
Aging, Race, and Inequalities: Challenges and Injustices in the Experience of Black Elderly People in Brazil

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to analyze the intersections between aging, race, and inequalities, with a particular focus on the experiences of elderly Black individuals. It is a descriptive, exploratory case study with a qualitative approach, reflecting on the subjective trajectory of an elderly Black woman from Recife (Pernambuco), in the Northeast of Brazil. The methodology involved the use of a sociodemographic questionnaire and a semi-structured interview, with the narratives submitted to Orlandi's discourse analysis, grounded in a psychoanalytic framework. The results highlighted that the persistent impacts of structural racism shape the existence, reality, and identity of the interviewed elderly Black person, reflecting an aging process marked by inequalities, prejudices, and discrimination. This study underscores the concern with the various barriers faced by elderly Black individuals, emphasizing the urgency of promoting effective and comprehensive public policies that break the entrenched structures of power and privilege that perpetuate inequalities.

Keywords: Ethnic-based Prejudice; Racism; Elderly People, Psychological Distress.

INTRODUCTION

In light of the exponential aging of the Brazilian population, discussions aimed at analyzing, understanding, problematizing, and proposing solutions for the various disparities inherent in the aging process in such a geographically vast, culturally diverse, and deeply unequal country have become central. Data from the most recent census conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in 2022 show that the Brazilian population is predominantly female and aging. Of the more than 203 million people across the country, about 22 million (10%) are aged 65 or older, and over 104 million (51.5%) are women (IBGE, 2023).

The 2022 census revealed a significant increase in the population that self-identified as belonging to the Black and mixed-race ethnic-racial groups compared to those who self-identified as white. Mixed-race individuals increased by 2.2% from 2010 to 2022, rising from 42.1% to 45.3%, while Black individuals increased from 7.6% to 10.2%, a 2.6% rise in 2022 compared to 2010. On the other hand, white and Asian populations decreased, with whites falling from 47.7% to 43.5% and Asians from 1.1% to 0.4%, respectively (IBGE, 2023).

Some common challenges in different life stages can become even more intense for elderly individuals, especially those related to biological aspects such as health and physical condition, as well as psychological and social dimensions. When we analyze factors such as gender, race, and age, it is evident that aging in Brazil presents a series of specific complexities and inequalities for different groups, "[...] generating trajectories that will not always have aging as the finish line for social groups like Black, mixed-race, and Indigenous people" (Silva, 2019, p. 1).

Since 1872, during its first census operation, IBGE has used the "color" category in its questionnaire. From 1991 onwards, it adopted the "race and color" category, understanding that ethnic-racial issues go beyond skin color and phenotype, capturing the degree of perception of "social discrimination phenomena based on color or identification" (Petruccelli; Saboia, 2013, p. 33). In this category, race or color is self-attributed by the respondent, who has the freedom to choose their color/race from the options: white, Black, yellow (Asian), mixed-race, or Indigenous (IBGE, 2023; Osorio, 2003).

It is worth noting that the adoption of the race and color category also complies with various international agreements and recommendations signed by Brazil to collect

data disaggregated by ethnicity. Brazil is committed, among other things, to the Declaration and Program of Action that emerged from the Durban Conference held in South Africa in 2001, to the Montevideo Consensus of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and to the United Nations' 2030 Agenda (Osorio, 2003).

The census considered that "[...] the complete characterization of the resident population [...] constitutes an important tool for analyzing demographic and territorial dynamics and the socio-economic situation of the population" (IBGE, 2023, p. 6-7). Accordingly, the analytical dimensions will present statistics on the resident population based on color or race and their interactions with age groups, gender, and gender and age combined (IBGE, 2023).

Race, gender, sex, age, and age groups are the foundational structure of intersectionality, referring to how subjectivity is mutually constituted and reinforced by these and other variables (Nash, 2008). The theorization of intersectionality addresses the various dimensions of marginalized individuals' experiences, with significant interest in race and gender (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991).

In addition to the individual challenges related to aging, intersectionality reveals how social and structural inequalities can exacerbate the suffering of elderly people, especially those from historically marginalized ethnic-racial groups who have faced limited access to adequate healthcare services, as well as racial and gender discrimination (Goldman, 2022; Mandelblatt *et al.*, 2023; Qin *et al.*, 2023).

The lack of inclusive public policies and systematic prejudice often result in aging characterized by social isolation, economic insecurity, and stigmatization. These factors, combined with others such as inadequate or non-existent basic sanitation, food, education, quality public transportation, and health services, including specific programs that offer psychological support, mental health services, and promote social inclusion, contribute to perpetuating a cycle of helplessness and exclusion in the life trajectory and aging process of elderly people, especially Black elderly individuals (Moura *et al.*, 2023; Nadimpalli *et al.*, 2015; Popescu *et al.*, 2018; Walker Taylor *et al.*, 2018).

From this perspective, revisiting key points of the historical process of colonization, which left indelible marks on the Brazilian population, especially the Black population, is essential for recognizing the complexity of aging in Brazil and building a framework that guarantees elderly individuals the experience of dignified and healthy aging, regardless of their race, gender, or socio-economic status.

The colonization of the Brazilian people is marked by "[...] an archaeology of violence that aimed to establish the figure of the master as the ultimate authority, with the marks and the law itself being inscribed on the body of the slave" (Schwarcz; Starling, 2018, p. 92). The enslaved Black individual experienced the breaking of family, cultural, linguistic, and religious bonds, in addition to being dehumanized, objectified, and traded at auctions and marketplaces under the constant threat and fear of punishments, often applied publicly (Grinberg, 2018; Rocha, 2017; Schwarcz; Starling, 2018).

In this context, various mechanisms were instituted to "maintain and legitimize violent structures of social exclusion," which turned Black people into intrusive enemies. At the same time, white individuals denied their desire to steal and control what belonged to Black people while projecting the opposite idea - that others sought to take what was theirs, and therefore they needed to be controlled (Kilomba, 2019, p. 34). This imperative placed Black individuals in a subordinate position. As Nogueira (2021, p. 55) points out, they are "[...] marked by dehumanization, which, as a consequence, becomes an obstacle to the construction of social individuality. The Black individual's process of becoming an individual is compromised."

From a Foucauldian perspective, the subaltern is also subjected to multiple operations of power present in the capillaries of institutions, which act as true operators of domination. Thus, the philosopher describes the transition from the regulatory device of life management, biopolitics, which regulates large populations through disciplinary techniques operated by knowledge, to what he calls biopower, expressing the idea of a form of politics, operated by the State, that acts on the control of bodies through "[...] birth rates, mortality, longevity [...]" (Foucault, 2010, p. 204).

The State begins to invest in the population in a new way—not out of love, but because it considers the dynamics of capitalism, in which the individual is a soul that works. This scenario temporally marks the transition from a pre-capitalist society (pre-industrial revolution) to a post-industrial revolution society, positioning the relationships of knowledge and power within the sovereign dynamic that operates between the right to "make die or let live" and the right to "make live and let die," where one does not erase the other, but "[...] penetrates, permeates, and modifies it" (Foucault, 2010, p. 202).

In this direction, critiquing Foucault's idea, Mbembe (2018, p. 17) perceives that the political models supporting contemporary society remain provincial, and these models not only dictate which people do not deserve to live or have their right to life protected but also designate which groups may or may not be respected. In other words, the author

notes that Foucault's notion of letting die becomes acceptable from the idea that some groups have their right to life relativized, such as favela-dwelling, Black, Indigenous, quilombola populations, among others. In this sense, he examines "[...] these trajectories through which the state of exception and the relationship of enmity become the normative basis of the right to kill."

This structure is sustained by a logic that "[...] results in a triple loss: the loss of a 'home,' the loss of rights over one's body, and the loss of political status," or in other words, "[...] a form of death-in-life" (Mbembe, 2018, p. 27-28, author's emphasis). Thus, it is possible to consider that the logic of slavery, present in Brazil's history, continues to operate and leaves scars that manifest in the home, the body, and political status – or the absence thereof. These traces persist as the same models of the old colonial system continue to be reproduced.

The historical past that shaped trajectories marked by dehumanization "[...] constitutes an obstacle to the construction of social individuality. The Black individual's process of becoming an individual is compromised" (Nogueira, 2021, p. 55). Aging, in a socio-historical-cultural context in which Black individuals are dehumanized and relegated to the status of objects or commodities, remains a challenge that persists. This challenge endures through the insurgency of voices, bodies, and struggles that, even after the so-called abolition, continue to seek their place in social representations after being violently thrust into this context of becoming equal to their peers.

Reflecting on the social chain traversed by the historicity in which Black elderly individuals are not fully constituted as subjects of rights is, above all, to acknowledge the effects of racial prejudice manifested in its intersections and how these violences shape and echo life stories. The legacy left by the long period of colonization brings with it the naturalization of the place occupied by white individuals and how that place institutes forms of exercising knowledge and power, guided by the perpetuation of privileges. This maintenance occurs without the need for verbalization, agreement, or explicit articulation because racism operates structurally, establishing a social symptom that manifests in the Black person's experience. This symptom is perpetuated across different institutions, supported by a logic that disguises itself under the guise of merit (Almeida, 2019; Bento, 2022).

Although some public policies have emerged seeking to reduce social inequities and ensure that individuals enjoy their legally guaranteed rights, these are still insufficient when it comes to the issue of discrimination and racism in Brazil. Laws such as

10.639/2003, which mandates the teaching of African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture in basic education schools, could be powerful tools in combating racism. However, the effectiveness of this legislation faces numerous obstacles, hindering its full implementation and limiting its transformative potential.

Even with the pressure and struggle from political organizations like the Unified Black Movement, which contributed to the approval of Law 12.288/10 (the Statute of Racial Equality) and Law 12.711/12 (the quota law for higher education), the political agenda in Brazil seems not to consider the anti-racist struggle as central to the discussions in a country where the majority self-identifies as Black.

The goal of this work is to analyze the intersections between aging, race, and inequality in the Brazilian context, with a particular focus on the experiences of Black elderly people. The aim is to highlight the complex dimensions of aging in a country marked by deep historical and structural inequalities resulting from colonialism and slavery, and to show how the marks of the colonial and slaveholding past continue to shape the lives of Black individuals, influencing their subjective experiences of aging.

The relevance of this work lies in the need to understand how the historical trajectory of violence and exclusion shapes the contemporary reality of Black elderly people in Brazil. By highlighting the persistence of inequalities and structural violence, this study aims to contribute to building a critical perspective that challenges dominant narratives and makes visible the specificities of the Black aging experience. In doing so, it enriches the academic debate on racism and aging, broadening the understanding of a complex phenomenon deeply rooted in the country's history.

INTRODUCTION

This is a descriptive case study with a qualitative approach. It highlights the fact that there is no single way to reach a result or understand a phenomenon. In this way, Minayo (2014) states that this approach applies to what is the product of human constructions in relation to their world and the way they “[...] live, build their artifacts and themselves, feel, and think.” Given the methodological possibilities, the case study is configured as a strategic tool through which information and data from various sources can be gathered, as well as categorize and particularize an endless amount of information about a specific subject (Freitas; Jabbour, 2011).

The participant in this study was a female, elderly (62 years old), born in Recife (Pernambuco), who was given the fictitious name of Amara. Her participation occurred after signing the Free and Informed Consent Form and the Confidentiality and Commitment Agreement, ensuring that no personal information could identify her, thus maintaining anonymity and confidentiality. It is also important to note that this study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Pernambuco, registered under CAAE: 76677923.0.0000.5208 and with approval number: 6.655.396.

The instruments used were a sociodemographic questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The interview took place in consultation room 01, located within the premises of the Open University for the Elderly (UNATI), which is part of the Extension Program for the Elderly at the Pro-Rectorate of Education and Extension at the Federal University of Pernambuco (PROIDOSO/PROExC/UFPE).

After an initial rapport, the researcher began the sociodemographic questionnaire, followed by the semi-structured interview. The first question was chosen to open possibilities for a field of personal expression, ensuring the subject's experience was always at the forefront. The opening question was: "In your life story, was there any moment when you experienced racism or racial discrimination?" From this starting point, the elderly woman was able to create a field of expressions in which her words formed narratives, bringing forth memories, experiences, and emotions, giving shape, meaning, and context to the intersections of her existence.

Given the need to explore the subject further, Amara was carefully prompted to talk about the impacts of racism and how it relates to her self-perception, social relationships, health, the process of aging as a Black person, and the resulting effects. The interview was recorded in digital audio format and later fully transcribed, with the narratives being analyzed from a psychoanalytic perspective.

The analysis and interpretation of the data were carried out through Discourse Analysis (DA), in which "one seeks to understand language making sense, as symbolic work, part of general social work, constitutive of man and his history" (Orlandi, 2015, p. 15). Discourse analysis allows for capturing, identifying, and understanding the subject's discourse, both spoken and unspoken, in a broad search for meaning that considers all nuances of communication and language.

Furthermore, "Discourse Analysis does not stop at interpretation, but works through its limits, its mechanisms, as part of the processes of signification. Nor does it search for a true meaning through a 'key' of interpretation" (Orlandi, 2015, p. 26, author's

emphasis). As a theoretical device, discourse analysis provides tools for the researcher to delve into the process and conditions of discourse production, whether through speech or documents, focusing on the meaning of the semantic field in which it is produced in a contextualized and critical manner regarding discursive realizations, corpus, and sample (Minayo, 2014).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE CASE

This section aims to shed light on the intersections between aging, race, and the context of inequalities. Understanding the aging process of elderly Black women requires, first of all, analyzing it in the context of gender, class, and racism inequalities, considering the contingencies, particularities, and their respective biographical histories. Racial and social conditions can determine unique ways in which each individual ages.

This section also brings to the forefront the different ways individuals subjectivize themselves as subjects who, historically, within the formation of Brazilian social fabric, have suffered oppression, humiliation, and discrimination imposed by a capitalist society that economically thrived through the enslavement of Black bodies. Therefore, the aim is to discuss the theme of racism and aging, drawing from the subjective experiences of an elderly Black person, which emerge as powerful yet often invisible narratives.

Amara is a cisgender, heterosexual woman, currently 62 years old, who self-identifies as Black, and is a widow whose husband passed away at the age of 52. She holds a college degree in History and is currently retired from a banking institution. She lives alone in her own home in an upper-middle-class neighborhood in Recife. Her biological parents are deceased, and she is the mother of an adult son who is financially independent. She reports no significant health issues, engages in physical activities, has access to technology, and participates in the Kardecist spiritist doctrine.

In her testimony, Amara strongly emphasizes that the discrimination she faces is a daily occurrence, something she has never perceived as being different throughout her life, as evidenced in this fragment of her discourse: “... *I think discrimination is daily, I think, on the contrary, if there was ever a time when I didn't experience it, you know what I mean?*” [...] “*because racism, in my opinion, is very... almost abstract, you know? It's very subtle [...] Little things, you know? The looks, that sort of thing...*”.

Under the inexorable and devastating condition of suffering represented by discriminatory situations related to skin color, the spectrum of subjective positions that individuals take in the face of what afflicts them ranges from the most submissive and subjugated to the most reactive, permeated by fear, anguish, and desolation. The elderly Black woman is part of a population group that is often invisible and surrounded by stigmas and stereotypes that socially segregate her (Walker Taylor *et al.*, 2018).

Throughout history, forms of existence have been promoted that marginalize or devalue her within a social structure hierarchized by racism, whose negative attitudes and behaviors aim to strip her of her own dignity. On the other hand, they invite her to constantly transcend and overcome the reality of her own limitations (Filho, 2017; Nogueira, 2021; Vannuchi, 2017).

Here, the compelling discussion about the invisibility of racism as a social determinant of health takes shape, even in light of the institutionalization of the Racial Equality Statute (Law No. 12,288, of July 20, 2010) and the advancement of the National Comprehensive Health Policy for the Black Population (PNSIPN), implemented in 2017:

The National Comprehensive Health Policy for the Black Population (PNSIPN) is a commitment made by the Ministry of Health to combat inequalities in the Unified Health System (SUS) and promote the health of the Black population in a comprehensive way, considering that health inequities result from unjust socioeconomic and cultural processes—particularly ongoing racism—that contribute to the morbidity and mortality of Black Brazilian populations (BRASIL, 2016, p. 7).

In portraying her journey as a Black person, Amara frames her life experience through the lens of an inexplicable difference—something abstract, strange, and simultaneously familiar. She speaks of violence characterized by what Souza (2021), describes as a fierce tendency to destroy the Black identity, which struggles to establish itself in a process of self-identification¹ against ideals that are incompatible, as there is no socially circulating identity through which the subject can be spoken of.

In contrast, she recalls a time when it was somehow possible to identify with someone similar, saying, *“In my childhood, I suffered less because I lived in a poor community where there were many Black people. So I didn’t really notice this thing about*

¹ In psychoanalytic terms, this is understood as the "psychological process through which a subject assimilates an aspect, a property, or an attribute of another and transforms themselves, either wholly or partially, according to the model of that other. Personality is constituted and differentiated through a series of identifications." (Laplanche; Pontalis; Tamen, 2001, p. 226).

racism, you know? From childhood to adolescence, and from adolescence onward, I suffered many times...”.

The hierarchical social system, grounded in racist foundations, inherently tends to undermine or devalue Black women, with stereotypes reinforced by their condition of poverty. This creates a unique mode of aging exacerbated by class and gender inequalities, domination, oppression, and absolute submission to the “big house” and the marks left by the overseers' whips. It is undeniable that these painful experiences had strong emotional impacts and left deep, indelible subjective marks, shaping ways of being, existing, and resisting in the world. When prompted to talk about these impacts, she expressed: *“I think it impacts, you know? In some way. Because you become more aware even of the clothes you wear, right?... Because if you’re not careful, you also fall into the trap of racism, right? And you end up feeling inferior to people, right? And I think there was a time in my life when I felt very much like that...”*

Her experiences, fundamental to the construction of her reality, transition from perceiving herself as a person, a subject, a peer within a social body during her childhood, to transitioning to a subject who, in Fanon's words (2020, p. 125) “[...] does not need to be Black, but needs to be seen as such by the white [...] the Black person has no ontological resistance against the white [...].”

In this construction, which oscillates between the possibility of being or not being a subject, the model of ego found in reality is marked by the attempt to eliminate any possibility of being a Black person, a human, a subject. Daily practices reveal the numerous tools of dehumanization that the Black subject faces systematically and continuously, encountering violent, persecutory, normalized processes defended by the logic of whiteness. These processes challenge the very essence of being human, turning one into something akin to an animal, something nameless (Lee; Bierman, 2016; Nadimpalli *et al.*, 2015).

Amara recalls moments when she was seen, questioned, and summoned to identify herself as an animal or as someone out of place. In one such instance at work, a superior, in a supposed “joke,” asked her: *“- And you, [...], what animal do you think you resemble?”*. Amara replied: *“What do you think I resemble?”*. She then concluded: ***“It was the monkey he wanted.”*** (our emphasis).

This narrative fragment illustrates her distress and unease in the face of a traumatic situation that imposed itself with overwhelming force, pushing her towards ambiguous and contradictory feelings. The dimension and intensity of psychological pain resonated

with other pains filled with overwhelming suffering. The core of this moment is circumscribed by a certain level of awareness of racism, forming a fragment of the tangled threads of life's fabric.

There are resonances here with Souza's (2021, p. 31) thought when he states that “[...] their psyche is marked with the seal of persecution by their own body. From then on, the subject will control, observe, and monitor this body that opposes the construction of the white identity they have been coerced to desire.” The bitterness, despair, or anger resulting from the difference from the white will translate into hatred of the Black body, as expressed by Amara: *“Every time feels like needle pricks,” I started working very early, got married early, graduated early. So, I think these things already dodge, right? That strong racism. But the needle pricks are daily. So, if you get a needle prick today and never get another, that’s one thing. But every day you always get a little prick, right? In a way, it keeps hurting, right? I consider them to be small and more subtle.”*

These "needle pricks," as described by Amara, can be translated as a metaphor for the daily microaggressions she endures. These microaggressions not only wound and harm her condition as a subject but also delineate her identity boundaries, marking her existence and promoting forms of subjectivity in a social space that constantly tries to deny her humanity. There seems to be no way to translate, embrace, or reframe such suffering except through the harsh reality that (Jesus, 2021, p. 152) describes as life, where “there is nothing worse in life than life itself.”

The drama of being a Black person aging in a country historically marked by processes of invisibilization, minimization, and exclusion has neither resigned nor diminished her. However, the interviewee expresses a certain disillusionment when she states that her life story could have been different if it weren't for these very processes, which she describes as: *“It hurts, makes a person different. She [referring to herself] might have been another person if there wasn't so much racism in her life.”*

These processes render the Black subject an indeterminate character facing the future. As Amara responds when asked about aging as a Black person: *“It is a victory... Because the people come from so much... It's a race that I think... I've never read the statistics, but I think they live less, right? Because of poverty and such things. So, I think my mother died at 67. I'm 62. My mother lived a short life.”*

The fact that she has not read the statistics does not mean they do not exist. Beyond existing, they are often silenced or underreported, as they reflect lives marked by

profound inequalities and cruelties orchestrated by those who impose a rhythm on life and death. In this sense, living becomes a victory because:

Within this universe of terror, even if a Black person consciously believes that such racist threats will not come to fruition, the terror does not disappear. It is carried in the body, conveying a meaning that incites and justifies racist violence to others (Nogueira, 2021, p. 126).

In other words, although they may seem invisible, or rather, invisibilized, the pains resulting from experiences of racist violence faced by older Black individuals will always be visible, felt, and lived daily in the various spaces they navigate. This results in various forms of physical and psychological suffering (Alang, 2019; Boen, 2020; Goldman, 2022; LaFave *et al.*, 2022). No matter how minor it may seem, “a needle prick will always be a needle prick” that hurts, bothers, and provokes reactions, with psychological consequences that can be evidenced in the following excerpt from her narrative: *“For me, I think the word that came to mind first was revolt, you know? Revolt, sadness... A certain anguish, right? Because I always thought that we hadn’t done anything, right? Just the color of the skin, the people, right? Already having this discrimination.”*

There is no doubt about how distressing experiences have permeated and shaped the course of her ways of subjectivizing and stylizing her own existence. When referring to her process of aging and old age, although Amara positions herself from a different place, namely that of feeling *“privileged in some ways... compared to people of my race, right? Having health insurance, being able to buy medicine, not having that difficulty, right? All of this makes life better, right? Being able to go to the doctor. That’s it. I’m ahead.”*

In light of these considerations, it is observed that Amara has, given her conditions of possibility, managed to construct her own style of existence. This involves adopting a unique way of establishing herself in ethical, aesthetic, and political registers. It implies acting upon herself, on behalf of her family, health conditions, and quality of life, positioning herself by promoting liberation from the discursive entanglements of knowledge/power, not succumbing to the normalization of shameful, prejudiced, and discriminatory behaviors, but instead moving toward inventive, creative, and desirous practices.

Despite managing, with great effort, to identify herself in a place of privilege, given such a shocking reality, Amara recalls other phases of her life where racist practices

anchored and normalized in cultural processes of violence confined her to positions different from those she tries to recognize herself in. The episodes of racism placed her in the position of a domestic worker, even when she had access to housing in a high-class building in a wealthy neighborhood of the capital of Pernambuco.

The signifiers that obscure Black individuals in Brazil operate in a perverse, corrosive, and annihilating manner in constructing their identity and perpetuate a cycle of silencing that often results in a false contentment with being Black. By releasing the song “Identity” in 1992, the composer Jorge Aragão denounces how the marks of slavery and racism are still relevant, saying:

Elevator is almost a temple / An example to undermine your sleep / Get out of this commitment / Don't go to the service elevator / If the social one has an owner, don't go / We have the color of the night / Children of all the scourging / A real fact of our history” (Aragão, 1992).

Upon moving in, Amara recalls: *“Every time I went in, the guy, who was very dark, would always get up when I went to the social elevator. ‘Ah, it’s the lady from [apartment number], right? Who just arrived.”* She adds: *“We go living and get used to it, that’s the worst part, right?”* This repeatedly denounces how systematic and subtle racism is. It is within this context that Amara perceives the power of whiteness that reinforces the place of being subaltern, servile, and how it is inscribed in the skin color. After all, she understands that *“Just the color of the skin, the people, right? Already involves this discrimination.”*

For Amara, there is a difference between aging as a Black person and as a white person, *“because this difference never fades, right? When you see an old Black person, they... are already thought to be poorer...”* Beyond racial and economic prejudice, that all Black people are poor, Amara adds her perception that Black individuals are also seen as thieves, especially when circulating in consumer spaces where Black people do not typically frequent, such as shopping malls. She says: *“I don’t have the spontaneity to stay inside a store. Now, at 62, in old age, it seems better. Because they think old people will steal. But this [case] was not even two years ago. It was last year. I was already in old age. He [the store security] still thought I looked like I could steal something.”*

In this context, we talk about an identity loss, considering that identity is a dynamic process sustained by the fundamental identifications of the Self (Freud, 2020). Losing her identity references—since the shopping mall was not a place for her, a Black person considered a thief—Amara has her pulsional circulation interrupted, as the symbolic universe she is in generates anxiety. This situation can have devastating effects,

directly affecting repressed contents and breaking the connection between affect and representation (Ceccarelli, 2007).

From this perspective, it is important to note the magnitude of racism, its repercussions, and how it directly impacts the aging process of Black people, generating conditions of inequalities and vulnerabilities. The reality she has experienced is updated from the preservation of the conviction that skin color is a determining aspect of a person (Munanga, 2023)

Only Amara knows how bitter the devastating experiences she has lived through were, but she wishes for other possibilities, proposing: *“I think there should be more projects or research on this subject. That would help people understand this. Because sometimes people, my generation, white people, they don’t think racism exists. Because for a while Brazil didn’t have racism. Right? They tried to impose this so strongly that even today, there are people over 60 years old who are white, who believe that... even though they have a racist attitude, they think racism doesn’t exist, you know?”*

Amara announces the possibility of ending the cycle of pain, violence, and evolving towards a more just, dignified, and benevolent society. For Hooks (2021), this would be a kind of loving society, where love would be a powerful force. Similarly, she also recognizes the challenge of breaking this cycle, where being Black means being marked by the difference constructed by white people, even though it is the white people who do not recognize or agree with the denial of the existence of difference (Almeida, 2019; Bento, 2022; Carneiro, 2011, 2023; Souza, 2021).

In this study, through her narratives, Amara exposed a life trajectory marked by challenges and achievements traversed by experiences where she could directly or indirectly perceive the effects of various forms of racial discrimination and racism as structures within which her life was organized. Along this path, she highlights experiences that shaped and contributed to what was possible to constitute as a subject. It is evident that racism not only excluded Amara from opportunities and rights that should have been guaranteed but also trapped her in a web of prejudices and symbolic violence, where the denial of her subjectivity and dignity was constant.

Thus, analyzing this case urges us not only to reflect on the scars left by racism throughout the life of an elderly Black person but also to recognize and rethink aging in Brazil from the perspective of racial inequalities, intertwined with pain, resilience, and the struggle for recognition and respect. It gave voice not only to Amara but also to the symbolic universe and meanings of aging as a Black person.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study revealed the experience of aging for Black individuals in Brazil, highlighting the complexity and depth of the historical and social marks that shape the lives of individuals like Amara. The analysis of her life trajectory in this context demonstrates that, despite personal and social achievements, experiences of discrimination and racism continue to profoundly influence her daily life and perceptions.

Through her narrative, Amara offers a glimpse into the subtle and persistent forms of racism that permeate her existence. Her experience reflects the continuity of structural violence that has persisted since the colonial period, revealing how the legacy of slavery and colonialism still shapes the living conditions and self-perception of Black individuals in Brazil. The violences endured, though often perceived as subtle and everyday, reveal impacts on overall health, particularly mental and social health, illustrating a constant struggle against a system that seeks to render the Black population invisible and marginalized.

The analysis also highlights how socioeconomic conditions, while providing some relief, are insufficient to neutralize the impact of structural racism, systemic racism, and the inequalities that have historically manifested in various dimensions of life. These include influences on employment and education opportunities, social circulation, and quality of life in old age. In this sense, it is also important to note that despite the existence of public policies and laws aimed at racial equality, the implementation of these measures still faces structural and institutional challenges that maintain discrimination and inequalities, anchored through the discourses and practices of whiteness.

Furthermore, the experience of aging as a Black person in Brazil is marked by a sense of resistance and resilience in the face of a society that has historically excluded and oppressed individuals based on skin color. Amara's view that aging is a "victory" in the face of adversity illustrates the strength and perseverance of a group that, even in the face of an exclusionary system, continues to fight for recognition and dignity.

This study not only highlights the persistent inequalities faced by elderly Black individuals but also underscores the urgent need for more effective and comprehensive public policies that address the multiple dimensions of racism and promote inclusion and social justice. The inclusion of narratives such as Amara's in academic and political

debates is crucial for a more complete and just understanding of aging experiences and the intersections between race and inequalities in Brazil.

Ultimately, the research reiterates the importance of continuing to examine and question the structures of power and privilege that perpetuate contrasts, and of seeking solutions that promote a more equitable and inclusive society for all.

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