

**Learning to be Black:**  
**The Afrocentric “Word” as Anti-Racism Mobilization in Salvador, Brazil.**

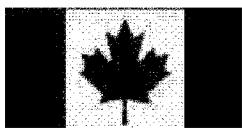
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## ABSTRACT

Since the “re-Africanization of Bahia”, there has been an increasing number of *movimento negro* led pedagogic initiatives which use education as a “weapon against racism.” These racialist projects from “below” have engendered an Afrocentric pedagogy, similar to Freire’s *pedagogy of the oppressed*. This highly phenomenological pedagogy targets the self-esteem of Blacks, and in particular Black youth in Bahia, and also results in the inscribing of Africanity in many traditional White spaces. These anti-racism efforts are coupled with recent legislation that entrenched the teaching of African and Afro-Brazilian history in the national curriculum and are informed by symbols and strategies derived from local and transnational Black networks. Together this conjunction of Black hermeneutics, using education as an important weapon, help insert an explicitly Black identity into this “racial democracy”, and in this way challenge the omnipresent coloniality of knowledge and power in Salvador, and more extensively in Brazil.

**“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”**

Nelson Mandela

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To Niyoa for showing me the complexities and traumas of our existence  
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## INTRODUCTION

“Emancipation and oppression are not transcendental states, but are themselves practices situated within power- knowledge formation.”

Usher and Edwards (1994:98) as quoted in Bartlett (2010:115)

“Negritude appears here like a detoxification project akin to the construction of a new place of intelligibility in relation to one self, with others and with the world.”

Munanga (1985: 4) in Aguiar (2006: 121)

### Racializing Democracy

Since the heady re-Africanizing efforts by the Brazilian Black movement in the 1970s,

“Negritude and Black aesthetics came to be primarily seen as a means to advance collective

action and not as an ends in themselves” (Tavolaro 2009:19). Cultural and religious practices,

while a longstanding site for community mobilization in Brazil, similar to the rest of the Black

Atlantic diaspora (Hanchard 1993; Gilroy 1994; Sansone 2003), now branched out into the

“political” sphere.<sup>1</sup> In this racially laden terrain, where even the vocal affirmation of a separate

Black identity was enough to contest the “folklore of Brazilian racial harmony” (Hanchard

1994:24), other assertions, more overt and less harmonious, were included into the strategies of

what was now seen as a *real* Black movement (Hanchard 1993). One of the strategies recognized

as imperative in this contestatory context was the ability to read the “word,” and, in particular, a

more racialist “word” which would confer a new vernacular to the Black “anti–citizens” of this

country (Aguiar 2006). It was intended that this new lexicon would allow for Blacks to better

understand their “world” and in a way articulate more deeply the conditions that permitted for,

and the manifestations of, the racism which they endured in their daily lives. Akin to the

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<sup>1</sup> While I recognize that even “cultural” mobilizations are political, in this thesis, akin to Hanchard (1994), I make the distinction between “cultural” and “political” campaigns in order to illustrate the difference between these most recent Black mobilizations since the 1970s, and those that preceded them. This distinction between “cultural” and “political” mobilizations is also made by Marcio who is a renowned *movimento negro* activist in Salvador da Bahia and was a key informant during the fieldwork process.

“African philosophy of education” that Dubois (1903) is seen as campaigning for in his early 20<sup>th</sup> century works (Rabaka 2003), the Afrocentric education that various segments of the Brazilian Black movement or *movimento negro*,<sup>2</sup> in Salvador were both advocating and organizing for, sought to emphasize race and class intersections that were intrinsic to the Afro- Brazilian ‘problem.’ The material manifestations of this Black situation were seen to necessitate “struggle, sacrifice, service, group leadership and [above all] African historical and cultural grounding” (Rabaka 2003: 399). This situated pedagogy crafted by the *movimento negro*, was envisioned as an education that more deeply spoke to Afro- Brazilian lifeworlds and their experiences as being part of the African diaspora that is at once within and without modernity (Gilroy 1993).

Even though Brazil was constructed in some spheres as the “first child of Bahia that was born on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 1500”,<sup>3</sup> its foundation in, and legacy of, a plantation slavery system, hindered the full participation of its Black subjects, even after abolition. The nation building trajectory which contemplated a “eulogy to miscegenation” in the 1930s, nevertheless, in its self - affirmation as a racial democracy, reified the ideal *mulatto* citizen in what Nascimento (2007) has termed the “sorcery of colour,” and in this way disguising the persistent anti-Black and anti- Indigenous racism that was ubiquitous.<sup>4</sup> As a consequence, quite the opposite of Degler’s (1971) infamous suggestion, there was no evident “mulatto escape hatch” for the darker citizens within

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<sup>2</sup> *Movimento negro* which is translated as Black movement, is used often as an umbrella term which encapsulates the Black organizations that are working to promote a racialized political and cultural consciousness amongst Afro-Brazilians. This consciousness is seen as imperative to the fight against the structural racism that leads to socioeconomic and political inequality in Brazil, and whose victims are more frequently the racialized in this country.

<sup>3</sup> Bahia in this quote refers to Blackness. This quotation is extracted from an email foreword that was sent to me by a university colleague whom I met at the Centre of Afro and Oriental Studies (CEAO), an academic institution which is affiliated to the Federal University of Bahia.

<sup>4</sup> Nascimento (2007) argues that even though racism organizes social, political and economic relations in Brazil, its importance is often denied and hidden in references to the “racial democracy” that supposedly persists. The author argues that, rather than confront the persistent anti-Black racism; it is often considered racism to talk about racism in Brazil. This contradictory situation is what she refers to as the sorcery of color.

these borders who instead suffered an internalization and epidermalization of inferiority (Aguiar 2006).

Aguiar (2006) argues that education, similar to Catholicism, has “two sides.” This is for the reason that, while this creed can be found in the “big plantation house” acting as an “instrument of domination”, it is also through religious brotherhoods that many enslaved persons in Brazil found some liberty (Aguiar 2006:12; Pinho 2010:117).<sup>5</sup> Comparable to Catholicism, education is seen to have a “liberatory face” in that whilst, it remains fundamental to the maintenance of a status quo, it also – when in a decolonial form- has the ability to redress the failures and silences in institutionalized pedagogy, to engender “freedom” (Freire 1970) and allow for the oppressed to recuperate their “denied humanity” (Rabaka 2003:413). For this reason, in a bid to engender a holistic anti-racism mobilization, the *movimento negro* encouraged the taking up of an Africalogical discourse in both formal and informal educational settings. This Afrocentric education, akin to that promoted by Dubois (1903), would be *praxis*, which in the Freirian sense is seen as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire 1970:33). Above all, this education for liberation targeted the mind, which in this context was the repository of a Black *habitus* that was formed through slavery and, therefore, if transformed would result in the “new” Black person that was so desired by the *movimento negro*. As the author Joao Ubaldo Riberio (1984) conferred:

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<sup>5</sup> The brotherhood of *Nossa Senhora do Rosario dos Pretos* (Our lady of the Rosary of the Blacks) in Salvador, is an example of a Catholic brotherhood that was essential in offering enslaved Blacks a space to practice their religions, be buried according to their traditions and in buying the freedom of other enslaved Blacks. This Brotherhood is based in a church with the same name and that is situated in the historical centre of Salvador called *Pelourinho*. Construction of this church endured for a hundred years as it was built by enslaved Africans at night, on the only day they had off and under the moonlight as without this light they were unable to see. This brotherhood celebrated 326 years of existence in 2010.

We don't have enough weapons to overcome oppression and never will although it's our duty to fight whenever our survival and honour have to be defended. But our weapon must be the mind, each and everyone's mind, which must not be dominated and has to assert itself. Our objective is not equality, rather its justice, freedom, pride, dignity, good coexistence. This is a fight that will go across centuries, because our enemies are very strong. The bullwhip still prevails, poverty increases, nothing has changed. Emancipation didn't abolish slavery, it created new slaves. The republic didn't abolish oppression, it created new oppressors. The people don't know about themselves and have no conscience, nothing it does is seen, and all it is taught is contempt for itself, for its speech, for its appearance, for its food, for its clothing, for what it is. But we are making this revolution of small and great battles, some bloody, some muffled, some secret, and this is what I do." (Joan Ubaldo Ribeiro (1984) as quoted in Winant 1994:1).

The aim of this thesis is to examine the Africa centered educational projects intended to transform the Afro- Brazilian mind, and which were engendered as part of these "small and great battles" of the *movimento negro* that became increasingly more cohesive, political and vocal from the 1970s. Using two key examples from the North Eastern city of Salvador da Bahia, my objective is to trace the genesis of these Africalogical<sup>6</sup> initiatives from within the racialist project which is referred to as the re-Africanization of Bahia<sup>7</sup>. This project to re-Africanize Bahia can be seen as a "racial project"<sup>8</sup> which aims to "racialize democracy" from below, a task which Winant (1994) argues is just as important as the "democratization of race" (Winant 1994:169). A key feature of this re-Africanization project is its affirmation of an Afro- Brazilian identity which is

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<sup>6</sup> Afrocentric scholars such as Molefi Asante advocate that the study of Africa should be conducted through a discipline called "Africalogy." For Asante (1996), Africalogy is an "Afrocentric study of phenomena, events, ideas and personalities related to Africa." This discipline begins from the primacy of African civilizations and is "sustained by a commitment to centering the study of African phenomena and events in the particular cultural voice of composite African people" (Asante 1996:259).

<sup>7</sup> The re-Africanization of Bahia is an expression that was coined by the Brazilian mass media in a bid to define both the increase in "Black movements and all Black carnival associations" in Bahia, and the official recognition by the government of "Black culture and religion" (Sansone 1999:9-10). Although it 'begun' in the 1970s, this process built upon centuries of resistance by African descendants and is often said to be the "watershed" moment for Black organizing in Salvador da Bahia (Da Silva 2005:322).

<sup>8</sup>The racial project here is a concept that is fundamental to Omi's and Winant's (1986) Racial Formation Theory which argues that race, while not an "ideological construct nor an objective condition," is nevertheless a fundamental organizing principle of social life albeit in a "processual and relational manner" (Winant, 1994). Racial projects are thus "simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics and an effort to organize and distribute resources along a particular racial line" (Winant 1994:24).

anchored in Africa (Dzidzienyo 1985; 1999), and as a result of the increased performances of Africanity since the 1970s, knowledge production about the continent has proliferated. The institutionalization of this knowledge in both formal and informal curriculum is intended to act as a “weapon against racism” (Cardoso 2005:1). It is my argument here that these Africalogical educational initiatives in Salvador, that are part of this recent anti- racism mobilizations, are creating more social possibilities for the younger generations to whom they attend, compared to those that were available to their parents and teachers. These possibilities are engendered principally by employing a Black Consciousness pedagogy which is grounded in an Africa that throughout the years is consistently being explored and contested in Salvador. Essentially, by way of brief life histories, participant observation and secondary research, I interrogate why an Afrocentric education was deemed important in this context as well as analyze the processes and problematics inherent its implementation in two educational institutions in Salvador: the Steve Biko Cultural Institute (ICSB) and the elementary school *Escola Municipal de Novo Marontinho* (EMNM). Moreover, as part of this endeavour I examine what changes in Africanity/ties<sup>9</sup> (Dzidzienyo 1999:139) are being provoked by these Africentric projects that are part and parcel of the re-Africanization of Bahia.

A major part of the data that informs this endeavour has been garnered from interviews with educators at the aforementioned institutions. In addition, I draw heavily from Freire’s

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<sup>9</sup> In this article Dzidzienyo (1999) distinguishes between two types of Africanities – or views about Africa - which prevail in Brazil. These are firstly a “frozen Africanity” that promotes the image of a static Africa and that “celebrates specific historical, cultural and religious retentions”, and, secondly, a dynamic Africanity which is cognizant of the ongoing socio-political currents in Africa and which links the ‘Africanisms’ in Brazil to present realities on the continent (Dzidzienyo 1999:139). In his opinion, “Brazil exemplifies the first paradigm” for, in the projects that work to deconstruct the national ideology of a racial democracy and seek to rehabilitate Africa in this setting, the myth of a static and “ancient” Africa is reified (Dzidzienyo 1999).

(1970) discussions of a *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as well as Omi and Winant's (1986) Racial Formation theory.<sup>10</sup> Certainly, I am also engaged by the works of Gilroy (1993) and Hanchard (1994) that focus on the Atlantic African Diaspora - which Gilroy refers to as the "Black Atlantic" - and Black transnationalisms. Furthermore, my arguments are informed by an Afrocentric theory as elucidated – in both "proto" and "formal" mechanisms- by DuBois (1903), Biko (2002 [1978]), Asante (2007) and Fanon (2008 [1952]). This research enterprise is also undergirded by the phenomenological assumption that the body is the "seat of subjectivities" (Csordas 1994: 9) and, thus, should be privileged as a powerful way of perceiving and understanding phenomena. Accordingly, it will suggest that the changes in Africanity which have resulted from the re-Africanization process, and the meanings (personal and/or social) of Africa that are part of these various Africanity/ies, should be recognized as a synthesis of both spoken and body prose, "wholly intelligence and wholly motility" (Merleau Ponty, 2002 [1962]: 226), dialogical processes which permit for the somatic performances of Africa that have been demonstrated in Salvador since the 1970s.

### Education as Liberation

"Our Goal is a Brazil whose education does not hide the history of Black people." (Movimento Negro Unificado – United Black Movement cited in Covin 1996: 48)

This research was inspired after I spent a total of fourteen months in Salvador da Bahia, the "Black Mecca" of Brazil, between October 2006 and June 2008. During this time, in my

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<sup>10</sup> Omi and Winant's (1986) Racial Formation theory, while mostly focuses on the example of the U.S, argues that race plays an important roles in "structuring and representing the social world" and therefore is central, at all levels, in any state, due to the racial legacies that persist globally. As a consequence, racial legacies of the past do shape the present. Furthermore, this theory argues that, despite the salience of race worldwide, race is not an essence, nor an illusion. Rather, racial formation is defined as "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed." Key to this racial formation are "racial projects" which have been explained above.

diverse perambulations in the city, I became privy to the work that was being done by the *movimento negro* and, in particular, the Afrocentric educational initiatives which were being pursued as part of the movement's anti-racism advocacy. As a "post colonial" subject who has been a student and teacher in both Kenya and Brazil, I recognized why the education that had been so elusive to racialized peoples in Brazil, automatically inhered the possibility of social mobility, while was also a signifier of their demise. Therefore, while devoid of the positionality which would engender a more comprehensive understanding, I nevertheless recognized the impetus behind the call for an Afrocentric pedagogy which would simultaneously act as a challenge to "this structure of education and offer [s] an alternative education so that the people until then considered naturally excluded, can occupy their real place in society, therefore constructing themselves like citizens" (Aguiar 2006:113).

The coloniality of education in this location made imperative both its pursuit and its disavowal, a dialogical endeavour that is encompassed in the "education for freedom" which is key to the *movimento negro*'s anti-racism agenda in Brazil. Education is able to confer the possibilities of this somewhat contradictory agenda – of both pedagogy of the oppressor and the oppressed - principally because it was, at once, instrumental in sustaining a White supremacist meta-racism, while was also used by Blacks to access and contest the spaces from which they had been excluded. This strategy is deemed equally important in "class" struggles (Freire 1970; Bartlett 2010), for to alphabetize - in a Brazil that until 1988 did not allow "illiterate "people the vote – is seen as a means to " politicize" (Bartlett 2010:67), while also providing the conditions for economic inclusion (Bartlett 2010: 59).

This thesis is situated within the debates on Black identity that have been ongoing in Brazil and, more particularly, in Bahia for the last forty years. Furthermore, this research study is located in the discussions which argue that the performance of Africa in Brazil is a form of resistance (Dzidzienyo 1985; Reis 2005). Rather, by virtue of a history of slavery and racial determinism, which established that life be led on the “frontiers of the skin” in Brazil, and thus confers to the country a particular xenophobic “cultural baggage” (McCallum 2005:100), a performance of Africa is also an explicit challenge to the racist state apparatus in Brazil, and is a phenomenological contestation of the status quo. As a consequence, the somatic modes of attention employed in these performances of Blackness exist in permanent tension with the prevailing hegemonic narrative of a racism free state (McCallum 2005; Reis 2005; Crook 2006). At this juncture when the re-Africanization project is gaining more ground and is being at once confirmed and contested, it is my aim that this research on an embodied Black Consciousness education will contribute to the documentation of the pedagogical features of this project, and the Africanity/ies that result due to its pursuance. In addition, this research hopes to contribute to the studies of identity and Africa in Salvador da Bahia.

### Literature Review

In the quest to remedy centuries of injustice, the mobilizing that is part and parcel of the re-Africanizing of Bahia has brought about a powerful crusade by Black organizations that, in an unparalleled militancy, is problematizing this marginalization of Africa and her descendants. In a country where there is, at once, a hyper-consciousness of race as well as its fervent negation – what Vargas (2008: 15) terms the hyper-consciousness/ negation dialectic, and what Nascimento (2007:3) terms a “sorcery of colour”, the re-Africanization of Bahia is a racialization project

from below (Winant 1994; Tavolaro 2009; Mullings 2010) that unyieldingly challenges the persistent myth of a racial paradise in Brazil. This re-Africanization process emerged due to a confluence of local political, social and economic factors. Furthermore, this “Africanizing” was also influenced by the vibrant Black power movements in other parts of the Atlantic African diaspora such as in the US, and in Jamaica, as well as by the anti-colonial struggles that took place in many African countries (Hanchard 2003:15; Dzidzienyo 1985:135; Gilroy 1993). Similar to other sites in this diaspora, as power struggles in a racialized context are at once material and symbolic (Moore 2003:1), Black ideologies and goods, strategies and semiotics from transnational African networks became integral as signifiers of an Africa that was, since the 1970s, relentlessly being imagined in Salvador da Bahia (Sansone 1999, Crook 2009; Cardoso 2005; Covin 1996).

Gilroy (1993) argues that the Africentrism which arose in such a context of “ethnic absolutism”, can be seen as “inventing its own totalising conception of Black culture” (Gilroy 1993: 87). For that reason, while it intends to “supply a special form of comfort in a situation where the very historicity of Black experience is constantly undermined” (Gilroy 1993: 87), it partakes in the same oppressive logic of difference contained within the enlightenment project that it intends to challenge, and in this way does not concede the fractal and fluid nature of Black identity (Gilroy 1993). Similarly, Pinho (2010) contends that while “reinventions of Africa”, have been important in spurring resistance within Black diaspora communities, they have reified - through inversion- pre-established notions of Blackness: race categories that had their genesis in early modernity. Furthermore, akin to Gilroy (1993), Pinho (2010) criticizes the racial lore and ethnicization promoted by the *movimento negro* in Brazil when she states that, rather than the

liberation from Brazil's narrative of racial democracy racialization purports to bring about, it is a limitation towards a *real* humanity that is engendered. In contrast, Winant (1994), Hanchard (1994) and Nascimento (2007) argue that a racialist politics of difference, as seen in Brazil, works to "racialize democracy", a task which is necessary in light of the *herrenvolk*<sup>11</sup> structures that persist with dire material consequences for those whom they marginalize. Nevertheless, Omi and Winant's (1986) racial formation theory concedes that whereas race is "a fundamental organizing principle of contemporary social life" (Winant 1994:115), it must, nonetheless, be recognized as being "processual and relational," with a historicity that is affected by the contingencies of contemporary political relationships at both the micro and macro levels, the global context of race and historical time (Winant 1994:21). Similarly, Barth (1994) conveys that ethnic identities can be "produced under particular interactional, historical, economic and political circumstances: they are highly situational not primordial" (Barth 1994:12). Therefore, while scholars such as Winant (1994) and Hanchard (1994) recognize the contingent and fluid nature of ethnicity in Brazil, it is their view that the ongoing racialist projects, which repudiate colour categories such as the *morena/o*<sup>12</sup> identities that are part of the non White colour spectrum which they believe intentionally seeks to negate one's African descent (Santos 2006: 41),<sup>13</sup> would coerce the rewriting of national "creation myths" (Nascimento 2007:30). The revised national narratives that would be engendered by these race mobilizations, would then coerce

<sup>11</sup> In accordance with Winant's (1994) use of this term, *herrenvolk* democracy means a White supremacist dictatorship.

<sup>12</sup> In the 1980 Brazilian census there were 136 color categories for non-White people. Vargas (2008) states that this non- White color spectrum exists in a bid to negate Blackness and nullify African descent in a climate where Africa is not valued (Vargas, 2008:104).

<sup>13</sup> In addition, the repudiation of color identities such as *moreno* and *pardo* and/or the inclusion of these 'mixed' identities under the *negro* category, would also be useful in highlighting the socio economic conditions of non-White Brazilians, while working to create a much stronger *movimento negro* (Santos, 2006:41).

previously established origin “myths” to “articulate new positive images of those victimized by [their] domination” (Nascimento 2007:5).

Since the 1970s, these incessant Black campaigns have led to significant structural change which is evidenced by the new Law 10637/03 that requires African and Afro-Brazilian history to be included in all school curricula (Moraes 2006). Concomitantly, this Black activism has engendered transformation in modes of social identification, and this is illustrated by changing racial identities, such as the movement of Afro-Brazilian students from “Brown to Black”, *morena/o* to *negra/o*, since this period (Turner 1985). While speaking from and positioned in different African diaspora contexts, the same type of Africentrism provoked alterities were envisioned by DuBois (1903), Biko (2002 [1978]) and Fanon (2008 [1952]). Rabaka (2003) argues that for DuBois, “one of the most pressing problems confronting persons of African origin and descent and humanity as a whole [was] the problem of education” (Rabaka 2003:399). For these Black intellectuals, literacy was an imperative since it was recognized as an important vehicle for both personal and collective ascension. Confirming this correlation between education, a Black identity and anti-racism advocacy in Salvador, Sansone (2003), describing the teenage interviewees with whom he had worked with in the early 1990s while researching Black youth culture in Salvador, observes that “in comparison with their parents, their educational level is substantially higher, they spend more of their leisure time outside their residential community and they are less respectful of traditional status (and racial) system.” It is also worth noting that these youth were “more often out of work or less satisfied with their work positions” compared to their parents (Sansone 2003:27).

As the above quote conveys, and, as also argued by Bartlett (2010), it may be “unrealistic” to expect education to automatically engender economic inclusion (Bartlett 2010:11). On the other hand, while admittedly a gradual and fluctuating process, the racial “word” that is being brought about by the *movimento negro* is illustrating that when coupled with other strategies, to “alphabetize” can also be a notable means to “politicize” (Bartlett 2010:67).

### Methodology

The two case study institutions, which in this thesis will be taken as a microcosm of Afrocentric education in Salvador, were chosen for a myriad of overlapping reasons. First, they are institutions where I had previously established contacts during my visit to Salvador between August 2007 and May 2008. Secondly, they are organizations that, because of the differences which I shall elaborate on below, engender a more interesting and cross-sectional analysis on the impact of the Afrocentric pedagogy that is part of the re-Africanization project in Bahia.

The Steve Biko Cultural Institute (ICSB) is an organization whose founders have emerged as important personalities in the local *movimento negro* and who came of age during, and participate greatly within the re-Africanization project. For this reason the ICSB is very involved, and highly regarded in both the national and local Black political spaces. Furthermore, the ICSB, as it is registered as a Non Governmental Organization (NGO) and therefore not a “formal” educational institution, is not dependent on state support and has been the recipient of regular funding from international donor agencies such as the Kellogg and Ford foundations. Lastly, this organization has as its principal objective the preparation of Black students in

Salvador so that they may pass their university *vestibular* exams<sup>14</sup> and also “interact critically with the hegemonic knowledge that circulates in the academic environment and through this, secure for the Black community a more dignified and more equal place in Brazilian society” (Historico ICSB 2010). Additionally, it is intended that the *pre-vestibular* training will in the long term create better social and economic possibilities for these Black youth and their communities (Aguiar 2006:106), primarily through the elevation of their self- esteem which is targeted by the Black pedagogy that undergirds all initiatives at this institution. In contrast, the elementary school *Escola Municipal de Novo Marotinho* (EMNM) is in a peripheral location both geographically from the city and in terms of distance from the urban centres of Blackness in Salvador, such as *Pelourinho*<sup>15</sup> and *Liberdade*.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, it is an actual elementary school and therefore dependent upon the state for both monetary and structural resources. As a consequence, most of the teachers are at this institution for employment purposes and are thus required to teach the history of Africa and Afro Brazil as a result of the new law cited earlier, and not necessarily because they are intimately engaged as “militants” in the re-Africanizing projects. It is due to the different “sameness” of these two institutions that I feel an examination of both their Africalogical initiatives engender a more realistic and complicated depiction of the promises and problems inhered by the Black Consciousness pedagogy in Salvador.

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<sup>14</sup> *Vestibular* is a requisite university entrance exam that many post secondary institutions in Brazil require prospective students to take. While there are different requirements for each university, most students from poor areas are unable to access the preparation throughout their academic career or through expensive private *pre-vestibular* training institutions, training which would enable them to perform better in these exams. As a result, the ill preparation that is accorded to poor students while in school is compounded by the inaccessibility of *pre-vestibular* training. This diminishes the chance for poor and majority non- White students to gain entrance into university.

<sup>15</sup> *Pelourinho* is the historical centre in Salvador and means “whipping post”. This title refers to the fact that during the slavery period, enslaved Africans were often publicly “disciplined” in *Pelourinho* by their owners.

<sup>16</sup> *Liberdade* is a popular neighborhood in Salvador and is the residential area with the most number of Blacks in Brazil.

As part of this exploratory pursuit, I conducted semi-structured interviews with some of the educators who are engaged in the teaching of Africentrism at both of these institutions. In all, I interviewed fifteen educators<sup>17</sup> and, through a series of intersecting questions, I asked them to convey how they taught African and Afro-Brazilian history, and how this fit into their lives as a generation who had come of age during the initial years of the re-Africanization project.<sup>18</sup> I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews for two reasons. Firstly, because Africa in all of its manifestations is spoken of and debated principally in relations and performances that are informal,<sup>19</sup> such as in the daily interactions - both spoken and embodied - which prevail in Salvador da Bahia. Furthermore, by allowing respondents to speak with less limitation, and perhaps as informally about Africa as they are used to, it is my belief that a less formal interview process was better tasked to achieve the aforesaid objectives of this research. In addition, as I am already familiar with many of those whom I interviewed, a semi-structured interview process allowed for professionalism whilst also permitting for the camaraderie that had been established since 2007.

Coupled with other research approaches such as participant observation and relevant literature reviews, I collected brief life histories from four teachers at both of these institutions. For the reason that many of these teachers came of age during the early years of the re-Africanization project, I feel that stories of their lives, when rendered in a narrative that is more depictive of 'life' - ruptured, changing, remembered, contradictory - and used in conjunction with other methods, will help to better articulate the ongoing re-Africanization process, the salience of

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<sup>17</sup> These interviews varied in length and formality and could range from a minimum of twenty minutes over lunch break, to a maximum of three hours over an extended period throughout the day.

<sup>18</sup> These interview questions can be seen in appendix 1.

a Black Consciousness pedagogy within it and the changes which the entire Africentric project is engendering. For Bertaux (1981), life histories help to negate the “divorce” between theoretical and empirical levels of social theory (Bertaux 1981:37). Similarly, Thompson (1981) argues that life histories also help cut across generalizations and in this way, in regards to this thesis, will allow for both the objective and subjective Africanizing soundscapes and landscapes to more profoundly be discerned. This method, when employed with other procedures, gives access to “the reality of life of social aggregates” [such as] “strata, classes, cultures, etc” (Kohli 1981: 63), engendering a holistic view of being that permits for “the phenomenological theory of the foundations of social action [to] argue that the autobiography is one of the essential dimensions of the articulation of the stream of consciousness” (Shutz and Luckmann 1974:58). Accordingly it is important for the researcher to be cognizant of the sequence in which experiences are organized and correlatively their “place” in the trajectory in which they are linked. This is for the reason that, when “adults turn to past segments of [their] life, we can discover very decisive experiences that subsequently determined [their] life” (Shutz and Luckmann 1974:58). As this research also seeks to discern if the re-Africanization project was momentous in the lifeworlds of the educators at the aforementioned institutions, a method which allowed for the participant to convey the noteworthy moments of their lives, in particular those related to a Black identity, while still allowing for the overall picture, was crucial to this research endeavour.

It is my belief that the responses (and perhaps also the silences) generated from the interview process in these diverse settings, allowed me to better recognize the impact of the racialist project that is the re-Africanization of Bahia, and the educational projects within it that

are providing more possibilities for a Black subjectivity which challenges the “sorcery of colour,” not only Salvador, but in Brazil as a whole.

### Blackness and Racism

It is important, before I proceed, to convey what I mean by two key terms which I will use extensively in this thesis. The first is the term Black or Blackness. Discussions about Blackness in Brazil beg the question about just “who is actually Black in Brazil?” (Dos Santos 2006), since it is a term that, until fairly recently, was rarely used in this setting. Although cognizant of how problematic this expression can be in this context, for the purposes of this research, I categorize as “Black” both those who self-identify as Black as well as those whom the *movimento negro* would view as Black, which in effect is anyone who is non-White and not Indigenous. This somewhat continuum of Blackness used by the *movimento negro* is intentional since “having pride and “assuming” one’s identity as *negro* has been the driving force behind some Black movements’ attempts to get rid of the popular *morena* identity. They argue that powerful solidarity movements cannot grow in strength when people focus on physical features (slightly lighter skin) or manipulate racial markers (hair straightening) to avoid being classified as “*negro*” (Burdick 1998 as quoted in Baran 2007: 402). As a result, some who might ordinarily identify as “Brown”, “mixed” or even “White”, would be included in the *movimento negro*’s definition of Black.

Creating the *negro* as a political subject involves the construction of racial difference. Accordingly, terms such as *preto*, which is the color Black in Portuguese, which are seen to connote only shade are no longer deemed valid identities by the *movimento negro* and rather,

*negro*, or Black in the North American sense, an identity which is seen to encompass a culture, cosmology and history, is what is advocated for (Nobles 2000: 15 in Tavolaro 2009:21). This emphasis on a Black identity, and not just shade, is a key feature of the racialist projects that are part of the re-Africanization of Bahia. Critics of racialism such as Gilroy (1993) and Sansone (2003) decry the “inflated” status of race which they see as privileged within these recent racial projects in the “Black Atlantic.” Conversely, within this research endeavour, while guided by the Racial Formation theory of Omi and Winant (1986), I take a position similar to that of Tavolaro (2009) who argues that in Brazil, one should “deal with racialism as symptomatic of a certain way of framing the problem of racism that was neither inexorable nor unauthentic but, instead socially and historically conceived through the work of political institutions, social movements, and scholars” (Tavolaro 2009: 4). Essentially, it is my view that the denigration of Blackness which has been, and is, ubiquitous in many national spheres, regardless of the conceded inter-race and inter-class celebrations of some elements of Africanity in Bahia such as *Samba*, made it so that an important strategy to fight racism in this context was through a Black racialism premised on an inversion of the notion of this degenerate Black body, a “degeneracy” which many non-Whites do share. Furthermore, I agree with the author that while racialism can engender its own limits, one must not lose sight of the fact that this “new trend of the anti-racism discourse that, even though has not prevailed as the only and totalizing symbolic framework, has become more influential over the last few years” and has been recognized as paving the way for much material and symbolic change for Blacks in Brazil (Tavolaro 2009:5).

Chapter two focuses on the history of Africa in Bahia and in particular traces the trajectory of Africa in Brazil until the re-Africanization project. This chapter foregrounds the

salient themes within this thesis and attempts to immerse the reader in the field-site. The third chapter introduces the two case study institutions, examines why Afrocentric education was deemed important in this context and documents its genesis in the works of a few diasporic Black intellectuals. The fourth and largest chapter conveys the brief life histories of the four educators and provides them as a kind of material bridge to the arguments that are stated in this research endeavour. This chapter also attempts to discern which promises and problematics are part of these educational projects for liberation, and which Africanities resulted, and are resulting, due to these Africalogical initiatives. In conclusion, chapter five provides a summary of my main arguments and suggests questions for further research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### From Salvador de “ todos os Santos”<sup>20</sup> to Salvador de “todos os negros”<sup>21</sup>: A brief history of Blackness in Brazil

“We built this country” AB personal communication (Nov 12 2010, Salvador, Brazil)

This chapter traces the trajectory of Africa in Brazil until the re-Africanization project in order to illustrate the changes in Africanity that provoked the institutionalization, in both formal and informal mechanisms, of an Afrocentric pedagogy in Salvador, and more broadly in Brazil. One of the key tasks of this research is to situate these Africalogical discourses within the specific racialist projects of the 1970s, and indicate the Afrocentric semiotics and strategies which were key to these mobilizations. Therefore, the brief historical trajectory of Africa in Brazil from 1501 to the early 1970s which is provided in this chapter, is instrumental in contextualizing the key themes in this thesis which are a Black anti-racism mobilization, Afrocentric pedagogy for liberation, Africanity/ ies in Salvador and the re- Africanization project of the last forty years.

*Sao Salvador da Bahia de todos os Santos,*<sup>22</sup> or Salvador as it came to be more colloquially referred, was never meant to be a Black city. In fact, after abolition, by virtue of the fervent national bids to undo the colonial strategies which had engendered the presence of *too* many *negros*, Blacks in Brazil had more luck entering “the kingdom of heaven” (Skidmore

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<sup>20</sup> In English it means “of all saints”, and this refers to the fact that the city of Salvador is in a bay known as the “Bay of All Saints”.

<sup>21</sup> In English it means “of all Blacks” and this is in reference to Salvador’s reputation as the Blackest city in Brazil.

<sup>22</sup> In English it means “Holy Savior of All Saints Bay.” It was so named after Amerigo Vespucci the Italian explorer who landed there on All Saints Day, November 1<sup>st</sup> 1501. Amerigo Vespucci also gave his name to the Americas, which initially only referred to Latin America.

1974:194) than Brazil. Nevertheless, to the great dismay of King Dom Joao<sup>23</sup> of Portugal and many of his subjects, these efforts to disperse the Black population proved to be in vain for the capital city of this new Portugal, did not have to do much to be referred to as the Black Rome of the new world (Sansone 1999:8).

Not too long after Amerigo Vespucci landed in Bahia in 1501 and gave it its name, the slave trade to this part of the world was established. Via the British ships that carried enslaved Africans to the Americas (Graden 2006: xvi), these “unfortunate arrivals” traversed the Atlantic as the cargo and motor of slave ships to establish what would later be known as Brazil. Bahia, which is situated in the North East of the country, was the largest slave entrepot in the Americas (Graden 2006: xix) and the presence of these enslaved Africans ensured that there were always “too many slaves in this port city of Salvador!” (Graden 2006:17). This considerable “preponderance of the negro” (Pierson 1967:29) was exacerbated by the “libidinous” Portuguese settlers” (Skidmore 1974:204) whose “amorous” (Skidmore 1990:7) actions brought about the *mulattos*, those who were “neither Black nor White” (Degler 1974). Together with the enslaved Africans, these *mulattos* “made up a majority of the population of Brazil prior to the last quarter of the nineteenth century” (Degler 1974:44) making, for Dom Pedro II<sup>24</sup> and his subjects, the “degenerative” African threat more real in this city of all saints.

Brazil received the largest number of enslaved Africans during the slave trade ( Skidmore 1990:7; Sansone 1998:3), and conservative estimates put the number who came to Bahia at 4.4 million between 1520 and 1850 (Graden 2006: 1). These Africans were brought to labour in the coffee, tobacco, sugar and cocoa plantations that made this state so important to this new

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<sup>23</sup> Dom Joao was the king of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarves from 1777 to 1825.

<sup>24</sup> Dom Pedro II was the second and last emperor of Brazil before it became a republic in 1889.

nation.<sup>25</sup> As the country grew in size and other states began to establish themselves agriculturally, there was an internal slave trade that saw many enslaved Africans moved from the North East to the South when “the foreign slave trade was closed and the growth of the coffee producing regions of southern Brazil” made imperative the procurement of additional labour (Degler 1971:38-39; Piertese 1967: IVI). Nevertheless, despite the movement of enslaved Africans from North to South, it is indisputable that Bahia, more visibly than any other state in Brazil, has been influenced in its colour, commerce and culture by the enslaved Africans who were brought to this location since the early 16<sup>th</sup> century. Furthermore, Bahia can boast of a more stable connection with Africa that “no other Brazilian much less a United States port could match for directness and closeness” (Degler 1971:58). Due to this persistent relation with Africa, this North Eastern state is often considered the home of Africa in Brazil. If merely aesthetically, the importance and ubiquity of *Candomble* the Yoruba derived religion, of *Capoeira* - an Afro-Brazilian corporeal practice and the African influenced cuisine and music (Crook 2009; Johnson 1999) all attest to the African contribution in Bahia. In addition, it is interesting to note that even during slavery, there were at least “four official embassies that came from West African states to visit Bahia, not to mention the shuttling of lesser individuals and many goods between Bahia and West Africa” during the eighteenth and early nineteenth century (Degler 1971:58). So close “was the connection between Brazil and Africa that until 1905 at least - almost twenty years after abolition – ships plied between Bahia (Sao Salvador) and Lagos in present day Nigeria, repatriating nostalgic, emancipated Negroes and returning with West Coast products much prized by Africans and their descendants in Brazil”(Degler 1971:60).

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<sup>25</sup> In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, due to the labour and lives of the enslaved Africans, Bahia became one of the world's great sugar centers (Piertese 1967:7).

It is important to recognize however, that these journeys to Africa were only accessible to those who were considered *free persons*, as the dire conditions of slavery did not render those who were still enslaved opportunities for leisure, let alone travel. Nor did the initial years of abolition change much for those who were “emancipated” on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 1888 when Princess Isabel,<sup>26</sup> provoked by the local abolitionist campaign that had garnered significant international attention, signed the *Lei Aurea*, the Golden Law, which abolished slavery in Brazil. Despite this legislation, Skidmore (1974) confirms that after abolition, social stratification and its correlation with colour continued to persist. This stratification was exacerbated by the fact that most Blacks did not have the education to partake in the formal employment of the time, did not have any political representation and were not able to own any land. Consequently, abolition did not engender any modification in the status quo for Blacks as race relations continued as they were in “pre industrial” Brazil (Skidmore 1974:39). The Freyrian<sup>27</sup> pastoral scene that “became the basis for Brazils self portrait” (Hanchard 1974:54) was far from being realized.

It was with the dawning of the new republic in 1889, one year after emancipation that race became more fervently discussed in Brazil. The burgeoning social and political thought between 1888 to 1914 was filled with preoccupations (as well as disavowals of this preoccupation) with the race question (Skidmore 1974:118). Brazil, in a quest to refashion itself from an ex-slavocracy into a country with the economic, political, social and cultural requisites

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<sup>26</sup> Princess Isabel was tasked with signing the law after it was debated in both houses as her father, Dom Pedro II the Emperor of Brazil, was in Europe at the time.

<sup>27</sup> Gilberto Freyre was one of Brazil’s defining social theorists in the early twentieth century. In the 1930’s he wrote a seminal sociological survey on Brazilian race relations titled the *Master and the Slave* (1933). In this book he described these race relations as harmonious and asserted that this was evidenced by the large *mulatto* population. This “Freyrian” view of race relations has endured for a long time as it has been propagated by the state both locally and internationally, and has thus proved an indefatigable obstacle to the Black organisations which seek to bring to light the prevalence of anti-Black racism in Brazil.

of the “modern” world, debated its future avidly. The emerging intelligentsia wondered aloud whether “modern progress was meant only for White men in temperate zones” in locations such as the US and France (Skidmore 1974: ix), and the key question for the next few decades, until after the Second World War, was: *how can we prepare for a future that looks like Europe?* One of the first solutions employed in response to this query was to endeavour to look like Europe phenotypically (Skidmore 1990: 124).

Akin to its neighbours, during this same time period between 1888 - 1914, Brazil was receptive to the racial theories arriving from Europe and which were advocated by theorists such as Artur Gobineau and Louise Aggasiz. As a result, one could discern the prevalence, although often at different and overlapping times, of three distinct types of racisms. These are, firstly Social Darwinism, an ethno-biological racism influenced by Agassiz, and a historical racism that was theorized by Artur de Gobineau (Skidmore 1974: 28 – 38). One of the most adept supporters of this racist thought was a *mulatto* from Bahia - the medical doctor, psychologist and anthropologist Raimundo Nina Rodrigues. It was through him that psychology helped racism evolve in Brazil; naturalized the immorality of Black people and was fundamental in seeking inhuman solutions to the “Black problem” (Nascimento 2007; Skidmore 1974). Through books such as *Negro Criminals in Brazil* (1932) and the *Fetishist Animism of Bahian Negroes* (1900), the author, heavily influenced by Lombrosian criminology, maintained that “Black people wear on their bodies the physical stigmas of degeneration common to their race.” These “stigmas” such as “fuller lips, flattened nose and flat feet” (Nascimento 2008:88), effectively branded the descendants of Africans as criminals. For this work promoting the scholarship of legal medicine

in Brazil, Lombroso consecrated Rodrigues the “apostle of criminal anthropology in the new world” (Nascimento 2008:71).

After roughly two decades of being receptive to the various strands of racial determinism, Brazil reconciled these theories and local conditions (the local conditions that engendered the presence of peoples of “questionable origins”) thus engendering a “Whitening” project which was, in itself, a particular Brazilian racism. The emergence of a nationalist agenda (fuelled by a young and emerging elite intelligentsia), the fallibility of Europe as was witnessed in the first world war and the recognition that there really was never going to be *any* racial purity in Brazil, helped institute this compromise (Skidmore 1974; 1990). This Whitening project, also known as *embraquencimento*, was complemented by a new reverence of the de-Africanized *mulatto* citizen (Tavolaro 2009:13). Instrumental in this nascent Brazilian nationalism were scholars such as Gilberto Freyre whose books on the making of “Brazilian Civilization” painted a romantic picture of Brazilian slave - master relations and colonialism. Central in this thesis was the *mulatto* citizen who, although was historically painted as shifty and untrustworthy, became the celebrated symbol of a miscegenated Brazilian identity, one that more than any other national figure purportedly testified to the racial democracy that was said to exist, and which made all citizens ‘fraternally brown.’ As part of this depiction of Brazil, Freyre:

Praised race mixture and proposed to substitute the biological paradigm of race for an ethno-cultural or anthropological one. This substitution meant essentially that race mixture could be accepted as a link to Whiteness rather than rejected as degeneracy, to the relief of a ruling class faced with such a large Black population. Nina Rodrigues’s caveat that this population would constitute forever a factor of the Brazilian people’s inferiority could now be dismissed; but the goal of public policy remained improvement of the race – ultimately, the elimination of the Black population. Freyre conjugated his celebration of miscegenation with a festive idea of parallel cultural mixture. Although it was based on explicitly racist principles and on sexual aggression towards Black women, the

miscegenation ideal was now set forth as the paradigmatic development of the Portuguese colonizers generosity and lack of racial prejudice toward enslaved Africans. (Nascimento 2008:53)

Rather, “in other words, White supremacy goes to bed with racial democracy [and] their offspring is the hegemonic mulatto identity of virtual Whiteness” (Nascimento 2007: 60).

As can be discerned, despite the omnipresent ‘Africanisms’ in Brazil, the actions of the nation state, where the theory and practice of race is significantly different, worked to diminish the role of Africa in this country, principally through its relentless construction of her descendants as degenerative and impure (Nascimento 2007; Vargas 2008; Santos 2006). The eugenic practices which were entrenched in both the constitution and immigration laws, as well as the adoption of a Lombrosian criminology which links phenotype to criminality, all worked to barbarize African descendants in Brazil (Nascimento 2007; Vargas 2008). They were considered the “sphinx in the future” (Skidmore 1974:58) and like the “dinosaur” they needed to become extinct (Skidmore 1974:53). Cognizant of their situation in Brazil, the National Convention of Brazilian Blacks in 1946 declared in their manifesto that: “we no longer need to consult anyone to come to the conclusion that we have legitimate rights, that the reality of our situation is an anguishing one and that various forces are conspiring in the commitment to despise us and, indeed, to create the conditions for our disappearance” (Nascimento 2007:147).

Even in this the Black Rome of Brazil, as Salvador by virtue of the large African presence, “gilt churches and baroque slave blocks” (De Jesus 1962:7) came to be known, when Africa’s influence in Brazil was recognized, it was confined to the ‘folkloric’ sphere, recognized as the source of quaint Brazilian particularities that could only be used for enjoyment (such as samba and football) and which had no profound bearing on the nation as a whole (Moraes 2006:

9). All the while, the purveyors of these particularities languished in poverty, impacted by a pervasive structural violence that for generations was unrelenting (Scheper – Hughes 1993).

Towards the late 1960s a ‘revolution of rising expectations’ was on the horizon. This explicitly Black expression of discontent took inspiration from the anti-racist and anti-colonial struggles all over Africa and the Atlantic Diaspora. The goal was a Black liberation in Brazil, one that would ensure equal rights and justice: access to the same education, jobs, food security and healthcare. Intricately tied to these exigencies was a contestation of the racial democracy myth intended to reveal the persistence of the racism in Brazil, a discrimination that hindered the full acceptance and participation of Afro- Brazilians in national affairs. The hope was that once the veneer of racial democracy was lifted, it would finally elicit the emancipation that was promised by the *Lei Aurea* (the “Golden Law”) on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May 1888.

#### The Arbetura Democractica and “moving” from “Brown to Black”

Historically in Bahia, ‘African revelry’, whilst paying homage to “deeply meaningful manifestations of culture” has also been an event from which to anchor resistance (Reis, 2005:202). This can account for why “cultural” practices have been the key site for Afro-Brazilian mobilization (Hanchard 1994:21). The history of *Capoeira*, a Brazilian corporeal practice with African origins, also illustrates this resistance as its deft and powerful movements were often practiced under the guise of dance in order to disguise the potential challenge which this practice posed to the slave socio-economic system in Brazil (Reis 2005). Similarly Reis (2005) discusses the *Batuque* – African drumming and dance in Brazil - from 1808-1855 and argues that these events were “a window onto power relations under slavery in Bahia, but

moreover as a means of ‘liberation’ through the assertion of an identity, which although confined corporally by slave chains, could never mentally be enslaved” (Reis 2005: 201). The same could be said of other Afro-Brazilian manifestations, although not always revelrous, throughout the history of Brazil such as the Revolt of the Males<sup>28</sup>, the *Quilombo Palmares*<sup>29</sup> and the Black Experimental Theatre (TEN - *Teatro Experimental do Negro*). Furthermore, these events and institutions illustrate the growing expression of Black discontent that came to a head during what has been termed the re-Africanization of Bahia, - a re-Africanization which could be generalized to Brazil as a whole – and which begun in the 1970s. This period, which includes the last forty years, is often regarded as the ‘watershed’ for Black organizing in Brazil, and the effects of this mobilization are visible, although vary in extent, throughout each state. For these organizations that were established to contest the myth of the racial democracy, and “for Afro- Brazilians who have developed racial consciousness, Africa and its Diaspora have been a crucial foundation for racial identification on a national, international and transnational scale, utilizing forms of protest and commonality exercised by “Black” peoples elsewhere in both the old and new world” (Hanchard 1993:24). Attesting to this, the Afro- Brazilian activist and psychologist Maria Lucia Silva conveys that “to me redeeming Africa is to rescue and recover self esteem” (Maria Lucia da Silva as cited in Nascimento, 2007:110). It is due to this commemoration of Africa in her various manifestations that this most recent racialist project, which focused “on African roots as

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<sup>28</sup> *Male* was the term used to describe enslaved Muslim Africans in Brazil such as the *Hausas* and the *Nagos*. In January 1835, a group of roughly 1,500 enslaved Africans led by Males started what was to be the most important slave rebellion that Salvador had ever seen. Although betrayed before they could fully carry out this rebellion, the incident served as a demonstration to the authorities of the risks the state was taking by perpetuating the slave regime (Skidmore 2010:47).

<sup>29</sup> *Quilombo* is the name given to runaway “slave” communities. The most renowned of these in Brazil is *Quilombo Palmares* which existed from roughly 1605 to 1694. Its most famous leader is *Zumbi Dos Palmares* who is an important figure for the *movimento negro* in Brazil. As an homage to Zumbi, since 2003 the 20<sup>th</sup> of November -the day of his death in 1695 - has become *O Dia da Consciencia Negra* (The day of Black Consciousness) and has been institutionalized as a state holiday in Bahia.

the basis of ... political [and] cultural practice" (Hanchard 1993:121), was labelled the re-Africanization of Bahia by the Brazilian mass media. Vargas (2008) asserts that as a result of this period:

Never has Brazil had so many Black nongovernmental organizations focusing on health, violence, media, culture and electoral politics. Never has so much Black music and so many dance groups engaging with, openly criticizing and proposing alternatives to endemic Brazilian racism.... [some of these are] *Olodum* and *Ile-Aiye* in Salvador, *Cidade Negra* and *Afro reggae* in Rio being only the very tip of a vital movement that does not shy away from the national public sphere while engaged in local grassroots anti - racist efforts. (Vargas, 2008:119)

It is important to examine what political economy allowed for these most recent demonstrations of Black discontent. In this regard, Sansone (2003:25) argues that an ongoing "democratic opening" - the *abertura democrática* - that began in 1964 after the military coup, was important in creating new opportunities for Afro-Brazilians to force racial conflicts out into the open. Similarly, Hanchard (1994) contends that because of the military dictatorship (1964 - 1985) there was a halt to public organizing and "the *movimento negro* was no exception and did not resurface in a public, organized manner until the early 1970s [when the decay of the military dictatorship was most evident] as did other contestary groups. When it did resurface, however, the Black movement assumed a character it never had prior to 1970" (Hanchard 1994:109). These Black activists came seeking to disrupt the rituals of White domination and subordination, and it was during this time, as part of their assertion of an identity that was grounded in Africa, that terms such as Afro-Brazilian and *negro*, the latter which was inverted from its historical depreciatory connotations, came to be more widely used (Hanchard 1993:24).

Sansone (1999) also explains that the import substitution policies of the 1960s, which augmented the number of jobs available to Brazilians as a whole, did much to increase the

economic, social and political possibilities for the Black population. The policies allowed for the development of a skilled local workforce whose effect was to provide Afro-Brazilians with opportunities for social ascension that were not previously available. As a result, this also permitted for an increase in their disposable income and leisure time. Additionally, many of the activists who were key in the anti-racism campaigns during this period attended university in the 1970s (Hanchard 1994:93), thus illustrating that besides the “scientific” knowledge they garnered while in these institutions, they also became more “conscientized” about the pervasive structural racism both within and without these post secondary establishments (Hanchard 1994:93). These events, coupled with the slackening of the military control in the 1970s, led to the “growth of creativity in Black organizations and Black culture” (Sansone 1999: 9). Even so, it is important to note, that although opportunities for social mobility increased in theory, racial barriers remained and they acted as the glass ceiling which hindered the full realization of Black citizenship. Furthermore, when the global recession of the 1980s arrived, it was primarily Blacks who were forced out of the workforce as they composed the majority in the manufacturing sector that was hardest hit by an increasingly moribund economy. These events did much to dismantle the dreams of social improvement through hard work which were fostered in this ‘racial democracy.’ Therefore, cognizant of the White supremacist foundations of most formal institutions in Brazil, the Black organizations worked hard to chart a “third path” that “attempt[ed] to transcend the narrow confines of the left right continuum to create organizations that confront the specificities of racial oppression in conjunction with the general issues of state violence and economic exploitation” (Hanchard 1994:101). For this reason, their activism did not rely heavily on any of the traditional mediums for expressing discontent, such as political parties

and/or trade unions. This third path was smoothed by the increasing political, economic and social independence of Afro-Brazilians. The combined influence of the aforementioned factors in conjunction with the increase in the accessibility of mass media and the advent of “mass schooling,” all worked, at this historical juncture, to create a space that would allow for the progressively militant vocalization of Black furore (Sansone 1999:10).

Summarizing the motivations of both earlier and ongoing Black rebellion, Nascimento (2008) discusses why it was imperative for Blacks to act against the status quo in Brazil. She asserts that:

The absence of knowledge about their origins contributed to that fact that African descendants have a low self esteem; this is what impedes their full access to opportunities and hinders their capacity to fight for their rights. This situation made it imperative for the Afro-Brazilian social movement to exercise strong political pressure. This movement that has been increasingly articulating itself since the National Convention of the Blacks that was held in Rio de Janeiro and in São Paulo in 1945 and 1946, when Black intellectuals and activists advocated for affirmative action in the constitutional assembly of 1946, has been expanding greatly in the 1970s and 1980s. At the end of the twentieth century, with the third global conference against racism, the movement gained new ground with the modification of the law on the right to national education (10.639/2003), which made obligatory the teaching of Afro-Brazilian history and culture. (Nascimento 2008:14)<sup>30</sup>

Perhaps due to the significant number of African descendants in Salvador, the impact of recent cultural and political advocacy has been very perceptible in this city's soundscapes and landscapes, compared to the rest of the country (Hanchard 1994; Dzidzienyo 1999; Sansone 1999; Covin 1996). These changes which allowed for the increased visibility of Africa, and in this way the increased contestation of space for her descendants in Salvador, range from the

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<sup>30</sup> My translation.

transformation of *carnaval* by exclusively all Black *blocos Afros*<sup>31</sup> that ‘perform Africa’ every year, the establishment of classes and forums for the dissemination of knowledge about Africa and the creation of musical genres, for example *Samba Reggae*, which utilized ‘cultural products’ such as African print clothing and local religious symbols that help naturalize the Black identity that is increasingly being claimed in this location (Sansone 1999; Turner, 1985; Fontaine 1985; Mitchell 1985; McCallum 2005). Furthermore, during this period, Afro-Brazilian students moved from being “Brown to Black” (Turner, 1985) and the *blocos Afros* that came to ‘revolutionize’ *carnaval*, occasionally featured enthusiastic African ambassadors “with complicated names” in their parades (Dzidzienyo 1985:135). In this the new world Black Rome, this re-Africanization incorporated and embodied more than just the performativities of “Black Soul.”<sup>32</sup> Driven by both cultural and political Afro- Brazilian groups who advocated the need to ‘encounter our own history’, this process challenged the national narrative of a racial paradise and sought to reclaim and distinguish a ‘Black’ race and culture from the hegemonic “non racial” *mulatto* Brazilian identity (Rodrigues 1999).

### Transnational Transactions and Ideological Impositions

By the late 1970’s symbols of militancy which had belonged only to distant cousins a decade ago were pervasive and commonly accepted by Afro- Brazilians. Afros and cornrow hairstyles were being worn by models appearing in the most established and fashionable Brazilian magazines; the intricate rituals of Black power greetings had been adopted by younger Afro- Brazilians and Black university students were quoting knowledgably from Malcolm X and Frantz Fanon. Moreover, Afro-Brazilian poetry and

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<sup>31</sup> *Bloco* in this case denotes a group that parades during carnival. The groups can be of any affiliation (cultural, occupation, religious etc) but these *blocos Afros* are often ‘cultural’ groups who are African inspired both in their way of dress and the ideologies to which they subscribe.

<sup>32</sup> The Black Soul movement in early 1970s/1980s Brazil was inspired by American Soul music. The youth who listened to this music were seen to incorporate the hairstyles, ways of dress and intricate handshakes which the soul artists employed. Nonetheless, although this soul movement has “political overtones” it did not allow for mobilization around an increased racial and political consciousness and thus differs from organizations such as the United Negro Movement (MNU – *Movimento Negro Unificado*).

fiction had begun to reflect significant aspects of the racial consciousness movement. (Turner 1985:108)

Whereas many of the struggles and symbols that influenced this movement were derived from the transnational networks that prevail in the Atlantic African diaspora, these combined with local ‘Africanisms’ to produce symbols that were uniquely Afro-Bahian. Zeleza (2005) argues that Black diasporic cultural identities emerged in the transnational and intercultural spaces of the diasporic experience itself (Zeleza 2005: 36), and in this way acknowledges the contextual dialogic relationship between the global and the local, which ensure a situated identity. Drawing upon this understanding of diasporic identity, one can discern that the meaning of the unique medley of symbols which have proliferated in Salvador since the beginning of the re-Africanization of Bahia, can only profoundly be understood by those who are part of this Bahian landscape, a terrain that is increasingly being influenced by a Black Consciousness philosophy. These new modes of Blackness that have been provoked in this re-Africanizing, while have employed Black transnational goods and ideologies, have to be articulated by local speech and sensuality, as it is only through culturally specific practice that these symbols can speak about local lifeworlds. And even when they took on names and liberatory identities from other locations such as “Nelson Mandela, *Africa Mia*, Martin Luther King, Afro 29 [and] *Negro Bonito*” (Nascimento 2008:207-8), the expressions and experiences of a particularly Brazilian discontent situated them in this new world country. The power of these transnational solidarities was evident in the resistance to them, which, above all, claimed that these Black mobilizations were racist. Gilberto Freyre, forefather of the great Brazilian creation myth, was so aghast with the actions and articulations of the *movimento negro* organizations in the 1970s that he “sounded the alarm” in a 1977 article in the *Diario de Pernambuco*. He wrote:

Perhaps my eyes are deceiving me? Or did I really read that the United States will be arriving in Brazil..... Americans of color.... why?... to convince, Brazilians, also of color, that their dances and their “Afro- Brazilian” songs would have to be of “melancholy” and revolt”? And not as it is today... sambas which are almost all happy and fraternal. If what I have read is true, it is once more an attempt to introduce into a Brazil that is growing fully, fraternally brown (*moreno*) – what appears to cause jealousy in nations that are also bi or tri-racial – the myth of Negritude, not of Sengor’s type, of the just valorization of Black or African values, but that which brings at times that “class struggle” as an instrument of civil war, not of the lucid Marx the sociologist, but the other: the inspirator of a militant Marxism with its provocation of hatred... What must be made salient, in these difficult times which the world is living in, with a terrible crisis of leadership...Brazil needs to be ready for work being done against it, not only of Soviet imperialism... but of the United States as well. (Gilberto Freyre (1977) as quoted in Hanchard 1994:115)

As is evident from the above statement, White Brazil was having a hard time coming to terms with these recent antics of its “unfortunate arrivals” from Africa. While many of its academics, since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, had been responsible for producing a certain Africa – museum worthy and archaic, yet without agency - in Bahia, these new and explicitly Black mobilizations complicated the notions of Blackness that were central to the constructed Bahian identity and refuted these White academic notions of Blackness that were promoted by both Brazilian intellectuals and foreign anthropologists. Instead of the Bahia of Gilberto Freyre and Nina Rodrigues, these re-Africanizing mobilizations engendered an Africa that was a Black gaze, one that looked less towards the academy and more towards places such as Jamaica, Nubia and Bahia.

One specific example of an endeavour that brought about a direct exchange of ideas from two Black diasporic locations was the 1993 visit of fifteen Black members of the Coalition against Police Abuse (CAPA) in South Central Los Angeles (CAPA at this time was headed by an ex Black Panther), to the *favela* community of *Jacarezinho* in Rio de Janeiro (Vargas, 2008:21). The purpose of the visit was to share knowledge and strategies aimed at diminishing

police and state violence in poor Black communities, both in Brazil and in the US. For Vargas (2008), these “forms of grassroots organizing inflected by a transnational consciousness reveals projects of social organization that at least implicitly, suggest alternative modes of political intervention derived from a diasporic praxis of racial solidarity” (Vargas, 2008:41). What was demonstrated by the success of the *Jacarezinho* residents in curbing police brutality is that grassroots organizing, which includes transnational consciousness and cunning, can increasingly grasp power by placing suffering in a global comparative framework and by adopting intercontinental strategies that have already been tried and tested. It is in this way that transnational exchanges such as these offer themselves as imperative and dynamic sites for local resistance (Mukuna, 1999). Nevertheless, it is important to note that this universalization of struggle can make salient the use of certain universals or essences, in this case a “negro essence,” that for better or worse will have to be naturalized in the landscape (Dzidzienyo, 1999). As a result of such essentialism, material objects, which were said to embody a Black/African “cultural” identity, became fundamental to Black Brazilian advocacy in its bids to re-Africanize. The products that established a Black culture - which was a distinguishing feature of a Black racial identity needed in order to stir Brazil from its hegemonic Whiteness — were drawn from both old and new trade relations that united Africa, North America and Brazil (Sansone 1999: 40). These goods, symbolic of a Black identity, ranged from natural hair products, African print clothing, religious symbols and beaded jewellery (Turner 1985; Sansone 1999). These are still necessary acquisitions whose aesthetics (and implied ethics) confer the Black *militante* or militant identity that is an essential component of the ‘conscienticized’ Black Bahian culture (Sansone 1999). McCallum (2005), in her discussion of the performance of race and class in

Salvador da Bahia, documents that conscious embodied practice that is repeated often and whose implements are material objects such as clothing, jewellery or even natural Black hair, entrench race and class roles in this location. The race of a *Soteropolitano/a*<sup>33</sup> therefore is constituted by, and mutually constitutes, the meanings of certain spaces. Rather, the meanings produced by a body intentionally performing an action in a certain space - and of relevance to this thesis is the Black body - creates a particular political meaning in that space, a meaning which is thrown back and “sticks” to the body (McCallum, 2005). It is in this way, not solely by voicing the racial politics of their Northern neighbours as critics claimed, but by performing an intended “Black” action in a power laden terrain which embodies the various “cognitive baggages” of a Brazil without race, that these Black organizations challenged the status quo and further entrenched a political and racial identity with its own distinct culture.

All the same, the unrelenting myth of a racial democracy did much to mask the blatant structural racism that was, and is still part, of the Afro- Brazilian day to day reality (Scheper – Hughes 1992:39 – 40; Hanchard 1994). In its self promotion as a *mulatto* nation, Brazil continued to establish a ‘pigmentocracy’ informed by a hegemony that is not any “one single dominant or subordinate ideology”, but is – like the reactions it provokes- “ multivalent, contradictory in itself “ (Hanchard 1994:23). The hegemonic Whiteness that persists, which even to this day perpetuates the “myth of the friendly [slave] master” (Skidmore 1974:217) did not allow for the “old common sense to be supplanted” entirely (Skidmore 1974: 143). Consequently, the racism in this location, although greatly problematized since the 1970s, was by no means destroyed by the re-Africanization project. Hanchard (1994) argues that the most

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<sup>33</sup> A native of Salvador da Bahia is called a *Soteropolitano/a*

symbolic demonstration of this is the fact that Brazil, despite the structural violence which still persists, has never had a civil rights movement akin to that which was witnessed in the US (Hanchard 1994). Some students moved from “Brown to Black” (Turner 1985) and *carnaval* to some extent was taken back (Rodrigues 1999), however the uninterrupted history of racial prejudice in the country did not disappear so expediently and was readily disguised with less grating euphemisms, such as ‘class’ and ‘regional disparities’.

Notwithstanding these upward battles, struggles are still being waged and won, and one weapon instrumental in these triumphs is education, particularly because of the historical exposure to “miseducation” (Hanchard 1994:159) that Afro-Brazilians have encountered. Artur Ramos, a Brazilian anthropologist who heavily supported the work of psychologist Raimundo Nina Rodrigues, conveyed that for the Black, “this sense of inferiority may begin in school but does not end there”(Ramos in Degler 1971: 164), for “by the age of seven most *negro* children have accepted the reality that they are, after all, dark skinned. But the stigma remains; they have been forced to recognize themselves as inferior. Few if any *negroes* ever fully lose that sense of shame and self hatred” (Degler 1971:162). The impact of the Brazilian education system on Blacks has been increasingly problematized throughout the years. At the same time, however, as early as the 1940s, Black activists also identified its utility in anti-racism advocacy. In his recalling of the strategies of the Black Experimental Theatre (TEN) in the mid to late 1940s, Abdias Nascimento provides that:

The first step in founding the Black Experimental Theatre was the understanding that the process of freeing the masses of Black people from their state of social marginalization would have to be based on education and on creating the social and economic conditions for this education, for life in freedom to be effective. We started from zero: Initially we organized literacy courses where workers, domestic servants, people from the *favelas*

with no defined profession, low level public servants, and so on, would gather at night, after their daily work, to learn to read and write.(Abdias Nascimento quoted in Nascimento 2007: 172)

Similarly, in 1949, the Union of Men of Colour (*União dos Homens de Cor*), while working at the community level to raise monetary resources which would target poverty, establish schools and provide medical care both in the “back country” and in the *favelas* of Rio, also targeted, as one of their main goals, the expansion of literacy among Afro-Brazilians of all ages (Degler 1971:182).

Although the modes by which race is operationalized in Brazil have changed since the 1940s and indeed since the 1970s, they have not altered enough to engender the transformations which are still demanded by the *movimento negro*. For this reason, over the last forty years educational initiatives have persisted as a popular means by which to exert constant surveillance on this racism and its impact on the Black population. It is to these pedagogic initiatives which are used as weapons for anti-racism mobilization that we now turn.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **“Education as a practice of freedom”**

“To study is a political act”<sup>34</sup>

Recently, Jorge Portugal, a Black educator and TV personality - astounded by the amount of attention and public commentary that was devoted to the 2014 World Cup in Brazil - asked perplexed:

What if school was the stadium and education was the world cup?... What if a third of this sports fervour was used to improve our national education system? If everyone agrees that this is where our fundamental failure lies, our deep social sin, why is there not a national force behind quality public education equal to what we expend talking about the World Cup?<sup>35</sup> (Portugal 2011)

Portugal’s comments echoed those of many educators I met when I was in Salvador who, while dedicating themselves to their students, nevertheless acknowledge that the failing educational system, particularly within institutions found in the majority Black and poor areas, is indeed a “deep social sin.” These educators concede not only that the learning structures need to be improved, but also recognize that the narrow and euro-centric focus of the national curriculum needs to be overhauled. Above all, what is increasingly demanded by both students and educators is an instruction which is grounded in their own experiences, that incorporates the history of Afro-Brazil in its multiple forms, and which can then be used as part of the ongoing anti-racism mobilization.<sup>36</sup> For Marcio,<sup>37</sup> one of the brothers who founded the Steve Biko Cultural Institute (ICSB) in 1992, “to study is a political act” for to “believe, read and write,” in

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<sup>34</sup> Marcio, Personal Communication, Dec 29<sup>th</sup> 2010. All of the personal quotes used in this work were initially conveyed to me in Portuguese and I later translated them into English.

<sup>35</sup> My translation.

<sup>36</sup> Oliver, Personal Communication, October 29<sup>th</sup> 2010.

<sup>37</sup> All the names of the informants have been changed in order to maintain their privacy.

this Brazil, where “Blackness” has been marginalized, is a Black protest (Aguiar 2006:89). Paulo Freire, the renowned Brazilian educator who recognized the role of education “as an instrument of oppression” (Freire 2000 [1970]:30), all the same, also argued for a *pedagogy of the oppressed*. While education, similar to Catholicism in Brazil, has been used as an instrument of domination, it is seen as having “another face” (Aguiar 2006:12), one that can be liberatory and revolutionary. Therefore, according to Freire (2000 [1970]), a pedagogy which is forged with and not for the oppressed, and that is a “pedagogy for people engaged in the fight for their own liberation” (Freire 2000 [1970]:53), can counter the systems of domination established by the other “face” of education, and in this way bring about real substantive freedom for those to whom it has been denied.

In this chapter I will discuss how education, and in particular an Afrocentric pedagogy, has been used as a vehicle to garner freedom for Black Brazilians, particularly since the 1970s. The freedom that is envisioned would begin from the recognition of, and ultimately result in, the demise of the hegemonic racism in Brazil which manifests itself in both public and private spheres to the detriment of the non-Whites that it marginalizes. Education’s salience in this pursuit of ‘unshacklement’ is due to the fact that it is recognized as “one of the chief arenas for *doing* in contemporary society” and as the “locus of all definitions that maintain the society and the institutions: commercial, religious, or social, that are used to sustain the society” (Asante 2007:15). In this way, it performs an unparalleled function in the creation of a hegemonic “common sense” group thought which upholds “systems of domination”, as it tethers the oppressed to their deprivation through strategies such as creating within them a negative understanding of themselves (Asante 2007; Biko 2002:52). While cognizant of its menacing

qualities, it is my intention in this chapter to investigate the possibilities that education provides in creating an alternative “group thought,” one that is part of an increasingly powerful anti-racism mobilization in Brazil. As part of this interrogation I will illustrate the various informal and formal pedagogic forms that anti-racism advocacy has embraced and is embodying in Salvador. In this pursuit, I begin by discussing the type of education which is demanded by the local *movimento negro* and draw upon the Black transnational discourses, such as those by Biko (1978), which influenced the *negritude* or Black Consciousness which motivates and informs the “education for freedom” that is desired. Following this, I highlight education’s importance as a weapon against racism and, drawing from a vast trajectory, I briefly discuss some of the post - abolition Afro-Brazilian educational moments and movements which have as their ultimate goal a Black liberation in Brazil. These are events and organizations such as the Revolt of the Males, the Black Experimental Theatre (TEN) and *Ile Aiye*, all of whom constitute important benchmarks in the constellation of Black organizing in Bahia and in Brazil as a whole. This discussion is followed by an abridged history of the two educational programs that are used as case studies in this thesis and are: the Steve Biko Cultural Institute (ICSB), which is an informal explicitly Afro- Brazilian educational institution, and the *Escola Municipal de Novo Marotinho* (EMNM) which is a “formal” elementary school that is part of the municipal school system in Salvador. The discussion of the latter institution includes reference to relevant legal provisions, in particular the 2003 law 10639.03 which established the teaching of African history, “the struggle of Blacks in Brazil, Black Brazilian culture and the contribution of Blacks to the national society”(Pamplona 2007) in the curriculum of both public and private schools. All of

these discussions highlight the critical race perspective which these pedagogic initiatives seek to make imperative.

The next chapter will document brief life histories of the community educators in the two institutions that are the case studies for this thesis, and these will be anchored in the changes which have occurred in Salvador since the re-Africanization of Bahia that provoked the Black Consciousness projects in these two locations. The educators interviewed for this study conveyed that they had become “new persons” as a result of engaging with this Black education for freedom - in its multiple forms, which has been inscribed in the landscape by the *movimento negro*. Chapter four documents the changes and contradictions these educators see as persisting in themselves and in their communities, as a result of, and despite, the re-Africanization of Bahia which engendered these bids for Black liberation. The burden of this chapter, however, is to describe why these Afrocentric pedagogic initiatives for freedom were deemed necessary, to convey the local and transnational philosophies that influenced them and to communicate the informal and “formal” manifestations which they embody in Salvador. Prior to commencement, it is important to reemphasize what is meant by the terms African centered/Afrocentric and/or Africentric institutions. Within this thesis, all of these terms will be used interchangeably and refer to institutions which draw as their main inspiration the history of Africa and Afro-Brazilian culture. While their “goal is a Brazil whose education does not hide the history of Black people” (*Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU)* - United Black Movement, as cited in Covin 1996: 48), in their pursuit of liberation and humanization (see Freire 2000 [1970]) for African descendants in this location, reminiscent of Fanon (1961), these Africa centered educational projects also seek to “set afoot a new man” (Gutiérrez 1988:49 cited in Aguiar 2006: 116). It is intended that

through engagement with Africalogical discourses, these envisaged “new persons” will defy the prevailing systems of domination and will then “manage to hold their head high in defiance, rather than willingly surrender their soul to the White man” (Biko 2002:49).

### Education as Freedom in Black Brazil

Winant (1994) argues that “the phenotypical signification of the world’s body took place not only in and through conquest and enslavement, to be sure, but also as an enormous act of expression and of narration” (Winant 1994: 117). This comment highlights that while violences towards the enslaved person were, more often than not, explicit violations on the material body, they were also part of a more comprehensive process which had “cultural, epistemological and ideological consequences” (Hanchard 1994:4). Therefore, while less obvious, symbolic violences were also enacted on the total body of the enslaved through “benevolent” campaigns such as “acculturation.” For this epistemological and ideological domination to work effectively, it is necessary that it does not “remain in the objective”, and instead enters into the “field of subjectivity.”<sup>38</sup> Rather, this domination needs to become part of the personality of the dominated person, inevitably engendering what Dubois (1903) and then Biko (2002 [1978]) referred to as a “double consciousness.”<sup>39</sup> A primary means by which the subjective is attuned to the objective is through repetitive indoctrination, for which formal education is a good medium and the results of

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<sup>38</sup> Marcio, personal communication. Dec 29<sup>th</sup> 2010.

<sup>39</sup> Double Consciousness in the Bikoan thesis is “knowing a lie while living its contradiction” (Biko 2002:ix). For Du Bois it is “a world which yields him [the Black] no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,- an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (Du Bois 1903:192).

this approach can be discerned throughout the post-colonial world. When ethnic salvation was sought in Brazil, similar to other parts of the continent, one way of ensuring this redemption - when Whiteness was not within grasp for the people of “dubious origins” - was via education (Skidmore 1994:118). Equally in Peru, formal instruction was seen as means for “constructive miscegenation” (De la Cadena 2000:16) and, more generally, as an escape from racial determinism, a departure that would, nevertheless, acculturate those whose degenerate nature was almost irredeemable (Skidmore 1974:64. For De la Cadena (2000), education – while not producing the ideal White citizen, was nevertheless, the “true hygiene that purifies[d] the soul” (De la Cadena 2000:47).

Through the “banking model of education”<sup>40</sup> that is characteristic of many educational systems, schooling is a way in which race is operationalized. In its “exercise of domination [which] stimulates the credulity of students with the ideological intent (often not perceived by educators) of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression”, education was and is unparalleled in its contributing to the “silences” that shield dominance (Freire 2000[1970]:78). In consequence, when the curriculum is filled with images which provoke the students to reject themselves, instruction is tantamount to “mis-education” (Hanchard 1994:159), thus confirming the warning given by Biko (2002 [1978]) when he declared that “the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed” (Biko 2002 [1978]:68). Degler (1971)

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<sup>40</sup> Freire (2000 [1970]) argues that education within systems of domination resembles a “bank.” This is as the students become the “depositaries” and the teacher is their “depositor” of knowledge. In such an education system, no dialogue between students and teachers is allowed for there is recognition of the primacy of the teacher’s knowledge. In this scenario, knowledge from the teacher is a “gift” to those who, it is assumed, know nothing. It is in this way, in an atmosphere that privileges authority, that systems of domination are reinforced.

highlights the racism which permeates the Brazilian education system in the following anecdote given by Florestan Fernandes<sup>41</sup>:

In 1950 a study of six primary school text books by Dante Moreira Leite showed, Florestan Fernandes writes, how our school literature spreads and maintains ethnocentric evaluations unfavourable to the “Black”. The authors of the books which are analyzed, Fernandes is careful to observe, probably enlist themselves among the advocates of racial democracy. Yet inadvertently, they project images of the Blacks which produce the opposite effect. (Degler 1971:123)

These images, while not always so explicit, are nevertheless present in the instructional material used in the national curriculum,<sup>42</sup> and in this way illustrate how schooling is conditioned by the character of the nation in which it is developed (Asante 2007:83). Degler (1971), in his description of racial relations in Brazil, highlights the imprint on the psyche that can result from a severe treatment of the “other”, which throughout the years has been normalized by the nation.

In this historical investigation he notes that:

When a master muzzles a slave, for example, he is literally treating that slave like a dog. At the very least the master is in the process of thinking of the slave as being on a level with a dog; at the most, his behaviour suggests that the source of, or impetus for, the particular behaviour is the belief that the slave was, from the beginning no better than a dog and so deserves no better treatment. In either case, the master’s treatment of the slave is part of the evidence to be evaluated in ascertaining White men’s attitudes towards Black slaves. *Equally important for our search for the origins of differences in race relations is the real possibility that a slave who is muzzled or who sees other Black men muzzled may well be led to think of himself as no better than a dog and therefore quite worthy of being muzzled.* (my emphasis - Degler 1971:74).

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<sup>41</sup> Florestan Fernandes is a Brazilian sociologist whose work in the 1950’s challenged the idea of a racial democracy in Brazil. His most famous work that challenged this utopian “creation myth” is the book *The integration of the Negro in a Class Society* (1964).

<sup>42</sup> The Ministry of Education (MEC) in Brazil recently rejected a petition by the National Education Council (CNE) to reconsider inserting the book *Cacadas de Pedrinho* (“Petes Hunting”) which was originally published in 1933 by Monteiro Lobato, into the 2011 national curriculum. This book was condemned by many educators because it is replete with racist stereotypes of Afro-Brazilians and even makes allusions to their similarities to monkeys and vultures. Despite the furore created by the MEC’s decision, and the international petitions and local outrage that it provoked, to my knowledge the MEC has not reconsidered its decision to include this “classic” in the 2011 curriculum.

When a descendant of an enslaved person sees herself/himself as being “no better than a dog”, a variety of strategies need to be used to address the comprehensive consequences of this normalized racism. By virtue of the contradictions inherent in the double consciousness which race relations in Brazil have engendered, it is vital that a holistic struggle against racism be employed (Nascimento 2004: 22-23). A historical example of such an all-inclusive action and one that is highly regarded in Afro-Brazilian narratives is, the Revolt of the Males (1835). This revolt, while an uprising in the narrow sense of the word in that it was an embodied rebellion, nevertheless, required writing and reading expertise in the preparation for and dissemination of information about the Revolt, competencies that are the outcome of education. Emphasizing this, Aguiar (2006) notes that “the act of reading and writing that were used in the organization of the Islamic Revolt of the *Males*, acted like strong examples of how these skills could be favourable to social organization and in making those who are dominated and discriminated against in charge of their own destinies” (Aguiar 2006:15).

While education promotes the mastery of important skills, when it is a problem-posing education<sup>43</sup> it goes beyond these skills, and allows for the discernment of one’s fate as a complex intersection of economic, social and political domination (Freire 2000:83-86). This type of instruction posits as problematic the status quo that makes oppressors and the oppressed. Above all, it is part of a pedagogy of the oppressed which, as detailed above, is the pedagogy produced by people engaged in the fight for their own liberation (Freire, 2000:53). Recognition of the

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<sup>43</sup> For Freire (2000 [1970]) a problem- posing education is one that views the status quo as problematic, and seeks to, via a dialogical approach in the classroom between student and teacher, interrogate it, and through reflective action engender solutions to its oppression. In Freire’s opinion, problem – posing education is important because it is a “humanist and liberating praxis and posits as fundamental that the people subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation” (Freire 2000[1970]:86).

multifaceted nature of oppression has the potential to catalyze a movement towards a “consciousness”, or what Freire (2000 [1970]) terms *conscientizacao* or conscientization, a term that denotes the process when one is “learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and [above all] to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire 2000:35). This conscientization is not a process which is employed in isolation. Rather, by “de-mythologizing” reality, it provokes action and thus effectively constitutes praxis: informed actions which demonstrate that situations *are* indeed transformable. This praxis is fundamental to an education for freedom, which represents a pedagogy of the oppressed, for the reason that the subject who is engaging in a praxis whose end goal is a re-humanization of all oppressed subjects<sup>44</sup>, will set forth a new person (Freire 2000: 30, 46, 79).

The importance of the “new” educated subject in the fight for freedom was also deemed necessary in the early Indigenous liberation movements in Peru. The ending communiqué of the First Indigenous peoples congress held in 1921 highlighted the salience of education in the pursuit of emancipation when it stated:

.... But before being bold it is necessary to be literate. Even if the government has the best intentions, if we [the Indians] do not impel those intentions, we will never be able to do anything that will really favour us. An educated Indian is an inconvenience for *gamonalismo*; *gamonales*<sup>45</sup> know that their regime will end the day the Indian knows how to read and write and that is why they prevent the functioning of schools. But now the Indians are ready to do so by themselves what the Supreme Government would not be able to... [T]he organized community should support the school they already have or build another one at their own expense... If ten years from now each community has its own school, the gate of the Indian will change... Respected for his knowledge, the Indian will have strong fists to defend his rights. (De la Cadena 2000:90)

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<sup>44</sup> In the Freirian thesis, humanization is the end goal of the pedagogy of the oppressed.

<sup>45</sup> *Gamonales* are large landowners in Peru, usually of European/mixed Indigenous European descent. *Gammonalismo* thus refers to the exploitation of Indigenous Peruvians in Peru by these land owners.

This knowledge that would engender “strong fists to defend one’s rights” was also desired by the *movimento negro* in Brazil, which recognized that the struggle for *real* citizenship needed to move into the ontological field. The prejudiced depiction of Blacks in educational manuals (Aguiar, 2006:114) and the structural racism in the educational system (Nascimento 1978:95) could not be fought solely by protests, petitions to the governments or an aesthetic re-Africanization. This is because the bigoted images of themselves that Blacks were and still are subjected to, made imperative “the need to develop [their] own strategies and not just to correct this failure but [above all] to be our own authorities, instead of waiting for others to interpret us” (Biko, 1990:70). Therefore, whilst “formal” education had been a means to ensure acculturation and submission (Skidmore 1974: 118) in Brazil, it was now used by the *movimento negro* as an important medium for redress. While education was the medium, a dialogical consciousness raising or conscientization was the method, and although similar to the Freirian (2000) *consientizacao*, in that it was an education by the oppressed to ensure their own freedom and subsequently a “rehumanization” of society as a whole, there remains an important distinction between the two. The Afro- Brazilian brand was more than just a methodology, it was a way of life which, above all, sought to produce “real Black people who did not regard themselves as appendages to White society” (Biko 2002: 51). It was this conscientization which became the clarion call for the *movimento negro* in the 1970s and 1980s (Hanchard 1994:160) and that continues to the present.

### Conscientization in Black Salvador

We coloured men, in this specific moment of historical evolution have consciously grasped in its full breath, the notion of our peculiar uniqueness, the notion of just who we are and what, and that we are ready, in every plane and in every department, to assume

the responsibilities which proceed from this coming into consciousness. The peculiarity of our place in the world is not to be confused with anyone else's. The peculiarity of our problems which aren't to be reduced to subordinate forms of any other problem, the peculiarity of our history, laced with the terrible misfortunes which belong to no other history, the peculiarity of our culture, which we intend to live and to make live in an ever realer manner. (Aime Cesaire, 1956, from his letter of resignation from the French Communist Party).

We have seen in the previous chapter how the reaffirmation of a racial democracy was repeated in Brazil even while the living conditions for a majority of Black population were dire and the structures of the *plantocracy* had not changed despite abolition. Notwithstanding these circumstances, throughout the years and particularly since the *arbeitura democractica* in the early 1970s, Afro-Brazilians consistently sought to challenge the myth of a racial democracy in a plethora of ways, including calling for a revamping of the education system (Hanchard 1994:126). Aime Cesaire, who is quoted above, could have been talking about the situation in Salvador for the resistance and interrogation of the White supremacist status quo that was prevalent from the 1970s, was located in the “peculiarity” of the Black situation in Brazil. During this period, this “peculiarity” was expressed through an Afrocentricity, which Asante (2007) refers to as a “self conscious approach to the agency of African people within the context of their own history” (Asante 2007:11). Observing this phenomenon, Sansone (2003) observes:

The overwhelming majority of groups in Rio and Sao Paulo, not to mention the rest of Brazil, had on some level focused on an original return to African “roots” as the basis of any political or cultural practice. Here Negritude operated as a cornerstone for the edifice of *negro* definition, the celebration of “otherness” and differentiation from the West. Its symbolic manifestations were found in the emphasis on wearing West African garb, name changing [and] the aforementioned donning of Afro hairstyles during the Black Soul period. (Sansone 2003: 121).

Aguiar (2006) maintains that since historically “to be negro was a sign of inability, dependence and social exclusion” (Aguiar 2006:99), this “Negritude came about in the struggle

for equality and against the social norms that enable class divisions and maintain the Afro-Brazilian populations far from their ‘place’ in the cities” (Aguiar 2006:30). As a consequence, not only was there a need to remember culture but also to recover it, to reignite the “African memory” that was lost (Aguiar 2006:19) due to the violent negation of Indigenous and Black culture by the hegemonic Whiteness in Brazil (Munanga 2004: 22). This call for pride in one’s Blackness was seen in the increasing valorization and defence of “Africanisms” locally. Nevertheless, the resistance against colonialism that was ongoing and that had gone on in Africa, the Black power movements in the US and the resultant theorizing of Blackness by African and African descended figures such as Biko, Nkrumah and Fanon who all wrote about the need to engage and overhaul the consciousness of Black populations, influenced the local Bahian Negritude. What is this Black Consciousness movement that was so influential amongst the *movimento negro*?

### Black Consciousness and the attainment of the envisaged self.

The call for Black Consciousness is the most positive call to come from any group in the Black world for a long time. It is more than just a reactionary rejection of Whites by Blacks. The quintessence of it is the realization by the Blacks that in order to feature well in this game of power politics, they have to use the concept of group power and to build a strong foundation for this. Being historically, politically, socially and economically disinherit ed and a dispossessed group, they have the strongest foundation from which to operate. The philosophy of Black Consciousness, therefore, expresses group pride and the determination by the Blacks to rise and attain the envisaged self. (Biko 2002[1978]:69)

While the roots of Black Consciousness are vast and can be traced back almost two centuries to the thought and actions of personalities such as Martin Delaney, Toussaint Louverture, Marcus Garvey and the maroon struggles in the Americas and independence struggles of Africa, it is Steve Biko in South Africa who articulated this concept more

elaborately, therefore permitting that he be referred to as the father of the Black Consciousness movement (Aguiar, 2006: 106). There are various intersecting terms for Black Consciousness such as Afrocentricity, Negritude and Afro and Africentric. However, as they all emphasize the centrality of Africa, the need for a conscientization of the Black self (Asante 2007:17) and all emerged in the theorizing of a Black Consciousness which is “a process of political consciousness for a people who existed on the edge of education, art, science, economics (Asante 2007:32), I will speak primarily of a Black Consciousness while also recognizing the salience of other terms such as Negritude, in Salvador.

Black Consciousness calls for “Black realization of the humanity of Black folk [and] it is a transcendence of racial self hatred” (Biko 2002[1978]xi). The end goal of this “transcendence” is mental liberation which would then deem imperative the usurping of the governing racialist structures - inevitably setting afoot a new humanity (Biko 2002[1978]). The Bikoan thesis, which is grounded in the importance of African culture[s] and the need to overcome a low self-image, is particularly imperative when one takes into consideration the years in which Blackness was seen as degenerate and thus negated. This repudiation was done explicitly through racial determinism, and more subtly, via the perpetuation of the racial democracy myth which institutionalized racism and led to the internalization of Black acquiescence, a phenomenon that Biko (2002 [1978]) also noted in South Africa. Bearing this history in mind, one recognizes the significance of Black Consciousness and its proposal to “infuse the Black community with a new found pride in themselves, their efforts, their value systems, their culture, their religion and their outlook to life” (Biko 2002[1978]:49). If a definition is sought to articulate this mode of holistic Africanity, it would therefore be a “consciousness, quality of thought, mode of analysis, and an

actionable perspective where Africans seek, from agency to assert subject place within the context of African history [...] it is also the quality of seeking in every situation involving Africans, the appropriate centrality of the African person” (Asante 2007:17). A Black Consciousness rendition of the past would therefore prioritize the need for the history of Brazil to be told by the African descendant who is central to its existence. Such a rendition remains urgent for, similar to what Biko (2002 [1978]) observed in South Africa, in Brazil the history of those who were enslaved is often abbreviated, not seen as complex and illustrative of the “emptiness of the natives’ past” which was appropriately interrupted (to the benefit of civilization of course) by the “arrival of the Europeans in 1652” in South Africa, or the docking of slave ships in Brazil in the early 1500s. If, by chance, an element of complexity is conceded, this history is nevertheless “a long lamentation of repeated defeats” (Biko 2002 [1978]:70), or the barbarity, passivity and/or degeneracy of Black culture in Brazil whose contribution is limited to the folkloric sphere (Moraes 2006). The afflictions that result from this immersion in a negative history of one’s own culture engender the double consciousness that Dubois (1903) refers: a permanent tension with the self which produces an inferiority complex that is all encompassing (Biko 2002[1978]:48). A similar phenomenon in Peru is documented by De La Cadena (2000) who in quoting Gramsci (1987), describes the situation of Indigenous persons in Cuzco Peru who in denying the existence of racism in the country, perpetuate it and thus bring about what Gramsci (1987) termed the “the co-existence in the individual minds of two conceptions of the world” (Gramsci 1987:326).

All the same, despite the contradictions inherent in the colonized body observed in both Brazil and apartheid South Africa, these exceedingly racially laden terrains allowed that “merely

by describing yourself as Black you have started on a road towards emancipation, you have committed yourself to fight against all forces that seek to use your Blackness as a stamp that marks you out as a subservient being" (Biko 2002 [1978]:48). This self-identification leads to a process of regaining agency and rejecting an imposed marginality in all spheres, a condition provoked by a shift in paradigms that - in the "revolution" which is engendered- unsettles years of mental enslavement, permitting for the liberation of the mind that must precede all other forms of liberation (Asante 2003:210).

### Escaping the Intellectual Plantation

Why should a little African child have to see herself as a guest when her ancestors are interwoven with the fabric of the nation? (Asante 2007:91).

Education is our struggle; they have killed us already.  
(Maria, personal communication. Jan 5<sup>th</sup> 2011).

Clementina de Jesus (1962), one of the most renowned Afro- Brazilian writers, if not the most renowned *favelada*<sup>46</sup> writer, wrote in one of her diaries of a young girl in her *favela* who was nine years old and illiterate although she had been going to school for some time. Of her she says: "The child knows the letters and the numbers, but she doesn't know how to make words. When she writes she puts down whatever letter comes into her head. She mixes numbers with letters. She writes like this: ACR85CZbo4Up7Mno1oE20. And it is almost two years since she started going to school" (De Jesus 1962:104-5). This failure within the teaching institutions in majority poor and Black areas is well expressed in a saying that is widely heard in Salvador. This expression maintains that in the public school system "teachers pretend they teach and students pretend to learn" (Sansone 2003:33). The infrastructural problems, coupled with the "intellectual

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<sup>46</sup> *Favelada*, refers to a female who comes from the *favela*.

plantation” (Asante 2002:7) which undergirds institutionalized pedagogy in Brazil, maintains systems of domination and privilege that make the particularisms of Europe- and Europe in Brazil- universals, thus allowing for the production and promotion of knowledge which is not grounded in the lifeworlds of Black students. These multiple failures in the educational system and, above all, the underlying racism within it, has led to a call for its replacement with a more situated structure, a demand that Black Consciousness theorists such as Biko (2002 [1978]) and Asante (2007) have also called for in South Africa, and the US respectively.

This overhaul of the education system and its replacement by one that incorporates a situated Negritude in Salvador would engender, firstly, an education which would remedy the absence of Blacks in the public imagery and would allow them to appear as more than just “slaves” within national narratives. In addition, it would challenge the “long succession of defeats” that is said to constitute Afro- Brazilian history, and allow for a “good memory” of one’s own past. This remedying and recollection of times gone by is essential for, in order to create a new society; “one needs ancestors” (Aguiar, 2006:38). Moreover, as recognized by Indigenous activists in Peru, “only people that have a history can be sure to have a future” (De la Cadena 2000:154). Furthermore, only an education grounded in the concrete experiences of its participants would bring to light the factual conditions of existence, such as the “real level of poverty and isolation” that is the Black situation in Brazil (Aguiar 2006:101). Concomitant to allowing for a “pedagogy of veracity” (Asante 2007:87), anti- racism advocacy that is historical will allow for the oppressed to better discern what conditions sustained the resistance of their ancestors and, in this way, allow them to derive strategies from these past rebellions (Aguiar 2006:42). While recognizing the contradictory processes which may arise in this trajectory

towards conscientization, it is important to acknowledge that this situated Negritude would only succeed if it will “increase the self-esteem, technological domination and political participation [of Blacks in Brazil], fundamental tools for the living and practicing of full citizenship” (Souza 2004:43). It is only through such substantive citizenship inhered by the aforementioned acquisitions that Black Brazil could begin to embark towards a more equal place in society.

Munanga (2008) asserts that the “rethinking of Africa” seen in the recent anti-racism campaigns demands “scientific knowledge of Africa in her entirety: including religious, political, economic and social complexity”(Munanga 2008:22). This scientific knowledge of the continent which informs the situated Black conscientization, is being established in Salvador in both formal and informal ways. Below I briefly document, from distinct periods of resistance, some of the informal and formal pedagogic initiatives which are an important part of the historic struggle for Black liberation in Brazil. In this pursuit, I briefly examine the Revolt of the Males (1835), the Black Experimental Theatre (TEN) (1944) and current cultural and political groups such as the *bloco Afro Ilé Ayé* which were Afrocentric forerunners during the early years of the re-Africanization of Bahia. This is followed by a discussion on the two institutions that are used as case studies in this thesis. These organizations are first: the Steve Biko Cultural Institute (ICSB), an informal educational institution that offers Afrocentric *pre-vestibular* training for Black students from marginal neighbourhoods. The second case study institution is the *Escola Municipal de Novo Marotinho* (EMNM), a formal state funded educational establishment in Salvador which is mandated, due to recent legal developments, to integrate the teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African history into its curriculum.

In reference to the Revolt of the Males (1835), Aguiar (2006) explains that, even with the extensive corporeal action intended with this resistance, reading and writing skills were fundamental to this rebellion. In particular, the author provides that “the fact that these Blacks knew how to read and write presented the biggest advantage to organizing and also allowed them to have a very high self esteem. They did not ever lower their heads as they knew their real place in society from which they had been displaced. Due to this, they revolted in order to gain back this space” (Aguiar 2008:89). Similarly, the Black Experimental Theatre which came about at the end of the second world war begun as a way to bring a Black “audacious and new perspective” to theatre, and to challenge the perverse racism in the arts world (Nascimento 2008:265). Attributable to its mission and for the reason that its members asserted that they were Black without any “euphemisms”, the existence of TEN was inherently a political one. An important impetus for its existence was the inability of its founders to find plays written by Blacks, or about Blacks, which did not conform to the sexual or submissive stereotyping that were prevalent at the time. For this reason, the members of TEN and, in particular, Abdias Nascimento who was one of the key founders, started writing plays– political, insightful, and defiant- about the Afro- Brazilian reality. In this bid to showcase Black oppression through art, and during a period where the “racial democracy” myth was still ardently pursued, this theatre group encountered many obstacles. It is imperative to note that whereas TEN was a theatre group, its objectives were not merely artistic as its members expressed and acted upon their belief in education as fundamental to the process of “freeing the masses of Black people”, and in bringing about the social conditions for their “life in freedom” (Nascimento 2007: 172). Accordingly, TEN created alternative educational programs to organize people of colour socially

and culturally (Nascimento 2007:165; Hanchard 1994:107) and these workshops were attended by a diversity of Black workers, public servants and even *favelados*<sup>47</sup> who would gather at night after a full day at work to learn to read and write (Nascimento 2007: 172).

The early years of the re-Africanization of Bahia also witnessed the initiation of educational projects by two groups who had initially begun as *blocos Afros* - explicitly Afro-Brazilian themed *carnaval* groups. Of the two *blocos* that caused "revolutions" in the Salvador *carnaval* during the early years of the re-Africanizing project, the pioneer and the most explicitly Afrocentric is *Ile Aiye*. *Ile Aiye*, a phrase which means "house of life" in the *Yoruba* language of Nigeria, although most widely recognized as a *bloco Afro*, also organizes community educational and cultural advocacy initiatives. This group emerged in the 'renaissance of Black musical activity' which was provoked by the blossoming of the *movimento negro* in the 1970s and 1980s Salvador. *Ile*, as it is more colloquially known, was founded in 1974 in the neighbourhood of *Curuzu* which is part of the working class Black suburb of *Liberdade*, one of the largest residential areas in Salvador and, with its six hundred thousand inhabitants, the suburb with the largest Black population in Brazil (Crook, 2009). *Ile* was the first *bloco Afro* in Salvador and was formed above all for "dark skinned Blacks," an intentional exclusivity that was a response to the exclusionary practices of the other predominantly White carnival *blocos* (Ojo – Ade 1999:188; Crook 2009:52). *Ile* has now been institutionalized into the city's landscape by virtue of the educational and cultural projects it offers, and its work to, above all, improve the self-esteem and critical consciousness of Afro-Brazilians. These pedagogic initiatives are employed in its after school programs, in the educational materials it produces and in the Black Consciousness training which it offers through the *Projeto de Extensao Pedagogico Do Ile Aiye* (The *Ile Aiye*

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<sup>47</sup> *Favelados* are people who come from *favelas*.

Supplementary Education Project); training in Black history and culture which is offered to educators who are employed within the public school system. In spite of its tremendous mobilization[s] in the sphere of education, this group has made its most dramatic impact in the area of music. Nonetheless, their sound which is embodied action of rhythm and prose is also used as a medium for enhancing critical pedagogy (Crook, 2009; *Ile Aiye* 2010). In their own words they assert that:

The objective is to preserve, value and expand Afro-Brazilian culture and as part of this goal, since it was founded, *Ile Aiye* gives homage to the countries, nations and African cultures and the Black Brazilian revolts that contributed strongly to the process of strengthening the ethnic identity and self esteem of Black Brazilians, making popular African history and linking it with Afro-Brazilian history that constructs the same history, a history of Negritude. (Mission statement, *Ile Aiye* (2010).<sup>48</sup>

The holistic and ground breaking campaigns which groups such as *Ile Aiye* have employed throughout the years, paved the way for organizations such as the Steve Biko Cultural Institute (ICSB). The ICSB is a youth targeted educational institution that as its main objective assists young Black students in Salvador to access post secondary education in order that they may rupture hegemonic racism, attain social mobility and above all procure for the Black community a “more dignified and more equal place in Brazilian society” (Historico ICSB 2010). Aguiar (2006) maintains that the ICSB intends to continue the work of the Afro-Brazilian rebellions that preceded it and, akin to the Revolt of the *Males*, proposes to use faith, reading and writing to conquer their place as subjects and as citizens (Aguiar 2006:92).

Similar to the young Afro- Brazilian girl whom De Jesus (1962) speaks about, many of the Black students in Salvador – who despite attending school for an extended period – are,

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<sup>48</sup> My translation.

nevertheless, still not on par with their White colleagues, and as a result, are gravely unprepared for the *vestibular* exams which determine who gains entry into both national and private universities. In addition, Silva and Hasenbalg (1999) indicate that Blacks in Brazil, in comparison to their White colleagues, have less access to school, a greater drop-out rate and less employment possibilities in the future. Recognizing the dire situation that impedes a majority of Black youth from continuing on into post secondary education, the ICSB was founded by a collective of educators, students and diverse professionals who cumulatively sought to strengthen the front against racial discrimination (Aguiar, 2006:20). The ICSB offered its first lessons on the 31<sup>st</sup> of July 1992 with the goal to assist as many Blacks as possible from the *periferia* – marginalized and low income neighbourhoods far from the city center with inadequate and inherently racist educational facilities - get into post secondary institutions. While it was the first institution of its kind in Brazil, it is now joined by roughly 1500 other Afro-Brazilian *pre-vestibular* organizations in Brazil. The name Steve Biko is given as an homage to the lawyer and South African intellectual who was assassinated by the apartheid government on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September, 1978. This reverence is intended to provoke an Afro-Brazilian reflection with the South African society on Black Consciousness, and its power to bring about social transformation (Aguiar 2006:20).

Addressing the absence of the Black community in spaces of power, and in particular universities, was deemed crucial by the founders of the ICSB. This was considered salient for the reason that “the university is a space of power that needed and needs the competition of qualified African descendants as a strategy for the promotion of human rights and of the acquirement of citizenship for the Black population” (Aguiar 2006:11, 22). While most of the classes at this

institution have a *vestibular* focus, a compulsory course on Black Consciousness and citizenship (CCN- *Cidadania e Consciencia Negra*) is also offered. In contrast to the other classes where Negritude is an underlying theme, in CCN, Black Consciousness is the principal subject matter and, in this regard, it is the class that most explicitly targets the self-esteem of the youth (Aguiar 2006:16). This Negritude is conveyed through the dialogical discussion of African and Afro-Brazilian history and this is interfaced with the present history of Blackness in Brazil, and in particular, Salvador. Within these discourses the students are encouraged to, above all, situate themselves as the locus of “action and reaction,” to take all the depreciatory connotations of Africa and invert them, incorporating these renewed references and signifiers of Blackness into their increased claims for citizenship, exigencies that are intended to result from an augmented self-esteem (Aguiar 2006: 129). The ICSB has also throughout the years offered classes on science and technology and professionalism, the latter subject targeted towards Blacks who had recently graduated from university and were preparing to enter the job market.

The *Escola Municipal de Novo Marotinho* (EMNM) is an municipal funded elementary school in the Salvador neighbourhood of *Sete de Abril*, and was founded on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April in 1987 on the grounds of the old *Escola de Sete de Abril*. While the structures of the institution are small, it still counts on 35 employees to offer management, pedagogical and other diverse services to the students who attend classes throughout the day. Those tasked with managing the school are elected every three years by the employees at the school, many of whom come from the surrounding community (Santana 2010)

While it offers classes in the evening to adults, for the most part, the school has only four grades - grades one to four, and most of the students come from the informal settlement called

*Marotinho*, which is in the neighbourhood of *Sao Caetano*.<sup>49</sup> While it is similar to many schools in the *periferia*, EMNM is nationally recognized as it was the first public school in Brazil to receive a computer connected to the internet from the Ministry of Education and Culture (EMNM 2011). By virtue of its association with the public school system, the curriculum of this school has not historically been anchored in a Black resistance. Nonetheless, even before 2003 when the law 10.639/03, which legislated the teaching of Afro-Brazilian history in schools, was established in Brazil, the school, which has art and culture as its main “axis,” had been increasingly turning resources towards a Black anti-racism advocacy. The *Projeto de Extensao Pedagogica Do Ile Aiye* (The Ile Aiye Supplementary Education Project), held in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2000 and, the project *Respeito Ja* (Respect Already) were key entry points for entrenching an Afrocentricity in the school’s curriculum (EMNM 2011). These anti-racism initiatives employed in conjunction with the local community were implemented not solely in the classroom, but additionally through theatre, dance and music which are the EMNM’s key areas of specialization (EMNM 2011). Above all, these Africalogical discourses are dialogical attempts to improve the self-esteem of those marginalized by the “creation” narratives about Brazil, and allow for its victims to see themselves as subjects in the nation’s history. More generally, these campaigns work to “reduce prejudice and existing stereotypes in relation to Blacks, as well as develop a respect of difference in the school environment” (EMNM 2011). These Afrocentric initiatives were complemented and developed further with the introduction of the legislation 10639/03, which was later substituted by the law 11.645/2008 that adds the teaching of Indigenous knowledge and culture into the initial legislation. This “ethnicization”, “respect for your origins and ancestors” and the “promotion of

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<sup>49</sup> *Sao Caetano* is the fourth largest sub district in Salvador and has over 450, 000 inhabitants.

equal rights” are incorporated into conventional disciplines such as Mathematics, Portuguese Language, History, Geography and other arts and sciences (Santana 2010: 5).

These ongoing anti-racism projects are complemented by the national and state Afro-Brazilian focused events during the *Semana de Negra Consciencia* – Black Consciousness week, which is held in what is informally called *Novembro Negro* – Black November (Santana 2010). While Black Consciousness in Salvador is a theme that is increasingly incorporated in the day-to-day life of the city, these celebrations of Blackness are more concentrated in November and begun initially as a commemoration of the date of *Zumbi dos Palmares*<sup>50</sup>’s death, an event which has been established as a national holiday for the last forty years. Throughout the years, these celebrations have increased and now consist of a week of activities which usually begin on the 15<sup>th</sup> of November and culminate on the 20<sup>th</sup> of the same month, the day of *Zumbi*’s death. Recent trends have witnessed not only a week of activities, but a whole month of commemoration in November, hence its informal, yet intentional, acknowledgment as *Novembro Negro*.

Notwithstanding the celebrations of Negritude in November and the ongoing anti-racism initiatives, it is mostly the efforts of particular educators at the EMNM - educators whose narratives are documented in the following chapter – who are truly practicing and promoting a pedagogy for liberation. Aguiar (2006) argues that if “you know how to read and write many doors can be opened and many myths broken, allowing that the future generations of Afro descendants will have situations different than those that were lived by ones ancestors” (Aguiar, 2006:94). The work of the community educators in both these latter institutions illustrates just

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<sup>50</sup> *Zumbi dos Palmares* 1645-1695, was the leader of the most famous *Quilombo* - maroon community in Brazil called *Palmares*. This community existed for over a hundred years, despite the incessant state attacks against it. It has become a symbol of Afro-Brazilian resistance and pride.

how important an emancipatory education is in bringing about transformation. It is to the lived experiences of these community educators which are shaped by the Black Consciousness movement in Salvador- in all its limits and liberations-, that we now turn in order to discern the possibilities and problems inherent in the education for liberation that they strive to offer.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **“Learning to be Black”**

The preceding chapters have contextualised the Afro- Brazilian situation in Brazil, and above all sought to highlight the resistance, in particular pedagogic resistances, to this normalized racism. These aforementioned contestations borrow and are inspired by earlier Black liberatory initiatives in Brazil such as the Revolt of the *Males* (1835) and the educational initiatives of the Black Experimental Theatre (TEN) in the late 1940s. I have also briefly discussed what the most recent manifestations of this emancipatory praxis look like in Salvador da Bahia by using the two examples of the Steve Biko Cultural Institute (ICSB) and the *Escola Municipal de Novo Marotinho* (EMNM), which are the case studies for this thesis. While this chapter extends the discussion on the activities of these two institutions, its key intention is to examine the experiences of four educators who are engaged within the aforementioned organizations, primarily as teachers but also as students. The narratives of their lives which they use to situate their role as educators within their community [ies] are set against the backdrop of the re-Africanization project, which is part of the specific history of Africa in Brazil. These accounts were garnered while I conducted participant- observation with these teachers as they perambulated around their homes, places of work and recreation. As a result, both the processes of recounting and recording their life narratives were extremely corporeal, as the body - the form that most evinces the degenerative mark established in the enslavement process –was central to these productions. While recollecting the past, these educators emphasized histories which they believe were delimited by their bodies, and also imagined their bodies as sites of all knowledge. In addition, these bodies were used to interrogate and express the past and are also central to both

their personal and social investigations and performances of the present Africanity/ies while in these racially laden spaces.

These personal trajectories of Blackness in Salvador are vital to this research as they elucidate the changes which have resulted more generally from the re-Africanization process that began in the 1970s, but above all from the teaching of a Black Consciousness pedagogy in Salvador. This teaching of Negritude, which has been integrated into the curriculum of both formal and informal institutions, not only came ready to decolonize the old but also, above all, to construct a new Black subject.

The central argument in this thesis is that the Africa- centered educational projects in Salvador which are anchored in a Black Consciousness pedagogy, are creating more social, academic and economic possibilities for Black youth in Salvador, compared to those that were available to the generations that preceded them. Furthermore, this rethinking of Blackness in Bahia, this intentional reassertion into the Brazilian landscape as an active Black subject - in all its meanings and motivations - is the key objective of the Afrocentric educational projects, and is bringing about new Africanity/ies in Salvador da Bahia. The intended goal of these educational initiatives is not just to fill the university or curriculum with young Afro-Brazilians, but rather to construct a new Black person who will reclaim his/her citizenship and challenge the structures that enable racism and which allow for the “absent presence” (Brown 2007) of Black people in Brazil.

The long enduring “internalization or rather epidermalization of inferiority” requires a much more “total comprehension” (Appiah 2000 cited in introduction to Fanon 2008 [1952]: xv).

Essentially, what is required is an anti-racism mobilization on both a subjective and an objective level. It is for this reason that holistic redress has been a key objective of the re-Africanization project, and, therefore an analysis of the recent pedagogic anti-racism mobilizations in Salvador necessitates an examination of the changes – if any - of Africanity in this location. What has Africa become in Salvador da Bahia since the 1970s? How, if at all, has the landscape become more conducive to accepting her manifestations in this city? Paraphrasing Cesaire (1939), we can ask, “will the source of poetry silence itself? Or indeed will the great Black river, despite all, color the sea into which it flows”? (Cesaire 1939, as quoted in Fanon 2008:113). In order to discern whether indeed this surging Black river shall and is altering the sea, it is necessary to look at the embodied poesis which this great Black river has engendered and is engendering in Bahia.

As it is people who make institutions, the life experiences of some of the community educators who are intricately part of the two aforementioned organizations follows shortly and will demonstrate more clearly the transformations which they are bringing about as part of their work - a vital component of this “Black river”- while in these educational spaces; efforts whose implications inevitably reach beyond the frontiers of these institutions and their communities. Moreover, their own conception of their lifeworlds – intersecting, ruptured and discordant - will be evidence for the holistic changes that Black Consciousness pedagogy permits for at both the subjective and objective level in this location. They will essentially illustrate that “learning to be Black”, while problematized as performative and essentialist (Gilroy 1993; Sansone 2003; Pinho 2010), should also be considered a challenge to the coloniality of power and knowledge that has framed Black existence in Brazil for the last five centuries.

Prior to presenting the narratives of these community educators, I begin this chapter by discussing further the coloniality of education in Brazil in order to contextualize the struggles that the educators in question encounter and contest in their day to day lives. This is followed by the brief life history accounts of three community educators at the ICSB and a reintroduction to the objectives of this institute precedes these life histories. Subsequent to this is a section on the EMNM and this segment begins with a summary of its Afrocentric initiatives. Thereafter, I provide the life history of the educator at this school who is most active in ensuring the implementation of federal law 10.639/03. In conclusion, I summarize the key points presented in these personal narratives and relate these to the key themes that were discussed in the preceding chapters.

### Colonial Epistemologies

“The enemy is also the elementary school teacher.” (Fanon 2008[1952]:18)

Da Costa (2010) argues that “colonial epistemologies” in Brazil similar to other “discovered” locations, organized the production of knowledge about other cultures. As a consequence, “aggressive nationalisms” such as those promoted by the Getulio Vargas<sup>51</sup> regime, preached inclusivity, but, being grounded in a “racial democracy” ideology, the promotion of such nationalisms did more to exclude than include Blacks. As a result, an “other” identity, such as an Indigenous or Black persona, which did not correspond to the national ideal, was fetishized and this difference was “state managed”, thereby negating the substantive content of the Brazilian population (Da Costa, 2010). Emphasizing this, the author notes that “in other words, notions of racial mixture appropriated Blackness to produce the ideal mixed race Brazilian

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<sup>51</sup> Getulio Vargas was president of Brazil from 1930 to 1945 and then from 1951 to 1954.

subject (the *mestiço*). Yet coloniality continued to articulate Blackness as a signifier of inferiority in the Brazilian imagination” (Da Costa, 2010: 203). As a result, Black children would recite poems similar to their colleagues in the Antilles who in verse would honour “our ancestors the Gauls” (Fanon 2008 [1952]:126). It is inevitable therefore, that one would question whether the “inclusive” nationalism that persists can actually be seen as overcoming racism in Brazil, and whether it actually conveys the demise of the Whitening ideal which underscored nation building efforts. In contrast, the lived experiences of Blacks in Brazil belie the assertions of “inclusivity” which are central to these nationalist tropes. As Da Costa (2010) argues:

Practice shows us that racist thought, even when it talks about integration, about the acceptance of diversity, of accepting those who are different, in most cases colludes to eliminate those who are different, to exterminate Black as Black and accept them as individuals whose difference appears merely in the color of this skin or in his colourful clothing. (Da Costa 2010:199)

Within the context of the school system, this exclusionary inclusion was manifested in the educational texts as well as in the everyday spaces of interaction, allowing that Afro descendants would see themselves as the *other*. This conceptualization of the self as different affected a self -esteem “that both stems from and reinforces dominant aesthetic, cultural and civilizational values in society.” As Black students were not accommodated within the dominant category within these spaces, the adherence to the exclusionary ideology bolstered everyday racism in the structure and transmission of knowledge, “reproducing coloniality through curriculum and classroom”(Da Costa 2010- 204 – 206). Fanon, cognizant of the role of the classroom in producing coloniality, argued that in colonized lands the “enemy” can also be “the elementary school teacher” (Fanon 2008 [1952]:18). The following extract develops this idea further while also demonstrating the imperative that education, as long as it is an indispensable

weapon of domination, be used as a means for racial redress. Illustrating the violence which is inherent in “colonial” education, Fanon (2000) stated:

Strictly speaking, nursery rhymes are subject to the same criticism. It is already clear that we would like nothing better than to create magazines and songs specially designed for Black children, and, to go to an extreme, special history books, at least up to the end of elementary school, because, until there is proof to the contrary, we believe that if there is a traumatism it occurs here. (Fanon: 2000 [1952]:127)

Fanon’s (2008 [1952]) appeal for an education which acknowledges the epistemic violences which it has institutionalized, has been the clarion call of many Black interest groups, not just in the French Martinique, but also in the US (see Asante 2007) and in Brazil (see Nascimento 2004). The narratives that follow shortly will confirm and reiterate these exigencies for a decolonial education system; for academic spaces which are not just rhetorically, but truly representative. This envisioned system will enable a pedagogy that incorporates and values Afro-Brazilian culture as a site of knowledge production, and which recognizes the importance of the embodied nature of knowledge in this location. Furthermore, the “development of a political philosophy for decolonization that starts with an account of the psychological harm that colonialism had produced” (Appiah 2000: viii in Introduction to Fanon 2008[1952]) should be at the center of any education for liberation. Concurring with this, Fanon (2008[1952]) asserts that any attempts at redress and redemption must “touch with our finger [s] all the wounds that score out Black livery” (Fanon 2008[1952]:164). It is in a bid to bring about a “collective catharsis” which would result from such comprehensive interrogation of these wounds, to redress not just the absences in educational material, but the entire absence of Black Brazil from the national ‘creation myth’ that colonial scholarly structures represent, that the following educators dedicate their lives.

### “Maroon Teachers”

#### The “Bikudos”<sup>52</sup>

The Black Consciousness incorporated in ICSB initiatives, while aiming to assist in the “reconstruction of an ethnic identity, self esteem, and citizenship of Afro- Brazilians” (Santiago 2005:8) overwhelmingly, in all of its diverse projects, works to combat poverty, state violence and to encourage activism and leadership amongst Black youth from the marginalized neighbourhoods of Salvador. Underlying these activities is the reaffirmation that to be Black in Brazil is different than what has been propagated to Afro descendants, and rather, in the ideology that circulates within this institution, it is to be “connected to a continent that was the birth place of humanity, that had fundamental importance in the civilization process of our country, it is to be the inheritor of a cultural heritage of knowledge, of resistance and of a very positive history for humanity. Furthermore, “it is to have pride in this history and in the possibility of the construction of another future for Brazil” (Santiago 2005: 8).

As can be discerned, the projects which form part of the mandate of the ICSB demonstrate that it envisions itself as more than just a simple *pre-vestibular* institution. The classes that are offered in preparation for the university entrance exam have been accompanied through the years by a diversity of important courses. These include a discipline in science and technology (*OGUNTEC*), Afrocentric pedagogy training for elementary and high school teachers, professionalism programs for students who are entering the job market (*Projeto Biko*) and a class on Black Consciousness and Citizenship ( *Cidadania e Consciencia Negra - CCN*), which primarily seeks to “elevate the self esteem of ICSB students” (Aguiar 2006:16). Implicit

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<sup>52</sup> *Bikudos* in this context means “Biko Youth” who follow the philosophies of Steve Biko. It is also a term that the ICSB uses to refer to those who form part of its teacher and student community.

in the objectives of these interconnected projects is recognizing that you are Black and the need to recuperate this situated Black identity, both collectively and individually, which has been destroyed by racism (Aguiar 2006:17).

The eight founders of the ICSB, all members of various *movimento negro* organizations, lived uncharacteristic academic experiences in comparison to their peers because they had succeeded in rupturing the “cycle of exclusion” that prevents Blacks from entering university (Aguiar 2006:107). Motivated by the absence of Afro-descendants in post secondary institutions, they worked diligently so that they and other Afro-Brazilians could be protagonists of their own lives. At the time that they started the ICSB in 1992, these founders were students as well as professionals in fields such as teaching, engineering and finance (Aguiar 2006). Since then, they have worked and keep working to offer these academic services so that a university experience would no longer be anomalous in their communities. As a result, they continue to engender more Afro-Brazilian students, teachers and professionals in this racially laden terrain. In their first year of operations, the ICSB trained thirty students and only fourteen passed their *vestibular* exam that gained them entrance into university, likely the first ones in their family to have this opportunity. Eight years later in the year 2000, the institution was catering to over six times the number of students, many of whom would go on to university and, due to the efforts of this institute, were slowly changing the profile of post secondary institutions in Salvador (Aguiar 2005:110). The number of students being trained in such a limited space<sup>53</sup> is impressive, and illustrates the desire for many Black youths to access the education which until recently was

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<sup>53</sup> The ICSB officially occupies only the top floor of an old colonial building in the *Pelourinho/Santo Antonio* neighborhood of Salvador da Bahia. As the number of students and projects increase, the ICSB uses the spaces of other Afro-Brazilian focused institutions that are situated close by.

scarcely an option open to them. Nevertheless, given the barriers that many of these students face, simply enrolling in the program and finishing this year of conscientization can be seen a victory in itself.

What follows are narratives that convey this trajectory of teaching and learning for liberation that has been made increasingly salient in the re-Africanizing landscape of the last forty years. It is important to note that all of these accounts were first narrated in Portuguese and shortly thereafter, I translated them into English. Furthermore, some of these brief life histories were garnered at different times and in varying interview circumstances. Nevertheless, they have been placed together here in order to provide a fuller picture of what the interviewee was conveying.<sup>54</sup> In addition, while not entirely encapsulated by the ensuing narratives, it is important to recognize that there are many commonalities in the sojourns of many Black youth who have engaged with the Black Consciousness pedagogy since the 1970s. The first narrative to be provided is that by co-founder and educator at ICSB, Marcio. His account is placed first in sequence as he has been organizing with the ICSB since its inception in 1992. His personal journey is recounted in a talk titled “On Race, Racism and Prejudice” that he gave to a group of teachers from a *Quilombola*<sup>55</sup> community on the Ilha de Mare<sup>56</sup> on December 29<sup>th</sup> 2010.<sup>57</sup> An account by Maria, community educator at the ICSB and at other formal and informal educational institutions, follows Marcio’s narrative. The final life history is by Valdimir, a former student

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<sup>54</sup> The questions that offered a “structure” to this interview process are provided in Appendix one.

<sup>55</sup> *Quilombo* was the name given to maroon communities in Brazil, therefore a *Quilombola* community is composed of descendants of, and is usually at the same site of, an original *Quilombo*.

<sup>56</sup> *Ilha de Mare* is an island about twenty minutes of the coast of the Bay of all Saints in Salvador.

<sup>57</sup> Marcio’s public lecture that is included here has been translated from the aforementioned talk that he gave to the teachers from Ilha de Mare. In the time I was in Salvador for fieldwork, I was never able to get an individual interview from Marcio as he was always busy and /or traveling. However, as he was aware of the themes I was interested in, he invited me to this talk where he would dwell on some of these themes and how they were relevant – if at all – in his life.

and now turned educator and *militante negro* at the ICSB. It is my belief that his story, by virtue of his age and experiences, is a good example of ICSB's success in Salvador. At the same time, his narrative aptly conveys the challenges and contradictions that this generation of youth in this location face, as they encounter and seek to debate with the burgeoning Black Consciousness movement in this city. These accounts are followed by a short summary of the main themes within them. A more extensive discussion of all the life stories will follow the narrative of Kyesi, the educator at the *Escola Municipal de Novo Marotinho*.

### Marcio

Marcio is an economist by trade and works for the municipality of Bahia. He is forty-seven years of age and has been involved with the *movimento negro* for over thirty years. He is probably the most renowned of the eight co-founders of the ICSB, is currently its Executive Director, and has a public profile. He is recognized nationally for his Black Consciousness activities, work which he says is motivated by the knowledge that "racism does not go on holiday." This narrative was recorded on December 29<sup>th</sup> 2010.

In the *movimento negro* we are few doing the work of many. The *movimento negro* has been going on for over thirty years but even before this there were always expressions against this racial democracy myth. I am the fruit of the *movimento negro* and like some of my generation of Blacks in Salvador, I joined when I was sixteen or seventeen years old and I am now forty seven. Salvador is a Black city and full of Black culture but Blacks had no space in it. But groups like *Ile Aiye* which have a trajectory of resistance, made that space. People still ask, "Why do we need to discuss race, racism or

discrimination?" There is still this ignorance in Salvador. People talk about prejudice like it is racism but it is not. Racism goes over and above prejudice because it structures everything. These Whites here live with the Black population but at the same time they think that they [Blacks] are inferior. And they say that because racism needs race, but[if] races don't exist then there is no racism. They say this but we know there is racism even without biological races. Because of this, we suffer from an innate inferiority. It is interesting how Black people only turn *negro* when they are outside of Africa, while White people will always be Europeans, White. This is a characteristic of racism, and shows the multifaceted nature of racism when we are not even allowed to be Africans outside of Africa. There are different types of racism. You have racism that came and integrated itself and made Blacks subordinate like in Brazil and Cuba, and then you have racism that "disappeared" Black people like in Argentina. The whole of America asked "what will we do with all of this Black mass?" Even in the Haiti that chased away Napoleon there is still racism. In America there were many oppressive measures such as Jim Crow, but with Jim Crow the Black person had a gun pointing to their head and so they knew who their enemy was. Here in Brazil, the weapon is not on your head and so you can wake up and die and wake up again and still think you are not discriminated against. Here in Bahia, to deal with the race "problem," the state tried to get [European] immigrants but it didn't work so they had to face up to the Black mass that was present. Because of this they had to invent ways to keep them down and one way to do this is through poverty. Racism still continues after "abolition" because, when slavery ended, did Black people stop being Black and White people stop being White? I always ask

myself, where would this country, where would Bahia and even Salvador be if everyone had the same opportunities?

There is still racism in the papers. They used to disguise it by talking about the *negrissia*<sup>58</sup> but now they use euphemisms and instead they say the “*populacia*”<sup>59</sup> or “*o povao*.<sup>60</sup>” They also still tell us things such as “you may be Black but your heart is White.” They say things are getting better and they always point to one politician Edvaldo Brito<sup>61</sup> – but he has been the only one in the state government for almost forty years! How much longer can they keep pointing at him saying that there is change? It just shows that in Salvador there are many anomalies because in this city the Blacks are not in the traditional places of powers. There is still a *Branquitude*<sup>62</sup> even if everywhere there is talk about how the “Black is so beautiful.” Do they remember that until the 1960s *Candomble* houses needed a licence from the police? And that the media used to show pictures of “primitive” Blacks so as to separate Black people here from Africans? And then what came as resistance to all of this is now also becoming co-opted. The work of *Ile Aiye* of *Olodum*... some of it is now owned by White people, it all becomes just that the “Black is beautiful.”

In 1972 a discussion was started about the fact that there were no Black people in the university. The city was built by enslaved peoples, but they were nowhere in these places of power. I was alive during these debates and have been part of the discussion since.

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<sup>58</sup> I could not find a direct translation for the word *negrissia*, but my inference is that it is a Greek derived word that refers to a place of Blackness.

<sup>59</sup> My translation is that *populacia* means the “populace” in English.

<sup>60</sup> *Povao* means the “masses.”

<sup>61</sup> Edvaldo Brito is one of the few Black senators of the state of Bahia, and first came into power in the early 1970’s.

<sup>62</sup> I translate *Branquitude* to mean a hegemonic White power.

There have been advancements, certainly. For example, after one hundred years of abolition, the government founded the *Fundacao Palmares*<sup>63</sup>. This is because of the advocacy of the *movimento negro* who had been commemorating in various ways, a hundred years without abolition. Nevertheless, there are still people who deny this, who deny the importance of our work. One example is a book called “We are not racists” written by a journalist in Sao Paulo. These are the books that were written about the *movimento negro*, about how we should stop trying to deny the mixed character of our nation. Now it is us who are racist, can you imagine this? We are the racists even though we are just defending our rights. At this time in Salvador there are over three hundred *movimento negro* organizations because Black people want education, land and public resources. When Black organizations were mostly cultural organizations, it was fine but now when we move to the political sphere there are problems.

There are contradictions though in our knowledge. People talk about Africa but there are limits to these discussions. The *blocos Afros* talked about Kenya and Jomo Kenyatta<sup>64</sup> and at the same time they have been saying that I’m Black and I’m beautiful, but that’s all. There are limits. People need to sit down and read. Now we are dealing with two types of racism old and new. It is a complex existence that people are living. When slavery ended people didn’t stop being Black and so the things that made them enslaved continued. We need to study because it is a political act. In my days you had to study

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<sup>63</sup>The *Fundacao Cultural Palmares* – The Palmares Cultural Foundation is a governmental organization that was founded in 1988 to commemorate one hundred years of abolition. Its mission is to promote Afro-Brazilian rights and culture. One of its key roles has been documenting *Quilombola* communities since descendants of these maroon settlements are able, if recognized as legitimate *Quilombola* communities, to have their land protected by the state from any illegal incursions.

<sup>64</sup>Jomo Kenyatta was the first post independence president of Kenya

but you also had to hide your intelligence for fear of being thought of as not knowing your place. Being Black was burden, you were Black but you also had to be intelligent. Studying has to be the focus but you can't forget this: you still have to remember to be better collectively. Affirmative action is important because do you really think the White is going to leave their place willingly? And you must remember you are what you believe and imagine, do not ever forget this. They see now that the “problem” is that Black people are coming together collectively, despite what was done to contain them.

It is complex [this life in Brazil] the racial democracy ideology manifested itself in various ways, inside and outside us. The situation is complex really, there still exists even, here in Bahia, a “pigmentocracy” and Whiteness means more here than for example in Sao Paulo. We can see that racism is not efficient if it just remains in the objective, to really have an effect it has to be present in ones subjectivity. This is why we must address it.

This lecture was delivered to a group of educators, many of whom had passed through the ICSB and in this process, became part of a network of educators who sought to entrench Africalogical discourses both at work and in their communities. History for them as *quilombolas*, and it took a while before they would call themselves *quilombolas*<sup>65</sup>, contained possibilities, as it is through the collective memory of their “maroon” past that they could ensure their safe guarding of their land. They were in this sense, real maroon teachers. While the lecture was from time to time interrupted by the queries and personal testimonies of racism from these

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<sup>65</sup> Seu Joao, personal communication. December 29<sup>th</sup> 2010. Seu Joao was the eldest educator from *Ilha de Mare* at this lecture.

educators, for the most part Marcio, who is seen as a knowledgeable “mentor”, held “court.” Marcio’s personal and collective experiences in the *movimento negro* allowed him to be knowledgeable about the hollow promises of Brazil’s ‘racial democracy.’ Furthermore, as a ‘conscious’ Black person who attained university education and a job in the government while maintaining an explicitly Black identity, similar to Maria whose story follows below, he remains an important symbol and reference in this increasingly Africanizing Bahia.

### Maria

Maria is one of the most renowned Black Consciousness educators in the city. She is forty-nine years old and has been an educator in the city for over thirty years but only began teaching at the ICSB just over eight years ago. She is also an artist, poet, actress and activist in the *movimento negro*. The life story below is from an interview that was conducted on January 5<sup>th</sup> 2011 in the bar *Cruz do Pascoal* in *Santo Antonio*, a neighbourhood that borders the historical centre of *Pelourinho*.

I began to love myself. I began to love my big forehead that people used to call a lamp or an “airport for a mosquito” when I started getting an education that was really about us, a better education. That said, it is important to recognize that we still have a perverse education and in it there is no recognition of the Black as a *Black*. Back then, and maybe still now I had the nostrils that a “cow had stepped on” and also with these big nostrils I was the “oxygen thief.” All of these insults for looking like a Black. But now after thirty years learning more and being in the *movimento negro*, I love myself.

I am forty-nine years old and I am a grandmother. I was born in Salvador, right here in this city, in the neighbourhood of *Liberdade*. Do you know *Liberdade*? *Liberdade* is a very big and very Black neighbourhood. Growing up, I was very far from Negritude, very far. I grew up in an evangelical family, which is against any Black religion, and in their religion the Black is a symbol of the devil, and everyone important is a man. It is my mother's influence this religion and unfortunately she still sticks to it very strongly. I have two siblings, one sister and one brother. They do not have the same consciousness that I do, but we still get along fine. I did a degree in Art and Education and then I did a course in Psychoanalysis. After this, I also dabbled in theatre and still love acting. I have a master's degree in life, that's right, contemporary Black life, because I was born Black in Brazil, and I have taught for about thirty years! I am lucky because I have always had teaching contracts, but in addition to this work I also give lectures and also act as an MC for various events. I am good at doing that [MC work] because I put humour and experience into it. Also I really believe in education channelled through humour and theatre, because in my experience, it works. I also write and recite poems and in this too I add humour because humour is important. This informality is important to "distract", for to make fun is really important when teaching. I teach in three main places. First, I teach for the state, for a project called "Education in the Field" which is a televised class for people who live far away from urban centers and do not have access to schools. I give these classes in real time and have about 15,000 students in this way. Imagine, I have [as students] Indigenous peoples, Indigenous/Blacks, *Quilombolas*, Whites, *Ribeirinhos*<sup>66</sup>, and I do all of this teaching in my fine African clothes.

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<sup>66</sup> *Ribeirinhos* is the name given to the mixed Indigenous people who live along the Amazon river.

I have had the privilege of participating in this struggle. Like our ancestors, a lot of struggle we have gone through, a lot, and we come now, this new generation, looking for new ways to continue this struggle. As part of these battles I have been an educator for ten years with *Ile Aiye*, and we started all of this before the law [referring to the federal law 10.639/03] made it that all schools are obliged to teach African and Afro-Brazilian history. I have also worked for eight years with Steve Biko [the ICSB], and when the law came we were already teaching Blacks and teaching people how to teach Blacks.

There are many of my students in politics now, and also in many other important positions, and they say openly that I was the first person they ever heard refer to themselves as a Black without any hesitation. When we teach at Biko or *Ile Aiye*, we learn by doing. There was no course to get us where we are going because we were doing everything because of necessity, these were the pioneer projects. Look at us now, I am an artist and Edivaldo<sup>67</sup> is an engineer but we always search inside ourselves, borrow from our own different spaces in order to find strategies that will help us teach. We can do this because we have the same goals. Yes, I have heard about the re-Africanization of Bahia, but for me I ask why do they add a “re” in the front of this word? For me Bahia was and is always full of ancestrality, of Africa. Whether it was done consciously or unconsciously it was here because our ancestors will not allow for us to lose this. And we must always remember to use the strategies that our ancestors have given us.

Have there been any changes? There have been, but in my view I think we should not always be looking at the masses. It's also important that we look at and reach individuals,

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<sup>67</sup> Edivaldo is a key figure in the Salvador *movimento negro* and is one of the original co-founders of the ICSB.

because we have worked hard to change individuals. This has been tough community action and politics, however, we must always remember that the system is powerful and does not want to see changes and so we must work harder. Now the census says we are more Blacks! Really, look at the results of our work, being Black became the fashion [laughs]! The teaching of Africa will change things but the law does not work alone. But ten Maria's, ten Maria's will change things. Slowly, but it will change things. Still, nevertheless, the image of Africa is very negative. *Rede Globo*<sup>68</sup> insists on showing the Africa of hunger, ugly people, and animals and until a little while ago businessmen had advertisements about Blacks being cannibals. That is only two years ago! They also had a commercial about our nappy hair being used to wash dishes! Can you imagine this?

The racism in our Brazilian education is not always as explicit as it is on the TV, but it is there between the lines. Because of this we need to be creating conscious students who can read between these lines. We need to not act inferior. Our past is Black, but we are educated by Whites, and this is a problem. My family and my mother do not understand my hair,<sup>69</sup> at least now they leave me alone about it. I have a daughter and she has the same hair as me, and she has seen and she has learned. And so she believes that we are deconstructing in order to recreate ourselves. Maybe in Africa they have lost their essence? Edivaldo told me about how the women in Africa are also straightening their hair and bleaching themselves, but even here we have an essence that is being killed because of all this racism. I was an ugly child, an ugly woman, but I know myself now

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<sup>68</sup> *Rede Globo* is the biggest national TV station in Brazil. It is also considered by many activists and critics to be vital in propagating the racial democracy ideology replete with all the exclusions and silences.

<sup>69</sup> Maria has natural hair which are in dread locks.

thanks to the work of the *movimento negro*. And in my work as a teacher I also give lessons to Afro- Brazilian women who live in many of the distant and poor neighborhoods. Many of these women are semi- literate and come from very far to attend my classes. I teach them literacy but also how to love themselves and their communities. They feel more and more of value, and when they leave you can see the changes that are happening to them.

The adults of the 1970s are now the parents of the day and so their children are different like my daughter, they are changed. They no longer really believe they are inferior, but there are still struggles and prejudice and there are still things being said about us that are not so explicit. We are the second generation from the 1970s. The first were people like Vovo, Gilberto Leal and Vanda Machado<sup>70</sup>, and they took us by the hand. Now it is our turn and education is our fight because they have killed us already. In my classes I speak about Africa because it is our ancestry, but I am not a person who says we need to go back to Africa. We are Brazilians, I am not African, I am Brazilian. We have spent a lot of time here, and so here is where we have had our experiences. Most of my students are initially prejudiced against Africa, but from the time they come into my classroom their views change. Still, there are not enough human resources, not enough teachers, which is a shame because it is this kind of teaching that is important and allowed me to discover myself. Truthfully, I am already damaged because it has been a long process. I am damaged by school and education but I am working on it, and we are doing it and we are teaching it to our children. When you teach you need to teach about who we are, and to

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<sup>70</sup> These are all key *movimento negro* figures who were instrumental in the early stages of the re-Africanization of Bahia.

teach this you need to teach about where we have come from. It is in this way that Africa comes into the classroom, and with me in comes a very colourful Africa. But really I have to tell you, people now - people who don't study Africa but also sometimes people who do - they only know Africa and are able to deconstruct what is said about it because of the World Cup in South Africa. Even if the law will say Africa is beautiful, it's not always that people will believe this. But now with teachings and with the World Cup the media has to concede, even if it's just a little bit, and they will say "Africa is beautiful, however...." There is, nonetheless, still the idea that you should not go to Africa because you will get malaria and AIDS. There is little knowledge about Kenya and Africa, and if you wear an *Abada*<sup>71</sup> people will ask you whether it is carnival! I know it is a pity, but I still wear them and I look and feel good! With Negritude, the biggest change is in the individual, but it is also [in] the community. People need to be reaffirming the self, reaffirming this Black label. We are rethinking it yes [this Black Identity] and we need to, but even while we discuss it and rethink it I still use it with my students because to go through what we went through, we need this self- affirmation.

Unfortunately, the *movimento negro* is not so united now. The law has helped but also handicapped us in the process. White professors who teach graduate courses about African culture, there are many of them now. But I ask, before them who taught it? Before the law it was us! We are the course, and still they ask me for my certification before I can teach it. We are the masters but they still ask us for this certification.

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<sup>71</sup> *Abada* is a Afro Brazilian Portuguese word derived from, and has the same meaning as the word *Agbada* which is a traditional *Yoruba* dress from Nigeria.

Nevertheless, a new consciousness is being born. Geronimo<sup>72</sup> sings a song that says “I am Black.” *Ile Aiye*, always speaks about Africa, for example in their song Dakar, [and] *Oludum* brought us Egypt, and in these songs that were sang mostly during *carnaval*, there were people who understood nothing and just danced, but there were others who did understand.

Maria’s story touches on many of the same themes as Marcio, however, she expounds more on the impact of the aesthetic stigmatization of Blackness, and the damage this has engendered, particularly on the self- esteem of Black women. Notwithstanding the vast experience she has garnered while engaged in an Afrocentric pedagogy, Maria concedes that she is still learning, and while in this dialectical process she is problematizing the limits contained within the situated Black Consciousness pedagogy. Similar to Marcio, Maria acknowledges that there is still more reflexivity that needs to be incorporated into these *movimento negro* racialist projects. Nevertheless, she affirms adamantly that because “the adults of the 1970s [initial re-Africanization project] are now the parents of the day... their children are different like my daughter, they are changed.” It is to a life history account of one of these “changed children” that we now turn.

### Valdimir

Valdimir is the youngest of all my interviewees, but is, despite his age, very much engaged with the pedagogic struggles of the *movimento negro*. This interview was conducted on December 19<sup>th</sup> 2010 while seated outside the ICSB, and because it happened to fall on a Sunday, we also partook in the pre-Christmas celebrations of the *Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Rosario*

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<sup>72</sup> Geronimo is a popular Bahian singer who performs every Tuesday in the *Pelourinho*.

*dos Pretos*, the most famous Black Catholic brotherhood in Salvador. Valdimir is twenty- two years old and comes from the neighbourhood of *Uruguaii* which is a poor working class neighbourhood on the outskirts of Salvador. He began as a student at the ICSB and, a short time after his graduation he was included in the pool of teachers who teach the class on Black Consciousness and Citizenship (CCN). Valdimir's account is the longest compared to the two previous narratives, as it was with him that I was able to spend the longest time.

I was born in Salvador in the neighbourhood of *Uruguaii*. I was adopted into my present family as my real mother died when she was giving birth to me and my dad gave me up for adoption when I was seven months old because he was not able to deal with the responsibility. My adopted mother had seven children and was living in a *palafita*<sup>73</sup> when she adopted me. I was her eighth and last child. I grew up in a poor working class neighbourhood and everyone loved each other, unlike today. You could borrow salt, sugar, and visit other neighbours without any problems. But now, people do not have as much community as they did back then. I studied in a community school in my younger years and right now I would like to study Anthropology in university. The community school was started by women who realized the importance of having a school and who knew how important education would be in our lives. It was mainly women who started this school, and they came together, quite a few of them, to realize this goal. These women were feminists and were racially conscious, and because of this, all the classrooms were named after Black women in Brazilian history who fought hard for our

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<sup>73</sup> A *palafita* is a makeshift house that is constructed on wooden stilts above shallow parts of the sea or a river.

liberty. There were women like *Anastasia*<sup>74</sup> and *Dandara*<sup>75</sup> and many others. Because of this I was able to develop a racial consciousness and, unlike my brothers and sisters, I have an affinity for Africa. The rest of my family have no identification with Africa at all. Africa for them is a mosaic of disgrace. It is like this also in my neighbourhood just like it is in my family. Africa is primitive and that is why Blacks discriminate against Blacks. Africa is sold like this. It is a place of poor people, of dirt and hunger.

The *movimento negro* is imprisoned in one type of Africa in order to anchor their identity. They are trapped in the talk of *Orishas*<sup>76</sup> and a romanticized African past because this is what we have here in Brazil. And because we live in a very racist community where all that is good is Europe and Africa is all that is bad, this is why the *movimento negro* still continues with this type of Africa, so that we can rupture these notions of the Black who is the colour of charcoal. The vision of Africa that we have now is the vision of the *movimento negro* who always and still do make Africa visible, even with the problems that are created. It is due to them that we have Africa so visible in Bahia. The law 10.639/03 is a direct victory of the *movimento negro* because before this when people talked about Africa they only talked about slavery, but the *movimento* brought more knowledge about Africa to us and this is now in the schools. Even with this - what we are learning about Africa in schools, our education is not good and for a long

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<sup>74</sup> Anastasia is a popular Afro-Brazilian “layman” saint who is venerated in Brazil for her resistance against the oppressions of slavery and for her healing powers. She was an enslaved woman from what is now Congo/Angola, and died after contracting gangrene from the iron muffle which her slave master imposed upon her. This was done by the plantation owner in order to prevent her from provoking resistance amongst other enslaved peoples because of her insistent declarations that she was not a “slave”.

<sup>75</sup> Dandara was the wife of Zumbi Dos Palmares who was the leader of the *Quilombo Palmares* from late 1670s until his death in 1695.

<sup>76</sup> *Orishas* are religious deities in the Yoruba influenced religion in Brazil – *Candomble*.

time was responsible for teaching us that we were never to be treated like humans because of our link to Africa. Human rights only came when White people were killing White people. Before this, we didn't have any souls so we weren't humans and so it didn't matter if we were killed. Abolition made us humans in their eyes. This is what is taught in our schools. Even our English education is bad, for how many years will we be learning the verb "to be"? That is what they teach in our schools, you won't get any of this in the private schools in the White parts of the city. For three years you will be learning the verb "to be". I don't know how I can live with my community if this is all we get.

The political parties are trying to infiltrate and be part of the discussions about the racial question and are trying to occupy our space. An example is PT<sup>77</sup>, which is part of the White mental hegemony, really, the logic of the oppressor. They always tell us "speak to me about what you understand, about your life", but they need to do more. Instead, they make it into a class discussion like they have been doing, but while they make everything into a class issue Black people who live in apartment buildings are being mistaken for cleaners in their own buildings. It goes to show that I can sleep poor and wake up rich, but I can never sleep Black and wake up White. So, therefore, it is not a class discussion. The *movimento negro* came affirming our value, but there have also been mistakes along the way, accidental values, and you can't change that because it was for a purpose. We need to realize that we have been doing important things for centuries, for centuries. White people think they discovered the circle with their new terms "economic solidarity"

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<sup>77</sup> *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT) is the Workers Party.

and “permaculture,” but this is what we have been doing all our lives. This is what they did in *Palmares*, in other *Quilombola* communities and in Africa.

You see in Brazil we are not born Black but we discover Blackness or we live as *morenos*<sup>78</sup> our whole life. That's why education has to be better, intentional. That said, in relation to the education system, I am not optimistic. I am pessimistic. It is not good that schools only remember Africa, on November 20<sup>th</sup>. There are some exceptions, but mostly the discussions on racism, on a Black identity, are only discovered in November during the month of *Novembro Negro*. What's more, the pedagogic material about Africa that is needed to teach Afro- Brazilian history comes from Sao Paulo. Can you imagine information about Afro Brazil coming from Sao Paulo? And so because of this, the information is not from Bahia where Africa is really present. Because of this, these books say nothing about people's lives here. Really, the model of education is bad enough in itself and should not continue. The schools are in really bad condition, and the students are not taught to understand that school is good for them. The professors are not qualified and there is still the colonial model of education where the teacher is the prophet and the student does not have any knowledge in them. And so in this day and age there is more conflict as teachers don't get the attention that they want. In addition, the schools don't allow for the development of a person's artistic side. And for those who would like to be medical doctors there is nothing to prepare them for this. The education system in these

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<sup>78</sup> *Moreno* is a “Brown”/ mixed identity with shifting frontiers. Anyone of any shade in Brazil can say that they are *Moreno*. Nevertheless, it was and is often used to identify (both self and other) people who were primarily of visible African descent. This is for the reason that *negro* was seen, and is to some extent still seen, as a derogatory term.

public schools in our areas doesn't realise that not everything has to be blue. It is just the very same model of education that Dom Pedro<sup>79</sup> brought.

There is a program on TV every day at 6 p.m. on *Rede Global* about high school students, and it shows a school with everything - a swimming pool, laptops, everything. These students are driven to school by drivers, are brought to school in big cars or even drive themselves. It has been on TV since I was a child and it is a very White world, probably somewhere in Rio or Sao Paulo. When the youth from the schools here watch this program they are shocked by the contrasts, and they want that life and they wonder: could it be that they live in the same country? They are shocked by what they see - it unsettles them.

The *movimento negro* also has their own institutions, and the teachers in these institutions don't treat their students like little animals. At Biko, the professors treat students like humans and agree that the students also bring things to the classroom. Not like the schools that just want to teach you about the verb "to be." To study in Brazil is an obligation, but there are no resources; the teachers just photocopy books as there is never any new allocation in the budget to buy anything. And the teachers in the public schools don't have any qualifications to teach about Africa and, more importantly, they also don't have any identification with Africa because of the mis-education they went through. Because of this they just pass on the same shit to their students; their experiences of

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<sup>79</sup> Dom Pedro was the son of King John VI of Portugal and was the first emperor of Brazil. He ruled from 1822 to 1831.

knowing Africa as a disgrace. If the *movimento negro* could teach, it would be much better. All the same the schools look like prisons anyway, all those metal bars.

It is my belief that Valdimir's story, because of his positionality as a poor and Black youth who has grown up within the re-Africanization of Bahia, confirms the complex trajectory of Africa in Salvador since the 1970s. At the same time, his account conveys the importance of an education geared towards rebuilding self esteem and which, while is "slow" to engender holistic change, nevertheless succeeds in provoking gradual results.

We have seen from the narratives of these connected yet diverse Bikudos, the significant role which education is playing in the lives of both Black educators and youth in Salvador. A recurring theme in these accounts is firstly the increasing problematization - often pedagogic - of institutionalized racism, the battles both internal and external that have been engendered as a result and finally the positive changes in Africanity, gradual, but nevertheless important, which are now visible due to this increasing contestation of the status quo. These Black subjects draw from diverse embodied experiences yet, all contain the same common denominators. These are for example, knowledge of the pervasive anti- Black racism that enables a stigmatization of Africa's many manifestations in Bahia, as well as the individual and collective struggles it provokes. Furthermore, the recognition of education in its two "faces" - its role in reinforcing coloniality while its salience in the contestation of the status quo both within and without the Black body. In addition, one can also discern from these narratives, a reflexivity about the challenges facing the ongoing racial projects, even from Afro Brazilians, that occurs in conjunction with a resolution to continue this Black Consciousness pedagogy because of the holistic transformations they see it engendering in this landscape.

Marcio speaks from the experience of being one of the only Black students in his high school in the 1970s, and in a landscape where Tarzan was a key the reference for Africa.<sup>80</sup> Maria reiterates her experiences of being a young Black woman in a family whose religion posited Blackness as the devil and synonymous with undesirability. For Valdimir who is more than twenty years younger than Marcio and Maria, his battles are framed by the violences of *favela* life, both symbolic and literal, a topic which he writes about and comments on frequently. This plurality of Black lifeworlds illustrates the need for a multifaceted anti-racism mobilization, one that can simultaneously love Blackness as resistance (hooks 1996), work to decolonize academic spaces and which campaigns against extra-judicial violence by the police. The Afrocentric pedagogy, in its various informal and formal manifestations, that is being employed in this location, appears to be a unifying mechanism which is allowing for personal and collective redress. While the contradictions, errors, and “abusable” (Sansone 2008) nature of this Black Consciousness initiative are acknowledged, there is recognition that is it an ongoing endeavour, constantly recreating itself in order to be more remedial, and, like Africa in Salvador at once emanating and elusive, yet, since the 1970s, has been deemed imperative because, as Marcio maintains, “racism does not go on holiday.”

#### Escola Municipal de Novo Marotinho

*Escola Municipal de Novo Marotinho* akin to other public and private schools in the country is bound by the 2003 law 10639/03 to teach African and Afro- Brazilian history. This law which was brought about by the anti-racism campaigns of the *movimento negro* was

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<sup>80</sup> Marcio personal communication December 29<sup>th</sup> 2010

comparable to the “dramatic accomplishments” (Winant 1998:25) achieved by civil rights movement in the United States for it sought to rupture the tendency for Blackness to be linked *only* with slavery, and provided a space for Africa’s vast and uncolonized heritages to be acknowledged . In Nascimento’s (2008) view, this “law 10.639/2003 oblige[d] everyone in society to assume the African legacy [of Brazil] as an essential precondition needed to develop knowledge” (Nascimento 2008:9). Therefore, the contributions of Africa to this new world country were no longer to be considered marginal but, rather, central to Brazil’s existence and, imperative to any of its reified cosmogonies. Nevertheless, Nascimento (2004) implores that the efforts to teach African and Afro- Brazilian history that occurred prior to the legislation, should not be forgotten as it is those early educators who helped provoke this law. One forerunner in this regard was the EMNM, which has since the late 1990’s, and through the impetus of various educators, sought to focus on teaching a more Afrocentric curriculum. An example of this is its involvement in the *Projeto de Extensao Pedagogico do Ile Aiye* which trained public school teachers to “learn about Afro- Brazilian history and culture, to develop critical thinking about identity issues and multiculturalism and analyze scholarly material in order to be prepared to approach these themes with their students” (Ile Aiye 2011). One educator at this institution who has been fundamental in institutionalizing this Black Consciousness pedagogy is Kyesi.

Kyesi was my main contact at the EMNM, and while I interviewed other educators at this institution, she was the only one with whom I was able to conduct an extensive interview. Kyesi is thirty-nine years old, married and a mother of one. She was born in the town of Irara which lies 107 kilometres north of the city of Salvador. Kyesi has been a teacher for over 20 years, and has been teaching at the EMNM for over a decade now. She often marvels at her progress from a

picker of okra, to a teacher and graduate student. Kyesi is a Catholic and is part of the most famous of the Black Catholic brotherhoods in Salvador called the *Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Rosario dos Pretos*, a church which while conducts what could be seen as generic Catholic masses, incorporates significant aspects of Afro-Brazilian religion into these events. This is a space that is very influential in her life, and is theme that can be discerned from her narrative below.

### Kyesi

I was born in a hospital, but some of my brothers and sisters were born at home. We all studied at school but we also worked on a farm where my dad used to work. I started school when I was seven years old because the big farm where I used to work had a school and so I went there when I was seven. People say that the country contains a lot of suffering, a lot of work and hunger, but it does not. Really you just know you have to work and help your parents, and these are things you have to do, so you do them. In this farm where my father worked and where we all worked, I helped weed and also plant in the fields. I planted cassava, okra and other things. We could do that easier because as children we had small hands. And my father also had a little garden at home where I worked.

When I went to school I did not learn anything about Africa at all and when they did talk about Africa, they only talked about Egypt and about the pyramids as though it was not in Africa. Oh and in science they only talked about the animals, but really they only talked about how enslaved peoples were brought here from Africa, and that's it, only slaves. I

had nothing to say about Africa until I was nineteen or twenty years old. Before then I only knew about Africa through some of the manifestations of it around my area such as Samba and religious practices, but that was all. My brothers do not talk about Africa, and so at that age eighteen or nineteen I went after my own self-affirmation . When I got to Salvador from Irara, I went to lots of classes and lectures that were given by the *movimento negro* and they helped significantly with my self esteem. Before then I was known as the girl who had a Black forehead, a big behind and also a nose that “a cow had stepped on.” I really wanted to love myself at this time but I was unable to do so. Now, in my own classes when I do any presentation, all I would like to do is talk about Africa. I also do this in the school when I teach! Even the director of the “House of Angola”<sup>81</sup> calls me *Kimpa Vita*,<sup>82</sup> just because all I want to do is talk about Africa. In the rural area where I’m from, when Africa was talked about it was always about religion or something else small. But now I know a whole lot more about the history and the cultures from our mother continent.

My father grew up like he was a slave because he did not have a family and he lived on a farm. He used to tell us lots of stories about his childhood. He was an orphan and was adopted into a White household but in that place he was like an enslaved person. All the same, he always knew how to work hard, and promised himself that he would not let his

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<sup>81</sup> There are three main “African houses” throughout Salvador and these are the “House of Angola”, “House of Nigeria” and “House of Benin.” These houses act as cultural embassies and museums for each of their respective countries and to my knowledge, are funded by the governments of the countries they represent. My inference is that they were also established to illustrate the similarities between Afro- Brazilian culture and the cultures of ethnic groups within these African nations. They are also often used as venues to showcase various manifestations of Afro-Brazilian culture.

<sup>82</sup> *Kimpa Vita* was a Congolese female prophet who founded her own Christian movement called Antonianism. She lived between 1684 -1706.

children go through what he went through. And so when he got older, he was able to have his own land and his own family. He did not have a family until he could move into his own house and on his own land - he was very conscious about providing these things because of his childhood.

The *movimento negro* has helped a lot in the changing of the views about Africa. When I took classes at the *Projeto de Extensao Pedagogica do Ilé Aiyé*, these classes included discussions on identity, on African values and about Africa. Because of these classes I came to understand why I'm the person who I am, why I have this body and why I have these values. The *movimento negro* has a complicated trajectory because the country is organized so that Blacks can't organize. Nevertheless, it has gained many victories. At the same time, though, it is having a hard time gaining other victories because it has a radicalism that makes things difficult.

The images of Africa have changed for me because I read a lot about Africa. This tends to be an older more traditional vision of Africa though. And, in order to have a more contemporary knowledge about Africa, we need contacts with people like you because in our classes there is mostly the old Africa.

The Black Consciousness week in my school was a success. I worked hard for it for a long time and we trained the students how to do "African dance." I personally bought their costumes and some of the other books and things that were needed. I decided to do it because there is not really any support for it and there are also teachers who don't want to work to make it happen, Black teachers and other teachers who say it is not important.

At the start of this week we usually have a big assembly where we talk about Africa and Afro-Brazilian culture with all the students. Then, we usually have other events which follow this. I teach young students during the day but I also teach three classes at night for people between the ages of 15 and 80, and in all of these classes I always incorporate teachings about Africa and our African traditions here in Bahia. This year in Salvador there were many things going on for Black Consciousness week, but also many activities going on throughout the month. There are also a lot of films and other lectures and so I can only choose to go to some of these events. After I go to the events, I come back home and type a summary of them for my colleagues at school. I'm completely dedicated to doing this and I even bought forty books for my students. This is because I believe that the teaching of Africa is important, we still have a lot to do though, but it is important. If I had had the same education, since I was little, that I have had in these last ten years, I would have been a very different person.

On an earlier occasion Kyesi told me:

You can tell the difference between students who are already taught about Africa, they are different. I read, I talk, I recite poems, all for these same goals.<sup>83</sup>

Kyesi's narrative highlights the reality of teaching an Afrocentric pedagogy in public schools in Salvador. While a law has been established to compel the teaching of African and Afro-Brazilian history in both private and public institutions, many schools argue that they do not have the resources, nor the trained personnel to implement this legislation. In addition, what

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<sup>83</sup> Kyesi, personal communication December 18<sup>th</sup> 2010.

also appears to be missing, with some exceptions, is the personal will of the teachers to transmit this knowledge. The experiences of an Afrocentric curriculum at the EMNM illustrate that while this institution is one of the exceptions and has been a pioneer in this regard, the Black Consciousness pedagogy is nevertheless only propelled by the dedication of a few teachers. Luana, who is one of Kyesi's colleagues and also dedicated to the teaching of African history to youth within this community, also highlighted other concerns. While admitting that in Brazil "you learn to be Black", and that "there is no weapon better than education" she nonetheless questioned:

How can children learn anything when they are hungry and they go to school without shoes? Furthermore, If the lessons of Africa are not organized into a separate discipline but are incorporated at the teachers' discretion into the other classes, and the students only go to class for four hours a day – an institution that was established for colonial purposes so that the people would remain ignorant, will they [the students] really learn anything about Africa in this haphazard manner? And, if the teachers don't call themselves Blacks what can they teach? I wish I was a witch and then I could change people's minds.<sup>84</sup>

Luana's own experiences enduring racist teachers who hindered her academic possibilities, have made her more determined to ensure that, education and in particular an Afrocentric pedagogy is accessible to the youth that she teaches, especially, she says, in this area where from birth they are destined for "prison, prostitution or death."<sup>85</sup> All the same, even with the dedication of teachers like her and Kyesi, and the remarkable collective and personal impact that they engender, some of the obstacles they encounter loom unrelenting and indicate that, while incorporation of Africa into the curriculum is important, perhaps the education system itself needs to be transformed.

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<sup>84</sup> Luana, personal communication November 16<sup>th</sup> 2010.

<sup>85</sup> Luana, personal communication November 16<sup>th</sup> 2010

### Discussion of Life Histories

“There have never been any laws that could uproot profound sentiments and change the mentality of a people.” (Roger Bastide in Degler 1971:127).

Nascimento (2007) has argued that Mother Brazil’s “rejection of her Black children” has had a grave all-encompassing effect on Afro-Brazilians. The narratives of these educators, such as Marcio, Maria, Valdimir and Kyesi reveal the complex and comprehensive ways in which this rejection has been manifested in the lives of Brazilian Blacks. This negative impact, both internal and external, is evidenced in the self-loathing expressed due to racial comments from others. More explicitly, racial tensions are revealed through the lack of upward mobility for the majority of Blacks. In view of these experiences, particularly since the 1970s, education is seen by the participants in this study and many Blacks in Bahia as, paraphrasing Freire (2000 [1970]), a way for individuals as well as communities to “say his or her own word, to name the world” (Freire 2000 [1970]:33). This naming of the world is framed in a Black identity anchored in Africa, a subjectivity that when embodied in this context, asserts a difference that defies the claims to a *mulatto* homogeneity. Central to this identity is a Black history, an Africentric grounding which is both corporeal and cognitive and deemed necessary for “without a Black past and without a Black future [...] it is impossible to live Blackness” (Fanon 2008[1952]:117). The Black identity that results from immersing oneself in an Africana education - its ethics, aesthetics and actions - is a powerful concept, which, in its militancy, is remembering in order to rupture, and re-humanizing in order to reveal the pervasive racism in Brazil (Mullings 2010:14).

The importance of an Afrocentric pedagogy to a Black identity is emphasized by Fanon (2008) in the following quote. Denied humanity by the ubiquitous racism in his context the author asserted:

In a frenzy I excavated Black antiquity. What I discovered left me speechless. In his book on the abolition of slavery, Schoelcher presented us with some compelling arguments. Since then, Frobenius, Westermann, and Delafosse, all White men, have voiced their agreement: Segu, Djenné, cities with over 100, 000 inhabitants; accounts of learned Black men (doctors of theology who travelled to Mecca to discuss the Koran). Once this had been dug up, displayed, and exposed to the elements, it allowed me to regain a valid historic category. The White man was wrong, I was not a primitive or a subhuman; I belonged to a race that had already been working silver and gold 2, 000 years ago. (Fanon 2008:109)

The “Biko effect”<sup>86</sup>(Aguiar 2006:148) also demonstrates the impact of such intentional Black Consciousness pedagogy and this is confirmed, for the most part, by the life histories of the four educators. Nevertheless, as one study participant stated, while “we have to say that enough is enough”<sup>87</sup>, another warned that we must not always imagine or teach that “Africa is a super hero.”<sup>88</sup> Similarly, Fanon (2008[1952]) also found it necessary to state that “the discovery that a Black civilization existed in the fifteenth century [will] not earn me a certificate of humanity. Whether you like it or not, the past can in no way be my guide in the actual state of things” (Fanon 2008 [1952]:200). Certainly, it can be argued that the present day violences such as the extra-judicial killings of Black youth which Valdimir and Luana conveyed, may not necessarily see their demise as a result of a history lesson, and may ultimately be more problematic than the potential for social mobility implied by education. Furthermore, because of their small number,

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<sup>86</sup> Aguiar (2006) says that the ICSB has engendered a “Biko effect” for not only has there been a proliferation of *pre-vestibular* establishments for Black youths ever since the ICSB began, but in addition, this institute has had great influence in engendering affirmative action quotas in universities in Bahia, as well as other diversity projects and programs at these institutions. An example of this is the “University for all” Project initiated by the Government of Bahia (Aguiar 2006:148).

<sup>87</sup> Oliver, personal communication, November 4<sup>th</sup> 2010.

<sup>88</sup>Sergio, personal communication. November 4<sup>th</sup> 2010.

Afrocentric *pre-vestibular* institutions are not accessible to everyone that needs them, and moreover only offer one year of “positive” training compared to the eleven years of “negative” schooling that precedes them. In addition, one can also inquire as to the feasibility of the national education system in fulfilling an advocacy type role. Will the “master’s tools” ever “dismantle the master’s house”? (Lorde 1984).

Moreover, as has been discussed by the educators in the preceding narratives, there is often a “gap” between the word and the world in the public sphere, a “space on the side of the road” (Stewart 1996) where the signifier, which is in this case Africa, may indicate not one meaning, but a myriad of possibilities which may not adhere to the connotation that is most advocated by the *movimento negro*. In this regard, notwithstanding the increasingly more widespread and varied discussions about Africa and the many initiatives where Afro-Brazilians can “learn to be Black” that have been engendered since the re-Africanization of Bahia, there are still, as Maria conveyed in regard to those who attended the *bloco Afro* performances, “people who understood nothing and just danced.”<sup>89</sup> Rather, for many in Salvador, Africa and Afrocentric discourse may not be taken up in order to challenge the coloniality of power and knowledge in this location, but rather, if taken up at all, for a complex constellation of individual purposes that do not explicitly contribute to the re-Africanization agenda.

In their own lives these educators flow between centres that affirm Africanity – where they readily agree that it is “few doing the work of many”<sup>90</sup> – and spaces, as has been narrated by Maria, Valdimir and Kyesi, such as in their own families where they were “not born Black”<sup>91</sup> and where the idea of a Black identity may not be readily accepted. In these scenarios, while not

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<sup>89</sup> Maria, personal communication, January 5<sup>th</sup> 2011.

<sup>90</sup> Marcio, personal communication, December 29<sup>th</sup> 2010.

<sup>91</sup> Valdimir, personal communication, December 19<sup>th</sup> 2010.

intentionally diminishing the “new” identity that their body acquires and performs, and that is complemented by the material symbols of Blackness attained from local and transnational Black networks, they may nevertheless acquiesce to the conditions of these spaces- both internal and external - which may reaffirm the tropes of a “racial democracy” in Brazil. While this situated Africaological discourse, in both formal and informal variants, seeks to act as both “ethnic redemption” and as a “back talk” to the epistemic violences that Blacks face in Brazil, the persistence of these “spaces on the side of the road” (Stewart 1996), both internal and external, which allow for multiple interpretations of Blackness, complicate and contest these re-Africanizing initiatives.

Even while these community educators are dedicated to valuing Afro- Brazilian culture as a site of knowledge production, they readily acknowledge the obstacles that are inherent in the national education system. As Hanchard (1994) recognized, “the lack of pedagogy and educational materials about racial- ethnic differences in Brazil is particularly telling in light of the fact that the research for [his] study was undertaken during the centennial celebration of abolition” (Hanchard 1994: 61). This lack of didactic material is compounded by the fact that what is available is often produced in Sao Paulo and may still carry the absences and/or prejudices of earlier works. Also considered problematic is the reiteration of a “mystical Africa”, one which, while is admittedly purposeful in this contest, is not devoid of contradiction. Furthermore, the lack of trained teachers (Da Costa (2010: 211) makes it hard to implement the new law concerning the teaching of Africa and Afro- Brazilian history ( Da Costa 2010), and, by virtue of this, there are cases where the educators are “teaching our students about the law and

not about Africa.”<sup>92</sup> The interview with Kyesi also illustrates that while the law obligates the teaching of African and Afro-Brazilian history, often the institution or the teacher’s lack of identification with Africa, hinder the transmission of this Afrocentric knowledge. As a result, this situated Black consciousness pedagogy remains the dedicated task of a few engaged teachers. As Sidney quipped in response to a question about the obligation of all schools to adhere to the new law, “the State gives the law but they [both the State and the institutions] really don’t care.”<sup>93</sup> Moreover as Sergio noted, some “teachers may just be training because their salaries improve with each new qualification that they have”<sup>94</sup> and not because of a genuine desire to ensure the spread of a Black education for liberation. An extreme example of this disregard is evidenced by the fact that during the 2010 Black Consciousness week in Salvador, the celebrations at the American school were confined to a lunch time demonstration of “Japanese sword fighting” at the elementary school level and a “Jazz band composed of all White people” at the high school, because, as two educators at the institution noted, “they don’t really connect with Africa and so there is no point” in commemorating the continent during this week of national and local events.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, the limited hours designated for education in public schools, as well as its location within a system whose genesis is in a slavocracy, really provoke the question as to whether education should be such a privileged mechanism of anti-racism advocacy. An

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<sup>92</sup> Sidney, personal communication, November 12<sup>th</sup> 2010. Sidney is teacher in a municipal school and who is currently enrolled in a African and Afro-Brazilian History teacher training course in Salvador. It was in one of these history classes that we met.

<sup>93</sup> Sidney, personal communication, November 12<sup>th</sup> 2010.

<sup>94</sup> Sergio, personal communication. Sergio was one of the trainers at the African and Afro-Brazilian history course for teachers. During this class he conveyed to me that in both public and private universities there are now a wide range of graduate diplomas specially for teachers, to train them to teach African and Afro-Brazilian history. The more certification a teacher is able to acquire the higher their salary will be, hence some teachers opt to receive this training more for personal gain, than with the aim of contributing to the creation of new Black subjects.

<sup>95</sup> Amelia and Stephanie personal communication, December 4<sup>th</sup> 2010. Amelia and Stephanie are two teachers at the American school in Salvador.

inclusionary curriculum is not in essence the revolutionary curriculum which will bring about an entirely new person. This is expressed by Sidney when he declares: “I don’t want to keep saying I’m Black, I’m Black, I’m Black, I just want to see change.”<sup>96</sup> Is it right, therefore, to task the Afrocentric pedagogy with engendering the holistic change that is so desired by many Blacks in this location?

Da Costa (2010) contends that the decolonizing of the education system and the educational space must precede any “inclusionary” initiatives so that they do not reproduce coloniality (Da Costa 2010). Furthermore, the author argues that transforming the educational space, challenging the features inherent in education that legitimize exclusion (Da Costa 2000:209), is what will genuinely bring about the alternative notions of citizenship which are increasingly demanded (Da Costa 2000: 199). Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that, while the education system has not been overhauled, Black educators are still managing to challenge racial inequality. This is done by rewriting Brazilian history[ies] to include the centrality of the Black subject and in this way contesting “unequal histories of power underlying the very meaning of knowledge, that counts in understanding the making of modernity, race and development” (Da Costa 2000: 1988). Indubitably, a challenge is not a full repudiation of coloniality. Nonetheless, the path towards comprehensive transformations may only be catalyzed by an aggregation of these smaller intentional alterities which confront the arbitrariness of dominance. As the context has shown, decolonized Black subjects who are the goal of the *movimento negro* will only be realized processually; an odyssey that may result due to intentional pedagogy that reveals the coloniality of experience[s] in this location. The “Biko

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<sup>96</sup> Sidney, personal communication, November 4<sup>th</sup> 2010.

effect," discussed below, illustrates the possibilities implicit in this sojourn. Santos (1997) documents that the ICSB:

Has effectively modified the lives of a significant number of Afro descendants who have established, with the help of the ICSB, a real connection between their day to day studies and moments of reflection, be it as a student, or in different positions one assumes in the internal universe of the institute and outside of it, [they are thus] changing stigmas constructing self esteem, ethno- racial identity, exercising citizenship, critical sense, reflections about the collective constitution and life in ones community, a priority of the collective good in relation to the good of the individual, analyses about racism as a social mechanism and the interventions that it produces, demystifying myths such as the myth of racial democracy; allowing for a political organization that permits for action and claims that continue allowing [for the Black] a place in society and social mobility. (Santos 1(997: 3) in Aguiar (2006:148).

Just like the cobblestones of *Pelourinho* that were built by people who learned by doing, so will the educators and students who engage in this Black Consciousness pedagogy if there is ultimately the goal of a racism-free Brazil. While neither the public education system nor Africa are "super heroes", and a Curriculum Vitae will not prevent the extra-judicial killings of Black youth by the police, at the very least, this Black Consciousness pedagogy, in both its informal and formal variations, is an important beginning. Fanon (2008 [1952]) conveyed that "it is not because the Indo –Chinese discovered a culture of their own that they revolted. Quite simply this was because it became impossible for them to breathe, in more than one sense of the word" (Fanon 2008 [1952]: 201). While I agree with Fanon's view, I also argue that the gradations and the complexity of this absence of breath are further revealed when one dedicates time and academic endeavour, to their interrogation. This is confirmed by the fact that many of the key *movimento negro* activists have often achieved higher levels of education than most of their peers (Sansone 2003:55), and the reality that in the 1970s, university students were instrumental in advocating for a racial consciousness (Hanchard 1994:111) and were those whose self

identification was rapidly changing from “Brown” to Black (Turner 1985). In addition, it is important to recognize that the Black Consciousness pedagogy was, and is not being implemented in a vacuum as the “re-Africanization” continues to encroach on other traditionally White spheres and spaces. National and state legislation which penalize racism and offer positive discrimination for both Indigenous and Blacks have been prompted as there is the recognition that “unfortunately some things here in Brazil only work if there are laws.”<sup>97</sup> Tied to this, there has also been a proliferation of both “cultural” and “political” groups whose mandate is to remedy both the personal and social afflictions of these “damaged” Black subjects and above all, to transform them anew.

The brief life history accounts provided in this chapter have revealed that education is a vital component of anti-racism mobilization as it can target both etic and emic spheres. This emancipatory pedagogy has targeted oppression and its roots, is working to ensure both cognitive and corporal liberation and, in these “battles”, is constantly being “made and remade” (Freire 2000:48). This dialectical trajectory of this Bahian Afrocentric pedagogy is composed of a diversity of local and transnational Black experiences and hermeneutics that, while may produce essentializations, are also challenging assimilationist accounts of Brazil’s history, allowing for a liberatory “word” to rupture the limits that are increasingly being discerned by a new Black “world.”

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<sup>97</sup> Ricardo, personal communication, December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010. Ricardo is a science teacher at the ICSB.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter begins by giving a recent example of the other less positive ‘face’ of education, particularly in light of a recent “classic” book that was admitted into the 2011 Brazilian national curriculum by the Ministry of Education, despite its racist content. Thereafter, I summarize the main arguments conveyed in the previous chapters and conclude by suggesting areas for further research.

### Contesting Lobato: Curriculum and Coloniality

“Our goal is a Brazil whose education does not hide the history of Black people.” (*Movimento Negro Unificado* – United Negro Movement as cited in Covin 1996:48).

During an “African history”<sup>98</sup> class for educators that I attended in November 2010 while conducting fieldwork, one of the trainers was unrelenting in his criticism of the coloniality of education in Brazil. This teacher expressed great disdain after hearing that the Brazilian Ministry of Education had recently included in the 2011 national curriculum, a children’s book entitled *Caçadas de Pedrinho* (Pete’s Hunting) that was widely considered racist, written by Monteiro Lobato, one of Brazil’s most famous writers and personalities, in 1933. This educator, who had come of age during the re-Africanization of Bahia, was privy to and participated in the projects that emerged from this re-Africanizing process. While he had experience of Blackness both before and after the *movimento negro* efforts of the 1970s, he nevertheless was cognizant of the fact that below the first floor of the church where he worshipped in *Pelourinho* was a *senzala*,

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<sup>98</sup> As provided earlier, there has been a proliferation of graduate level African and Afro-Brazilian history classes for educators as a result of the new federal law that institutionalized the teaching of this history.

the room where enslaved Africans used to be kept.<sup>99</sup> The Ministry of Education's decision to include this text in the 2011 curriculum, further emphasized its presence.

An article written by Eliene Cavalleiro an Afro-Brazilian educator and Professor at the University of Brasilia, and widely circulated amongst *movimento negro* activists and educators, conveyed dismay at the inclusion of the children's book into the classroom. In its headline, the article declared: "The state will celebrate the International year of African descendants distributing a racist book in the schools" (Cavalleiro 2010). Cavalleiro's article fiercely criticized the decision by the Ministry of Education to include this book into the national curriculum. The contention by the National Council on Education (CNE)<sup>100</sup> that the book was bigoted primarily because of its depiction of Afro-Brazilians in stereotypical and racist fashion was rejected by the Ministry, who argued that the book was a "classic" and thus merited insertion into public schools. Notwithstanding the book's reference to Tia Nastasia, a key Black character in the book, as a "monkey" and "vulture," to my knowledge the CNE was unable to prevent the use of the book in national schools. Cavalleiro (2010) argues that as a result, when it would be read in the classroom domain, like *Saci*, the one legged bad smelling and trickster Black personality that Lobato had also helped establish in the national consciousness through his other writings, Tia Nastasia, in her stereotypical largeness and languid Black eyes, would be the only person that Black students would be able to identify with in this "classic."

As the above anecdote illustrates, education, because it has been and still continues to be a space for enacting oppression, can also double as a site for waging resistance. As Hanchard

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<sup>99</sup> The *Senzala* was usually in the basement level of buildings or located some distance from the main house.

<sup>100</sup> The National Council on Education (CNE) acts as the governmental watchdog on education, and as part of its mission seeks to make education better, more accessible and participatory.

(1994) argues, violences towards the enslaved person involved a comprehensive process that had “cultural, epistemological and ideological consequences” (Hanchard 1994:4) and, therefore, greatly impacted the subjectivity of the enslaved. For this reason, essentially due to its importance in upholding systems of domination and as the “locus of all definitions that maintain the society and institutions: commercial, religious, or social, that are used to sustain the society” (Asante 2007:15), formal education is an imperative part of the holistic strategies employed by the *movimento negro* to fight the coloniality of power and knowledge (Da Costa 2010).

In this thesis it has been my intention to illustrate the strategic importance of education, and, in particular, a Black Consciousness pedagogy, in the mobilization[s] against racism that emerged during the re-Africanization of Bahia in the 1970s. This era has been regarded as the “watershed” moment in Black organizing, not only in Bahia, but more generally in Brazil (Da Silva 2005). This re-Africanizing project can be classified as a racialist project in the definition provided by Omi and Winant (1994) and Winant (1994) in their Racial Formation theory, and one where the colour line has been imposed from below (Mullings 2010). In addition, quite the opposite to the “anti- anti essentialist” arguments of Gilroy (1994), Pinho (2010) and Sansone (2003), the Racial Formation school of authors, such as those mentioned above, argue that since race structures society, the efforts to democratize race should be matched with efforts to racialize democracy (Winant 1994). While informed by the works of Winant (1994) and Hanchard (1994), I have taken the position articulated by Tavolaro (2008) who argues that racialism in Brazil is one way of framing anti- racism discourse which is intentional and not unauthentic as argued by scholars such as Bourdieu and Wacquant (1999). Moreover, these explicitly Black discourses have since the 1970s been regarded as a viable means to advance

collective action and not as an ends in themselves” (Tavolaro 2009:19). This employment of an Afrocentric pedagogy as praxis, contrasts with the employment of an aesthetic Blackness as protest that was visible in the Brazilian Soul movement in the 1970s and which is briefly discussed in chapter two. In this study, I investigated the Africa-centered educational projects at the Steve Biko Cultural Institute (ICSB) and the *Escola Municipal de Novo Marotinho* (ENMN) and interviewed the educators who teach the Black Consciousness ‘pedagogy of the oppressed’, the education for liberation which is central to the Africalogical discourses at these institutions, and which were provoked by the re-Africanization of Bahia. Using these two institutions as case studies, in this thesis, I argue that a Black Consciousness pedagogy in both formal and informal varieties, is helping provide better social, academic and professional possibilities for Black youth in Salvador da Bahia compared to the generations of Blacks that preceded them. Furthermore, I contend that the racialist discourses employed in these pedagogical resistances build from the legacy that was established by previous Black mobilizations such as the Revolt of the Males (1835), the 1940s Black Experimental Theatre (TEN) and the action of *blocos Afros* such as *Ile Aiye* and *Olodum*, which were created in the 1970s with the intent to “Africanize” Bahia’s annual *carnaval*.

The emancipation associated with the Black Consciousness pedagogy that undergirds curriculum at these institutions, can be attained materially through the greater social mobility available through education. Above all, however, this freedom is inhered by the improvement of the self-esteem of Blacks, and in particular Black youth. Via the new representations and resignifiers of Blackness which these Afrocentric discourses promote, the self-esteem of Black youth, a noteworthy victim of centuries of hegemonic racism in Brazil, is improved. As a

consequence, the younger generations of Afro-Brazilians begin to make increasing, individual and collective, citizenship claims from the state. "Learning to be Black" therefore, is an embodied political act because through its struggles "against forgetting" the contribution and history of Blacks in both Brazil and in Africa, the economic possibilities it implies and the promotion of an explicitly Black identity separate from the hegemonic mixed Brazilian identity, it works to rupture the racist political economy in the country by creating "new Black subjects." The transformations anticipated arise as a direct result of a Freirian-esque conscientization which is a dialogical, problem - posing praxis and, in this context, also inclusive of Afro-Brazilian lifeworlds. These Black experiences are constitutive of an embodied Black *habitus* which recognizes the body as the locus for the performance of a Black identity because it is precisely through the Black body that its difference is established. The corporeality of identity is evident both during slavery, where physicality was depictive of Blackness, and even in recent *movimento negro* mobilizations where expressions of Blackness are emphasized both within and on the frontiers of the skin (Pinho 2010).

### Summary of Life Histories

The processes and results of a Negritude pedagogy were confirmed by the interviews and life histories garnered during the course of this research. While problematizing the silences and contradictions that they saw within this Black Consciousness project, From Maria to Kyesi, all the interviewees affirmed the importance of both formal and informal Africentric *conscientizacao* in Salvador and expressed their commitment to perpetuating and interrogating it for the future generations of Black youth in Salvador. For Marcio, this Black pedagogy works to convey the racism that still persists in Salvador, and more generally in Brazil as a whole. He sees

it as a way to reveal the contemporary manifestations of the “plantocracy” that remains even if slavery was abolished over a hundred years ago. For him the rupturing of established racial democracy myths is particularly salient when Afro Brazilians still ask “Why do we need to discuss race, racism or discrimination?”<sup>101</sup> In his view, the internalization and epidermalization of inferiority is what best illustrates the multifaceted nature of racism and its persistence after anti-racism” landmarks such as the abolition of slavery and the genesis of the racial democracy myth in the latter part of the 1930s. Notwithstanding the essentializations of Blackness that do arise from a racialist enterprise, Marcio concedes that the anti-racism mobilizations of the *movimento negro*, are engendering objective and subjective changes in this landscape; alterities that are necessary since, as he often asserts, “racism does not go on holiday.”

Both Maria and Kyesi expressed the “love” that they developed for themselves once they began to engage with an Afrocentric pedagogy. Having endured, since birth, depreciatory remarks directed to them because of the physicality of “degenerate Blackness” that they embodied, the situated negritude which they immersed themselves in allowed for their re-humanization. For these women who are both symbolically and literally the bearers of Blackness, they were particularly conscious of the explicit inscriptions of Blackness on their bodies. Whether it was the nose that a “cow had stepped on” or a forehead that was an “airport for a mosquito, as carriers of this “degeneracy”, it seems that for them, more than for their male colleagues, “Learning to be Black” needed to include loving the physicality of Blackness as resistance.

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<sup>101</sup> Marcio, personal communication. December 29<sup>th</sup> 2010.

Even though Valdimir is twenty years younger than his colleagues, he is, nevertheless, able to discern the contrasts in self-esteem and citizenship claims between those Blacks engaging with a negritude pedagogy, and those who, similar to the rest of his family, prefer to see Africa and its manifestations, as a “mosaic of disgrace.” For him the ‘discovery’ of Blackness through engagement with an Afrocentric pedagogy can be instrumental to anti-racism mobilization but also as a weapon for survival. And while in, Valdimir’s opinion, the *movimento negro* has been known to generate romantic and static images of Africa, it, nevertheless, through pedagogical initiatives such as the community school that was created in his neighbourhood, is succeeding in affirming the self-value of Afro-Brazilians and through commemorating Africa – both corporally and ontologically- is contesting spaces of White hegemonic power in Brazil.

### Black Transnationalisms

Marable (2010) argues that Blackness only acquires its full “revolutionary potential” as a site of resistance when it is within a transnational and Pan-African context (Marable 2010: 3). The Afro-Brazilian positionality, as members of the African diaspora, allowed that the Black identity they were asserting was constituted by hermeneutics and ideologies derived from transnational Black networks. These symbols and strategies, when injected into Negritude pedagogy, expanded the signifiers of Blackness, whilst concomitantly permitting for a proliferation of anti-racism tactics that could be employed by the *movimento negro*. The transnational nature of the re-Africanizing projects is immediately explicit in the name of the Steve Biko Cultural Institute (ICSB) which is an homage to Steve Biko, the Black anti-apartheid activist from South Africa who is also considered one of the “fathers” of the Black Consciousness movement. Through this moniker, the ICSB locates itself both locally and

globally in the fight against racism, employing a “Blackness without boundaries” approach which Marable (2010) argues constitutes a transformative praxis (Marable 2010:3).

Building on earlier Black resistances, as well as the works of Du Bois (1903), Biko (2002 [1978]) and Fanon (2008 [1952]) which emphasized the importance of an education that contained the historicity of Blackness, the Black Consciousness pedagogy in Bahia was and is successful in introducing new- or as Pinho (2010:115) argued “renovating” old - ontologies, geographies, ethics and aesthetics. However, one must readily question the impact of these new interventions, and ask, following Lorde (1984) if the ‘master’s tools’ can ever be used to dismantle the ‘master’s house.’ The *movimento negro* emphasizes that a critique of modernity requires alternative sites of knowledge, and Afrocentrism is offered as the ontology from which to anchor these new critiques. Nevertheless, it is important to query whether the “plantation” - in all of its intellectual, political and economic varieties - can be escaped through a pedagogy which mediates, but does not entirely replace, the coloniality of formal education.

The limitations of this pedagogy were readily conceded by all the educators who were interviewed. In reference to the federal law 10639/03 which establishes the teaching of African and Afro Brazilian history in the national curriculum, Maria asserted that “even if the law says that people are beautiful not everyone will believe this or will teach it,”<sup>102</sup> and this is evident from the four year delay that it took to implement this legislation in many national schools (Pamplona 2007). In addition, the knowledge, particularly about Africa, which is conveyed in this situated Black Consciousness pedagogy, contributes to what Dzidzienyo (1999) refers to as a “frozen Africanity”; a vision of Africa that does not allow for the past and contemporary

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<sup>102</sup> Maria, personal communication, January 5<sup>th</sup> 2011.

complexities of the continent to be explored. This absence of an extensive body of knowledge on African and Afro-Brazilian history in Salvador is attributed to the fact that the teachers never learnt about this in schools, and have only recently been privy to training in this specialized scholarship, mostly as a result of the aforementioned law. In addition, the interviewees also attributed educators' deficiency in knowledge and reluctance to implement the legislation to a lack of identification with Afrocentric material. As one interviewee at the ENMN asked, "If the teachers do not identify as Black, how can they teach anything on Blackness?"<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, and inevitably more present in formal institutions such as the EMNM than in the informal *movimento negro* established institutions, the often superficial nature in which students are exposed to an Afrocentric pedagogy is also to be problematized. Since Afrocentric scholarship is incorporated into other disciplines such as History and Literature and is not given a class on its own, this allows that only sketches of Africanness are conveyed to the students. This phenomenon is compounded by the fact that students attend school in shifts and for only four hours a day. Moreover, as Nascimento (1978) asserts, the state system that requires students to go to school for only four hours a day and that produces obstacles for Blacks to go to university, is the very same structure that enables violences such as poverty, inaccessible health care and unemployment for its citizens (Nacimento 1978). As a result, and as Bartlett (2010) asserts, with few Blacks going to university there may be much less collective transformation brought about by the social mobility associated with education. Furthermore, with the presence of other symbolic violences which have been mentioned above, can the education that emerged from within the manifestations and narratives of empire really be tasked with engendering the revolutionary subjectivities and landscapes that are desired?

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<sup>103</sup> Luana, personal communication, November 16<sup>th</sup> 2010.

As the above analysis has illustrated, neither Africa nor Education are “super heroes.”<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, the last forty years of the re-Africanization project have shown that when both Africa and Education are linked, they have the potential to engender significant changes in the peoplescapes of Salvador da Bahia. Notwithstanding their importance at the time, the integrationist and assimilationist *movimento negro* projects launched in the early twentieth century, had limited impact compared to these recent anti-racism efforts. In particular, as I have argued here, one of the most strategic initiatives to emerge from this intentional re-Africanization process is the implementation of a Black Consciousness pedagogy. This is evidenced by the “Biko effect”, which has seen the ICSB become a model for more than fifteen hundred other Afrocentric *pre - vestibular* institutions in the country. Moreover, the pedagogic advocacy of the *movimento negro* has also catalyzed the citizenship claims of other racialized groups, and this is witnessed in the institutionalization of a new law which establishes the teaching of Indigenous history in the national curriculum. Attesting to the generational impact of this Black advocacy, Sansone (2003) indicates that the younger generation in Salvador da Bahia increasingly identifies as Black, and there is a “revolution of rising expectations” amongst them; a burgeoning consciousness among this new “Black” generation that racism needs to be fought as they make increasing demands from the state. Furthermore, the Africentered roots needed to ‘root’ the anti-racism struggles of the *movimento negro* have allowed for the proliferation of Africanity which, in its performance on both a physical and metaphysical level, are being used to further interrogate the deep White supremacist roots of the country. While, educators, and the *movimento negro* as a whole, do not believe that there is a “gap” in the understandings of Africa, and that many do view Africa – in all her manifestations in Brazil- as a signifier with

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<sup>104</sup> Sergio, personal Communication, November 5<sup>th</sup> 2010.

multiple possibilities and not – if at all - solely an Afrocentric one, there is still a recognition of the potential of Africanity to engender constant surveillance on this “racial democracy”, and thus a continuous, and contested, effort to inscribe Afrocentricity in the landscape. Lastly, it is important to note that the increasing manifestations of a Negritude pedagogy may cumulatively incite greater demonstrations of discontent especially since it is not being conducted in isolation, as the *movimento negro* is constantly seeking to employ a diverse array of strategies on both a local and global front.

A quote paraphrased from a Martin Luther King speech conveys, “We are not who we would like to be. We are still not what we are going to be, but thank God that we are not who we once were.”<sup>105</sup> Similarly, Marcio of the ICSB conveys that his “dream is that Steve Biko [ICSB] would no longer need to exist, because like this the problem would be resolved. But, for the mean time this day has not arrived” (Humberto 2010). The effects of a Black Consciousness pedagogy may not always appear to be sufficiently expedient especially when pitted against a Brazilian collective consciousness which has been formed and informed by centuries of coloniality. Nevertheless, while recognizing the contradictions and silences that an Afrocentric pedagogy can embody, its effectiveness in remedying – in part - the internalization and epidermalization of inferiority, is anticipated. It is my hope that if further research on this topic is conducted, it will examine the impact of this Bahian Black consciousness pedagogy on the self esteem of Indigenous, White and ‘other’ Brazilians. In addition, a survey that would inquire into the shortcomings and oppressions of a racialist mobilization, for example in regards to class,

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<sup>105</sup> This Martin Luther King quote was taken from a newsletter that the Black Maria Institute (Instituto Maria Preta), sent out in early June. The institute is a Salvador based NGO that seeks to defend the religious, cultural and sexual diversity of Brazilians.

gender and sexuality etc, and that would suggest initiatives for their remedy, would also be necessary in order to ensure a real liberation for all Brazilians.

Heeding Biko (1978), through this emancipatory education which is employed as part of a *movimento negro* anti-racism advocacy, the oppressed are taking back their “most powerful weapon,” the mind. By means of a dialogical and problem-posing “violence of ideas” (Rodrigues 1999:44), this new Black “word” is rewriting this “world.” At its best, Rabaka (2003) argues that “Africana education must not simply expose and introduce us and others to African history and culture as well as African thought, belief, and value systems and traditions, but it must also aid us in our efforts to engage, explore and ethically alter the world in our own and other struggling peoples best interest” (Rabaka 2003:418). The space that the *movimento negro* has created to allow, for example, Indigenous groups to contest for more political spaces, has illustrated the wide reach of its advocacy. And though the images of Tia Nastacia and Saci - the two Black characters in Lobato’s books who were spoken about in the beginning of this chapter - persist in many national spheres, the discontent provoked by the Ministry of Education’s action demonstrates that, in this gradually “re-Africanizing” Salvador where Afro-Brazilians are “learning to be Black”, education’s more emancipatory face is being revealed.

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APPENDIX ONEInterview Questions

- 1, Where are you from?
- 2, How long have you been engaged in this institution?
- 3, In which ways has the *movimento negro* been involved in education/ teaching about Afro Brazilian and African history? Do you think that this is important?
- 4, Did you ever learn about Afro- Brazilian or African history when you were in school?
- 5, What are some of the problems that are encountered in the process of “conscientizing”?
- 6, What do you think about Salvador/Brazil now that it is “re –Africanizing”?
- 7, How have you (individually and collectively) been affected by the *movimento negro* anti-racism campaigns?

APPENDIX TWOPictures from the field

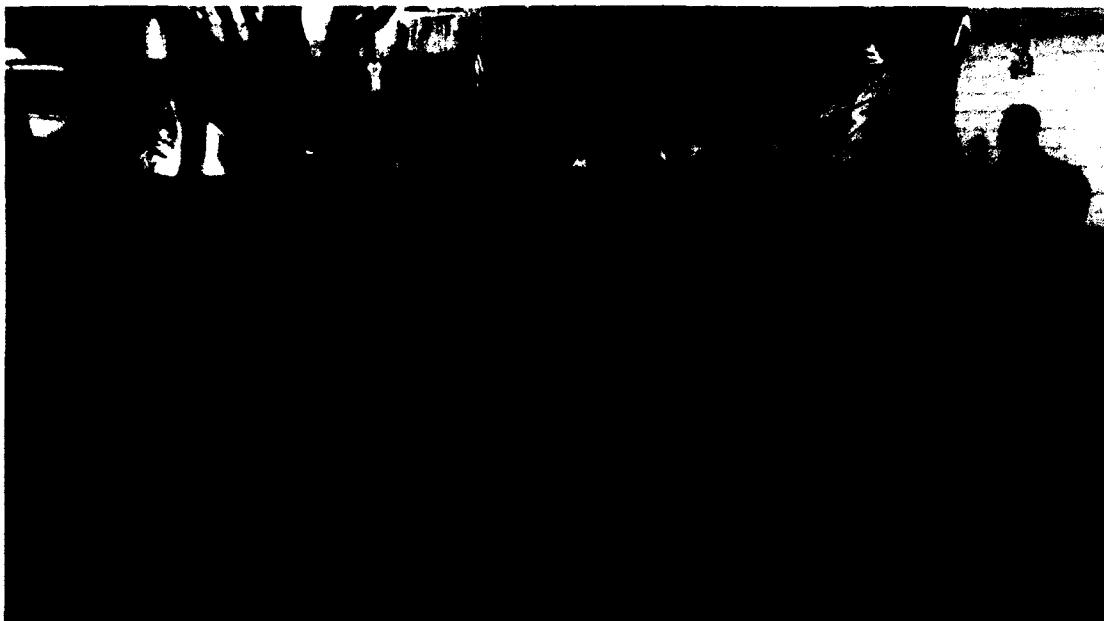
1, Salvador: An aerial view.



2, *Pelourinho*: Historic centre and one of the key spaces of Blackness in Salvador.



3, A *movimento negro* manifestation/protest in Salvador during the month of *November Negro*.



4, November 20<sup>th</sup> celebrations: Day of Black Consciousness, Salvador, Bahia.



5, Educator conscientization session with the Steve Biko Cultural Institute.



6, Some of the first group of ICSB students with one of their female educators from the ICSB.



7, Kyesi and two educators at the *Escola Municipal de Novo Marotinho* with Wangui Kimari.



8, Ready for “African Dance”: Students at ENMN with Wangui Kimari.

