

## BLACK ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ETHNIC BEAUTY SALONS: POSSIBILITIES FOR RESISTANCE IN THE SOCIAL (RE)CONSTRUCTION OF BLACK IDENTITY

Empreendedorismo negro e salões étnicos: possibilidades de resistências na (re)construção social da identidade negra

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### ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the case of five Black entrepreneurs who own businesses in a public space that for years has denied aesthetic and phenotypic traits. These spaces, branded as 'ethnic salons', aim to take care of the curly and / or Afrohair of Black men and women. In the face of this context, we ask: how can Black entrepreneurs and enterprises confront colonial mentality in social relations, by creating businesses aimed at giving value to, and appreciating the identity of Black men and women? The field research was conducted via observations and interviews, collecting narratives from both. The narratives went through a process of synthesis and analysis processes that allowed us to flag the motives behind these enterprises, as well as the racial/ethnic acceptance present in these spaces. Thus, the main contribution of this paper is to discuss 'hairtype' as a constitutive element of Black racial identity, and the opportunity for more autonomy when entering the labor market.

**Keywords:** Coloniality. Black Identity. Ethnic Entrepreneurship. Beauty Salons.

### RESUMO

Este trabalho aborda o caso de cinco empresários negros que possuem empreendimentos voltados para um público que há anos tem a sua estética e traços fenotípicos negados. Esses espaços, nomeados de salões étnicos, têm como finalidade cuidar do cabelo crespo e/ou cacheado de mulheres e homens negros. Frente a essa contextualização, pergunta-se: como empreendedoras e empreendedores negros enfrentam uma lógica de colonialidade nas relações sociais, mediante criação de negócios que partem da valorização e da identidade dos negros? Realizou-se a pesquisa de campo por meio de observações e entrevistas, e a partir destas colheram-se narrativas. As narrativas passaram por processos de síntese e de análise que permitiram sinalizar as motivações que dão suporte a esses empreendimentos, bem como o movimento de aceitação étnico-racial presente nesses espaços. Dessa forma, a principal contribuição deste texto é discutir a categoria cabelo como elemento constitutivo da identidade racial negra e a oportunidade de uma inserção mais autônoma no mercado de trabalho.

**Palavras-chave:** Colonialidade. Identidade Negra. Salões Étnicos. Empreendedorismo.

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## INTRODUCTION

**B**lack, mixed-race and blackness are not just adjectives of color nor of skin tone, but they are also "[...] a social construct, persistently conceived as an opposition to whiteness: it is not only that which defines whiteness but is also inferiorized by it". (MAPEDZAHAMA; KWANSAH-AIDOO, 2017, p. 1). There is the burden of being black (AUSTIN, 2004), a burden heaviness which manifests itself as, among other things, problematic stereotypes and social constructs, (in)visibility, the onus of racial duality and the burden of minimizing racism.

The trajectory of Blacks, not only in Brazil but also elsewhere (e.g., USA and France), has been marked by social inequality, discrimination and prejudice, arising from a historical and cultural construct of slavery from which phenotypic traits and Afroculture were treated as inferior in comparison to those of whites (FANON, 2008).

Hair proves to be an important, constituent element of Black identity in this context, one which, once denied, imposes a barrier to the confrontation of inferiority and can even reinforce racism. According to Austin (2004), inferiority permeates what has been socially constructed as Black, since the meanings attributed to it are negative (MAPEDZAHAMA; KWANSAH-AIDOO, 2017). The exotic, the black girl who is good in bed, the 'little black girl', the denial of hard, "Brillo Pad" hair are just some of the derogatory meanings and outcomes. So it is not about having this or that ancestry or having a certain skin color and hair texture, but of being labelled under a socially inferior construct.

This type of inferiority results in a constant struggle to not be ashamed of curly hair. Then, people begin to look for alternatives such as chemical treatments that straighten or transform curly hair into a symbol of self-esteem, consumption and personal pride (SANTOS, 2000). The discourse of self-esteem is intertwined with a type of beauty linked to the aesthetic standards of that which is not white, but also does not have the Black appearance/phenotype. This appearance can increase the possibilities of better integration in the labor market and, even, of upward mobility. Curly/Afro hair is therefore denied and, consequently, the proposition of an identity that denies race can be noticed.

However, in contrast to the denial/negation of Black identity, we have, in recent years, witnessed the strengthening of concepts such as the Strong Black Woman (SBW) in organizational studies, erudition about Black femininity linked to postmodern discourses on identity and resistance (NELSON; CARDEMIL; ADEOYE, 2016) and, in Brazil, social movements such as the Slam Resistance (*Slam Resistência*). There is also the strengthening of ethnic economic ventures, associated with the construction of an ethnic identity (SANTOS, 2000). Among these initiatives are the beauty salons aimed at the Black population, who defend and share the idea that curly hair is as beautiful as straight, and that acceptance of the phenotype is part of the process of both strengthening self-esteem and of racial identity.

Ethnic beauty salons are commercial enterprises that comprise companies and alternative sites for the assimilation of another beauty standard, since the discourses produced in these enterprises developments are directed toward ethnic reaffirmation. These salons enable the creation of an "alternative" esthetic to the dominant images in Western aesthetics (SANTOS, 2000).

Nevertheless, even with the growth of these enterprises, their purpose and survival face daily challenges that can be observed from a decolonial perspective. This perspective aims to break away from Eurocentric and hegemonic paradigms that assume a universal point of view, neutral and objective, concealing and silencing the person who speaks out, as well as breaking from the epistemic and geopolitical seat of colonial power structures (MALDONADO-TORRES, 2007). Without this rupture/separation, it is impossible to truly understand the violence, prejudice, and racism that are consolidated and operate through coloniality.

Despite the strength of coloniality, Lugones (2015) states that one should not think of the global capitalist system as being successful in destroying peoples, relationships, knowledge and economies, because there is constant resistance to these processes. The colonized should be considered henceforth, a fractured locus, that is, a space doubly constructed by the colonized in which there is a constant tension between resistance and coloniality.

The notion of fractured locus helps us to understand ethnic beauty salons, the object being studied in this research, because although curly/Afro hair is seen as a symbol of inferiority, in these spaces, on the other hand, there is the possibility of appreciation and re-signification of the stereotype in the struggle against subalternization, as well as in the construction of racial identity. This appreciation can go beyond the individual, even reaching the racial group to which the subject belongs (GOMES, 2003). Moreover, these entrepreneurs find better positions in the job market, both because of the appreciation of curly/Afro hair, and the development of specific techniques to treat it. Even with all the inherent appropriation that comes with the capitalist system, this type of enterprise is understood to be a somewhat more autonomous form than the conventional way Black entrepreneurs enter the labor market.

In view of the above, the question of this research is: how do Black entrepreneurs face colonial logic in social relations through the creation of businesses that are based on start from the appreciation of Black identity? Therefore, the objective of this study is to understand how the Black entrepreneurs of special beauty salons resist the logic of subalternity and contribute to the construction of racial identity.

The aim of this research is to contribute within the scope of the collective, antiracist actions that are currently in Brazilian society (JAIME, 2016). Firstly, because it is empirically based on the specific trajectories of Black entrepreneurs who argue that hair type is a constituent element of racial identity. Secondly, because the results suggest that there is an opportunity for more autonomous entry into the labor market in ethnic ventures and, therefore, a less subaltern opportunity for entry of these Black entrepreneurs. Thus, they can value their aesthetics and offer their customers and employees less colonizing conditions for hair treatment and, through that, worship their identity.

To present this study, based on the narratives of Black entrepreneurs who own beauty salons, this article is structured in five sessions, the first of which is this introduction. In the second session, we discuss issues related to colonialism, coloniality, subalternity, racism, Black entrepreneurship and ethnic beauty salons, which comprise the theoretical foundation of the construction of the text. The third session presents the methodological procedures and the data analysis. In the fourth session, the considerations are elaborated and evaluated, and, finally, in the fifth session, the references used are made available.

## FROM COLONIALISM TO COLONIALITY: SUBALTERNITY AND RACISM

Criticism of the modern Western world and resistance to colonialism may involve the way you choose to manage, work, think and decide in contemporary organizations (PRASAD, 2003).

Some authors reveal the prevalence of an epistemic coloniality in organizational studies in Latin America (IBARRA-COLADO, 2006). Others suggest discomfort regarding the possibility that Brazilian researchers have a colonized outlook (MISOCZKY; AMANTINO-DE-ANDRADE, 2005), and there are also those who address the effects of colonialism on the contemporary world, recognizing the need to decolonize the field of organizational studies (ROSA; ALCADIPANI, 2013), as well as the need to listen to peripheral voices, that is, those that are not from the global centers (ALCADIPANI et al., 2012).

The presence of multiple identities in Brazil is a historical process (ROSA, 2014). If, on the one hand, the process of colonization was fundamental for the creation of the conditions for the multiplicity of the variety of conditions between these identities, it, on the other hand, triggered the emergence of a number of inequalities related to the experience of colonial domination that still pervades some contemporary societies (QUIJANO, 2005). The colonial nature of a phenomenon rests on the hegemonic power of Modernity (LANDER, 2005; QUIJANO, 2007).

To rebuild itself both historically and politically, Modernity in Europe, has had the collective notion that the European identity is superior to that of non-European peoples and cultures. This notion comes from the contrast between the European "us" and the non-European "them" (or "others"), consolidating the hegemonic European culture. Constructing such a vision of European superiority guarantees and legitimizes various types of racism, imperialism and dogmatic visions of the other (SAID, 2007). It is therefore necessary to recognize the world as a system beyond Europe (DUSSEL; IBARRA-COLADO, 2006), even though Eurocentric patterns and ways of thinking continue to prevail in most parts of the world (WALSH, 2012).

Coloniality, the hidden face of Modernity, is characterized by violence justified in the superiority of the European civilization. Thus, violence became part of the process of hegemonic modernization that then became the reason for emancipation and therefore liberation. The patterns established by Europe guided the formation of the rest of the world, and it was therefore considered justifiable to sacrifice and deny the other in sex, gender and race (DUSSEL, 2000).

Modernity presents itself as a phenomenon of which the world is part, but each part has different positions of power (MIGNOLO, 2005). Hence, the decolonial perspective seeks to both criticize Modernity and Eurocentrism as well as how to recover Latin American contributions from postcolonialism, even if this means deviating from the postcolonial canon (BALLESTRIN, 2017). It is this "decolonial turn" that urges an epistemological movement for the critical renewal of the social sciences in Latin America in the 21st century and that defends the decolonial option (BALLESTRIN, 2013).

The discourse of emancipation, defended by Modernity, seems to be a myth (MIGNOLO, 2007) since while Modernity includes (those that it is concerned with - the do-

minant), it is used as justification for practices of violence (used by Europe in its worldwide expansion) against all those who do not belong to this group of the emancipated (MIGNOLO, 2007; QUIJANO, 1992; DUSSEL, 2000).

Even with the end of colonization, coloniality still remains as a mindset that legitimizes discrimination and differences. The notion of coloniality takes up the ideas of the Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano, who developed the concept of coloniality of power in order to understand the historical context of inequality in Latin America. This concept allows us to observe a pattern of power constituted together with modern/colonial capitalism, which began with the conquest of America in 1492 (BERNARDINO-COSTA, 2013).

The modern/colonial world-system was established through this conquest, generating a pattern of world power based on the idea of race. Thus, subjects became classified and their racial identities were associated with hierarchies, places and social roles that responded to a pattern of domination (QUIJANO, 2005). The colonial difference is articulated, according to Mignolo (2005), based on through discussions that were about ethno-rationality, the place of the Amerindians in the Christian economy but were silent in the face of African slavery. The modern-world system was responsible for defining categories that hierarchized people by race. Thus, it defined who were Indians, who were Blacks, whites and "mixed-race". (QUIJANO; WALLERSTEIN, 1992).

According to Quijano and Wallerstein (1992), the category of race was not simply a categorization that was imposed. Families socialized their children in cultural forms associated with ethnic identities, reinforcing these differences that were (and still are) widely used to dominate and exploit people, which take the shape of racism.

Using race categorization, the exploitation of labor was justified, and the colonizers defined a new, negative identity for colonized native populations. Thus, people coming from different regions of Africa, for example, were classified with a negative colonial identity, they became "the Blacks". The colonizers, on the other hand, already self-identified as Spanish, Portuguese, Iberian, British, European or white. Those who were the fruit of the relations between the now different races came to be identified as 'mestizos'. Such distribution of identities was the basis for the social classification of the population of the Americas (QUIJANO, 1999).

According to Fernandes and Souza (2016), racism hinders interaction between the different groups that compose a society, since it is responsible for creating rigid symbolic boundaries that create binaries and opposites, such as natural / unnatural; good/ bad; authentic/inauthentic (THOMPSON, 2009) or even the identity binary, such as being white/ being black (FERNANDES; SOUZA, 2016), which are based on negative stereotypes that attribute an essence of inferiority to Blacks.

Black people are incessantly associated with social, economic and intellectual positions inferior to those of whites. Many people, just by looking at a black person, classify them as poor and/or question their intellectual capacity in comparison to whites. In this scenario, Blacks learn to live with the denial of their social position and, therefore, resort to the naturalization of the "place" of the Blacks, the "role" of the Blacks (PATTILLO, 2003). This is what Fanon (2008) calls the construction of the colonized subject based on a stereotypical

discourse, which establishes a false image, allowing discriminatory practices and racist discourses.

When Fanon (2008) wrote about Blacks in France in the 1960s and 1970s, in his work entitled "Black skin, white masks" he describes da black man who wants to whiten. A man who sees the possibility of legitimization in whiteness. It is necessary to consider that the Black identity is not only constructed by the force of the dominator, but also by the acceptance and incorporation of the subordinate. Identity, for Quijano (1992), can not be treated as something given neither as an attribute of isolated entities, nor as something that must be discovered or assumed: "The question of identity has been established in Latin America since the violent destruction of Aboriginal societies / cultures by the invaders, the Europeans" (QUIJANO, 1992, p. 74). Confronted with this reality, it is necessary to think of identity as a solidification of relations produced, reproduced and modified, and therefore changeable, in process and permanently unfinished. As the legitimacy of a people or its identity depends on the recognition of its culture, its way of life, its language, its customs and its inherent specificities within a social group, it can be said that identity itself is constructed in a process of interaction and dialogue established with others (FERNANDES; SOUZA, 2016; SOUZA, 2012; QUIJANO, 1992).

Therefore, discussing identity, stereotypes, skin color and questioning the naturalization of the negative attributes associated with Blacks is fundamental to tackling racism and stimulating social change. Over the centuries, the inferiorization of Blacks in front of whites has embedded, in the social imaginary, the idea that Blacks are naturally inferior and can only be recognized by a process of whitening, whether by miscegenation or self-violence aesthetics.

## BLACK ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ETHNIC BEAUTY SALONS

The inclusion of Blacks in the business context, as is the case of any other group that suffers from prejudice, is both complex and paradoxical. This is because career opportunities are not the same for everyone, especially in the case of Black men and women (JAIME, 2016). Thus, the entry of Blacks into the Brazilian labor market is marked by racial inequality (CHADAREVIAN, 2011), since, from a very early age, they have to face a significant disadvantage in order to be recognized both professionally and intellectually. They are often associated with the "crooked" path of violence and crime or by escape on the path of disqualified work (MACIEL; GRILLO, 2009).

In the 1970s, prejudice in the accession and promotion of Blacks to prominent positions in large corporations led them to adopt individual and defensive 'whitening' strategies that bordered on self-whitening. However, in the twenty-first century, Blacks have had the opportunity for professional achievement in organizations where they work, through collective, anti-racist actions that have been developing in Brazilian society (JAIME, 2016).

Black entrepreneurship can be seen as a way, or an attempt, to overcome unequal and subordinate relations in the labor market. Social influence plays a part in Brazilian ethnic relations in business operations. In addition to the challenges inherent in business operations in Brazil, ethnic issues influence this dynamic, especially when it comes to fun-

draising activities, and relations with clients, suppliers and employees (OLIVEIRA; PEREIRA; SOUZA, 2013).

Race relations are, therefore, an aspect of the social and historical context of Brazil that can shape organizations as spaces of social segregation. This is due to the fact that, throughout their history, many organizations have been constituted as spaces which are symbolically exclusive to particular social groups (NASCIMENTO et al., 2015). In many of these spaces, discussions about race and problems affecting Blacks in society may not be well regarded.

The ethnic beauty salons are spaces that allow Blacks to discuss matters related to Afro hair. These salons play a key role in providing hair styling services to Black women, even promoting the empowerment of these women in the community. Despite the main purpose of these environments being to style their hair, when entering a salon, Blacks also find a place of refuge, in which they can share experiences. In addition, these spaces provide opportunities for Black entrepreneurs to set up their own businesses, thereby achieving some degree of economic freedom (HARVEY, 2005; NIMOCKS, 2015).

Wingfield (2008) argues that systemic gender racism is a significant and important factor for the business experiences of Black women who primarily act as beauty salon owners. In this segment there are the ethnic beauty salons that have clearly defined their target audience as being Black, and who seek to conquer their clientele through discourse that brings together ethnic identity, Black beauty and solidarity through the appreciation of Afro hair.

These spaces are responsible for rescuing, producing and developing aesthetic and identity references that contrast with the Western hegemonic model of the West. Ethnic beauty salons are at the very core of the tensions that involve the construction of Black identity in Brazil, since "[...] in these spaces, Black identity as a process is problematized, discussed, affirmed, denied, concealed, rejected, accepted, re-signified and re-created" (GOMES, 2002, p.179).

As Wingfield (2008) suggests, another factor impacting these issues is systemic gender racism, which induces business patterns among black women understood as "racially-minded economies". These, in turn, reflect on race and gender realities as systemic factors for the creation of unique entrepreneurial experiences often neglected by management training.

By branding themselves as "ethnic" and proclaiming themselves as promoters of a positive self-image of Blacks in a racist society, salons are at the center of a political and ideological struggle. The racial question, in a racist country, will always be political as well as ideological" (GROSSI, 2005, p. 164), because to counteract racism is to oppose practices, attitudes and ideologies. It requires attitude and behavioral change (GOMES, 2002).

For Sansone (2000), it is possible to communicate by means of hair, since it can be manipulated and adorned in different ways. There is a movement that recognizes the changes in portrayals of the Black body and Black hair, even though black hair is often represented as difficult hair. So, accepting natural, Afro hair that reflects the *Black form* contributes to the revolution of a Black aesthetics that helps re-signify Afro hair.

Hair is symbolic and assumes different meanings in the various dimensions of culture and Black lifestyle. In some cultures, it even has religious and spiritual overtones. In Africa, for example, hair was used to designate age, religion, social status and even marital status. Hair is intrinsically linked to the cultural identity of a people. During the period of Black slavery, with the express intention of dehumanizing the Africans, the Europeans cut the hair of the enslaved who arrived at the Americas. Cutting hair meant cutting off African culture. It also represented the removal of any vestige of African identity. Therefore, the removal of hair from those enslaved by their owners was the first method used to suppress their identity (JOHNSON; BANKHEAD, 2013; SYNNOTT, 1987).

The social movements to strengthen Black identity contribute, in a certain way, to a new portrayal of Blacks and their hair. Such a change finds support through access to beauty spaces aimed at Black body and hair care, as well as changes in the way Blacks deal with the racial difference, inscribed on both their bodies and hair types. The handling of these aspects contextualizes and underpins the outcome of this qualitative study, whose methodological procedures and analysis of the data obtained are presented in the next session.

## METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES AND DATA ANALYSIS

This qualitative study was conducted in five beauty salons located in the city of Belo Horizonte, in the state of Minas Gerais. These are classified by their entrepreneurs as spaces dedicated to the appreciation of Black aesthetics or African ethnic beauty, taking human diversity into account.

For the collection of data, moments of interaction in the beauty salons were observed, and interviews via oral history were also used (GODOI; BANDEIRA-DE-MELLO; SILVA, 2006; VERGARA, 2005). The oral history interviews enabled the gathering of information on the enterprises, regarding the business as an extension of the lives of the subjects. The choice of oral history was justified by the requirement to listen to the stories of the subjects, to identify how they constructed meanings about themselves and narrated events from their lives, as well as the need to understand the contradictions (colonialities) in their narratives.

The interviews were conducted with three black businesswomen and two black businessmen, owners of beauty salons. In Table 1, we can see the profile of the interviewees. In order to preserve their identity, we chose to use fictitious names to represent them.

**Table 1** - Summary of the profile of the research subjects

Interviewees	Sex	Age	Profession	Education Level
João	Male	43	Hairdresser	Environmental Management college degree
José	Male	49	Hairdresser and makeup artist	Completed high school
Joana	Female	55	Businesswoman and Hairdresser	Completed high school
Juliana	Female	25	Businesswoman	Sciences of the State college degree
Julia	Female	61	Businesswoman and Hairdresser	High school (incomplete)

**Source:** prepared by the authors.

The data obtained was analysed using the Narrative Analysis method (BASTOS; ANDRADE BIAR, 2015). Through these narratives, subjects were able to convey life experiences from the construction of meaning about themselves. The stories told by the subjects allow us to comprehend events in social life.

**Analysis categories:** The categories of analysis that emerged from detailed reading and analysis of the narratives, seeking to identify shared meanings by the narrators in their discourse are: a) the salon with space for discussion and Black militancy, and b) the constant struggle for the affirmation of the Black identity in the context of capitalism, emerging from the reading and detailed analysis of these narratives, seeking to identify meanings shared by the narrators in their words. At first, each interview was analyzed separately. The second time, the narratives were read in an integrated way, seeking to identify striking aspects and events that are on the trajectory and in the actual construction of the identity of the subjects. These aspects and events were flagged and denominated, respecting the words and expressions used by the interviewees. Thus, the first categories of analysis emerged. After the previous analysis, the discourses were regrouped in a smaller number of categories. This reduction was relevant to the research objective and was also consistent with the theoretical approach that supports this work.

## THE SALON WITH SPACE FOR DISCUSSION AND BLACK MILITANCY

The salons studied were mostly created to meet either a personal, or family need, related to both identity and survival. They represent the search for a place in the market that, historically, has been denied to Blacks. In addition to entering the labor market, the development of the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to conduct these projects have emerged within the family environment. All of the interviewees are Black and have grown up in Black families, where they experienced the specific need to care for Afro hair on a daily basis. Such questions have aroused interest in investing in businesses to serve this client-base, as exemplified in the following narratives:

### Excerpt 1: José

I went into the profession to meet a family need. I am one of seven siblings, four men and three women, and it was a constant disappointment when we went to the salon. The only way Mama could be happy with her hair was if she travelled long distances to look for people who always took care of hers and who, most of the time, were not working then or were only available whenever they wanted to. And when she put herself in the hands of anyone else, they could not control Afro hair. So it was necessary to solve the need at home. That's how I started the profession, I realized that a lot of the family had the same problem and my first clients were my own family (JOSÉ, 2016).

### Excerpt 2: Joana

I worked down here in the backyard for thirty years. I worked, like that, I started with family, worked on the hair of family members, worked on the hair of friends, you know [...] (JOANA, 2016).

Juliana (excerpt 3) reports that the motivation to open her own salon arose from the desire to offer potential clients a space in which no chemical products are used in Afro hair treatment or care.

Excerpt 3: Juliana

I tried to enter into a dialogue with some salons in Belo Horizonte, so they would address that [Afro hair care without using chemicals that straighten hair] and they were very resistant. Not least, because, economically, financially, chemical treatments are the largest revenue source of the salon. So, if you give that up you give up money (JULIANA, 2016).

Of all the spaces analyzed, the Salon belonging to Juliana (excerpt 3) is the only one that does not offer chemical treatments to alter the structure of Afro hair, adopting a more radical posture. In the other Salons studied, although it is possible to undergo chemical processes that alter the hair structure, the first option to be offered to the client is always non-chemical treatments. There is a conversation with the client in order to show them the possibilities or choices of wearing using the strands of hair without any chemical process or even alternative hairstyles, which also refer to the concept of racial identity, as is the case with braids.

In most cases, however, the search for hair treatment offers the opportunity to discuss the meaning of hair, beauty standards, choices and self-esteem. Besides these issues, with this form of work, the salons also face standards related to the hegemonic business model by questioning or avoiding the use of chemicals. Chemical treatments are some of the core elements of the beauty industry: in addition to generating more revenue, they also generate patents when developing a new product. However, when using manual techniques for hair care, which are not widely available on the market, such as braids, there is a loss of revenue for the salon and the developer of the technique - if we compare with the option of using chemicals.

All interviewees had to deal with the difficulty of professional training to maintain their businesses. Although they have a lot of knowledge from practice and experience within the family, Black entrepreneurs have reported that they would like to have developed their skills on vocational courses - which does not detract from the knowledge and the way of organizing and undertaking their business ventures these professions (CARRIERI; PERDIGÃO; AGUIAR, 2014). However, according to the narratives, the courses that existed either did not offer further development in the techniques of natural treatment of curly hair or were directed mainly to the processes of hair straightening, as Júlia reports in excerpt 4.

Excerpt 4: Julia

So, you got there [the vocational courses], you had to learn how to straighten your hair. So, I straightened everything, straightened badly, because that stuff burned and then, I left that business like that, kind of, I said: "I do not want to mess with this business of straightening, no". And the teacher said, "No? if you do not do this straightening, you will not pass". So I stopped doing that, so much so that today, I do not straighten any kind of hair. I had temper tantrums to make that hair very straight. So, later, I analysed the reason for my

questioning. It was an excuse not to allow such straight hair. Because I did not have straight hair like that [...] (JULIA, 2016).

In the 4<sup>th</sup> excerpt, Júlia affirms states that the professional courses that taught the care of Afro hair sought to perpetuate a 'white' beauty standard, according to which long, straight hair was seen to be beautiful hair (SANTOS, 2000). Even so, Julia, in reporting that she "stopped doing that, so much so that today, I do not straighten any kind of hair" (excerpt 4), resists this coloniality, the Eurocentric standard, the power of which still determines various scopes of society. Quijano (1992) points out that this coloniality can press for imitation and reproduction, as occurred in the professional training course attended by Julia, which said that completion of the course was only possible by learning to straighten Afro hair.

As a result, entrepreneurs have had difficulties hiring people to work in salons. Often family members, people who shared the difficulties and the path of self-teaching, or people who were trained by owners within the salons themselves were hired. Two of the five salons offer training courses to the public who are interested in learning how to care for Afro hair. Classes take place on Mondays, the only day that salons are not open. The courses are paid, but scholarships are also offered for students in need.

This is how many have become instructors in courses designed to meet the specific demands of a Black clientele. With all this, these spaces have proven to be more than simply places to take care of hair. In them, Black people share experiences and fight for greater racial acceptance, as reported by José, excerpt 5.

Excerpt 5: José

For the Black, it was school [the salon was seen by the Black as a school]. And when there was a Black man in the chair who had the same attitude I had, he helped the other to understand. Because, many times, as I said, the greatest difficulty was not to make white people accept the new techniques and possibilities, they did not. It was to make the Black man who had these troubled habits understand the possibilities he had. So he often asked difficult questions in an attempt to understand. And who helped him [client 1] to understand? It was another client [client 2]. It was not me, it was the client who had already understood. Then he would talk to the other client. So the interaction between clients of the same ethnicity, of the same habits, of the same type of hair, he [client 2] helped the other [client 1] to understand (JOSÉ, 2016).

In the narrative from Jose (excerpt 5), it can be seen that the experience in the salons contributes to a change of focus: Black clients are (now) not concerned with the acceptance of the white aesthetic standard, but with the mobilization of Blacks (JAIME, 2016). This is a meaningful change when one thinks about the quest for whitening that many Blacks have undergone (FANON, 2008): it is a movement opposed to this quest, to become who you are not. Today, Blacks (or Black clients) seek to rebuild their own identity based on aesthetic criteria which differ from hegemonic standards.

The Blacks who once had difficulties taking care of their hair in the so-called 'traditional salons' find a place where the natural look is valued in these spaces. José's nar-

rative, excerpt 5, reveals a change in this reality; Afro salons were granted the status of a school, since "the interaction between clients of the same race, of the same habits, of the same type of hair" took place in them, and the subjects themselves "helped the other to understand" (excerpt 5).

Ethnic beauty parlours, while they are businesses (mercantile enterprises), they are also alternative spaces for the construction of a Afro beauty standard, since the discourses in these environments strengthen an ethnic and racial affirmation. In this way, these spaces of aesthetic appreciation play an important political role in the context of race relations established in Brazilian society (GOMES, 2002; SANTOS, 2000).

The businesspeople and the clients who understand the movement care about showing new clients that they are beautiful with their natural hair. That straight hair is an imposed beauty standard and that choosing to use natural hair should be an enlightened choice, and there should be no imposition or attitude where the aim is to become less Black (at least apparently). Accepting natural hair is a long process, one in which the person knows their own hair and rediscovers their racial identity simultaneously. The aspects that were once concealed as a consequence of the search for the white-European beauty standard (FANON, 2008) have strengthened racial identity in this context. As Juliana (excerpt 6) shows, in narrating what motivated the creation of the salon:

Excerpt 6: Juliana

[...] when I thought here [the salon], I thought, "I do not want to sell 'solutions' for anybody's hair". Because hair is not a problem to be solved. We're going to make your hair be your hair. Yeah, and there are a couple of cool questions too. I attend militant women, who have always worried [...] But, so, always used natural hair, like this or that, will stop and have never attended the salon. And, for the first time, they found an environment where they feel at ease [...] And even here, in this environment, where everyone is always talking a lot and then, we discover and strengthen ourselves, right. It had become a network of articulation (JULIANA, 2016).

It is important to note that the search for natural hair does not happen suddenly. The use of natural hair occurs through a slow process of acceptance. Many women who had straightened their hair since childhood and who had accepted a whitened ideal of beauty sought the ethnic salons in search of perfect straightening. It can be seen in the narrative of Juliana (excerpt 6) that ethnic salons have become safe spaces, also, for those who are militant, from the Black movement, for example.

Corroborating José's narrative (excerpt 5), Juliana (excerpt 6) indicates that whether positioning themselves as militants or not, in ethnic salons, people can share experiences that strengthen their racial identity and talk about the struggles of Blacks in Brazilian society.

The salons aimed at the Afro public play a role breaking with stereotypes related to Afro hair and point out the need to develop aesthetic empowerment from the appreciation of the beauty of Blackness. The dynamics of the salons, narrated by the interviewees, reinforces the idea that hair is a symbol of resistance to racism. So, it is necessary to (re)discover the hair - the actual structure and texture of the strands without chemical processes, without changing it with a hot iron - and thus (re)build Black identity.

Excerpt 7: João

A customer who comes up with some stereotypical ideas about Afro hair, we explain. Oh, bad hair, bad hair, it has to be cut, it has to be soft, it has to be shaved. And we explain that he does not have bad hair, there is badly treated hair. So, each one has the hair of their ethnicity. And his Afro hair is not straight, it is tightly curled. It has volume, it has a life of its own, it has everything. We try to justify this in the person's mind so that they understand; Then after that, the person understands. 'Ah, that's right!', my hair is like that, that's right. Nowadays, people are a little more accepting. (JOÃO, 2016).

Arriving in ethnic salons with stereotypical ideas about Afro hair, such as "ah, bad hair has to be cut, it has to be soft, it has to be shaved". (excerpt 7), clients externalize what Fanon (2008) addresses as the inferiority complex suffered by Blacks. There is an epidermalization of inferiority, from which arises a need not to be Black. The 'epidermalization of inferiority' was used by Franz Fanon (2008) as a metaphor. The intention was to make the concept of the inferiority that Black people feel when relating to white people more didactic for him. In other words, it is the behaviors that emulate the white man. Thus, Blacks become slaves of their appearance. It can be seen that there is an attempt to reduce the social construction of Blacks to the opposite of the whites, leading them to elaborate a social-historical corporal scheme according to elements provided by the other, the white, and not by themselves (FANON, 2008).

## THE CONSTANT STRUGGLE FOR THE AFFIRMATION OF THE BLACK IDENTITY IN THE CAPITALIST CONTEXT

Businesses targeting the Black public are promising an increase from 21.4 million people to 23.5 million (almost 10%) between 2003 and 2013 (BEDÊ, 2015). Of these deals, 22% are in the hairdressing business. Despite this promising scenario, everything focused on Black beauty still suffers from a lot of prejudice, the subject addressed in this category of analysis. Even the business proposal (ethnic salons) is not well regarded, both by customers (whites) and by the beauty market itself. José (excerpt 9 and excerpt 10) and Joana (excerpt 11) flag the difficulties of owning a business aimed at the Black population.

Excerpt 9: José

[...] We no longer had the shyness to assume [to assume the salon as a space for the Black public], to say [...] we saw that automatically we were losing clientele [the white clients], and really, those who were not comfortable, were little by little evading. (JOSÉ, 2016).

Excerpt 10: José

When they came in and found the salon full of jabuticaba [the term used by the Black community to characterize Black people], they would say: "your work is different, right?!" This word, different, one hurt in my heart hurt my soul. Is my work any different? (JOSÉ, 2016).

Excerpt 11: Joana

It's really like facing a battle [...] Because discrimination is really insane. One day they talked to a teacher like this: "You're not going to the normal people's salon. It is not normal. They call me crazy, they call me stupid". (JOANA, 2016).

The image of ethnic salons is stigmatized. Skin is used as a key meaning for the cultural and racial differences that are established in the stereotype (BHABHA, 1998). The white client and colleagues of the profession can not perceive the possibility of business when it is aimed at an audience that has been marginalized for years. There is a denial that Black-oriented products, services, or businesses are promising, despite the economic and social changes that Blacks have gone through. And entrepreneurs are branded as "dumb", "crazy" because they have to face the issue of non-professional and intellectual recognition to which Blacks are subjected (JAIME, 2016).

In order to survive in this context, entrepreneurs resist the logic of domination, and accept themselves as Black and as the advocates of a cause. Due to the fact that they call themselves "ethnic" and take on the role of spreading and stimulating the positive self-image of Blacks in a racist society, the salons and their owners are at the center of a political and ideological struggle (GOMES, 2002). This struggle has been evident since the entrepreneurs began searching for a space to rent and start operations, as Júlia says in excerpt 12.

Excerpt 12: Júlia

My father had a car of his own, we have a house of our own, thank God and such [...] Then she asked the guarantor for rent. My father had [...] He was this guarantor with income and property. Then she asked for another one with rent. Fine, I got it. Then she asked for a third. Then, I questioned her: Why a third? [...] if she told me that I need two guarantors? Then, she: "Ah [...], right!". Then I understood why, do you understand? Then, it is no use talking saying: oh, no! You who are prejudiced, racist. I was in [the name of a noble neighbourhood in the city of Belo Horizonte], a Black woman speaking of the salon, see? right, in 87 [1987], 86 [1986], speaking of the Afro salon. [...] Then, I arranged the third, which was my godfather, that he has several rented houses. Then I got the third one and said, Here, look! Then, she looked and such and such: Oh, these properties are all his? They are all his". And such and such [...] And then, okay!, she signed the papers and I have been here for thirty years (JÚLIA, 2016).

Júlia (excerpt 12) recounts the obstacles that were created by a real estate agent when she tried to rent a space to open her Afro salon. Being Black and being in a upmarket neighbourhood of the city of Belo Horizonte - MG, talking about a business proposal aimed at the Black population, more than two guarantors (enough) were required of Julia so that she could rent the property. The suspicion, based on prejudice, made Julia have to work harder than expected to overcome all obstacles created by the real estate agent, and thus be able to rent the space (OLIVEIRA; PEREIRA; SOUZA, 2013). As can be seen in João's account (excerpt 13).

Excerpt 13: João

Black women sare getting better at accepting themselves, they want to arrive ata storeand buy stuff! So..., shop owners and business owners, they want money. It does not matter if they are Black or white, they want their money. Then they sell. But it's not because they want to sell to Black people, it makes no difference to them. If the could take their money and see no one, they would not see. I do not know if it's Black people's money that's different, I do not know. They think that Blacks don't drink milk, do not ride a car, do not parade, do not buy anything. But you get there with your money, even the people who have money, even imposing the financial power on top, have not yet accepted in this society, society does not accept". (JOÃO, 2016).

João's account (excerpt 13) portrays the appropriation and the distortion that the market makes of the demands of Black identity. Even in a capitalist society in which it is possible to achieve some degree of purchasing power, the Negro remains discriminated against. João's narrative (excerpt 13) shows that, even with purchasing power, Blacks are still not treated as consumers (or when they are, they shouldconsume products that have been made for other consumer profiles). Hence, they receive little attention from the beauty market and are treated as inferior, including their demands. This contradiction is sustained through the coloniality of power (QUIJANO, 2005), which, by classifying people based on racial hierarchies, associates Black men and women with certain social positions.

From the point of view of consumption, there have been changes, and Blacks have been treated in a new way, as João (excerpt 13) points out, saying that store owners and entrepreneurs seek money and are willing to pay for products, for example, there is currently a variety of products for Afro and Curly hair. In this way, many female entrepreneurs sell, for different reasons that include not offering the Black public something that has been taken away from them, like a treatment that reinforces their racial identity, but by foreseeing the laws of capitalism, where supply and demand generate revenue.

It is necessary to analyzethat the traditional market was directed to the standards of hegemonic beauty and not to the specific demands of Blacks. That is, there is an even greater dispute for a Black population that can - thanks to several conquests - consume.

Excerpt 14: Joana

[...] I'm telling you that I heard: "What day, Joana, are you going to stop working for Blacks, poor? [...] That I saw a businessman [...] a person saying: Blacks don't even have the money to buy soap, how will they buy imported products?" (JOANA, 2016).

Excerpt 15: Juliana

[...] there, the supplier, like... that, he does not understand how you're going to sustain the business without messing with chemicals (treatment). So, no [...], but there's this one. It does not smell. Honey, the problem is not the smell. The problem is that my clients already have wonderful hair and they do not need chemicals. No! But isn't it bad hair that you work with? No, bad hair [...] Here, we do not work with bad hair, no. We work with hair. Understand? We work with hair. People think that Black people don't have money to buy any products that cost more than ten reais. (JULIANA, 2016).

Even perceiving a change in the consumption patterns of the Black clientele, suppliers and the market itself still see this audience as people with no consumption potential. This way of seeing Blacks, linking racial identity with an economic profile, reflects the arbitrariness and difficulties encountered when starting a business in Brazil (OLIVEIRA; PEREIRA; SOUZA, 2013). For Black entrepreneurs, there are even more obstacles in our society and they are perpetuated to this day. After the end of slavery, the Blacks, who were totally subject to the slave system, assumed the role of the unemployed or migrated to less skilled jobs. As a consequence, they acquired a lower income (wages) (MACIEL; GRILLO, 2009).

Over the years, Blacks have achieved plenty and improved the situation. However, there is still an imaginary coloniality, one in which all Blacks are poor and, therefore, it is not advantageous to work for them, since they cannot afford to buy soap, for example, as Joana reports in excerpt 14. The capitalist system feeds and reproduces prejudice and racism when using such arguments to classify a business, an entrepreneur or a consumer.

Contrary to this imaginary in the consumer environment, Blacks want to acquire products and services developed specifically for them. However, the market, the industries, and the stores are not concerned with meeting the demands of Blacks as potential consumers. It is because of this fact that, formerly, there were few hair products for this audience. Nevertheless, today the capitalist system has incorporated this criticism and offers a range of products for Afro and curly hair on store shelves.

Excerpt 16: José

I saw a megahair being made in the front, an African braid being made in the middle, another cool style there, another there doing a job to be able to curl with a product that was not so fragrant, because unfortunately, the products to work with frizzy, Afro hair are not perfumed like white hair products (JOSÉ, 2016).

Even with the same financial resources and demand for goods, Afro hair products are of poorer quality. The market appropriates the demands of Blacks and offers them a single chemical product with attributes inferior to those developed for white consumers. The problem of the products goes beyond the bad smell mentioned by José (excerpt 16) and Juliana (excerpt 15). According to Nimocks (2015), many women suffer from the products used to straighten the curly strands, since they have chemicals that can cause problems ranging from scalp burns to serious health issues, such as cancer.

Ethnic beauty salons, with all their potential for change and support for the construction of racial identity (or, perhaps, precisely because of this), face difficulties that permeate several areas, such as: (a) the profile of their clients - rooted in hegemonic standards; (b) the market - in the resistance of service providers and suppliers that insist on not recognizing the rights of entrepreneurs, by offering them low quality products; (c) the competitors - that disqualify the initiatives. All these attitudes reinforce the hegemonic standards of beauty.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study sought to understand how Black entrepreneurs of specialized beauty salons resist the logic of subordination and contribute to the construction of racial identity. The prejudice in Brazil is not broken by the performance of the ethnic salons nor the acceptance of Afro hair, what has happened is the emergence of a culture that has been silenced for a long time. In this movement, Blacks demonstrate the need to have their demands met and their identity respected.

The ethnic salons are spaces that allow the care of Afro hair to the group of various Blacks who have this demand in common. In these spaces, such clients are taught to know their hair in its natural form and there is a process of deconstruction of established aesthetic standards. Thus, ethnic beauty salons also present themselves as a form of resistance to coloniality insofar as they produce, reproduce, and maintain specific knowledge outside the dominant capitalist axis.

Developing a study with and within the environment of ethnic salons empirically strengthens the project, developed from the notion of coloniality of power. This project indicates the need to recover stories hitherto silenced by the dynamics of Modernity/rationality. With actions in this sense, subjectivities hitherto repressed and knowledge that had a subaltern status gain status as protagonists.

From the analysis of all the categories selected in this study, a struggle for the acceptance of Afro hair is observed, which reflects in greater racial acceptance since it is as external as the color of the skin. Thus, by taking on their natural style, Black men and women move toward ethnic-racial acceptance. Accepting Afro hair is a big step toward the self-acceptance of subjects as Blacks.

In describing their own family relationships, it is noted in the interviewees' narratives that the reasons that support entrepreneurship arise from personal needs, they represent a movement from the interior of those researched to their exterior. Experiencing the difficulty of the mothers/grandmothers themselves when dealing with Afro hair has aroused interest in creating a business aimed at this public, which has little choice of salons when it comes to dealing with natural Afro hair and not just the chemical treatment of the hair.

Despite the political power that the consciousness of the processes of coloniality has, it is not totally successful. By assuming Afro or natural hair, Black women and men demonstrate the appreciation of a phenotype denied since slavery. The Afro hair assumes the status of the protagonist in the fight for humanization and respect towards the other, towards those that are not white and represent more than half of the Brazilian population. In observing this new demand, Black entrepreneurs have idealized businesses that are characterized as ethnic salons, that is, beauty salons that have the Afro public as their target audience. In these environments, Blacks are taught to take care of their natural hair and relate to others who have experiences in common. The salons support a social articulation that seeks to value and appreciate Black racial identity.

In view of the importance of ethnic salons for the construction of the Black racial identity, they are considered inadequate in the capitalist context. It is difficult to perceive

and accept a space that is aimed at the Black population as a viable business proposal, especially when the entrepreneur is Black.

Keeping an establishment like this open is a cry of resistance, which sheds light on the need to break through imposed standards. Every day, within the salon itself, the owners face prejudice. Every day, when they stop buying chemicals that straighten hair and thereby contradict the whitened standards of the fashion industry, they face ethnic hierarchy.

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