The Sweet Itch of the Sand Flea: The Diploma Mill of Higher Education in the New Plantation and the Anathema of Race in Management Studies

Coceira Boa de Bicho-de-Pé: O Engenho de Diplomas da Educação Superior na Nova Plantation e o Anátema da Questão Racial na Administração

Humberto Reis dos Santos-Souza

ABSTRACT

With the implementation of affirmative action policies, a growing number of Black students are entering public universities and require an educational environment free from racism. This shift poses new challenges for management lecturers and professors, beginning with their training, which must be grounded in an antiracist education. However, as teacher training is delegated to graduate programs in Brazil, significant gaps remain in their formation. Given that Brazil bears the legacy of a violent history of enslavement, these gaps become abyssal when confronted with the racial divide within academia, here symbolized as the new plantation. In this context, I examine the anathema of the racial question in graduate management education and argue that its domination by white individuals in a predominantly Black society, shaped by a colonial slave-based economy, is both incongruent and violent. Racial diversity in graduate management programs is crucial for training antiracist educators, transforming higher education, and de-lording the academy. To this end, I position elements of Brazil's racial dynamics, interweaving them with evidence of academic exclusion and reflections drawn from my own experience as a Black professor and student. Finally, I present some implications inspired by the thought of Carter G. Woodson.

Keywords: Racism. Antiracism. Teacher Training. Graduate Education.

Received on: 31/08/2024
Approved on: 14/12/2024

RESUMO

Com as ações afirmativas, um número crescente de estudantes negros ingressa nas universidades públicas e precisa de um ambiente educacional sem racismo. Isso impõe novos desafios aos professores de administração desde a sua formação, a qual deve estar comprometida com uma educação antirracista. Entretanto, com a formação docente delegada à pós-graduação, percebe-se que ainda existem grandes lacunas no percurso formativo desse professor. Sendo o Brasil

Humberto Reis dos Santos-Souza
humberto.souza@ifrj.edu.br
Master's degree in Business Administration at Fluminense Federal University - UFF
PhD. Candidate in Business Administration at FEI University Center
Professor at Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Rio de Janeiro - IFRJ
São Paulo / SP – Brazil

RESUMO

herdeiro das marcas de um processo violento de escravização, essas lacunas se tornam abismais diante da clivagem racial na academia, aqui simbolizada como a nova *plantation*. Diante disso, examino o anátema da questão racial na pós-graduação em administração e argumento que o seu domínio por pessoas brancas em uma sociedade majoritariamente negra, herdeira de uma economia colonial escravagista, é incongruente e violento. Saliento que a diversidade racial na pós-graduação em administração é crucial para a formação de professores antirracistas, para a transformação da educação superior e para dessenhorizar a academia. Assim, posiciono alguns elementos da questão racial no Brasil, entrelaçando-os com algumas evidências da exclusão acadêmica e parte da minha vivência como professor e estudante negro. Por fim, apresento algumas implicações alinhadas ao pensamento de Woodson.
Palavras-chave: Racismo. Antirracismo. Formação de Professores. Pós-Graduação.

Introduction

Although Black people constitute most of the Brazilian population (IBGE, 2022), racial exclusion in higher education – particularly in the field of management – reveals a deep and often silenced divide. Moura (1983), in his critique of the myth of racial democracy, draws on the metaphor of the "sweet itch of the sand flea" to illustrate how Brazilian society tolerates, naturalizes, and even derives pleasure from certain forms of racial oppression inherited from the colonial order. The *bicho-de-pé* – a tiny flea that burrows under the skin – causes an irritating itch that is at first tolerable and, up to a point, disturbingly pleasurable. This sensation mirrors how racial issues are perceived in academia: an open wound that is ignored, yet perversely indulged.

Faced with this persistent "itch," I argue that the predominantly white dominance of higher education – particularly graduate programs in management – in a society that is majority Black is both incongruous and violent. This is the central argument of this essay. Despite some advances in representation, Black students remain a minority in graduate business education (Anpadata, 2024). As for faculty, the racial gap between white and Black professors is so stark that it becomes axiomatic – these data do not even exist.

Beyond the lack of racial diversity, there is also a systematic effort to suppress epistemic plurality. The dominance of Western European thought frameworks in management science is not merely a theoretical preference but reflects a colonial legacy, in which the legitimacy of knowledge is anchored in Eurocentric (Munanga, 2019; Quijano, 2000) or white-centered (Bernardino-Costa & Borges, 2021) perspectives. Consequently, research that highlights the contributions of the Black experience to management knowledge has found little resonance, especially from the Global South (Barros & Alcadipani, 2023; Cooke, 2003; Imas, 2023; Sabino & Teixeira, 2023, Teixeira et al., 2021).

In this context, the absence of Black perspectives in academia directly shapes the identity formation of those who increasingly access these institutions (Fanon, 2020; Munanga, 1999; Bernardino-Costa & Borges, 2021). Still, the metaphor of the "itch" persists: racial exclusion in academia is tolerated and naturalized, sustaining what I symbolically refer to as the new plantation.

Historically, the plantation system in Brazil and other colonies was an economic model based on export-oriented monoculture, enslaved labor, and large estates (Ferdinand, 2022). In sugar plantations, the *engenho* (mill) functioned as the productive and symbolic center of wealth, power, and exclusion. This paradox is metaphorically reactivated in the new plantation referenced in this essay's title. Just as the colonial plantation amassed wealth through the exploitation of enslaved labor, today's academia reproduces racial hierarchies. It maintains access to knowledge under the control of a predominantly white intellectual elite.

Thus, the new plantation stands for academia in its broadest sense, including universities, publishers, journals, research centers, agencies, foundations, and government institutions. At the same time, the diploma mill represents the structure of higher education in Brazil (undergraduate and graduate alike), which, with few exceptions, tends to reproduce racial exclusion. If the sugar engenho relied on physical violence and overt coercion, today's diploma mill, the epicenter of the academic plantation, operates through institutional, epistemological, and symbolic barriers that regulate access to resources, to what is recognized as legitimate knowledge, and to viable academic trajectories.

From this institutional, epistemological, and symbolic exclusion emerges the anathema: a term that denotes banishment, excommunication, or collective rejec-

tion. In this essay, the anathema of race refers to the exclusion or marginalization of racial issues in academia (particularly in graduate management education), which impacts students, faculty, and the training of future lecturers and professors.

Like the itch, I hope this anathema provokes discomfort in the reader. In sharing the source of this discomfort, I invite reflection not in the spirit of simplistic antagonism between whites and Blacks but rather through a call to reflexivity, grounded in respect and guided by tolerance. At the same time, this reflection refuses both naïve parochialism and conciliatory idealism. This is not an invitation to justify or relativize racism but rather an attempt to expand the field of knowledge through an open and democratic critique—one that avoids both the replication of the power structures that I question and the comfort of feel-good narratives.

History teaches us that Black people did not create racism, nor have we been the belligerent ones, despite having every reason to be (Woodson, 2021). Even though the African diaspora has been marked by fragmentation and struggle (Nascimento, 2021; Njeri, 2019), "Black may rejoice in the fact that his hands, unlike those of his oppressor, are not stained with so much blood spilled by brute force" (Woodson, 2021, p. 180).

In that sense, when Evaristo (2007, p. 21) reminds us that "our *escrevivência* should not be read as bedtime stories for those in the master's house, but as something to disturb their unjust sleep," we must recognize that the greatest discomfort has been caused by white people. The burden of that discomfort must fall primarily on them. Even so, in writing to return this discomfort to the *casa grande* (the master's house), there is also the writer's own pain. As a Black academic, I cannot afford silence because racism denies me that right. I write because I must. The assault of whiteness is relentless - a saga like that of Prometheus, whose liver is eternally devoured by vultures: a pain that is constant and renewed.

Because of these psychological and 'hepatic' costs, underscoring the inseparability of my academic experience from the anathema of race, I situate this essay within the framework of *escrevivência*: a mode of writing that emerges from lived experience, rooted in the embodied, affective, and epistemic realities of Black existence. Rather than striving for objectivity or neutrality, *escrevivência* affirms the political nature of narration and reclaims the right to knowledge production. (Evaristo, 2007). This is reflected in the choice of topic and the critical tone of the argument. However,

I engage *escrevivência* only partially since fully embracing it would require exposing personal experiences of racism within academia, which could raise institutional concerns. Thus, I commit to critical analysis, balancing lived experience with empirical evidence of academic exclusion.

Aligned with the tenets of *escrevivência*, I affirm that this text is not neutral. Writing must make the author's position explicit in relation to the object of analysis, avoiding an excessively detached posture (Bertero, 2011). An academic essay should articulate a theoretical, critical, and historically grounded standpoint, engaging existing knowledge while opening paths for new analyses (Barros, 2011; Bertero, 2011; Meneghetti, 2011). From this perspective, I write as a researcher, professor, and student in the management field whose lenses are already scratched by racism.

Following these principles, this essay objectives to reflect on the enduring white dominance in academia, particularly in graduate management education, as an expression of the persistence of an exclusionary and racially hierarchical structure inherited from a brutal colonial slave-based model.

To this end, the next section anchors the racial question and the metaphor of the new plantation, outlining key elements for understanding the argument. I then present the conceptualization of the new plantation and the diploma mill interwoven with my lived experience. Afterward, I discuss how Woodson's pedagogy explains the anathema of race, and I argue for the need to de-lord the academy. I clarify my epistemological commitments in that space, followed by final considerations.

The Racial Question and the New Plantation

The racial question in Brazil has been a topic of scholarly inquiry for over a century, grounded in various strands of philosophical and social thought (Jaime et al., 2024; Paixão, 2014; Rosa, 2014) and the subject of extensive research. Racism, as an economic, historical, social, and cultural phenomenon, presents vast and complex dimensions. For this reason, and given the introductory and contextual nature of this section, I will not delve into all its nuances. Nevertheless, in the organizational field, important studies have been conducted by Jaime (2022), Jaime et al. (2024), Jaime and Santos-Souza (2025), and Rosa (2014), which I will not revisit here. Instead, to reflect on

the anathema of race in management education, I focus on three conceptual starting points: racial democracy, the social marker of race, and affirmative action policies.

The first is the notion of racial democracy, which, though widely debunked, continues to exert ideological force, obscuring the Black holocaust that claimed millions of lives through a bloody system of exploitation (Moura, 1983; Njeri, 2019; Paixão, 2014; Souza, 2021a). This theory promotes the idea of racial harmony while ignoring the systemic inequalities that shape Brazilian society (Rosa, 2014) and its educational system (Paixão, 2008). Moura (1983) critiques this narrative by showing how it fragments the historical reality of slavery, portraying Africans as if they existed in a state of absolute subordination and, worse, as if they were content in that condition. Drawing on Gilberto Freyre, Moura (1983) highlights how the dominant classes romanticized their experiences with enslaved labor, a kind of "sweet itch of the *bicho-de-pé*": a metaphor that captures the perverse pleasure derived from oppression. This perspective erases the feelings and perceptions of the enslaved themselves, who sustained the parasitic existence of the landowning class – from the food placed directly into the mouths of slaveholders by Black women to the first experiences of physical love, often resulting from the rape committed by the sons of sugar plantation masters (Moura, 1983).

The idea of racial democracy thus offers a romanticized view of slavery, shaped by the values of the *casa grande* (Moura, 1983; Souza, 2021a). Nevertheless, the enduring legacy of Brazil's colonial slave-based model is visible in patterns of spatial segregation, mass incarceration, and unequal access to healthcare, education (Paixão, 2008, 2014; Souza, 2021a), and employment opportunities (Jaime et al., 2024; Jaime, 2022; Jaime & Santos-Souza, 2024, 2025; Paixão, 2014). This ideological myth underpins a racist policy framework that enacts physical, social, academic, and intellectual extermination of the Black population (Moura, 1983). It sustains a structure that continues to shape wealth distribution, power relations, and kinship configurations in favor of a privileged group that remains dominant today (Muniz, 2024). This occurs under an elitist and authoritarian regime of repression that has persisted for over a century after abolition (Moura, 1983; Souza, 2021a), sustained by the rhetoric that racism does not, and has never, existed in Brazil. This construction has allowed for "utopian interpretations of a society free from racial tensions and conflicts" (Rosa, 2017, p. 256).

However, this utopia quickly dissolves when we consider police brutality and the mass incarceration of young Black people, realities that have been denounced for decades yet persist as modern manifestations of a violent legacy (Moura, 1983; Souza, 2021a). These dynamics are deeply embedded in education: the level of schooling among Black youth killed by the police, or among those imprisoned, is notoriously low (Cerqueira & Coelho, 2017). Still, the idea of racial democracy minimizes these realities, functioning as a mechanism that perpetuates racism denial and obstructs the implementation of effective public policies aimed at racial equity, ultimately protecting the interests of a racially hegemonic elite (Moura, 1983; Souza, 2021a). As education and repression are two sides of the same structure, the institutionalized violence of the State and systemic exclusion are inextricably linked to the lack of racial diversity in higher education (Cerqueira & Coelho, 2017; Foucault, 2022; Paixão, 2008).

The second conceptual anchor is the social marker of race. This is because race is no longer considered a valid biological category; biologists have agreed since the mid-20th century that no genetic basis exists to support racial typologies (Munanga, 2004). However, the social reality of race continues to determine lived experience. Despite the collapse of biological racial categories, the social marker of race remains powerfully operative in statistical data related to the judicial system, access to health and, mainly education, particularly in the field of management (Anpadata, 2024; Cerqueira & Coelho, 2017; Paixão, 2008, 2014; Souza, 2021a). This social marker still seems more compelling than the biological one to security guards, business owners, judges, and, perhaps most troublingly, professors and lecturers (Jaime & Santos-Souza, 2024, 2025; Lima, 2001; Rosa & Facchini, 2022).

These manifestations reveal a symbolic contradiction: While we claim to belong to one human race, we sustain systems that exclude Black humanity, treating socially constructed differences as if they were biological facts (Souza, 2021a, p. 210). These first two points bring us to a central tension: the denial of racism based on an idyllic notion of equality, which often serves to delegitimize affirmative action (Neves & Barreto, 2022).

This leads to the third and final anchor: affirmative action in Brazilian public higher education institutions. These policies, backed by legislation, have led to a

more equitable distribution of university slots for Black students (Neves & Barreto, 2022). It is important to note that, historically, the system has favored wealthy white students from private schools, who still make up 50% of the reserved slots. Given that 87.5% of Brazilian students attend public schools, racial quotas (already diluted into broader socioeconomic criteria) barely address the privilege entrenched in Brazil's public education system since its inception. (Borges & Bernardino-Costa, 2022a, 2022b). Nonetheless, some degree of racial diversity has emerged, and the presence of Black students must be met with structural and pedagogical sensitivity (Queiroz, 2021).

On this issue, Brazil's leading research funding agency (Zago & Felício, 2022), the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP), conducted a study showing that the academic performance gap between quota students and those admitted through traditional competitive entry is statistically insignificant (Queiroz, 2021). In some qualitative assessments, Black students even outperform their white peers (Queiroz, 2021; Rosa & Faccini, 2022). Despite continued criticism of affirmative action, it is crucial to emphasize that FAPESP's findings are not speculative but based on replicable and verifiable research methods.

These three initial elements do not fully explain the marginalization of racial issues in graduate management education. However, they invite reflection on the incongruity of white dominance in graduate programs in a country where the majority of the population is Black. Among many possible approaches, I have chosen these three because, despite the advances enabled by affirmative action, the social marker of race still functions as a persistent mechanism of exclusion. The myth of racial democracy ignores a historical legacy that continues to restrict Black access to spaces of knowledge and power. This exclusionary structure can be observed in cases reported by Ari Lima (2001) and Rosa and Facchini (2022), which point to the ongoing existence of what I call the new plantation.

The plantation was a colonial system of exploitation organized around large rural estates. Within this hierarchical structure, white European landowners or their descendants occupied the top, and enslaved Africans were positioned at the bottom, treated as property (Ferdinand, 2022). In sugar plantations, the *engenho,* or sugar mill, functioned as the operational hub of the production process (Antonil, 1711). There, extractive monoculture was converted into sugar lumps stained with

the blood of Black humanity (Ferdinand, 2022). The land and enslaved labor were exploited for the enrichment of colonial shareholders at the cost of normalized violence against Africans and Indigenous peoples (Ferdinand, 2022).

In parallel, colonialism's "world-devouring" mode of inhabiting (Ferdinand, 2022, p. 168) found in the Western university a crucial pillar for legitimizing, structuring, and expanding its exploitative regime. The university contributed to the dissemination of a rationality that upheld colonial domination. As a result, the modern university consolidated coloniality, determining which forms of knowledge are considered legitimate (Quijano, 2000).

In this way, this essay positions academia as a new kind of plantation, one that operates an extractive monoculture centered on a whitewashed, Anglo-Eurocentric episteme (Bernardino-Costa & Borges, 2021; Borges & Bernardino, 2022a, 2022b). Mills (2023) notes that white scholars developed most canonical books and courses, reflecting a deeply ingrained system of privilege. This is so normalized that it often goes unnoticed even by those who benefit from it. The academic plantation thus authorizes a power structure in which white individuals, who have historically governed, continue to govern the lives and knowledge of nonwhite populations.

Furthermore, this dominant class "jealously guards its educational privileges, which ensure high salaries, prestige, and the power to exploit and humiliate Black and poor individuals" (Souza, 2021a, p. 262), pursuing that same sweet itch of the bicho-de-pé (Moura, 1983). In this analogy, the new plantation encompasses not only the university but also the wider academic-industrial complex, which includes schools, publishers, journals, research centers, foundations, government agencies, and higher education in general, particularly graduate education, which serves as the diploma mill, the central operational core of this structure.

Given the interdependence among higher education levels, such as undergraduate and graduate courses, many of these dynamics inevitably influence graduate programs as a whole. However, this discussion focuses specifically on graduate programs in management and, by extension, on training antiracist educators within that field. Due to the structural neglect of racial issues in graduate education, it would be naïve to think that this neglect does not directly impact teacher training. This structural neglect will be addressed in the next section.

The New Plantation and the Diploma Mill

In Brazil, CAPES (Brazilian Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education), a agency under the Ministry of Education (MEC), is responsible for the development and evaluation of graduate education, among other duties (Brasil, 2022). In the analogy I propose here, CAPES functions as a certifying body of the diploma mill, as it oversees the evaluation of the graduate education system. Yet, I was unable to locate any information on racial diversity among faculty in graduate programs in management on the official CAPES website (Plataforma Sucupira, 2024). Based on the Access to Information Law, which guarantees public access to information for the purposes of social accountability in Brazil (Brasil, 2011), I contacted CAPES on July 16, 2024, requesting anonymized and aggregated data on the racial composition of faculty members. Within the legal timeframe, I received the following response:

> "[…] we clarify that information related to racial/ethnic background, gender, and health are considered sensitive data under the General Data Protection Law (LGPD) and therefore cannot be made available individually. Such information is not included in CAPES' Open Data Portal or in any of the Foundation's other information access channels. For requests regarding the aforementioned data, there is the possibility of requesting summarized extraction through the Data and Information Management Office via the email c****@capes.gov.br. However, we alert that race/color information is voluntarily submitted on Plataforma Sucupira and is only included in the database when provided by graduate programs".

This argumentation reveals a discursive strategy (Foucault, 2014, 2022; Orlandi, 2015) that legitimizes and perpetuates a kind of erasure. The justification for protecting sensitive data is not applicable in this case since there is a well-established understanding that the LGPD does not prohibit the release of aggregated and anonymized data (Bioni, 2020).

Indeed, INEP (National Institute for Educational Studies and Research) publishes race/color data for both K–12 and undergraduate faculty, and the IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) does the same for the general population (INEP, 2024; IBGE, 2022). Given that the graduate education system has existed for roughly 70 years (Sucupira, 1980), the lack of racial data collection constitutes a deliberate form of negligence, especially considering that the LGPD was only enact-

ed in 2018 and that racial data was not collected even prior to this law. This kind of judicialized discourse, which appears to rest on legal grounds, in fact operates as a mechanism of exclusion by disregarding the practices of peer public institutions that, in alignment with the LGPD, regularly publish this type of data.

Additionally, CAPES' discursive strategy (Foucault, 2014, 2022; Orlandi, 2015) misrepresented my request by suggesting that I had asked for individualized data. This distortion was accompanied by extra procedural steps for obtaining the information, in clear contradiction with legal principles (Brasil, 1988, 2011). Since these data could expose racial inequalities, the omission may be understood as a strategy to avoid challenging the current order. Yet, these are public interest data and are crucial for understanding the lack of racial diversity in graduate programs.

Furthermore, the discursive practices and strategies used by CAPES seem to institute a regime of truth (Foucault, 2014, 2022; Orlandi, 2015), which, under the pretext of protecting sensitive data, constructs a reality that undermines the legitimacy of racial data disclosure. The use of the word "alert," for instance, functions as a disclaimer that the Foundation does not consider itself responsible for evaluating racial diversity, delegating this responsibility to the discretion of each graduate program.

However, the evaluation of graduate programs and the training of high-level professionals are, in fact, responsibilities of CAPES (2024). According to the National Graduate Education Plan, developed and managed by CAPES (2024), one of the key challenges for the coming years is to expand diversity and inclusiveness within graduate education. It is difficult to believe that the agency tasked with evaluating programs that train professors and researchers at the highest level can truly promote racial diversity and inclusion while failing to collect or publicly disclose data on the racial makeup of its faculty. After all, how can one evaluate what is not known? This behavior on the part of CAPES may well be classified as State racism (Barros II, 2018; Munanga, 2004; Souza, 2021a).

These arguments grounded my rebuttal to CAPES. In response, the agency openly admitted that it does not collect racial-ethnic data on faculty members. It also stated that there was no intent to conceal such information, foster privilege, or engage in State racism because Ordinance CAPES 99/2024 had established the Graduate Education Census. Logically, this implies that until the issuance of said ordinance, CAPES did conceal information, did foster privilege, and did engage in

State racism for over seventy years. The agency's reply also failed to explain the reasons for such prolonged inertia.

In short, CAPES initially claimed it could not provide race/color data on graduate faculty due to legal restrictions and that I would need to identify myself and formally request the data extraction. However, when I appealed this decision and demonstrated that there were no legal impediments, the agency formally admitted that it does not collect these data. This institutional behavior appears to reflect both internalized social practices and a technocratic modus operandi that preserves the status quo. It suggests that those responsible for crafting the responses may never have questioned the institution's operational logic. Still, it is incoherent for different departments within the same agency to adopt such divergent positions that shift only in response to legal and institutional pressure. The underlying question remains: What would have been CAPES' official stance if I had not appealed to the highest level? By presenting an initially outlandish response, followed by a formal admission of omission and inertia, CAPES disregards centuries of slavery and the post-abolition policies that have systematically marginalized the Black population. In doing so, the nation's leading federal institution for teacher education reduces Black humanity to academic invisibility.

Whether this omission is intentional or institutional, the outcome is the same: as a Black student, researcher, and professor, I am once again subjected to racism by an institution that should be protecting me. It is painful to realize that we are targets of erasure, silencing, and marginalization in graduate education statistics in such a deliberate and overwhelming way. This shows how a select class still manages part of the diploma mill, while reinforcing the anathema of race in the new plantation.

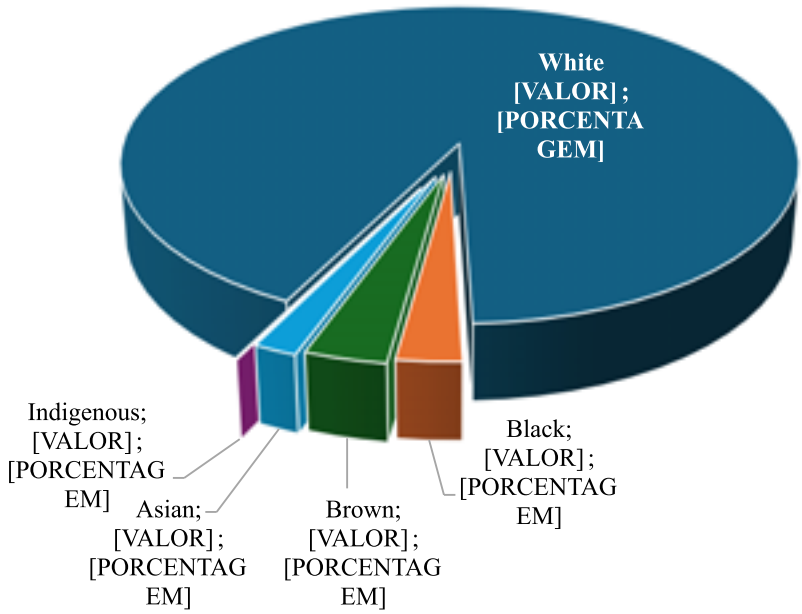
To visualize this anathema within the management field, I selected graduate programs rated six and seven (the highest scores in CAPES' four-year evaluation (Plataforma Sucupira, 2024a)) to analyze racial and curricular diversity. Aware of the complexities involved in this type of evaluation, I made this selection for two reasons. First, limiting the scope of the study: collecting data from each individual graduate program would require a different methodological approach. It would depend on institutional responses, given that CAPES itself does not conduct this data collection, though it should. Second, CAPES (2021) emphasizes that programs with such ratings tend to demonstrate international standards of excellence, with strong leadership, national visibility, and high impact in knowledge production. These pro-

grams often set the benchmarks for quality and innovation, as well as leading new debates and integrating new theoretical and methodological approaches.

Of course, this selection does not represent the broader reality of most graduate programs in management. However, it does make the new plantation more tangible, serving as an initial effort to define the diploma mill and its silence about the training of antiracist educators' management. Thus, the inclusion of these empirical descriptions serves a critical function in defining the object of study, not in representing a statistical profile of all graduate programs. They are not intended to exhaust the issue but rather to surface what official statistics and institutional discourse insist on obscuring.

With these considerations in mind, I turn to the 2022 Higher Education Census (INEP, 2024), which presents the racial composition of undergraduate faculty in management. I cross-referenced this information with data from Plataforma Sucupira (2024a), isolating programs rated highest in the most recent CAPES evaluation cycle.

Figure 1. The New Plantation: Proportion of faculty self-identifying as Black in schools hosting graduate programs in management rated six or seven.



Source: Elaborated by the author based on data from INEP (2024) and Plataforma Sucupira (2024a).

An approximate illustration of the new plantation can be seen in Figure 1. Among professors who declared their race/ethnicity across all courses offered by institutions hosting graduate programs in management rated six and seven, only 3.41% identified as *pardo* (brown) and 2.7% as *preto* (Black). Even though these programs are in the South and Southeast regions, the disparity is so vast that it does not reflect the racial composition of those regions. These data alone point to a serious issue regarding racial diversity among faculty at these schools. Clearly, this offers only a partial view of graduate education, as it includes faculty from all programs (both undergraduate and graduate), so caution is required when extrapolating. Still, I was able to isolate the entire faculty of one business school rated seven, and the proportion of Black faculty was 6.64%. Whether analyzed collectively or individually, the programs followed a clear pattern: for every 20 professors, only one is Black.

The mere absence of a representative number of Black faculty members in these spaces (undergraduate and graduate) reinforces the idea that this is not our place. It is a profound challenge to "find the strength to overcome adversity and avoid being uneducated by a perverse reality that propagates the idea that Blackness deforms the subject and relegates them to a position of subservience" (Souza, 2021a, p. 9) rather than one of intellectual production.

Using the same classification established for racial diversity, on June 30, 2024, I analyzed the mandatory curricular components of these graduate programs based on information available on their websites to identify any alignment with racial issues. I focused on mandatory curricular components because all graduate students in management may eventually become educators. However, I emphasize that the same caution applied to racial diversity data (Figure 1) must also be applied here: the absence of a required course does not imply a complete silencing of racial issues in every graduate program.

With that caveat, the curriculum analysis reveals that none of these programs include, as a mandatory component, the intersection of organizations and racial studies, which has been a century-long tradition in the social sciences. Given the Brazilian socio-historical context, one would expect these programs to recognize and address the links between organizations and race, especially in a time when inclusive and socially responsible education is a global demand. Although these highly

rated programs are at the forefront of academic innovation (CAPES, 2021), often discussing critical and socially relevant perspectives, the racial question remains far from central in the training of educators and researchers in this field. This absence can be interpreted as a form of power (Foucault, 2014; Orlandi, 2005).

Even considering some advances, this distance is nonsensical—not only for moral and ethical reasons, but also because Black people represent a billion-dollar market, and in absolute numbers, they constitute the majority of the workforce, the entrepreneurial base, and the consumer market (IBGE, 2022; Instituto Locomotiva, 2022). As graduate education is a core space for the production and dissemination of knowledge, the absence of racial discussions in mandatory coursework signals a disconnect from the urgent need to train educators, researchers, and professionals capable of engaging with the racial complexities that cut across both corporate life and management education.

The analysis of racial diversity and curriculum in this sample indicates that high-ranking programs remain predominantly white (epistemologically, structurally, and in personnel terms) 136 years after the formal end of slavery in Brazil. This reflects the atavistic persistence of a perverse process that naturalizes inequality in the educational system (Paixão, 2008).

Still, discussing teacher training boundaries in management graduate education can be challenging because the diploma mill never ceases to produce managers, professors, and researchers. These graduates often go on to teach at the undergraduate level, where training is frequently criticized for its functionalist and instrumental character (Alcadipani, 2011, 2011a; Souza-Silva, Paixão, & Lima, 2022). Considering that most graduate programs in management do not offer structured teacher training (Souza-Silva et al., 2022), even though the responsibility for teacher preparation has been delegated to them (Santos-Souza & Oliveira, 2019), it is wishful thinking to believe that antiracist educators can be trained without a critical mass of Black professors in graduate management education. The absence of these voices and perspectives already constitutes a form of violence.

To illustrate these epistemic and demographic absences and the violence they entail, I turn to an element of the new plantation: didactic materials. Given that human resource management is the subfield most commonly associated with diversity and inclusion, I analyzed the textbook used in the world and adapted to Brazil

called “Organizational Behavior: Theory and Practice in the Brazilian Context”, still commercially available (Robbins, Judge & Sobral, 2011).

The analysis reveals that of the 298 images depicting people in various contexts, only 22 show Black individuals. None of these are portrayed in positions of power such as executives, managers, or leaders. Most are represented through stereotypes or in service roles. This is exemplified in Figure 2, in the cliché of the Black person serving coffee or working in the kitchen. Unsurprisingly, this textbook is positioned as suitable for the Brazilian context: it reflects the dynamics of racial exclusion and hierarchy.

Figure 2. The New Plantation: How Black People Are Represented.

Source: Robbins, Judge & Sobral, 2011, pp. 80, 177.

As a pedagogical tool, the textbook reinforces a symbolic maintenance of white people in control positions. It creates an environment conducive to racism through education (Woodson, 2021), as other textbooks in the field show similar characteristics.

In this sense, I highlight that the academic erasure carried out by CAPES, the scarcity of Black faculty in graduate management education, the absence of racial

discussions in teacher training, and the invisibility or stereotyping of Black people in textbooks are not naïve or unknown phenomena. These elements are part of a system that sustains the status quo, promoting the idea that Black people are destined for service roles, not positions of power. This entire panoptic apparatus (Alcadipani, 2005) reinforces, explicitly or implicitly, the perceived "social place" of Black individuals (Souza, 2021a, p. 267).

Within the new plantation and its diploma mill, very little has been conceived for Black humanity. I say this because, over the course of my academic life (34 years, from elementary school to the doctoral level), nearly a hundred professors have shaped my intellectual development, but only two of them identified as Black. My earliest memory of racism also took place in an educational setting, delivered by a white teacher when I was eleven. Since then, I have realized that racism does not fade as one advances in academia; it becomes more sophisticated. At higher levels, it is harder to identify, as it takes on subtle, perverse, and cowardly forms. In my experience, the racist professor knows how to operate in the shadows of legality and institutional oversight, especially in private institutions, where silence and impunity ensure the continuity of this violence.

Another form of violence is the lack of representation. At graduate-level academic events like EnANPAD (Brazilian Academy of Management Annual Metting) and SEMEAD (Seminars in Administration of the School of Economics, Business, and Accounting of the University of São Paulo), I am often one of the few or the only Black participants walking through the corridors, attending conferences and panels. In none of these events have I witnessed Black keynote speakers or panelists. I feel that, despite the progress, change will take a long time to reach strategic spaces, as there are insurmountable barriers that push us into the dilemma of a "cosmetic diversity policy" (Bernardino-Costa & Borges, 2021, p. 14).

Thus, in terms of inclusion, "perhaps what initially appears as divergence actually reveals a kind of convergence in which the goal of never reaching what does not exist is carefully preserved. After all, failing to reach a place that does not exist is simply remaining where one already is" (Cruz & Glat, p. 269). Based on this reflection, my own experience, and the contours of the new plantation, there seems to be a tacit convergence aimed at maintaining things as they are or chasing a goal that was never genuinely intended or that remains unreachable under current structures.

CAPES is an example of this: it consigned Black graduate faculty to a non-existent place for more than seventy years.

Although the entirety of graduate education is beyond the scope of this discussion, it is difficult to comprehend how CAPES intends to create a racially inclusive and equitable environment for teacher training (CAPES, 2024) when it has never known the racial composition of its graduate faculty. Further questions arise: How can we foster the training of antiracist educators in management when there are signs that some programs do not address race in their core curricula? How can we promote antiracist education in management without the perspectives of Black professors and by relying on textbooks that either erase us or reproduce harmful stereotypes? Despite some progress, the available evidence suggests that the policies, discourses, and actions that claim to promote transformation are actually designed to preserve racial hierarchies and existing power relations. This process creates only an illusion of progress, instrumentalizing education, which should be the main tool to combat racism, as a mechanism for reproducing inequality, as I will demonstrate in the next section.

The New Plantation and the Pedagogy of Woodson

Carter G. Woodson was an African American historian, writer, and educator, being the second Black person to earn a PhD in history from Harvard University, in 1912. Considered one of the pioneers of multicultural education, his trajectory was marked by a determined effort to challenge the racist and distorted portrayals of African Americans and the histories of African peoples found in U.S. educational materials. Despite these foundational contributions, Woodson is often omitted from mainstream narratives concerning the development of social and curricular studies (King, Crowley, & Brown, 2010).

Similar to what happened in the U.S. during Woodson's time, a distorted view of Black humanity, disconnected from the realities of African peoples, was also promoted in Brazil by figures like Nina Rodrigues, Monteiro Lobato, and Gilberto Freyre. (Munanga, 2004). African peoples have long been credited with the domestication of animals, the discovery of iron, the development of stringed instruments, cesarean

surgery, advancements in fine arts and architecture, and the institution of jury trials, along with their contributions to ancient Mediterranean civilizations (Sewell, 1993; Woodson, 2021). Nevertheless, the oppressors of the new plantation raise their voices to say otherwise: They teach that Black history is undervalued, that Black people have never achieved anything significant, and that they will not accomplish anything great. They portray the slave regime as benign, like a fairy tale. Within this logic of oppression, one learns to admire and value Hebrews, Greeks, Romans, and Teutons, to the point where, as Woodson writes, "such is the education of the Black individuals. He has been taught to study the achievements of others and to imitate them in life" (Woodson, 2021, p. 137).

This idea of white superiority has the power to inscribe in the Black subconscious an understanding of their "place" in society, reinforcing white supremacy at the heart of our conceptions of humanity (Davis, 2022; Fanon, 2020; Munanga, 1999). That is why Woodson (2021, p. 181) emphasizes that if you control a person's thinking, "you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to go through the front door. He will go to the back door on his own. And if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit." This manifestation of power was demonstrated in the previous section through the analysis of textbooks and the racial divide in graduate management education. In this context, Woodson's central idea (2021, p. 181) is that the educational system was designed to control Black thought because, "if you can make a man feel that he is inferior, you do not have to compel him to accept an inferior status, for he will seek it himself."

While formal education may be "one of the few paths to improve the lives of Black and poor people, it is no guarantee that such improvement will actually happen" (Souza, 2021a, p. 8). The extent to which higher education has succeeded in convincing Black people that they are the purpose of education has only resulted in greater discontent, as "he now sees the trend of things and learns to face life as it is" (Woodson, 2021, p. 39). It is as though the system trains the Black person to become white while simultaneously convincing them of the impossibility of becoming so (Fanon, 2020).

Woodson's pedagogy (2021) teaches us that, as Black people, we have not yet been freed from mental enslavement, for we have been trained to think as others want us to think. We must liberate ourselves from these suffocating traditions

and recover from the education we have received (Woodson, 2021). This is because, as Fanon (2020) warns, the Black person who reads Montesquieu must be watched, even as they are expected to be a so-called "good Negro", that is one who does not question the status quo and aligns with the dominant societal ideals. It is as if, though legally free, we remain intellectually enslaved by an educational system that teaches us to believe in an illusion of economic and social emancipation. As the saying goes, "Those whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad" (attributed to Euripides).

A sign that we have been trained to think as others desire is that, throughout my academic journey and career as a professor, I never received adequate training to understand racial issues in the context of management or education. I do not believe this is an isolated experience among management educators. It is profoundly violent to realize that, in a nation so deeply marked by racism, we still fail to address racial relations in practice and in teacher education, especially considering the goals of the 2030 Agenda. It becomes evident that management education was not designed for Black people. As Woodson (2021) reminds us, we have never been truly educated.

Although Black humanity has made significant contributions across various fields of knowledge and culture, its impact on the field of management remains largely overlooked, despite the important role that Black populations played in the operation of pre-industrial economic systems. (Cooke, 2003). Adapted from African practices to the Brazilian context, management models were embedded in the organizational practices of *quilombos* and in mercantile commerce operated by Black people. For centuries, these *quilombos* resisted the colonial slave-based system and the most powerful military forces of their time. These communities developed production, distribution, and trade systems involving enslaved people earning their own income (*escravizados de ganho*), Indigenous populations, and even the Portuguese Crown (Gomes, 2015; Stucchi et al., 2000).

This quilombo economic system exhibited a remarkable level of managerial complexity for its era, illustrating that coordinated and effective practices were in place to sustain the growth and survival of these communities (Dias, 1985). Even the *engenho* (sugar mill), as the operational center of colonial sugar production, embodied early managerial ideas, with clear production control systems and labor division

(Antonil, 1711). These factors suggest that the history of management thought, particularly in relation to the resistance and survival strategies of Black communities, diverges significantly from the narratives typically presented in mainstream management literature (Cooke, 2003).

Beyond these historical contributions, Brazil's Black population today represents most of its entrepreneurial class and constitutes a trillion-real market with approximately 120 million individuals (Instituto Locomotiva, 2022). Evidently, this market is becoming increasingly aware of its racial identity, and business schools must pay attention to this shift. In short, as Woodson (2021) states, there is an urgent need to uncover the true history of Black humanity: where it came from, what it is today, and what it can become.

De-Lording the Academy and Its Diploma Mill in Management

Woodson's pedagogy reveals how education has historically shaped Black thought (King et al., 2010), with academia functioning as a primary site for sustaining this system (Mills, 2023). In this context, de-lording the academy emerges as a strategy to challenge hegemonic modes of knowledge production and enunciation that have historically structured science. This process involves a necessarily "anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-imperialist" agenda, confronting the frameworks that reproduce racial and epistemic hierarchies (Borges & Bernardino-Costa, 2022a, p. 21). Colonialism, with its aggressive logic of exploitation (Ferdinand, 2022), found in the Western university one of its core pillars for legitimizing and expanding its system (Quijano, 2000). Therefore, the process of de-lording the academy seeks to disrupt white-centered epistemic hegemony and affirm alternative intellectual production (Bernardino-Costa & Borges, 2021; Borges & Bernardino-Costa, 2022b). Drawing on the concerns raised by Woodson (2021), I propose a threefold framework for de-lording: epistemological, methodological, and practical. These levels can obviously be challenged, expanded, or reconfigured.

Epistemologically, this involves the radical integration of ancestral and local knowledge into academic practices, acknowledging that Indigenous, quilombo

practices, African, and Afro-Brazilian epistemologies are not merely objects of study, but valid sources of theory and methodology (Alperstedt & Andion, 2017; Borges & Bernardino-Costa, 2022b), including for understanding organizational phenomena. (Jaime & Santos-Souza, 2024; Imas, 2023; Jaime et al., 2024; Sabino & Pinheiro, 2023; Rosa, 2014). In addition to this integration, it is crucial to give visibility to decolonial approaches and intersectional feminisms, which remain marginalized within management studies (Alperstedt & Andion, 2017; Barros & Alcadipani, 2023). Such integration demands a rethinking of dominant curricular structures, embracing a pluralist approach that values diverse perspectives and avoids the kind of epistemological lynching often driven by academic prejudice (Alperstedt & Andion, 2017; Soares & Machado, 2017; Zanola, 2023). This revision may also extend to didactic materials.

I believe it is possible to broaden the foundational lens of management education, which has traditionally centered on European military and religious organizations, the Puritan ethos of the United States, and the principles of bureaucracy (Motta & Vasconcelos, 2006), to also account for our own historical and social contexts (Sabino & Pinheiro, 2023; Rosa, 2014).

This epistemic shift demands the creation of dialogical and collective spaces of reflection inspired by the organization of quilombos (Ferdinand, 2022; Moura, 1983; Nascimento, 2021). Study groups, reading circles, and open seminars can be established to promote a kind of circular science rather than a factory-like model, where collaboration and shared experience are prioritized over hierarchy. In these spaces, science becomes a communal and emancipatory act, challenging the notion of knowledge production as a solitary and competitive endeavor.

Methodologically, research must become a practice that strengthens ties between academia and marginalized communities. By directly involving these communities in the research process, academic output becomes more critical, relevant, and committed to social justice, respecting their knowledge systems and responding to their needs (Alperstedt & Andion, 2017; Borges & Bernardino-Costa, 2022b). It is also necessary to shift the analytical focus beyond the effects of racism and redirect the method toward examining the mechanisms and attacks of whiteness itself.

In practical terms, robust affirmative action policies are not enough; they must be accompanied by mentorship programs, scholarships, and psychological support to ensure that students from all backgrounds have equal opportunities to access and thrive in academia. It is useless to promote racial diversity in an environment that institutionalizes racism (Bernardino-Costa & Borges, 2021). From personal experience, I can say that this deeply affects the physical and mental health of Black students.

Still, in practical terms, higher education must provide tools that allow both students and faculty to report racism safely without fear of retaliation. Schools must actively commit to anti-racist efforts by institutionalizing diversity committees and creating inclusive and welcoming environments. These committees can critically assess the teaching staff's diversity while ensuring that racist behavior results in clear consequences, whether from faculty or students. These consequences should not be limited to punitive measures that combat impunity but should also include the establishment of educational spaces. As I have shown, racism is a complex issue, and recognizing one's own racism is not always an obvious or straightforward task, particularly considering the structural benefits of whiteness.

Furthermore, given the structure of Brazilian society and consumer market, graduate programs (whether academic or professional, master's or doctoral) should include at least one mandatory course focused on racial studies. This also applies to courses on teacher education at the graduate level, which should incorporate content that addresses the specific needs of Black students, who will continue to enter universities. Graduate programs may also implement institutionalized activities aimed at raising awareness and combating racism beyond the symbolic confines of Black History Month. These activities can and should take place even in programs that currently lack Black students or faculty, since such absences already signal a serious problem that must be addressed.

In Brazil, while public universities have made progress in expanding affirmative policies and compliance measures in both faculty and student admissions, there are still major private foundations that, despite receiving substantial tax incentives, have yet to implement access and retention policies for Black students. It is unacceptable that a system of incentives funded by the majority of the population continues to exclude Black people.

Table 1. Challenges and Implications for De-Lording the Academy.

Challenge	Connection to Woodson	Implication
Dominance of graduate programs by white faculty	Woodson critiques white control over education, which keeps Black people in subordinate positions.	Institutionalize affirmative action for faculty and expand access and support policies for Black students.
Difficulty in retaining Black students	The educational system was designed to exclude Black people or reduce them to mere spectators.	Implement institutionalized mentorship programs, scholarships, and psychological support.
Academic racism and racial erasure	If the system prevents Black people from accessing power, they remain objects rather than subjects in academia.	Formal reporting tools, protection against retaliation, and institutional accountability. Broaden epistemic and methodological lenses.
Absence of racial issues in curricula	Woodson points out that Black people are taught to value only white-centered knowledge, ignoring their own contributions.	Mandatory inclusion of curricular components or courses on racial issues in graduate management programs.
Eurocentric academic production and exclusion of Black perspectives	The educational system teaches Black people to imitate whites instead of developing their own thinking.	Shift the research perspective in management and organization studies toward Black, feminist, Indigenous, and Global South epistemologies.
Institutional resistance to change	Without autonomy and control over their own learning, Black people remain dependent on spaces not designed for them.	Establish racial diversity committees to ensure active voices for Black faculty and students.

Source: Developed by the author drawing on Woodson (2021) and Bernardino-Costa & Borges (2021).

These elements suggest that de-lording the academy, beyond changing how knowledge is produced, requires a continuous interrogation of the power structures that uphold racism and maintain privilege in both academia and its diploma mill (Bernardino-Costa & Borges, 2021; Woodson, 2021). Following Foucault's (2022) insight that madness is constituted by the asylum, we might ask: What institutions, discourses, and symbols constitute someone as racist?

As an educator, I believe that we must imagine a science committed to emancipation and social transformation, not simply the maximization of organizational outcomes, especially in a society on the brink of climate and social collapse (Alperstedt & Andion, 2017). For this reason, thinking about education with and for Black people will require even more of our pedagogical practice. It will demand that we think about what we have never thought before and ask what we have never dared to ask. In light of this challenge, Table 1 outlines some implications and possible paths, linking Woodson's pedagogy to the imperative of de-lording the academy in pursuit of antiracist education.

Final Considerations

At this point in the reading, I invite the reader to reflect: considering that the majority of the Brazilian population self-identifies as Black, can you say that 56% of your professors throughout your academic journey were Black? Could you affirm that 87.5% of them had attended public schools? How many Black professors accompanied your path in graduate education? Based on the likely answers to these questions, and from the connections I have drawn between elements of the racial issue, the fractures in graduate management education, Woodson's pedagogy, and my lived experience, I reaffirm my central argument: the dominance of graduate programs in management by white individuals in a society that is majority Black and inherits a colonial slave-based economy is both incongruent and violent.

These reflections on the anathema of race, along with the articulation of Woodson's thought and the expansion of the concepts of the new plantation and its diploma mill, contribute a theoretical advancement by exposing how management education still reflects the logic of racial exclusion within academia. Given that the

new plantation and its diploma mill are not neutral spaces, their structures must be critically challenged and transformed to integrate antiracist perspectives.

To support this shift, future research might investigate how quilombos were structured as organizational spaces of resistance and production, analyzing their relevance to the colonial economy and influence on management thought. Studies could also explore the influence of managerial practices in sugar mills and distilleries as a new frontier in management foundations. Additionally, the factors that enabled African-led mercantile organizations to prosper during the colonial period warrant further exploration. The matter of economic reparations for Black humanity might also be analyzed, considering the substantial state privileges granted to enslaving elites following the abolition of slavery.

Furthermore, the relationship between enslavement, capital accumulation, the industrialization process, and the formation of economic elites deserves deeper analysis, especially in regard to the benefits inherited by major landowners, real estate holders, and business owners. Part of this wealth may have been built or acquired with resources derived from enslaved labor, perpetuating structural inequalities across generations. Research can also examine the contributions of Black social organizations in the post-abolition period and during authoritarian regimes in Brazil to the field of management. Two additional phenomena also deserve attention: the underrepresentation of Black women in organizational leadership and their overrepresentation among entrepreneurs. Finally, expanding the epistemological horizons of management through the lens of Black Brazilian intellectuals presents a promising direction for research.

Faced with this broad agenda and the necessary critical engagement it demands, I still believe in education and in horizontal, democratic, respectful, and tolerant dialogue. However, I am aware that this alone will not suffice. As Foucault (2022, p. 54) notes, the issue is not about changing people's consciousness or what is in their heads but about transforming the political, economic, and institutional regime of truth production. I believe that graduate education in management represents a power structure consisting of political, economic, and institutional dimensions in knowledge production. Within this system, educators and the critical mass of researchers who shape the direction of knowledge are formed.

Therefore, I emphasize that business schools that do not reflect Brazil's racial reality (or other racial realities in different countries), both in their curricula and faculty composition, will continue to be whitewashed, producing educators, researchers, and professionals who may perpetuate exclusionary and racist outcome logic. These professionals, often without question, internalize and replicate power structures that maintain the status quo, becoming, consciously or not, agents of a system more interested in preserving privilege than promoting transformation. One irrefutable piece of evidence lies in the textbooks used to teach management in the world, which are written or adapted by academics trained in such programs. If these academics received a whitewashed education, they will likely reflect a non-racialized reality in their teaching materials, creating a recursive cycle of systematic and ideologically driven exclusion.

Because of this cycle, I return to the metaphor of the pleasurable itch of the sand flea (Moura, 1983). I remember that "good itch" with a certain nostalgia, a natural part of my childhood in the countryside, because the itch itself produced a strange and entirely bearable kind of pleasure. In analogy, it seems the Brazilian graduate education system finds a similar uncomfortable pleasure in coexisting amicably with racism, which is then reflected throughout the educational system. There seems to be no genuine desire to eradicate racism, but rather to enjoy or manage its effects. This controlled coexistence contributes to the anathema of race within the diploma mill because, despite the overwhelming silences and omissions, they expose a well-known issue that has been tolerated for over 70 years.

However, this "pleasurable itch" becomes a dangerous form of complacency that impedes the development of truly inclusive and equitable education. This reality is closely linked to the Black genocide occurring in Brazil's urban peripheries, where this education was never intended to reach. Thus, racism remains deeply rooted, while education, which should be a space for emancipation and equality, becomes instead a tool for perpetuating racial inequality in service of privilege.

Despite this, based on my lived experiences and reflections, I recognize that the anathema does produce effects on the education of Black people. Regardless of the magnitude of those effects, if we have the power to cause them, we also have the power to undo them. Addressing this issue will require mutual understanding, flexibility, and reflexivity between white and Black communities. The fact that this journal has opened space for this dialogue is already a meaningful sign.

Another sign of resistance is that, even after having been educated within a violent and racist system, surviving without being killed and being able to write these lines about such a brutal problem is evidence that Black humanity endures and advances. Many of my friends and students were not so fortunate; they are among the statistics of police violence and school dropout rates. Yet these words show that we are still imagining a management education that is antiracist. That is not enough, of course, but it sustains hope.

Like Martin Luther King Jr., I also have a dream. My dream is that, for every twenty professors in graduate management programs in Brazil, eleven will be Black. My dream is to see Black leadership grow in research and positions of power. Utopia or not, affirmative action policies mark the beginning of a crucial democratizing process. However, this process continues to face backlash, even from some of my own professors in graduate school.

For this reason, to those who still rest comfortably in their unjust slumber, protected by their chimeric castles within the new plantation, I warn: The majority is coming; wake up! As the Brazilian musician Rincon Sapiência (2017) states, we are the key: "Open the gates!"

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