

Afro-descendants, racialization and politics of sensibilities in Argentina

Afrodescendientes, racialización y políticas de las sensibilidades en Argentina

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Abstract

This article examines some connections between politics of sensibilities and racialization practices. Taking the problem of afrodescendants in Argentina as a case study, the overall objective is to discuss sensibilities, understood as structures of feeling that translate the plots of social domination into everyday life. From this perspective, we analyze how the sensibilities intercede in the racialization practices that accompany and make capitalist development possible in its neo-colonial aspirations. This theoretical position implies considering that sensibilities regulate, among other aspects, racialized ways of observing / feeling / perceiving the world that subjects have, and that they are radically put into play in intercultural contexts.

To achieve this objective, first, a set of analytical inflections that connect the practices of racialization with the politics of sensibilities is presented. Then, based on document analysis, the racial and social classifications operating in Argentina are explored, investigating the subalternity processes configured around the figure of the “Black” from the emergence of the Nation State until today. We conclude that the “categorical manichaeism” prevailing in racial classifications, and the “negritude” of the subaltern world that has been consolidated since the mid-20th century, makes the discussion on interculturality relevant as an epistemic problem and political project.

Keywords

Afrodescendants, interculturality, racialization, sensibilities, negritude.

Suggested citation: Cervio, A. (2020). Afro-descendants, racialization and politics of sensibilities in Argentina. *Universitas*, 32, pp. 19-36.

Resumen

Este artículo indaga algunas conexiones entre políticas de las sensibilidades y prácticas de racialización. Tomando por caso la problemática de afrodescendientes en Argentina, el propósito general es ofrecer una discusión sobre las sensibilidades, entendidas como estructuras del sentir que traducen las tramas de la dominación social en la vida cotidiana. Desde esta perspectiva, interesa analizar cómo las sensibilidades interceden en las prácticas de racialización que acompañan y hacen posible el desarrollo capitalista en sus aspiraciones neocoloniales. Asumir este posicionamiento teórico supone considerar que las sensibilidades regulan, entre otros aspectos, los modos racializados de observar/sentir/percibir el mundo que tienen los sujetos, y que se ponen en juego en forma radical en contextos interculturales.

Para alcanzar dicho objetivo, en primer lugar, se presenta un conjunto de inflexiones analíticas que conectan las prácticas de racialización con las políticas de las sensibilidades. Seguidamente, con base en un análisis documental, se exploran las clasificaciones raciales y sociales operantes en Argentina, indagando en los procesos de subalternidad configurados en torno a la figura del “negro” desde el surgimiento del Estado-Nación hasta la actualidad. Se concluye que el “maniqueísmo categorial” imperante en las clasificaciones raciales, junto con la “negrificación” del mundo subalterno que se afianza desde mediados del siglo XX, toman relevante la discusión sobre la interculturalidad como problema epistémico y proyecto político.

Palabras clave

Afrodescendientes, interculturalidad, racialización, sensibilidades, negrificación.

Introduction

Since the 19th century, the question of Afro-descendants in Argentina has been unfolded between the enigma of their “disappearance” until their most recent “re-appearance”, the product of important migratory flows from sub-Saharan Africa that begin to occur - with varying intensity— from the end of the 20th century to the present.

As in the rest of the region, the presence of Africans in the country is a consequence of the transatlantic slave trade that takes place between the 16th and 19th centuries. However, several studies have observed an intense underestimation, and consequent invisibility, of the African “component” in Argentine social and cultural life. A problem that, according to these studies, responds to the Nation-State project promoted by the Generation of

the Eighty.¹ Thus, the story of “whiteness”, together with the promotion of European immigration as state policy for “population improvement”, constitute two main pillars of the “myth of origin” of the Argentine Nation (Reid Andrews, 1989; Frigerio, 2008).

The contempt and rejection for subaltern populations that did not “fit” into the flourishing national ideology (especially indigenous and black peoples) led to postulate the gradual symbolic disappearance of Afro-Argentines.² Thus, a sort of original mythology that made the “extinction” of blacks a basal stone for the emergence of the Nation spread (and became common sense), and, in addition, moved to a place of “foreigners” and “strangeness” to everything that was not “white” and “modern.”

In this context, the “disappearance” of the Afro in the country can be understood as an analysis of the complex process of dilution of a racial alterity that originates at the end of the 19th century, giving rise to the circulation of a particular scheme of racial categorizations that will delimit the social and political constructions of “whiteness” and “blackness” that, with few nuances, are still valid today (Frigerio, 2006; Geler, 2010; Solomianski, 2003).

The brief considerations presented above, show that Afro-descendants have been subjected to systematic policies that during a good part of the colonial and republican period commodified them, classified, named, “discolored”³, disappeared and subalternized them, until they became, in recent years, lukewarmly recognized within the framework of a transnational context that claims multiculturalism and ethnic/racial equality, interceding on the agendas of States and international organizations (Agudelo, 2012).

In this context, the concepts of multiculturalism and interculturality gradually become State policies, programs financed by international agencies, slogans and demands assumed by social movements, etc. Particularly, interculturality stands on a “fertile” socio-political and epistemic terrain to rethink

1 Political and intellectual elite who ruled in Argentina between 1880-1916.

2 This designation includes descendants of: a) enslaved population from the 16th century onwards, b) Cape Verdean migrants who arrived in the country at the end of the 19th century and c) more recent migrants, from African countries (Senegal, Nigeria, Mali, Ghana, Congo etc.) and Latin Americans (Uruguay, Brazil, Peru, Colombia, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, etc.).

3 Metaphorical expression used here to refer to the diverse and complex processes of “whitening” that have operated on Afro-descendants, and that have been functional to the narrative that accompanies the birth and consolidation of the Nation-State. Among the main strategies of invisibility, the generalization of census classifications created to cover up African ancestry stands out (Reid Andrews, 1989; Frigerio, 2006, 2008).

the spaces and conflicts associated with ethnic-racial diversity and differences. An aspect that, in paradigmatic terms, re-positions the “afro” issue as a problem that “deserves” a place in the political and rights agenda in Argentina.

In this article, the considerations of Walsh (2007) regarding interculturality are resumed, recognizing - together with the author - that this concept cannot be thought outside the coloniality of power, as it is experienced by the different subalternized groups, or stay oblivious to the socio-historical constructions of the differences in local key.

From this position, interculturality is a *logic*. A social, cultural, political, ethical and epistemic project built from the colonial *difference* - that is, from the differences originated from the subalternization of peoples, languages, and knowledge - that seeks to reverse and cross the limits of the consecrated as “hegemonic” and “subordinate” by the Eurocentric colonial legacies. Thus, “the logic of interculturality compromises a knowledge and thought that is not isolated from the dominant paradigms or structures; out of necessity (and as a result of the coloniality process) this logic ‘knows’ these paradigms and structures. And it is through that knowledge that one ‘other’ knowledge is generated. One thought “other” (Walsh, 2007, p. 51).⁴

In this vein, this paper intends to investigate certain connections between sensitization policies and racialization practices. Assuming this theoretical-epistemic position implies considering that sensitivities are not abstractions but practices that organize everyday experience, regulating, among other aspects, the racialized ways of observing/feeling/perceiving the world that subjects have, and that radically take place in intercultural contexts.

To achieve this objective, first, the theoretical-epistemic approach that guides the analysis is presented, discussing a set of analytical inflections that connect the practices of racialization with the policies of sensitivities. Then, based on a documentary analysis, the racial and social classifications operating in Argentina from the emergence of the Nation-State to the present are explored, and some reflections on the subalternity processes configured around the figure of “black” are proposed.

4 An additional position on multiculturalism can be found in Tamayo Acosta and Fariñas (2006).

Sensitization policies and racialization practices

Racialization processes, which have become the foundations of the Nation-States (Segato, 2007), have been articulated with the sensitivities that historically have produced and explained racial differences as “natural” while serving to support racial inequalities in the name of white and European “supremacy.” Hence, racialization and sensitivity acquire a nodal space for the analysis proposed here.

In general terms, the “policies of sensitivities” are understood as: “The set of cognitive-affective social practices tending towards the production, management, and reproduction of horizons of action, disposition, and cognition. These horizons refer to: i) the organization of daily life (day-to-day, wakefulness/sleep, food/abstinence, etc.); ii) information for ordering preferences and values (adequate/inappropriate; acceptable/unacceptable; bearable/unbearable); and iii) the parameters for time/space management (displacement/location; walls/bridges; infrastructure for the appreciation of enjoyment)” (Scribano, 2017, p. 244).

As policies, sensitivities organize daily life and ways of ordering the preferences and values of the subjects, while defining the parameters for time-space management in which social interactions take place. From this position, this work starts from the theoretical premise that sensitivities (re) produce the plots of capitalist domination, under the guise of “everyday” practices and sensations. However, the aforementioned structures of feeling cannot “operate”, organizing the flow of everyday life, if they are not actively being supported by the performance of concrete “politics of the senses” that perform particular ways of looking, smelling, touching, hearing and liking that (are) displayed (in) societies at a given time, exhibiting a deep intersectional sense between class, gender and race/ethnicity.

Racialization can be understood as a set of production practices and body registration of marks or stigmas derived from the European colonial system. These “body marks” are socially conceived as “inferior” in relation to an “us”; an aspect that justifies the different forms of violence, intolerance, contempt, humiliation, and exploitation to which racialized non-European groups are subjected (Hall, 1991; Tijoux & Palominos Mandiola, 2015). For its part, Mbembe (2016) assumes a critical position with respect to those perspectives that are exclusively limited to the optical effect of race. In addition to the skin color and the possession of a set of phenotypic

traits, for this author, the specificity of race and racialization practices is that they always breed a substitute, a mask or a simulation. “Racism consists, consequently and, above all, in replacing *that which is something else* with *another reality*” (Mbembe, 2016, p. 75).

However, thinking about racialization in a context of coloniality requires considering that these practices are part of (and are inscribed in) a network of epistemological power through which experiential, cognitive, cultural, aesthetic, economic, etc. relations of domination are constructed, circulated and sustained. Such asymmetric relations originated in the contact between “natives” and “Europeans” (Quijano, 2000), which are a constitutive part of the social hierarchies that underlie the phenomena of domination and exploitation known as colonialism. Thus, coloniality is a practice and a discourse that simultaneously postulates the “natural” inferiority of non-European subjects and the exploitation of nature as a raw material. Both principles are based on the idea that a) there are superfluous/surplus lives for the logic of accumulation and b) that nature can only be exploited for the production of goods and their exchange in the market (Mignolo, 2003).

Articulating the previous readings, in this article racialization is defined as a set of practices that produce social effects, based on a *deviation from reality* that are inscribed in the body and emotions of racialized subjects.⁵ By raising bodily (escopic) appearances as guarantees of “truth,” racialization practices are part of an *episteme* of coloniality that produces bodies and subjectivities, structuring an “objective reality” (allegedly infallible/indisputable) that separates/alienates the subject of the historical, social and cultural totality that defines him as a human being.

In addition, Fanon argues that “black” is a non-being. That is, an *invisible object* to whom the colonial space daily subtracts spaces/times of humanity. They are beings that have not even had the “extraordinary” possibility of descending to hell because hell itself *stages/is* their daily life (Fanon, 2015). The lived experience of colonization is synonymous with war, conflict, cruelty, dispossession. The colonized are in permanent struggle with death (always omnipresent) that surrounds each vertex of life. Hunger, unemployment, disease, rape, inferiority complex and hopelessness

5 This analysis is part of a theoretical-epistemic positioning that starts from recognizing the unsustainable relationship that exists between bodies and emotions for the understanding of social structuring processes (Scribano, 2013).

are some of the “incomplete deaths” that are experienced daily in the colonial world.

Therefore, the notion of “condemnation” (Fanon, 1972) is key to understanding that “coloniality” is an experience of domination and exploitation that is inaugurated with the conquest of the Americas, and is perpetuated from the various ways in which invisibility and dehumanization is manifested — explicitly or implicitly — in the production of academic knowledge, in common sense, in the organization of work, in the logic of consumption, in urban segregation, in the aspirations of subjects, among other phenomena (Quijano, 2000, 2007; Mignolo, 2003; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Wacquant, 2007; Harvey, 2007). Hence, the study of the connections between racialization and sensibilities is revealed as an adequate analytical path to investigate the conflicts and experiences imposed by the current colonial situation.

The set of practices (legal, social, political, institutional, ethical and epistemic) that constitute the day-to-day racialization gears could not be possible (much less effective) without the operation of sensitivities that reinforce them in their genesis and consequences. Such sensibilities reproduce, in the daily life (whether by silent and unnoticed paths, or in a public and fierce manner), inequality and contempt for the Other that support, and at the same time promote, structures of domination. In other words, as a constitutive basis of colonial and imperial projects that are updated in the 21st century, racialization - along with gender inequalities and enclassement processes - is a way of living and living together. Therefore, in this work, it is understood as a sensitivity policy that which organizes, categorizes and classifies the values and preferences of the subjects with respect to themselves and in relation to others, based on the “naturalization” of a series of racial stereotypes which, in turn, (re) produce typified, exclusive and antagonistic ways of feeling and perceiving, with significant political, economic and affective consequences for racialized subjects.

In the indicated terms, the policies of sensitivities are at the service of the economic, political, moral, ethical, cultural and epistemological devices that support the accumulation regime and explain the social position that racialized populations have historically had. That is, in their daily occurrence, sensibilities contribute to classify and regulate lives. To do this, they promote a series of stigmatizing and stereotyped perceptions that end up associating certain groups (blacks, poor, indigenous, immigrants, etc.) with cer-

tain “social problems” (poverty, insecurity, crime, unemployment, etc.) that must be reversed, generally, through public interventions.

Within the framework of the problem, the next section explores the racial and social classifications operating in Argentina from the rise of the Nation-State to the present, in its articulations with two types of coexisting blacknesses in the country: racial and of class.

Racial and social classifications in Argentina

During several decades the investigations on racial classifications in Argentina were focused on the colonial and republican periods. It will be towards the end of the 80s and during the 90s of the 20th century when different local studies begin to outline the importance of the race factor - in their articulations with the social class, first, and with gender, later - to analyze social inequality processes (Segato, 2002; Margulis & Urresti, 1999).

Different investigations show how in the 20th century the term “black” ceased to be directly associated with African descent to become subalternity. Consequently, these studies show that in the national context the social class has a racialized dimension that acts permanently at the macro and microsocial level (Frigerio, 2008; Geler, 2016).

Within this framework, Frigerio (2006) develops the historical genesis and social consequences of the typically binary organization that has characterized the racial dimension in Buenos Aires. In line with the process of invisibility of the African legacy in the social and cultural life of the country that accompanies the consolidation of the Nation-State, since the beginning of the 20th century, the “black” was losing its inherent multiplicities to become a category assimilable to the simultaneous possession of a few and very specific body features: black skin, speck hair (or shavings), wide nose and thick lips. This limitation of the “black” to its minimal phenotypic expression, coupled with the high process of miscegenation in the country, has obviously resulted in an extreme reduction in the number of Argentines identifiable as “true blacks.”⁶

6 Due to space issues, state policies and constructed myths (common sense) about the disappearance of Afro-descendants in Argentina are not problematized. For an approach to the issue, Cf. Reid Andrews (1989).

The binomial logic that has characterized the racial classifications in the country from the 19th century onwards has made, even today, the possibility of the mestizo in the context of a social dynamic that tends to “hyper-include” the white as (almost) monolithic classification.⁷ From this logic, a “categorical Manichaeism” (white/black) that prescribes the whiteness of the Argentines prevails, while moving people carrying socially consensual phenotypic features as “blacks” to a place of foreigners.

This approach opens a series of questions that, for reasons of space, cannot be addressed here about the “politics of the gaze”⁸ that goes through and configures the recognition of the “black” as a racial and social category in the country. Following a reasoning rooted in common sense: *one is black only if socially accepted body markers of blackness are possessed; all that is left out of said classification constitutes the “non-black”, and therefore, the “normal”*.

In this way, the invisibility and stigmatization of Afro-descendants in Argentina can be understood in terms of a process of de-naturalization of otherness that occurs through the imposition of the figure of the foreigner. Following Simmel (2014), the foreigner is the one who is “outside” the limits of the community. Its external and strange character makes this figure a central sociological form because, due to his constitutive externality, the foreigner updates/exposes the conflicts of the destination society. In the particular case that concerns this work, Afro-descendants, violently dispossessed of any other characteristic that is not skin color and a set of body features, update racial, gender and class conflicts that socially accumulate as the expansion of capital progresses (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991; Mbembe, 2016).

Recovering the “classic” work of Ratier (1971) and Frigerio (2006) shows what part of the “whitening”/“disappearance” dynamics of blacks in the country was due to a displacement/impersonation of ethnic/racial factors by class to explain the stratification processes and social differences. In line with this discussion, the author argues that the “blackhead”⁹ category,

7 This is the case of Afro-Argentines who, as a result of miscegenation, have clear skin. In general, this population is socially classified as “white” because of its phenotypic features, radically ignoring their ethnic-cultural belongings.

8 The “politics of the gaze”, together with the politics of taste, smell, touch, and hearing are indispensable nodes of the politics of sensibilities that go through and shape the situation of current domination. Cfr. Scribano (2015).

9 Expression taken from the popular denomination of a bird native to South America (*spinus magellanicus*) that has a black head.

used to designate migrants from the interior of the country (with not very clear skins) that, since the 1940s and 1950s, began to populate the emergence villages and peripheral neighborhoods of Buenos Aires¹⁰, comes from the transposition of the cognitive scheme used to designate the subaltern (blacks) population of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Based on the qualitative analysis of secondary sources of the time, the author states that the “negative image” attributed to blacks at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century corresponds to the traits that, 40 years later, will be assigned to “Blackheads”, originating in localities in the north of the country (“poorly educated, unreliable, indolent, poorly inclined to work”, etc.).

For these and other pejorative qualifiers, the “heads”, like the “blacks”, constitute a “threat” to white, modern and Europeanized society. In addition to the bodily features and the alleged possession of personal attitudes disqualified by the hegemonic discourse, the “heads” are perceived as a latent “danger” to the established order, mainly because of their participation in Peronism (Ratier, 1971). This analysis places “black” in the foreground as a figure of the Argentine subaltern since the 19th century, while systematizing the cultural and semantic metamorphosis that went through the category, putting the racial and class designation in tension in an alternative way.

Along the same lines, Geler (2010, 2016) emphasizes the significant symbolic weight that the Afro-descendant population had in Buenos Aires at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries. According to the author, this situation was what enabled the Buenos Aires elites to project the same categories used to designate the “Afro-citizens” (the “blacks”) on the popular world (the “populace”, the “rabble”, the “guarangos”), Building, in this way, the historical foundations of local blackness that will be strengthened during the 20th century.

Previous research shows that, even “disappeared” (by the State, by the academy and by the “whitening” strategies operated by Afro-descendants themselves to achieve their inclusion in the Nation), since the 19th century the “black” category has persistently operated as a mechanism to subalter-

10 Due to the process of industrialization by import substitution (ISI) that unfolds during Peronism, the great Argentine cities begin to experience a growing urbanization process. Thus, waves of internal migrants, and many others from neighboring countries, arrive at the main urban centers in search of work. According to Basualdo (2006), the first stage of the ISI model begins in 1930 and is characterized by the production of consumer goods. The second stage is deployed between 1958 and 1975, and specializes in the production of intermediate and durable consumer goods.

nize and nominate radical alterity in Argentina, combining (in its form and content) the inescapable tensions between race and class that have sustained the colonial project in its successive historical phases (Balibar & Wallerstein, 1991). In this way, the “negrificación” of alterity has been installed as a norm and social, political, economic, cultural and identity resource, sedimenting - as a device of subjectivation - indifference, contempt and inferiority as unbeatable traits of “black” colonial experience, that is, of whom “has no ontological resistance in front of the white’s eyes” (Fanon, 2015, p. 111).¹¹

Specifically, in Argentina, the adjective-noun “black” became the most used to refer to the oppressed/excluded groups. Thus, “Indians”, “blackheads”, “black villeros” and, more recently, the “blacks of the plan”¹² are popular designations that testify, beyond color, the ways of *naming the other* in a period of long duration; all of them unified in the figure of black as an excrescence. In this way, black is the name of an insult; the sign of inferiority and submission; the unfathomable universe of emptiness, absence, defect, and error; the most perfect synthesis of those *superfluous humanities* (Mbembe, 2016), limited to its object existence, that capital indefinitely produces as part of its own reproduction logic. By designating the form and content assumed by the radical alterity in Argentina, from the 19th century until today, the “black” is a productive social category, that is, a signifier that has historically “manufactured” subjects whose lives are played in the plane of expulsion and racial, class and gender exception. On them weighs a substantial trait that erases their character and historical specificities. In other words, as part of a concrete policy of domination, the “black” is a particular that is instituted as universal. Such investment, which annihilates, erases and denies individual and collective stories, is established as a *dictum* of power relations, enabling a wide range of ontological, political, social and cultural disqualifications and erasures.

11 According to Fanon, black owes its existence to the design and projection (always essential and foreshadowed) that white makes on the basis of an external mark (corporal, epidermal). In dialogue with this postulate, the negrefication of the subaltern world implies thinking about the distance, the difference and the threat that is radically established between the world of the colonist and that of the colonized by and from a concrete material base: the skin. It is in this context that the “epidermization of inferiority” and the “negrification” of alterity weave the limits and densities that the subaltern experience covers by fixing (as a chemical does) to “being”, that is, defining what the colonial “other” is as it appears in the reflection of the dominant white eyes.

12 A derogatory term that refers to recipients of subsidies or state plans.

In this key, Memmi (1969) argues that defining the essence of the other (as if such a thing existed as universal) is what makes it possible to legitimize the actions and institutions of the colonizer. Naming, describing, qualifying and disqualifying the oppressed are therefore instituted in practices required to channel the structures of colonial power. In addition, for colonization to be successful, it is essential that the colonizer impose the dehumanization of the colonized. And it does, basically, defining it from what it lacks, that is, from what it doesn't have (and should have): psychological, cognitive, ethical, moral, etc. faults. In this way, the idea of an irresponsible, impulsive subject, subject to improvisation and without economic or family concerns (foundations of the colonial building) arises. Thus, not being a worthy and "resigned parishioner of the capitalist religion", the oppressed are dispossessed from part of his humanity, that is, from that humanity that only confers capitalism, associated with work, saving, responsible consumption and forecasting. In sum, the task of investing the colonized *with substance-traits* that split and feed on preliminary denials, only contributes to their social and human unintelligibility, making it an *almost-object* that only exists according to the needs (material and symbolic) of the colonizer.

This dehumanization process is complemented by total depersonalization of the colonized (Memmi, 1969). His existence is subjected to a universal judgment ruled by the colonizer. As "others", the colonized are immersed in collective anonymity ("They are all the same"). The aspiration of the colonizer is to depersonalize the colonized; turn *you* into an anonymous and uniform *them*. The objective is to win the battle by dehumanizing the other, that is, by alienating him from his historical-social context, his vital trajectory, and his multiple desires and resistance. Within this framework, it can be affirmed that the body/emotion of the colonized is the main field of struggle. Hence the cardinal importance that this article confers on the policies of sensitivities to observe, theoretically and politically, the ways in which societies "manage" ethnic-racial inequalities as an unavoidable structural problem.

Considering the categorical "Manichaeism" that has historically prevailed in Argentina for the definition of racial classifications (black/white), together with the "negrification" of the subaltern world that has been entrenched since the mid-20th century with clear class connotations, the question about interculturality as an epistemic problem and political project becomes essential.

Strictly speaking, interculturality does not pursue the hybridization of practices and forms of knowledge, nor does it promote the simple inclu-

sion of differences in a space that is supposedly “overcoming”. On the contrary, it is the product and production of an “oppositional” attitude oriented towards transformation and social emancipation, through the construction of wide-ranging alternatives (education, government, social policies, etc.) in which “the difference is not additive but constitutive” (Walsh, 2007, p. 52). In other words, rather than guaranteeing the interrelation of differences, interculturality is a logic that points to the construction of “other” knowledge, practices and social powers, as a way to contain, respect, dialogue, ponder and imagine new and future differences (Walsh, 2002).

Thus, the logic of interculturality differs radically from the objectives pursued by certain local public policies (Monkevicius, 2015). As an example, the National Plan Against Discrimination (PNcD), created in 2005, constitutes the first “gesture” of the national State in relation to the “Afro issue”.¹³

Evaluated by several groups as the “most complete” policy on the matter, the PNcD has some limitations. Thus, although it acknowledges that the native and Afro-descendant peoples are the main victims of racism that has accompanied the development of the Modern State, “(...) relativizes the fundamental racism by noticing that we are currently attending an ‘aesthetic’ racism, mainly related with economic differences” (DIAFAR, Association Africa and its Diaspora and CONAFRO, 2019, p. 5). Second, the aforementioned organizations evaluate that the PNcD has not been effective in carrying out actions aimed at dismantling the historical denial of the Afro-descendant population in the country. Proof of this is that the National Education Law (26,206), enacted one year after the approval of the PNcD, outright omits the “Afro” population and culture.¹⁴

Beyond their “good intentions”, in general, Argentine public policies¹⁵ tend to conceive of *differences* as a feature that must be “included”/“added” to the current social structure and institutional framework, rather than an

13 In addition to Afro-descendant populations, the PNcD includes actions in reference to native peoples, anti-Semitism, Arabophobia, Islamophobia, Gypsies, Rohm peoples, Latin American and Asian communities (Villalpando, 2005).

14 To this omission is added the total invisibility in the Magna Carta. Indeed, although the constitutional reform of 1994 considers ethnic and multicultural (non-racial) plurality, it recognizes the preexistence of indigenous peoples but makes no reference to Afro-descendants.

15 For an analysis of the programs and policies for the promotion of ethnic-racial equality in Argentina, with emphasis on the Afro-descendant population Cf. Ottenheimer and Zubrzycki (2011).

“Other” space-time that enables the “germination” of new practical, political and epistemic horizons aimed at decolonization.

As mentioned, racial systems are organized to produce sensitivities that “naturalize” the radically unequal origin that sustains and bases the capitalist regime. But, at the same time, sensibilities are constitutive of the racialization practices on which relations of domination are founded. In this context, policies aimed at promoting ethnic-racial equality are a good “place” (although not exhaustive) where “sociologically” observe the ways in which the societies of the Global South face/resist/reproduce the coloniality of social, political and economic experience.

Conclusions

To conclude, taking up the most substantial considerations of this work, it can be affirmed that:

- The *invisibilization and foreignization* of Afro-descendants are narratives that —availing the State-Nation project, first, and the systemic mechanisms of capitalist colonial exclusion, consequently— have operated in a sustained manner over the past 150 years, organizing large areas of Argentine social life.
- Due to legitimate-dominant explanations, those narratives have progressively become social ways of feeling about the “black”, the “white”, the “normal”, the “exceptional”, the “native”, the “foreign”.
- These sensitivities occupy a central place in public policies aimed at addressing the structural inequalities of which Afro-descendants are “object”. Indeed, given that these policies do not intervene merely on the material dimensions of life, but also operate on cognitive-affective aspects of the subjects (De Sena & Cena, 2014), a critical analysis of the public interventions that seek to promote ethnic-racial equality must consider the level of sensitivities that they produce/reproduce/question/emphasize. While there (in what they feel and in what the subjects do with what they feel), a crucial dimension of domination nests in its most common aspect.
- In a country that has made “blackness” the semantic and social reservoir of otherness until it becomes “invisible” (by foreigner or abject), asking about interculturality as a political and epistemic

project implies opening time-spaces to social dialogues that share differences, diversities, and multitudes as constitutive characteristics and not as mere additions to the hegemonic social project. And this is a challenge (not least) for public policies committed to the processes of autonomy, change, and social emancipation.

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Submission date: 2019/10/30; Acceptance date: 2020/01/14;

Publication date: 2020/03/01