

ARTICLE

Social work and the construction of decolonial humanities. Anti-colonial listening and speaking as strategies of resistance

Trabajo social y construcción de humanidades decoloniales. Escucha y habla anticoloniales como estrategias de resistencia

Vera Lúcia Ermida Barbosa¹

University of Évora, Portugal

Lusiada University of Lisbon, Portugal

Received: 31/04/2022

Accepted: 25/11/2022

25

How to cite

Barbosa, V. L. E. (2022). Social work and the construction of decolonial humanities. Anti-colonial listening and speaking as strategies of resistance. *Propuestas Críticas en Trabajo Social - Critical Proposals in Social Work*, 3(5), 25-43. DOI: 10.5354/2735-6620.2023. 64938.

Abstract

This article proposes a reflection on social work from the contributions of decolonial thought, arguing that ethical listening and speaking are strategic tools to dismantle the processes of dehumanization imposed by modernity/coloniality. To understand these processes, I turn to the macro-sociological analysis of long historical period according to Fernand Braudel (1965) and use Anibal Quijano's (2014) concept of coloniality to explain the current consequences of a structure of domination and exploitation of race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality and class that began with colonialism. The time frame is traversed by the Fanonian conception,

Keywords:
social work;
subalternity;
ethics; "zone
of non-being";
decoloniality

¹Contact: Vera Lúcia Ermida Barbosa  vermida@uevora.pt

according to Grosfoguel (2012), that the social constructions of modernity define the dividing lines of humanity. Above the line, in the “zone of being”, are the people recognized as human and below it, in the “zone of non-being”, are those classified as subhuman. This division functions as a structuring element of the exclusion and subordination of persons, peoples and cultures. The central idea of the reflection defends that the “zone of non-being” crosses and constitutes the territory of intervention of social workers and that, understanding it in its complexity, it orients the daily life of the profession in the construction of humanized relationships. The essay concludes with the understanding that, as a theoretical and methodological instrument, the articulation of ethical speaking and listening in social work with a decolonial political project can be revealed as one of the spaces for the construction of humanities and the fight against the production and reproduction of the “zones of non-being”.

Resumen

Este artículo propone una reflexión sobre el trabajo social desde los aportes del pensamiento decolonial, argumentando que la escucha y el habla éticas son herramientas estratégicas para desmontar los procesos de deshumanización impuestos por la modernidad/colonialidad. Para comprender estos procesos, recurre al análisis macrosociológico de largo período histórico de acuerdo a Fernand Braudel (1965) y utilizo el concepto de colonialidad de Aníbal Quijano (2014) para explicar las consecuencias actuales de una estructura de dominación y explotación de raza/etnia, género, sexualidad y clase que comenzó con el colonialismo. El marco temporal se encuentra atravesado por la concepción fanoniana, según Grosfoguel (2012), de que las construcciones sociales de la modernidad definen las líneas divisorias de la humanidad. Sobre la línea, en la “zona del ser”, están las personas reconocidas como humanas y debajo de esta, en la “zona del no ser”, están las clasificadas como subhumanas. Esta división funciona como elemento estructurante de la exclusión y subordinación de personas, pueblos y culturas. La idea central de la reflexión defiende que la “zona del no ser” atraviesa y constituye el territorio de intervención de trabajadores sociales y que, entendiéndola en su complejidad, orienta la cotidianidad de la profesión en la construcción de relaciones humanizadas. El ensayo concluye entendiendo que, como instrumento teórico y metodológico, la articulación del habla y escucha éticos en el trabajo social con un proyecto político decolonial puede revelarse como uno de los espacios de construcción de humanities y de combate a la producción y reproducción de las “zonas del no ser”.

Palabras Clave:
trabajo social;
subalternidad;
ética; “zona
del no ser”;
decolonialidad



Introduction

I was recently moved by reading the book “Memórias da plantação: episódios de racismo cotidiano”, by Grada Kilomba (2020). A powerful and necessary text for life, and what I want to highlight at the beginning of this article is found in the Introduction to the Portuguese edition of the work. It is precisely because of this translation that the author discusses language, and ends up revealing its subtext when she states that various terminologies present in the Portuguese language “reveal a profound lack of reflection and theorization of colonial and patriarchal history and heritage (...) [They] have a political dimension of generating, fixing and perpetuating relations of power and violence (...) [that] informs us (...) who can represent the true human condition” (Kilomba, 2020, p.14). The author deconstructs a set of words that exemplify the language still entangled by colonialism, among these: subject and object, which are reduced to the “masculine” gender without allowing variations for “feminine” or LGBTQIA+, thus we run the risk that, using x; other/o/e, will be seen as misspelling. Variation is even possible, but still does not escape the female/male, girl/boy, or even slave dichotomy, which marks a natural identity and not a political process of dehumanization, as was actually the enslavement of people. This careful and politically situated position of the writer is one more voice in the struggle to (re)write anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-colonial texts. In line with her, in the present text I will resort to italics when terminology does not allow another resource to overcome the restriction of gender variation imposed by language.

27

If in writing it is possible to use resources to correct or attempt to repair aspects of the colonial heritage, the challenge is greater for orality. The spoken word is an inescapable tool in professional practice which, combined with listening, is capable of reproducing processes of exclusion or constructing strategies of liberation. This is one of the challenges that are imposed daily between the lines of professional intervention, and that can only be faced with reflection and historical and critical awareness based on epistemologies that support them.

In this context, it is proposed to think, from the perspective of social constructions (Braudel, 2004), a theoretical, methodological and political articulation in which ethical listening and speaking in social work are accepted as powerful strategies of liberating actions in a societal project of transformation structured from decoloniality (Mignolo, 2010a, p.19; Walsh, 2013, p.25). Decolonial thought laid the foundations and interpretative categories of reality from experiences in Latin America. Structured in 1998 as a research program, it shares notions, reasoning and concepts that give it an identity and its own vocabulary, thus contributing to the analytical and utopian renewal of Latin American social sciences in the 21st century (Escobar, 2003, p.53). In other words, he



understands that decoloniality “indicates that, for the colonized with direct invasion, the path to decolonization is a libertarian yearning that seeks to reverse the colonial. However, colonizing practices and colonial legacies persist”(Gómez-Hernández and Sánchez, 2018, p.141).

The reflections presented here arise from research in the field of the PhD in Social Work in progress, under the decolonial approach, and from studies developed in the PhD in Contemporary Studies concluded by the author in 2019. The complexity of the profession’s field of action raises questions of study on training and contemporary epistemologies that dialogue with praxis. In this section, the text assumes the transversality of the decolonial approach to analyze institutions, research and practices from the critique of Eurocentrism (which does not imply anti-Europeanism). It adopts, therefore, as structuring categories economic, social, political and gender relations in Latin America (Martí, 2019), colonialism (Césaire, 2006), the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000), of knowledge (Lander, 2011), of being (Maldonado-Torres et al., 2007) and the epistemologies of the South (Santos, 2004).

Coloniality” is a useful concept for understanding the structures of domination within the capitalist model based on the racial and ethnic classification of the world’s population, which began with colonialism and extends to the present day, as a sequel. The “coloniality of power” names these modern forms of exploitation and domination, the “coloniality of knowledge” denounces the colonialism present in epistemologies and in the production of knowledge, and the “coloniality of being” refers to the lived experience of colonization and its current impacts.

This set of concepts is articulated with the conception of southern epistemologies. For Santos and Meneses (2014, p.13) the global South and North are metaphorically a field of epistemic challenges. The epistemologies of the South are configured as a key of analysis that adopts the idea that the South overlaps in part with the geographical South (countries and regions of the world that were subjected to European colonialism).

The text is divided into four sections. This introduction presents the theoretical and conceptual setting on which the essay is structured. The second section presents the macro-sociological context of neoliberal global modernity/coloniality and its colonial and Eurocentric roots, considered as the bases of the structures of inequality and exclusion forged from a racialized, sexist and classist morality that divides the world



into a global North and South (Grosfoguel and Mignolo, 2008; Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2007; Santos and Meneses, 2014; Wallerstein, 2017). This framework allows us to discuss the connections established between necropolitics (Mbembe, 2021) and the “zone of non-being” (Fanon, 2018), analyzed as a privileged territory of social workers for recognition and intervention from an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 2017). The third section exposes the articulations between societal dialectics and the everydayness of praxis, where ethical listening and speaking are tools of social work in the face of subalternization (Spivak, 2010) in the perspective of the “Philosophy of Liberation” (Dussel, 2011). The last section concludes these preliminary notes with the proposition that non-discriminatory, anti-colonial and geopolitically situated listening and speaking be understood as ways of affirming an “everyday ethics, from and in favor of the immense majorities of humanity excluded from globalization, in the current historical ‘normality’ in force” (Dussel, 2000, p.15), in the sense of critically thinking an existential political project as a space for the construction of decolonial humanities.

The historical construction of (dis)humanity: neoliberalism and the “zones of non-being”.

Understanding the construction of (dis)humanity requires a long-term historical analysis (Braudel, 1965) with respect to the social construction of modernity itself, which is not the purpose of this essay. However, and briefly, it will be necessary to situate from what historical perspective these constructions and the exclusion zones they generate are approached, considering that they are the privileged places for the action of social workers.

As Santos (2005, p.32) states, the neoliberal recipe is a “multifaceted phenomenon with economic, social, political, cultural, religious and legal dimensions interconnected in a complex way” that sustains the processes of globalization, poverty or even, as defined by Castells (2019), a sinister “ménage à trois”, formed by terrorism, fear and politics. Its consequences in the last three decades are the breakdown of the Welfare State and democratic systems, exacerbating economic vulnerability and the growth of inequalities, exacerbating humanitarian crises globally.

The intensity of the measures imposed by the neoliberal hegemonic order is felt most devastatingly in the countries of the global South, making them more vulnerable, whether due to internal policies or foreign policies imposed by the coun-

tries of the global North. In this context, necropolitics at the global level has been adopted as the exercise of a sovereignty that is based “on power and the ability to dictate who can live and who must die. Therefore, kill or let live constitute the limits of sovereignty, its fundamental attributes” (Mbembe, 2021, p.5).

Mbembe’s theoretical conception dialogues with Fanon’s (2018) contemporary critical thought on the construction of the “zone of being” and the “zone of non-being” within a modernity that is constituted from coloniality (Dussel, 2021). The articulation between necropolitics and the “zone of not being” allows us to understand the structures of inequality and exclusion forged from a racialized, sexist and classist morality that was established with the colonial processes and continues to this day, challenging the ethics founded on humanity.

The relations of power and domination between the metaphorical North and South of the world and, consequently, the question of the production and reproduction of social relations between individuals, groups and movements of society, points to the historical and current political and ideological issues that are required to be educated in reflection. The phenomenon called globalization is linked to the transnational and cross-border forms of interaction designed by the central states of the world system, in the mid-1980s, the so-called Neoliberal Consensus or Washington Consensus. Although economically outlined, its dimensions and consequences go far beyond this field, social globalization, or the globalization of poverty, is one of these. The reduction of wage costs, labor rights and the implementation of compensatory measures to combat poverty instead of measures to combat inequality, directly impact the poorest populations in all countries of the global South (Santos, 2005, p.41). Economic vulnerability made these peripheral and semi-peripheral countries the most subject to the impositions of neoliberal prescriptions and the exponential increase in inequalities.

According to Wallerstein and Quijano (1992) capitalism is a non-linear historical process that does not develop naturally. It is the result of the multiple interactions of a set of phenomena that make it possible. One of these phenomena is the so-called “discovery” of America, better known as invasion/intrusion, which marks the beginning of the process of global expansion of capitalism, science and the inter-state system. The idea of America (Mignolo, 2007) inaugurates modernity founded on coloniality, designated by Quijano (2014) as a complex historical phenomenon that extends to the present and refers to a pattern of power that operates through the naturalization of territorial, racial, cultural and epistemic hierarchies, enabling the reproduction of relations of domination. A pattern of



power that not only guaranteed, but continues to guarantee the exploitation, by capital, of a group of human beings over others on a global scale; the subordination and annihilation of the knowledge and experiences and ways of life of those thus dominated and exploited.

This historical and critical line, which shifts the focus to America, shifts the locus of enunciation and allows us to identify that power and knowledge made the “discoveries” a Eurocentric story, in which the discovery was based on a hierarchical relationship that affirmed that “The discoverer is the one with more power and more knowledge and, with this, the ability to declare the other as his discovery. It is the inequality of power and knowledge that transforms the reciprocity of discovery into the appropriation of the discovered” (Santos, 2008, p.181).

Such displacement reveals the history of colonial power and evidences two of its main consequences: first, it meant for all those peoples the dispossession of their own and unique historical identities; and second, the determination of new identities: racial, colonial and negative. Thus it is possible to understand how colonialism constituted Europe at the center of world history and all other cultures on its periphery. Eurocentrism is presented as the first great discourse of the modern world, which invented and subordinated indigenous populations, African peoples, Muslims and Jews (Santos, 2008). As Grosfoguel and Mignolo (2008) state, this is the nascent context of modernity that is systematically denied in the hegemonic descriptions of modernity made from Europe itself (as a locus of enunciation). In this, the idea of race and racism, which established the difference between colonizer and colonized, is the organizing principle of capital accumulation on a global scale and of power relations. A standard that marked the control of labor, of the State and its institutions, as well as the production of knowledge (Quijano, 2000; 2007; Wallerstein, 1992).

Analyzing the colonial context, Fanon (2010) states that racism and racialization² are part of a larger process of domination: the violent and unequal expansion of capitalist relations of production towards the non-European world that has been affected since colonization. In this, expropriation, dispossession, destruction and objective murder are deployed in a plundering of cultural schemes marked by a racial division of labor, which presupposes the place of individuals on the basis of the phenotypical and cultural marks they possess. The author’s reflection allows us to perceive how this

² Racialization, thought of as a process, refers to objective conditions that make possible definitions of racial classification translated into certain societies at the ideological level and generating economic, political and cultural tensions. It generates dynamics in which objective conditions propitiate ideological positions that reproduce, model and crystallize structural positions (Silvério, 1999)..

practice of denial of humanity is not restricted to colonially occupied territories, nor does it remain in the past, but has been configured and remains in force as a structuring axis of modern society. It shows that in the epidermization of places and social positions, what is understood by race has come to define the opportunities and barriers experienced by people throughout their lives (Fanon, 2018; Grosfoguel, 2012).

In this context, it is possible to understand how racialization is the subjective internalization of epidermization, that is, the moment when people cease to recognize themselves as reciprocally human/as, to see themselves and others through the distorted lens of colonialism. The binary contrasts between white versus non-white, male versus female are assumed as fixed and essential identities, which impoverish the perception of oneself and the other in the world.

For Fanon, racism is a global hierarchy of superiority and inferiority in the line of the human that has been politically produced and reproduced as a structure of domination for centuries by the imperialist/Westernocentric/Christianocentric/Capitalist/Patriarchal/Modern/Colonial system.” (Grosfoguel, 2012, p.93)

32

In different contexts, related to processes of social construction of modernity, the hierarchy of superiority/inferiority can be defined by different categories of racialization according to markers such as color, ethnicity, language, culture and religion, regardless of the region of the world. It is a hierarchy of domination sustained by the reproduction of discriminatory practices against inferiorized ethnic/racial groups that sustains inequalities, oppression and exclusion in all cultures.

In Grosfoguel's perspective on Fanonian thought, people above the dividing line of humanity are socially recognized as human beings “with subjectivity and access to human/citizenship/civil/labor rights. People below the line of human are considered sub-human or non-human, that is, their humanity is questioned and, therefore, denied (Fanon, 2010)” (Grosfoguel, 2012, p.93).

Thus, bodies bear the marks of racialization and are identified as superior or inferior (Fanon, 2010). Individuals above the line of humanity live in the so-called “zone of being” and those below the line live in the “zone of non-being”, which does not mean that these zones are homogeneous. Grosfoguel (2012, p.94) states that “in an imperial/capitalist/colonial world, race constitutes the transversal dividing line that crosses and organizes



relations of class, sexuality and gender oppression on a global scale.” It is these intersections, conceptually coined as “intersectionality” by the Black feminist movement in the ‘80s (Collins, 2019; Collins and Bilge, 2020; Crenshaw, 2017), that intensify the processes of interaction of class, gender, sexuality, and race relations of domination in individual contexts, collective practices, and cultural/institutional arrangements. The concept has been appropriated by the social sciences because of its scope for investigating how intersecting power relations influence social relations in different societies, as well as individual experiences in everyday life. As an analytical tool, intersectionality considers categories of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, ability, ethnicity, and age, among others, as interrelated and mutually shaping each other (Collins and Bilge, 2020).

These processes are present in the two areas of the world described by Fanon, but in qualitatively different ways. In the “zone of non-being,” due to the dehumanization to which they are subjected by the racialization of their bodies as inferior, the intensity of class, sexuality, race and gender oppression promotes different degrees of oppression and exclusion.

From the perspective of De Oto and Katzer (2014) the sociological dimension on the “zone of non-being” on which Grosfoguel’s conceptualization is based deserves a critical reading:

33

In no case is the zone of non-being synonymous with dispossession or diminution of the agency of the colonized, although its rhetorical figure inadvertently pushes toward that side. The zone of non-being can be understood in Fanon’s description as the least favored of the two, the most harmed of the modern-colonial relationship, as long as that is the reading of a dualism from which there is no escape. In a certain sense, the translation of these zones of non-being into sociological dimensions does nothing but reinscribe a phantasmaticization of experience, in the sense of stabilizing it in concrete conceptual and nominative articulations [...]. Fanon suspects that in the refusal of destiny, of the destinal, (there is only one destiny. And it is white) spectralities emerge for which there is no discursive domain available, no words of any vocabulary at hand, but that at the same time, any emancipatory journey must be initiated there. (p.58-59)

Although divergent on the ontological question and the critique of the dualism on which some sociological dimensions are built, it is possible to find convergences between the conceptions that theorize on the “zone of non-being”: that from this zone liberation actions must be initiated.

The critical reflection raised by Fanonian thought leads to the (re)knowledge that each context and each place possesses its condition of materiality in which liberation demands non-repression and non-subjugation of voices and people. This is the context in which the action of intervention mainly takes place: the practical ethics of the professional activity of social work.

In the professional daily life, it is necessary to understand this macro historical and sociological scenario so that the yearnings of freedom, equality, right and justice can be transformed into concrete acts. After all, a universalization that dilutes particularities, differences, cultures, histories and that privileges only Eurocentric Western thought, cannot serve as a parameter for interventions with individuals, groups, social movements and populations that find themselves in spaces where the enjoyment of the rights of humanity is permanently denied.

Listening and Speaking as Decolonial Strategies in Social Work

The debates and appropriations of decolonial thinking have been present with different intensity in subjects, undergraduate and graduate careers in different areas, assuming different characteristics from country to country. For Gómez-Hernández and Sánchez,

Opting for the decolonial implies situating oneself from the life alternatives of individuals, collectives, peoples and communities that have not only resisted, but during their historical struggle, have recreated their existences and ways of life. It is there where the hope for social liberation is born and sustained, which is impossible to achieve without intercultural critical dialogue. (2018, p.141)

In the global neoliberal contemporaneity, social struggles simultaneously confront the capitalism and racialization inaugurated by Eurocentric modernity, which together underpin necropolitics. In this perverse historical conjuncture, social classification systems maintain and reproduce intact colonial power structures, which “were maintained when their bearers changed or were forced to change roles and concrete activities and changed forms of work and exploitation” (Quijano, 1995, p.4), generating historical identities, as mentioned.

As an emerging and geopolitically located debate in Latin America and the Caribbean, decoloniality in Brazilian social work is still an incipient approach and there are few problematizations and contributions to the profession. It is worth highlighting, then, the reflection of dos Santos (2018) in his article “Serviço Social e descolonialidade: relações entre questão colonial e questão social no Brasil”. On the other hand, efforts by authors seeking to advance decolonial debates can be identified in several countries of the American continent. In 2017, the book “Social Work and Decoloniality. Epistemologías insurgentes para la intervención en lo social” by Hermida and Meschini, brought together foundational texts for an appropriation of this epistemology by social work.

In the field of professional praxis, the reflections that embrace the decolonial perspective reveal that it offers valuable theoretical contributions for a complex analysis of contemporary social issues and the construction of practices committed to a project of humanization, liberation and overcoming of “subalternity” (Beverley, 2004, p.337) geopolitically and epistemologically located from the colonial experience (Gómez-Hernández, 2017; 2018; Gómez-Hernandez and Sánchez, 2018; Gómez-Hernández et al., 2014; Martínez and Agüero, 2017; Pereyra and Paez, 2017). As stated by Curiel ,

35

Decolonial proposals, in their various expressions, have offered critical thinking to understand the historical and political specificity of our societies from a non-dominant paradigm that shows the relationship between Western modernity, colonialism and capitalism, questioning the narratives of official and political historiography and showing how social hierarchies were formed. (2019, p.32)

In the praxis of social work, marked by the permanent articulation between the individual and the collective, by political or ideological and historically situated non-neutrality, listening and orality are privileged tools, whether in action, scientific production or activism. As political acts, they are not neutral, and can be configured, for this very reason, as instruments for the maintenance of subalternity, reinforcing the hegemonic project of control, oppression, inequality and exclusion, or as powerful tools for social transformation. In the recipe book imposed by neoliberalism, listening and speaking are often the only tools available in daily work, especially when the intervention is not supported by public policies and social programs, since they do not address the levels of structural dehumanization imposed by the “zone of non-being”.

According to Couto and Carrieri (2018) in liberation processes listening is a way to break with the imposed silencing, therefore, it is imperative to consider the perspective of each person whose voice was denied or whose recognition of their humanity was omitted in the historical process of constitution of modern society.

In the Dusselian perspective of the “Philosophy of Liberation” (2011; 2021) the transformation of society is centered on the ethical principle of reciprocity with the Other. The liberating reason is, therefore, the search for emancipatory means, in which it is necessary to situate oneself at the level of the materiality of practices, in order to understand the mechanisms of exclusion, as well as the ways of silencing voices. This is only possible if there is an effective positioning next to the oppressed, and it is this proximity that allows their recognition as subjects and the awareness of responsibility for their physical, mental, emotional and social well-being (Dussel, 2001). For Couto and Carrieri the “philosophy of liberation” denounces that the form of emancipation from the oppressive totality occurs from the “place of the word of the oppressed”, in the political resistance to the system; and of the oppressors, in “assuming their share of responsibility in the construction of the totality and in the myth of modernity in order to, by giving voice to the other, allow dialogue and the reconstruction of society” (2018, p.637).

36

According to this approach, subalternity as a critical operator should not be the object of a victimizing discourse, which imprisons the subaltern subject in the space of exclusion and deprivation of access to power and protagonism, which requires salvation or others to manage it. In this context, listening and professional orality will be the tools that can intervene as resources to maintain or transform the oppressive system of subordination.

Spivak (2010), in his article “Can the subaltern speak?”, warns that it is necessary to become aware of the political ethical character of intellectuals, in order to avoid the traps of speaking for the subaltern subject, which is one of the ways of maintaining it in subalternity. What must be practiced is a professional intervention and effective actions against subalternity, generating spaces of qualified listening that assume the commitment that “responsibility must unite the call of ethics to a response” (Spivak, 1994, p.57).



Thus, professional ethics needs to critically apprehend the foundations of moral conflicts in order to avoid the determinations of its alienated form, identifying the relationship between the uniqueness and universality of moral ethical acts, so that it can respond to social conflicts in the search for freedom. It is necessary to connect “the ethics of Social Work with democratic values (...) and with the commitment to a way of understanding democracy in which the principles of Social Work have meaning and significance” (Mougan Rivero, 2019, p.298).

The strategies of humanization and integrality in public policies find in ethical listening and speaking two powerful tools of social intervention to articulate the private space and the public space. The non-dichotomous but dynamic transit between the subjectivity of the subject and the construction of social policies requires the mediation of professionals capable of overcoming conservative ideological instruments and who are committed to act according to a critical vision and a libertarian ethic capable of confronting the standards of dehumanization. Thinking critically about practice, values and ethical principles should reflect the search for spaces for the reconstruction of the humanities in a dialectical, permanent dialogue between the local and the global, the subjective and the collective.

To conclude

The transversality of decolonial thought offers social work contributions for the construction of an existential political project that is nourished by the radical critical debate of the ethics of liberation. The humanity recognized in this debate is instrumentalized through the dialogues of silenced voices and has as its principles an integrative thinking that resists the homogenizing logic of modernity. Knowledge based on heterogeneity and the protagonism of the subaltern subject recognizes the intersectional crossings produced by the different forms of coloniality that structure the “zone of non-being”.

The praxis of social work is a meeting place between the micro-social and the macro-social. In the professional intervention there is an intense exchange where the social is inscribed in subjectivity. This, with the marks of the colonial aftermath, in turn, is inscribed in the macro-social. The encounter and exchange between the micro and the macro is mediated by the dialogue that takes place in professional practice, where non-discriminatory, anti-colonial and geopolitically situated listening and speaking are tools to repair the violent denial of the Other, imposed by the invisibility and silencing of the voice, derived from the construction of a dominant discourse that is based on contempt,



insecurity and indignity. As a critical instrument, praxis invites professionals to situate concepts such as race, class, gender, sexuality and culture as axes of reflection on the construction of social problems and phenomena linked to exclusion and social inequality.

The notion of praxis for liberation is the necessary relationship between ethics and humanization. In this sense, it is urgent to restore, reconstruct and regenerate spaces, epistemologies and interventions, not only as an academic and professional disciplinary project, but also as an existential-decolonial ethical-political and epistemic project for the construction of humanities and the fight against the production and reproduction of the “zone of non-being”. The “being” finds the possibility of (re)existing (Achinte, 2013) in the ethical listening of critical professionals who use ethical discourse as an instrument to build spaces of daily resistance.

References

- Achinte, A. A. (2013). Pedagogías de la re-existencia. Artistas indígenas y afrocolombianos. En C. Walsh, *Pedagogías decoloniales: Prácticas insurgentes de resistir, (re) existir y (re)vivir* (pp.202–468, vol.1). Abya-Yala.
- Beverley, J. (2004). *Subalternidad y representación: Debates en teoría cultural*. Iberoamericana. Vervuert. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31819/9783865278111>
- Braudel, F. (1965). História e Ciências Sociais: A longa duração. *Revista de História*, 30(62), 261–294. <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.2316-9141.rh.1965.123422>
- Braudel, F. (2004). *Gramática Das Civilizações* (3a ed.). Martins Fontes.
- Castells, M. (2019). *Rupture: The Crisis of Liberal Democracy* (R. Marteau, trad.). Polity Press.
- Césaire, A. (2006). *Discursos sobre el colonialismo*. Ediciones AKAL.
- Collins, P. H. (2019). *Intersectionality as Critical Social Theory*. Duke University Press.
- Collins, P. H. y Bilge, S. (2020). *Intersectionality* (2a ed.). Polity Press.
- Couto, F. F. & Carrieri, A. de P. (2018). Enrique Dussel e a Filosofia da Libertação nos Estudos Organizacionais. *Cadernos EBAPE.BR*, 16(4), 631–641. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1679-395169213>



Crenshaw, K. (2017). *On Intersectionality: Essential Writings*. Books.

Curiel, O. (2019). Construindo metodologías feministas desde o feminismo decolonial. En P. B. de Melo, J. Coelho, L. Ferreira y D. E. T. Silva (orgs.), *Descolonizar o feminismo* (pp. 32–51). IFB.

De Oto, A. & Katzer, L. (2014). Tras la huella del acontecimiento: Entre la zona del no ser y la ausencia radical. *Utopía y Praxis Latinoamericana*, 19(65), 53–64. <https://ri.conicet.gov.ar/handle/11336/37527>.

Dos Santos, M. F. P. (2018). Serviço Social e descolonialidade: Relações entre Questão Colonial e Questão Social no Brasil. *Anais Eletrônicos do Congresso Epistemologias do Sul*, 2(1). <https://revistas.unila.edu.br/aeces/article/view/841>

Dussel, E. (2000). *Ética da libertação na idade da globalização e da exclusão* (E. F. Alves, J. A. Clasen y L. M. E. Orth, trads.). Vozes.

Dussel, E. (2001). *Hacia una filosofía política crítica*. Desclée de Brower.

Dussel, E. (2011). *Filosofía de la liberación*. Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Dussel, E. (2021). 1492 - *El encubrimiento del otro: (Hacia el origen del “mito de la modernidad”)*. Independently Published.

Escobar, A. (2003). Mundos y conocimiento de otro modo. El programa de investigación de modernidad/colonialidad latinoamericana. *Tabula Rasa*, 1, 51–86. <https://doi.org/10.25058/20112742.188>

Fanon, F. (2010). *Piel negra, máscaras blancas*. Ediciones AKAL.

Fanon, F. (2018). *Los Condenados de la Tierra* (4a ed., vol. 47). Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Gómez-Hernández, E. (2017). Implicaciones para un Trabajo Social intercultural crítico y decolonial latinoamericano y caribeño. En M. E. Hermida y P. A. Meschini (orgs.), *Trabajo social y decolonialidad. Epistemologías insurgentes para la investigación en lo social* (pp.121–154). EUDEM. Editorial de la Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata.

Gómez-Hernández, E. (2018). *¿Por qué Trabajo Social Intercultural y Decolonial?* Celats- Centro Latinoamericano de Trabajo Social. <https://www.celats.org/noticias/11-noticias/46-por-que-trabajo-social-intercultural-y-decolonial>

Gómez-Hernández, E., Sánchez, M. P., Barreto, E., González, F., Rivera, J., Muñoz, J. M., Muñoz, N., Morales, E., Fernández, S. Y., Muñoz, H., Vásquez, G., Nieto L., J., Suárez, J., Betancur, V., Atehortúa, O. & Román, M. (2014). *Diversidades, saberes y Trabajo Social en perspectiva intercultural y decolonial*. Pulso & Letra Editores.

Gómez-Hernández, E. & Sánchez, M. P. (2018). Decolonialidad en lo Social. Apuntes desde Trabajo Social. *ConCienciaSocial*, 2(3), 140–155. <https://revistas.unc.edu.ar/index.php/ConCienciaSocial/article/view/21593>

Grosfoguel, R. (2012). El concepto de «racismo» en Michel Foucault y Frantz Fanon: ¿teorizar desde la zona del ser o desde la zona del no-ser? *Tabula Rasa*, 16, 79–102. <https://doi.org/10.25058/20112742.112>

Grosfoguel, R. & Mignolo, W. D. (2008). Intervenciones decoloniales: Una breve introducción. *Tabula Rasa*, 9, 29–37. <https://doi.org/10.25058/issn.2011-2742>

Hermida, M. E. & Meschini, P. A. (orgs.). (2017). *Trabajo Social y Decolonialidad. Epistemologías insurgentes para la intervención en lo social*. EUEDEM. Editorial de la Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata.

Kilomba, G. (2020). *Memórias da plantação: Episódios de racismo cotidiano*. Editora Cobogó.

Lander, E. (2011). *La colonialidad del saber: Eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales. Perspectivas latinoamericanas* (2a ed). Facultad de Ciencias Economicas y Sociales (FACES-UCV), Instituto Internacional de la UNESCO para la Educación Superior en América Latina y el Caribe (IESALC).

Maldonado-Torres, N., Castro-Gómez, S. & Grosfoguel, R. (2007). Sobre la colonialidad del ser: Contribuciones al desarrollo de un concepto. En *El giro decolonial: Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global* (pp.127–168). Siglo del Hombre Editores.

Martí, J. (2019). *Nuestra América*. Biblioteca del Congreso de la Nación.

Martínez, S. & Agüero, J. (2017). El Trabajo Social Emancipador como aporte a los procesos de decolonialidad. En M. E. Hermida y P. A. Meschini (orgs.), *Trabajo social y decolonialidad. Epistemologías insurgentes para la investigación en lo social* (pp.101–119). EUDEM. Editorial de la Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata.

Mbembe, A. (2021). *Necropolítica. Biopoder, soberanía, estado de exceção, política da morte* (R. Santini, trad.). n-1 edições.

Mignolo, W. D. (2007). *La idea de América Latina: La herida colonial y la opción decolonial*. Gedisa.

Mignolo, W. D. (2010a). *Desobediencia epistémica: Retórica de la modernidad, lógica de la colonialidad y gramática de la descolonialidad*. Ediciones del Signo.

Mignolo, W. D. (2010b). De-linking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality, and the Grammar of De-coloniality”. En W. D. Mignolo y A. Escobar (orgs.), *Globalization and the Decolonial Option* (pp.303–368). Routledge.

Mougan Rivero, C. (2019). El valor de los principios: La ética del trabajo social desde el contextualismo pragmatista. *Cuadernos de Trabajo Social*, 32(2), 289–300. <https://doi.org/10.5209/cuts.58757>

Pereyra, E. & Paez, R. (2017). El Trabajo Social y los desafíos de una praxis anticolonial. En M. E. Hermida y P. A. Meschini (orgs.), *Trabajo social y decolonialidad. Epistemologías insurgentes para la investigación en lo social* (pp.201–225). EUDEM. Editorial de la Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata.

Quijano, A. (1995). Raza, etnia y nación en Mariátegui: Cuestiones abiertas. *Estudios Latinoamericanos*, 2(3), 3–19. <http://dx.doi.org/10.22201/cela.24484946e.1995.3.49720>

Quijano, A. (2000). Colonialidad del poder, eurocentrismo y América Latina. En E. Lander, *La colonialidad del saber: Eurocentrismo y ciencias sociales, perspectivas latinoamericanas* (pp.201–246). CLACSO.

Quijano, A. (2007). Colonialidad del poder y clasificación social. En S. Castro-Gómez y R. Grosfoguel, *El giro decolonial. Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global* (pp.93-126). Siglo del Hombre Editores.

Quijano, A. (2014). *Textos de Fundación*. Ediciones del Signo.

Santos, B. de S. (2004). Para uma sociologia das ausências e uma sociologia das emergências. En *Conhecimento prudente para uma vida decente: Um discurso sobre as ciências sociais revisitado* (pp.777–821). Cortez.

Santos, B. de S. (2005). *Globalização: Fatalidade ou utopia?* Edições Afrontamento.

Santos, B. de S. (2008). *A gramática do tempo: Para uma nova cultura política* (2a ed., vol.4). Cortez Editora.

Santos, B. de S. & Meneses, M. P. (2014). *Epistemologias do Sul*. Cortez Editora.

Silvério, V. R. (1999). *Raça e racismo na virada do milênio: Os novos contornos da racialização* [Tese de Doutorado em Sociologia, Universidade Estadual de Campinas]. <http://repositorio.unicamp.br/jspui/handle/REPOSIP/280036>

Spivak, G. C. (1994). Responsibility. *Boundary 2*, 21(3), 19–64. <https://doi.org/10.2307/303600>

Spivak, G. C. (2010). Pode o subalterno falar? (R. G. Almeida, M. P. Feitosa y A. P. Feitosa, trads.). UFMG.

Wallerstein, I. (1992). *Creación del sistema mundial moderno*. Editorial Norma.

Wallerstein, I. (2017). *El moderno sistema mundial II: el mercantilismo y la consolidación de la economía-mundo europea, 1600-1750*. SIGLO XXI de España Editores, S.A.

Wallerstein, I. & Quijano, A. (1992). La Americanidad como concepto, o América en el moderno sistema mundial. *Revista Internacional de Ciencias Sociales - UNESCO*, 4(134), 583–593. UNESCO Digital Library.

Walsh, C. (2013). *Pedagogías decoloniales: Prácticas insurgentes de resistir, (re) existir y (re) vivir* (vol. I). Ediciones Abya-Yala.



Acknowledgments

This article is the result of research from the Post-doctorate in Social Change at the Interdisciplinary Center of History, Cultures and Societies of the University of Évora (CIDEHUS/UÉvora - 2019/2022) and the PhD in Social Work at the Higher Institute of Social Service of Lisbon of the Lusíada University of Lisbon (ISSSL/ULusíada - 2021/2025), funded by FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, IP, within the framework of the Projects CIDEHUS-UIDB/00057/2020, CLISSIS-UIDP/04624/2020 and the Doctoral Scholarship UIBD/151071/2021, Government of Portugal.

Biography of the author

Vera Lúcia Ermida Barbosa. Social Worker by the Federal Fluminense University (Brazil). Master's Degree in Community Psychosociology and Social Ecology from the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). PhD in Contemporary Studies from the University of Coimbra (Portugal).

43

E-mail: vermida@uevora.pt

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7785-0113>

