Violence and vulnerability: the everyday life of black youth in suburbs of two Brazilian state capitals

Maria Edna Bezerra Silva (https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6343-5704) [1]
Diana Anuciação (https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7579-1674) [2]
Leny Alves Bonfim Trad (https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8762-4320) [3]

[1] Faculdade de Medicina, Universidade Federal de Alagoas. Av. Lourival Melo Mota s/n, Tabuleiro do Martins. 57072-900 Maceió AL Brasil. medna.pc@gmail.com
[2] Centro de Ciências da Saúde, Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia. Santo Antônio de Jesus BA Brasil.
[3] Programa Integrado de Pesquisa e Cooperação Técnica Comunidade, Família e Saúde – Contextos, Trajetórias e Políticas Públicas, Instituto de Saúde Coletiva, Universidade Federal da Bahia. Salvador BA Brasil.

Abstract *Violence is a serious public health issue and constitutes a historical social phenomenon with diverse causes and consequences, and multiple manifestations. The main victims continue to be populations left vulnerable and marginalised, where dimensions including gender, class, race and social belonging intersect. Although studies to explain the phenomenon of violence do address ethnic and racial issues, they tend not to consider violence as stemming also from institutional racism. This paper examines data from a qualitative and quantitative study drawing on focus groups and semi-structured interviews to evaluate symbolic and structural violence experienced by young black people from 15 to 29 years old residing in peripheral neighbourhoods of two Brazilian state capitals – Recife and Fortaleza. The focus is on their standpoints that situate the intersectionality, especially among race/skin colour, territorial belonging and class, in the very definition of identity. In both capitals, the young black people revealed a common reality: life projects constrained by economic limitations and by the concrete or symbolic demarcation of social spaces to which they are denied access.*
Key words *Violence, Intersectionality, Social vulnerability, Black youth, Structural racism*

Introduction

Violence is a serious public health problem[1] and, throughout the history of humankind, has constituted a historical and social phenomenon of diverse, multifaceted causes and processes. As a phenomenon of lived experience, violence entails different emotional burdens on those who inflict and those who suffer it, making it complex to conceptualise. It consists in using force, power and privilege to dominate, subjugate, harm and cause suffering to others[2]. The main victims of its worst effects continue to be populations left vulnerable and marginalised, in which factors including gender, class, race and territorial belonging intersect and converge[3-7].

Violence has been present throughout the history of Brazil's construction as a nation. At present, expressions of violence are increasing exponentially in a number of areas, legitimised by federal government policy in place between 2019 and 2022, which advocated arming society and, on the other hand, worked to dismantle social policies. This, coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic period, resulted in worsening and widening social inequalities and inequities, affecting black, poor and peripheral populations most significantly. Thus, there is no in-depth debate, nor any effort by society to find real solutions to this, added to which appropriate public policies are lacking[8-11].

Although studies seeking to explain the phenomenon of violence do address ethnic and race issues, racism and race relations carry less analytical weight than categories such as class, territory and gender. Above all, these analyses tend not to consider the phenomenon of violence involving the black population to be a product of the structural racism that pervades various institutions and public bodies, as exemplified by the practices of public security agents[4,7,12].

Pan-African feminist Lélia Gonzalez[13] stated that Brazilians express a different type of racism, which is racism by denial, concealed and camouflaged, unlike racism in the United States, which is explicit and even backed by segregationist laws. This racism by omission and denial reflects the myth of racial democracy, which fallaciously claimed that the Brazilian people was the product of miscegenation and lived harmoniously and cordially without conflict. This denied the historical process of colonisation, which involved exploitation and violent rape of black and indigenous women. That myth helped mask socially discriminatory processes of lethal force and the exclusion inflicted on the black population, preventing it from upward social mobility. Although refuted in the 1980s, it is continually reinvented and assumes new guises, in the failure, for example, to recognise the influence of racism in the incarceration of black youth, although 66% of the prison population is black and brown[14].

The most diverse forms of violence are inflicted on black bodies and racialised subjects, by denying their humanity, the universal model being the white man. Non-whites are accessory bodies, humans of less disposable value, who can be raped, wronged and even killed[15-20].

The black population continues marginalised, as reflected in the worst social and health indicators in a profusion of scenarios of avoidable inequities and injustices resulting from structural racism. This, Silvio Almeida[21] considered to result from the social structure itself, that is, from the "normal" way in which political, economic, legal and even family relations are constituted and thus to lie at the root of the socioeconomic organisation of the Brazilian State. This entails the production of the framework of racial inequalities expressed, for example, in non-entitlement to the human right to appropriate food.

According to the 2nd National Survey of Food Insecurity in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Brazil[22], of 2022, the black population living with the scourge of hunger increased by 60%, as against 34.6% of the white population. In that context, poverty spread through Brazil's population, engulfing 50 million people, with its black population accounting for around 38 million of them[23].

The 2021 Atlas of Violence[24] revealed that a young black man was 2.6 times more likely to be murdered than a young non-black man. That scenario constitutes necropolitics, a notion proposed by political scientist Achille Mbembe[16] in his book "Politics of Enmity", to define a process from the suspension of the rule of law to a state of exception or of terror in which the production of death features as a political strategy for governability.

With the growth of militias, arms availability policies and the war on drugs, the Brazilian State has relativised guarantees and allowed the technologies of necropolitics to be applied and expanded, which has led to a genocide of black youth. A macabre mix of biopolitics, state of exception and state of siege that is bringing control techniques developed in extermination camps[17] into Brazil's *favelas* and peripheral neighbourhoods. When the production of necropolitics is

interwoven with race and racism, the politics of death gains direction[18].

This article examines data from a quali-quantitative study, which evaluated symbolic and structural violence experienced by young, black people from 15 to 29 years old, residing in peripheral neighbourhoods in two Brazilian state capitals – Recife (Pernambuco) and Fortaleza (Ceará). Previous publications[25] have discussed specific situations where institutional racism was found to influence approaches to policing, in as regards both the selection of the public approached and the territories where such approaches are concentrated, as well resistance strategies pursued by youth groups in the study universe[26].

Here, the phenomenon is framed on the understanding that racial, economic, territorial and cultural inequalities pervade Brazilian youth, and that poorer and black youth are the main victims of rights abuses and police violence[25], as well as other forms of structural violence in various everyday contexts.

Intersectionality is considered to constitute an important theoretical contribution to analysis of the scenarios of violence and vulnerability experienced by the black and peripheral youth who participated in the study.

In Brazil, the intersections between race and gender and their implications can be learned from pioneering productions by black feminists and activists of the Brazilian black movement, including Lélia Gonzalez, Beatriz de Nascimento and Sueli Carneiro. More recently prominent is the production of Carla Akotirene[27], which highlights the potential of intersectionality as a theoretical and methodological to instrument to address the structural inseparability of racism, capitalism and cisheteropatriarchy, which are interconnected social phenomena that constitute a system of oppression.

Further on this analytical model, the "matrix of domination" proposed by Collins[28] is considered particularly appropriate. It comprises four components – racism, heterosexuality, colonialism and social class markers – which interact in the production of oppression and inequalities. Structural components also added include laws and institutional policies, disciplinary aspects, ideas or ideologies and discriminatory practices common in everyday life.

Methodology

The empirical data analysed below derive from a quali-quantitative study to examine experiences and indicators of violence, especially police violence, and vulnerability in the lives of young black people (15 to 29 years old) and the relationship between that situation and structural and institutional racism in two state capitals in northeast Brazil: Recife and Fortaleza. The criteria established by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics were used to specify the black population, that is, the group of people who declare themselves to be black or brown.

Data production drew on focus groups and semi-structured interviews of young people from four low-income neighbourhoods. The selected locations met the following criteria: they were peripheral or low-income neighbourhoods with high rates of urban violence, indicators of social vulnerability, especially as regards shortfalls in the social protection network (health, education, social assistance and public security). Also taken into account was the availability of local support for conversations with young people in the neighbourhood.

Material for this article was collected from seven focus groups (four FGs in Fortaleza and three in Recife) and eight interviews (four in each capital), which emphasised the participants' perceptions and experiences of everyday situations involving violence and social vulnerability. FGs lasted an average of an hour and a half and involved twelve to fifteen participants, who were 15 to 29 years old, predominantly black or brown, but including self-declared indigenous and white participants, and males and females, all residing in the selected neighbourhoods.

The semi-structured interviews served to explore what were considered emblematic cases from the FGs, particularly experiences of extreme violence during police operations. The four young people from each state capital chosen for interview from among the FG participants were of both sexes, self-declared themselves to be black or brown and lived in situations of extreme vulnerability in the selected peripheral neighbourhoods.

Data were systematised using NVivo 9.0 software into the the following analytical categories: i) identity, belonging and the experience of "being young"; and ii) perceptions of social vulnerability and social protection mechanisms.

The study was submitted to and approved by the research ethics committee of the Instituto de

Saúde Coletiva (ISC) of the Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA). The excerpts from interviews or FGs quoted in the next section will be identified by the following codes accompanied by an indication of the location (FOR: Fortaleza; REC: Recife): FGJFM: mixed FG; FGJF: female FG; FGJM: male FG; EJF: young female interviewee; and EJM: young male interviewee.

Results and discussion

Being young on the periphery: insider and outsider

Although young people share one social marker – they are at a stage of life delimited by age – other social markers, such as gender, race, religiosity, sexuality and social class have to be considered, along with their intersections. From this, the conditions of young peoples' lives can vary between two extremes: from social vulnerability and the risk of multiple forms of violence, to the privilege of a safe, comfortable life. Thus, what is at issue here is the manner in which diverse social, territorial and cultural belongings, combined with ethnic and racial markers, produce different symbolic and material configurations[29]. This occurs in the socio-historical context of a society that represents black youth socially on the basis of a process of demarcation of otherness, which specifies who can in fact be considered and treated as a young person.

The FG and interview participants reported that, in both Recife and Fortaleza, discourse on stereotypes of black youth is always stigmatising and connected directly with notions of irresponsibility, lack of commitment, laziness, "craziness", criminality and trickery, while discourse on young non-black people rests on positive features, such as proactivity, intelligence, commitment, responsibility, creativity and strength, as in the excerpt from the report, below:

Outside [the favela], we are seen as criminals' wives, easy women, and the boys are immediately seen as criminals. What I can say is that our image out there is negative and it really is dog's life and out there we are worthless, because we are always associated with bad things. (FGJ-F1_REC).

Because of these characteristics attributed to young black men and women, any promising future in the world of adults is foreclosed to them, at the same time as they are required, from early childhood, to behave like adults, which even has implications in the legal field, when they are involved in any situation recognised in law as a crime.

In an endeavour to learn and highlight the young people's place of enunciation, they were asked, in both FGs and interviews: "What does being young mean to you?". In response to this question, they evoked a conjunction of terms representing "multiple sources of identity"[30] and, therefore, diverse social markers. These elements related to various different ways of expressing social belonging and the interfaces between the generational component ("youth") and other dimensions involving education, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnic-racial identity, work and the feeling of social and spatial belonging to the urban periphery.

These categories are revealing of the multiple places and social roles the young people studied here occupy in their experience of the world and which they recognised as markers structuring their experiences as young people. Accordingly, the meanings they attributed to the notion of "youth" were tacitly interwoven with the way the participants experienced everyday life as framed by their social condition. In Recife, that condition was connected essentially with notions of race, ethnicity and territorial belonging, whereas in Fortaleza it actually centred on the dyad of social class and territorial belonging.

In the interviews and FGs in both capitals, participants also emphasised places of speech or enunciation given by references that made intersectionality part of their very definition of identity by gender, sexuality and race or skin colour or of their place of belonging and role in the family institution. Examples included: "I am a young black man", "I am a black woman from the periphery", "I am a poor, young, black, gay man and university student", "I am a young woman and mother of a family", "I am a young, brown and very proudly homosexual man", "I am a young family man, father of three children, a good husband, good son, good colleague and good brother". Minority struggles were also found to be strongly expressed when, for example, adjectives were used to assert a political identity, as in the claim to be "very proudly homosexual".

In Fortaleza, the accounts also embodied a certain tension between two pathways present in the state of "being young", particularly for those living on the periphery. On the one hand are opportunities for fraternal relationships and pleasant moments shared with peers; on the other, there were recurrent mentions of social obligations and expectations resulting from the socially

disadvantaged situations experienced by the participants and their family groups, as illustrated by the narrative of one young interviewee.

I had no freedom of choice, I had no freedom to work, I didn't have the option to work. I was forced to work, because I had to help my father and mother at home, with my three brothers at home. [...] I became animalized as a person, I left off my secondary school routine of working and classes, I worked eight hours a day and went to night school... [...] I worked as a tailor's assistant at the time (EJ-M3_FOR).

Also mentioned were anxieties and dreams, mediated by the expectations that society builds around young people as the "country's future". This entails a perspective framed by ideas of responsibility, change and social constraints, as opposed to the ideal of enjoying life as "age appropriate" and the social discourse of black youth's lack of prospects.

I feel that, because I'm young, I carry a lot of responsibility, a lot of responsibility is put on me for the future. Like, yeah... I'm young, but I don't carry just my future, I carry other things too, like the future of the nation. I carry the future of my parents' old age, for any number of things, social issues in general and so on. A lot of future expectations are placed on us, on these young people. We are young and things are expected of us, a lot of responsibilities [...] (EJ-F2_FOR).

It can thus be inferred that "being young" interacts with many different aspects of the family's socioeconomic position and mobilises zones of temporal tension, which circulates among family members' life experiences (time past), the urgent current needs of life to be met by entering the world of work (time present) and the objective conditions for social, economic and symbolic investment in a life project (time future) – which can, in turn (paradoxically), represent some improvement in the material conditions of participants and their families.

The concrete life experiences entailed by being a young black person reveal explicitly how their day-to-day experience of racism and violence in the widest variety of dimensions exposes them to situations of vulnerability and social risk. The rules developed and preserved in our society as one part of the political process of the social construction of reality are responsible for maintaining the stigmatising labels that encircle black youth and constitute a cause of conflict between this group and society at large and its social institutions, as well as divergences between the categories of youth and adults[31].

The term "community" was also always present in the participants' speech and the notion of territorial belonging was very well demarcated. Their accounts expressed feelings of belonging to a group and of being accepted as belonging to it, even though those communities were considered "places of violence", because of their high crime rates, and recognised for the fragility of their social protection networks and high degree of vulnerability.

In Recife especially, the term "community" always appeared as a place full of good things and of the duality between protection and loss of freedom, because of its high degree of risk. Nonetheless, young people do not feel strange in their space, because they are *from inside,* that is, the *I* is part of *us* and differentiated from the *other,* which describes whoever is *outside.* "[...] Community, we feel, is always a good thing. [...] it is a 'warm' place, a comfortable, cosy place. [...] In a community [...] we are never strangers from each other". The following excerpt from a FG brings this out well:

*We're all from a single place. Our **community is wonderful,** because it accepts us as we are. Here everyone knows each other, has the same style, faces the same difficulties, does the same thing. Here I have a name and I am somebody, because people recognise me. But out there? **Out there, I'm nobody** * (FGJ-F1_REC, emphasis added).

On the other hand, as in the account above, the perception of welcome and comfort inside the community is contrasted with the discrimination and marginalisation experienced outside the periphery. Here, the community is associated with a sensation of protection, while danger – including, and particularly, as perpetrated by public security agents representing the State itself – comes from outside and is outside the community. This young black person is an *insider* of the periphery, outside of which what prevails for him is the position of *outsider*, that is, of someone dissimilar from the overall society, who deviates from the social norms and rules and must be shut away within the territorial perimeter of their own community[31].

"That is not your place" or places forbidden to young blacks from the periphery

This section examines the narratives that reveal a common reality in the lives of young black men and women from Brazil's periphery: a horizon that limits their construction of life projects, in view of both economic constraints and the concrete or symbolic demarcation of social spac-

es to which they are denied access. These examples of symbolic violence can be understood better when one considers the intersections among race, gender, social class and generation.

Historically, Brazil's white elite has created a place of belonging for black bodies, the place of subalternity. It has built an image of these bodies as inferior, damaged their self-esteem, consigned their modes of existence to invisibility and restricted their social circulation to territorial spaces on the urban periphery, as described below:

To a lot of people, I'm worthless... I'm no good... I'm like uninteresting... ignorant... I'm black... and so society's daily routine goes on... **in some places I'm rejected,** *in others I'm not* (EJ-F2_REC).

In *Black Skins White Masks,* by psychiatrist Franz Fanon[15], the construction of the black body is permeated by the idea of non-humanity, of non-being. White people's failure to acknowledge their privileged position in society favours racial inequalities, which, in turn, have impact on the scenario of increasing violence in peripheral territories, in what Cida Bento[32] calls a "narcissistic pact", which requires "[...] silent complicity from all members of the dominant racial group [...]" (p. 121).

Accordingly, the violence produced in peripheral territories resembles and approaches the concept of necropower, consigning the populations of these places to confinement and social stigma. The occupied territories become impoverished, leading to increasingly precarious infrastructure and, consequently, to death from scarcity[16], as well as to young people's holding lower expectations for their dreams and future projects, such as entering a university, for example.

The following fragments from an interview with a young black man (24 years old) from Fortaleza illustrate this social demarcation well:

My father, who is illiterate, didn't even have... like, for a long time in my life, I didn't have university on my horizon. University came onto my horizon in my third year, because I worked and went to school. I worked and studied all through my secondary school years, and university came onto my horizon at the end of my second year and beginning of my third. I think that, as university was never on his horizon, he said: "That's no place for you. Go find a job. What do you mean, you're going to be a teacher?" [...] "You shouldn't be at university, that's not your place. You should be a mechanic." And that, like, really hurt me. And it is what I want, I like it and so on, and I never imagined that that phrase 'This is not my place' would be so present like that in my life.

In this case, the young man's decision to enter higher education became a source of tension in the family, a situation that recurred in the focus groups and interviews in Fortaleza. In a context of constant material deprivation, morality rests on an ethic of hard work, usually involving training in short technical courses, and family networks characteristically form circuits of reciprocity based on interdependence among the members and, to a certain extent, on sacrificing young people by suppressing their individual aspirations in favour of the family collectively[33].

In *Lugar de Negro* [Black Man's Place], Lélia Gonzalez notes that the term "place" has very strong symbolic meaning, because it refers to a dimension that is determinant of racial inequalities. In the preceding interview excerpt, "This is not my place" relates to the expression "knowing your place", which (to the author) naturalises social positions grounded in a matrix of colonialist oppression, by social markers of race, gender, class and territory. In line with this (and in the same book), Carlos Halsenbalg argues that the idea of place regulates dreams and desires through the notion of "proper places", which confines the black population to subalternate and/or entertainment positions[34].

In the following segment of the same interview, family subsistence also figures as another determinant defining these young people choices or, more properly, limiting them.

[...] I worked as a tailor's assistant at the time – and to this day, the income I earn is really important to help my family as well. My mother was always very sincere: "When you earn money, you will have to give some to us too, because we need to survive" and all the money from my job went to my family. I had no luxury. [...] I left the job even against their wishes. I fought with my mother for days and days because of this [...] I only had one chance, I had to get into university on the first try, because I didn't have that luxury [...] My mother always shouted at me like, "Either you finish soon, or you're going to have to go to work, because we can't make ends meet".

Unlike young people (generally young white people) in the middle and upper strata of society – to whom their families direct economic and symbolic investments, together with the notion of a social moratorium (time-taking) for young people[20], which allows them to enjoy some socially-sanctioned time to experience adult life without the onus, implications and responsibilities arising from it – the young black people who were the study participants see themselves im-

mersed in the logic of social relations that structure and characterise the ways of life of Brazilian families in the poorer classes, which rest on "[...] practical learning from work and on individual sacrifice, self-denial in favour of the family group's physical and social survival"[33].

Today, more than 20 years since the Quota Law was sanctioned, there can be no denying that black student participation in higher education has grown significantly[35]. Equally indisputable is that this group faces numerous challenges in maintaining itself and adapting to the university environment"[36].

To the study participants, being a university student placed them in a new liminal position, because they found their presence was not accepted by the academic community, which regards academia as historically a place where black youth do not belong, given that, strictly speaking, these young people do not have the social capital and the ethos, which together determine university students' conduct[37].

On the other hand, any changes in behaviour due to the cultural exchanges that take place at university are called into question in their own communities of origin. The statement below from a young man from Fortaleza expresses that challenge:

It [university] breaks your ties. It takes away your ties, some family ties, I'm very distant from my family, for example. I'm very distant from my friends. When I talk to my friends [...] they say "Man, you've changed a lot". Then you get a real shock that now these are two different worlds (EJ-M3_FOR).

Unlike Fortaleza, where several young people's accounts in interviews and FGs presented admission to university from a more individual standpoint, the debate in Recife focused on collective, community-level aspects. Life projects had a relation to peers, narratives indicated an endeavour to (re)configure the symbolic image constructed of black youth, whose incessant, daily battle aims essentially to show that young black people can occupy prosperous spaces in society.

It's my dream... to work as a social educator and now, at the moment, I'm happy because of that... but a few days ago I was sad because I wasn't working [...] to be someone in life, to transform other people's realities, maybe to prevent them from being seen the way I am (EJ-F1_REC).

We are here every day; we struggle every day; we battle and every day is a fight, so every day is a fight for us to go out there and show who we really are... we have to be really strong... it takes determination and grit [...] We have to be united (FGJ-FM3_REC).

The process of constructing a stigmatising image of black youth can also be seem in the assumptions made in spots, programmes and news articles in the media in general to discuss issues of security and violence, where the imprint of racism stands out in the way images and discourses are produced[38]. For example, cases involving discourse on violence and youth take, strictly speaking, two different directions: one focused on bringing out innocence and ingenuity, in which non-black people are presented as youngsters, teenagers, kids, boys and girls; and another conception that distorts the black population and establishes a naturalisation of stereotypical concepts, symbolically categorising them as young offenders, delinquents, lowlife, outlaws, vagrants, elements, miscreants, criminals, suspects, loose women, outlaw's wives. This trend can be seen to have changed in recent years as media have inserted positive images of young black people. When the topic addressed is public safety, however, the association between black youth and violence and crime persists. This was evident in both capitals, in the narratives below:

JF1: *The stereotype is already established, there is nothing left to argue, they have already placed us under suspicion. [...] They have already chosen who the criminal is, regardless of whether they are well dressed or not* (FGJ3_FOR).

J10: *So tell me: do you see them do this in a white boy's neighbourhood? Of course not. I tell you straight, I've never seen newspapers report the police going into the Boa Viagem neighbourhood to get drugs or weapons like they do here [Santo Amaro]. Never ever* (FGJ-M1_REC).

This reflects a national imaginary founded on a social representation based on eugenics. As a result, methods of human selection are instituted on biological premises that have specified notions of inferiority and subalternity via the concept of race, and which declare the black population to be prone to aggressiveness and violence and thus essentially dangerous. It must, therefore, be controlled, curbed, combated, purged, eliminated[21,39,5].

JM2: *This is society's greatest ignorance, because it categorises a group and imposes what is best and what is bad and always chooses what to exclude between one and the other...*

JM3: *One race wants to be superior to the other* (FGJ3_REC).

In Fortaleza, this issue emerged more vehemently in the semi-structured interviews, where the denial of blackness, the constitution of ethnic

identity, the process of self-recognition by young black people and the experience of racism stood out as important dimensions. Young people connected these facts with social tensions that interrelate on many levels of the individual-collective continuum and permeate people's (inter)subjectivities and those social relationships that produce suffering and psychological illness, as can be seen in the following interview excerpt:

There is a whole society saying that everything that I am is not beautiful, and however much you understand that all of this is a construction... it hurts, it hurts you psychologically. You may be super-empowered as a person, but you feel it. You feel it at different intensities, but you feel it (EJ-M3_FOR).

Violence and racism are clearly social phenomena that impact peripheral black youth's worldview, way of life and view of the future, which has impacts on their health situation. This group's trajectory bears the imprint of a social imaginary that reserves for young black people the stereotypical place of the criminal. After all, "[...] the figure of the criminal is open to all kinds of discrimination and disapproval, which have full social support". As a result, the format of its institutions of public security, criminal justice, health, education etc. is grounded on a "racialised system of social control"[34].

In Brazil, the introduction of affirmative inclusion policies, mainly for black youth, have set in motion a break with discourse based on the myth of racial democracy, and have revealed the existence of "openly-declared racism" and of socioeconomic and racial inequalities between the black and white populations, as well as denouncing black psychological suffering, State necropolitics and the privileges of whiteness[41].

Final remarks

The accounts by young people from Recife and Fortaleza are an invitation to think about the extent to which our institutions and social structure itself rest on structural racism. They also reveal that these young people find no room for their personal and collective expression and development in modern, patriarchal, racist, capitalist society, and that they thus place themselves in a "non-place"[29].

Their concrete experiences brought to light their life experience around racism and violence in their various dimensions and the vulnerabilities to which they are exposed within and beyond the confines of territorial belonging to their communities. These processes that speak not only of negative stereotypes, but are also expressed as effects of the institutional racism that operates through legal mechanisms and instruments present in organisations' *modus operandi* and is internalised and reproduced in the rules and practices of State necropolitics.

Racism thus causes all kinds of harm, directly and indirectly, to the health of those who suffer from stigma and discrimination. The production of social vulnerability and socioeconomic position hinders the black population's access to disease prevention and health care, fostering the link between the production of social marginalisation, physical and mental illness, and mortality[42].

Black youth continue to encounter a lack of opportunities, as access is denied to possible pathways, such as university, that could guarantee better living and health conditions. The principle of meritocracy attributes the causes of these young people's failure to their lack of ability or other limitations, thus exempting the State and society from their responsibilities.

In that context, racism and violence and their intersections with other social markers – gender, sexuality, religiosity and territoriality – are the main drivers of the processes of morbidity and mortality that afflict black youth. Accordingly, the "discovery" or recognition of ethnic and racial identity or "self-acceptance" highlights the fact that (inter)subjective conflicts, breaks or psychological suffering are constitutive elements of the life of black youth on the periphery. The starting point for self-discovery of identity, recognition of blackness and awareness of racism are their everyday experiences of discrimination in situations and experiences shared by peers. On the other hand, over and beyond the so-called identity agenda, it must be recognised that there are structural dimensions to the production of racial inequalities in Brazil and that they affect specifically the world of black youth.

In short, Brazil has an unrepayable, historical debt to black people, resulting from the process of colonisation and enslavement, which lasted nearly four centuries. To recognise structural racism and the privileges of whiteness is to take one important step in strengthening the anti-racist struggle and certainly addressing the many expressions of violence that result from racism in all social spheres and fields of action. It is urgent that we collectively construct resistance strategies and public policies for black youth to reduce the vulnerabilities inflicted on their bodies[7].

Collaborations

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