the professors, in turn, felt offended and started a series of accusations during a class, which were rebutted and exposed in several periodicals (Faculdade de Medicina, 1879b).

The faculty's response was also presented in the press. On November 6, 1879, a petition was presented with 91 signatures, including from Vicente Ferreira de Souza, refusing to take the written test at the university. In the document, the academics explained that the sixth-year teachers did not say the contents of the exam, unlike the other years, even with all the difficulty of creating a thesis, a requirement to graduate (Faculdade de Medicina, 1879c). Fearing reprisals, the students filed a petition with the Ministry of the Empire for the right to take their final exams at the Faculdade de Medicina da Bahia. All the facts were presented and debated by the students, and by the faculty, which mobilized public opinion. The petition was granted and the students celebrated the achievement: “[...] the cause of dignity and pride won, the law was fulfilled and justice triumphed²⁵” (Faculdade de Medicina, 1879d, p. 1). The students traveled to Bahia, and, on December 13, 1879, they were received by the students of the university from that province as heroes, with celebrations on the arrival of the vessel and a commemorative dinner. At these events, some students had the opportunity to speak: “[...] they were followed on the rostrum by the distinguished

²⁴ “[...] as mensalidades com o produto do suor do braço escravo” (freely translated from Portuguese).

²⁵ “[...] venceu a causa da dignidade e o brio, cumpriu-se a lei e triumphou a justiça” (freely translated from Portuguese).

students of our faculty, sixth year student Jansen Ferreira and third year student Assis Monteiro and sixth year students from the court Vicente Ferreira de Souza and Julio Borges Diniz²⁶” (Os sexto-annistas da côrte, 1879, p. 3).

In addition to this student mobilization, Vicente de Souza, after graduating, became involved in other controversies, such as the Revolta do Vintém (1880) and the Revolta da Vacina (1904). He married Cacilda Francioni de Souza, was an abolitionist, republican, one of the first to defend socialist ideals and workers' parties. He was also a journalist, poet, pharmacist and doctor, and made teaching his life passion. He made speeches, wrote books, was in charge of periodicals and associations, got involved in popular mobilizations: without a doubt, he had a strong presence in his time.

The Medical School – despite being structured by an elite that considered the formation of their own class and the maintenance of their status – had the presence of black students and professors. Such presence challenged and disturbed the prevailing power structure. The participation of José do Patrocínio and Vicente de Souza in clashes with the faculty demonstrates how black students positioned themselves in face of an unequal structure.

FINAL REMARKS

Urgency and ferocity for education. The quote by Angela Davis (2016) selected to open the introduction of this article summarizes some of our concerns: it shows the struggle and resistance of black people to exist in educational institutions that did not want them there. More than belonging to an educational institution, black students occupied them, on the margins, in the gaps, in the daily confrontation of prejudice and discrimination. We understand the presence of black students in different educational institutions as a subtle practice of 'settling down' (in Portuguese: “aquilombar-se”) these subjects (Nascimento, 2018).

This article also sought to reinforce the need to problematize the idea of complete and absolute absence of black students in prestigious academic institutions (Reginaldo, 2019). The contribution of works such as those carried out by Lucilene Reginaldo (2019) regarding black students at the University of Coimbra is fundamental, especially when the author questions the naturalization of the 'absence', without losing sight of the place of “[...] exclusion mechanisms that contributed to the silencing of their presence in the history of the prestigious university” (Reginaldo, 2019, p. 41).

²⁶ “[...] seguiram-os na tribuna os distintos estudantes da nossa Faculdade, sexto-anista Jansen Ferreira e o terceiro-annista Assis Monteiro e os sextos-anistas da corte Vicente Ferreira de Souza e Julio Borges Diniz” (freely translated from Portuguese).

Occupying the spaces of formal institutions was the investment of many black people in the nineteenth-century in Brazil, in a historical period in which the thesis of intellectual inferiority of black people and women was defended (Schwarcz, 1993). The flight of the black bird reminds us of the daring movement of black students in search of formal education. We defend that the investment in education was essential for the affirmation and definition of such subjects as intellectuals, as we understand that the engagement and daily struggle are also part of this concept, and it must be expanded. Furthermore, in a historically racist and unequal society, the existence of black intellectuals in such institutions had a pedagogical dimension. The desire for intellectual training was a daily movement of resistance and confrontation of racism.

Giving visibility to the existence of such subjects and their struggles is also a way of promoting historical reparation in the present, in the defense of affirmative actions through the history of education, in order to fight structural racism, social inequality and the denial of rights.

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