

DOSSIER

Innovation and tradition in the Transnational History of Educational Knowledge and Practices

“Schoolmasters to his Race”: Political Metaphor of the Transnational Circulation of Ideas of Racial Inclusion in the Early Twentieth Century¹

“Educadores da raça”: metáfora política da circulação transnacional de ideias de inclusão racial no início do século XX

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes aspects of José Eutrópio (1886-1929) biography as a starting point to examine the transnational circulation of ideas on racial inclusion in the early twentieth century. In dialogue with other Black intellectuals from the Western world, the Brazilian educator studied different currents of racial theories and the multiple expressions of racial ideologies that were in circulation at the time. These formulations were appropriated as political-intellectual resources for the development of educational principles aimed at formal education in Brazil. The article investigates these historical processes, examining how the school became a central metaphor in the civil and political rights debates of transnational Black Movements. Additionally, it analyzes the historicity of racism in formal education and the processes of formulating educational strategies to combat this social marker.

Keywords: Racial Inclusion. Transnational History. Racism. José Eutrópio.

RESUMO

O artigo analisa aspectos da biografia de José Eutrópio (1886-1929) como ponto de partida para examinar a circulação transnacional de ideias sobre inclusão racial no início do século XX. Em diálogo com outros intelectuais negros do Ocidente, o educador brasileiro estudou as diferentes correntes das teorias raciais e as múltiplas expressões das ideologias raciais então em circulação. Essas formulações foram apropriadas como recursos político-intelectuais para a construção de princípios educacionais destinados à educação formal no Brasil. O artigo investiga esses processos históricos, examinando como a escola se tornou uma metáfora central nos debates sobre direitos civis e políticos de movimentos negros transnacionais. Além disso, analisa a historicidade do racismo na educação escolarizada e os processos de formulação de estratégias educacionais voltadas ao combate desse marcador social.

Palavras-chave: Inclusão racial. História Transnacional. Racismo. José Eutrópio.

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Introduction

Between 1919 and 1925, the lawyer, teacher, school inspector, and journalist José Eutrópio (1886-1929) wrote a political column titled "For Education" ("Pela Instrução"), one of the sections of *Correio de Minas*, a newspaper published in the city of Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais, Brazil². In this column, drawing from his experience as a teacher and school inspector, Eutrópio discussed themes related to racial asymmetries and other forms of inequality that shaped the model of public primary education in Brazil. In one of these articles, he stated that schools adopted "prejudice against the colored race" as a "teaching method". To change this scenario, he suggested adopting textbooks that would teach the "heroism and tireless valor of the race in the construction of [Brazilian] nationality". This form of "racial egalitarianism – not as a utopia, but as a fraternal aspiration toward the social improvement of humankind – would enable the dynamism of intelligence, ignite motivation, educate desire, cure prejudice and its ignorance, and sensitize the soul" (Eutrópio, 1924a, p. 1).

Although controversial at the time, these political analyses were already undergoing a process of silencing by the intellectual circles with which José Eutrópio engaged – or aspired to engage. The production of a photographic portrait of this educator helps analyze how his biography was silenced in collective memory (Trouillot, 2024). Produced by the Sabino Brescia & Filho studio, the photograph was first published in a 1923 issue of *A Evolução*. It was part of a tribute by the Juiz de Fora-based magazine celebrating the second anniversary of the Associação Mineira de Imprensa (hereafter AMI). For this reason, the publication featured photos of its board members, including José Eutrópio, who had recently been appointed president of the organization (Associação, 1923, p. 15).

In this photograph – which circulated widely following his premature death in 1929 and later became a powerful support for memory – José Eutrópio's image appeared visibly whitened. In fact, as Lilia Schwarcz points out, this was a common technological (and social) practice in the early twentieth century, "through which photographers, aiming to 'enhance' the client's image, would subject them to a 'whitening' process – a true social engineering of color" (Schwarcz, 2019, p. 148). Images such as photographs produce imaginaries that often take root and stabilize in social memory, being "consumed as testimony, as records of their time, thereby transforming partial and subjective visions into widely accepted truths" (Schwarcz, 2024, p. 29).

² The column "For Education" was part of the editorial line of *Correio de Minas* since its first phase (1894-1908). Although it bore different titles over time, this section maintained a continuous presence in the history of the newspaper, generally devoted to topics considered relevant in the field of education, schooling, and educational processes underway in Minas Gerais, especially in the region of Juiz de Fora (Kappel, 2010; Almeida; Silva, 2014). Most of the time, it was signed by members of the editorial team, but it also featured opinion and critical pieces from various contributors. Between 1920 and mid-1925, José Eutrópio regularly authored articles for the "For Education" column, although many were published without attribution. It was common for the texts to be identified by references such as "J. E.", "J. Eutrópio", or "From our contributor".

Figure 1: Dr. José Eutrópio



Source: Associação, 1923, p. 15.

In collective memory, José Eutrópio is mainly remembered as a man of letters. The few existing studies on his life have described him as a Black man of unknown and poor origin who worked in various fields – law, teaching, journalism, and musical theater – more out of financial necessity than choice, vocation, or political commitment. Such memorial and academic works have consolidated the narrative that his journalistic career was primarily responsible for fixing his name in public memory (Oliveira, 1966; Nóbrega, 1982, 1987)³. Even in the 1920s, his racial identity and political-intellectual activism were framed within a layer of memory strategically whitened and, at times, silenced by his intellectual peers – not by himself. In this context, his public biography was presented as a concrete example of social relations supposedly free from racial hierarchies or prejudice.

The photograph published in the pages of *A Evolução* not only presented and documented José Eutrópio's physical appearance but also symbolized the expectations and representations regarding race, whiteness, formal equality, and citizenship projected by the intellectual elites of Juiz de Fora. Although he belonged to certain intellectual circles, José Eutrópio was not seen as their legitimate representative. Still, his public image bore the burden of representation imposed by an ideology of whiteness that shaped the ideal of the Black intellectual. Indeed, as Lilia Schwarcz (2024, p. 31) notes, "the language of this type of image and imaginary, under the supposed guise of inclusion, blatantly exposed and enacted a great deal of social exclusion". In a study on Black presence in early twentieth-century visual records, Saidiya Hartman observed that:

³ José Tadeu Júlio da Silva (2018), in a relevant study on aspects of José Eutrópio's literary trajectory, presents an analytical perspective distinct from the one adopted here. The author argues that it was whitening – as both a political behavior and a social habit – present in the intellectual circles of the early twentieth century, imposed upon (and assimilated by) José Eutrópio, that defined (and continues to define) the place of his biography's memories within the collective imagination.

In classical images of Black people, individuals were forced to symbolize generalized historical narratives about Black progress or failure, serve as representatives of a race or class, embody and inhabit social problems, and demonstrate societal flaws or advancements. These photographs expanded the scope of visibility and surveillance rooted in slavery and the racialized logic of post-emancipation social relations (Hartman, 2022, p. 41).

José Eutrópio was well aware of the rules of this political game. Born into an interracial family, he had to navigate the challenges of an existence that crossed fluid and fragile boundaries. His mother (and possibly part of her family) was a Black woman who may have experienced, at some point in her life, the condition of enslavement. The name of his biological father does not appear in his civil records, but social imagination in Muriaé – his hometown in Minas Gerais – suggests he may have been the son of a (white) Italian-descended (Ribeiro, 2024b). Being the product of an interracial family and living with the burdens, potentials, and fulfillments such a condition might bring were likely lifelong dilemmas for José Eutrópio. It is difficult to state definitively how he experienced the complex and winding process of identity formation as a Black person, or a “man of color”, in his own words.

In this context, Blackness may have been a social condition experienced with varying degrees of awareness, in different forms, and always situated within the dynamic and mutable field of subjectivities, identifications, and identities. It is therefore not surprising that private life themes are largely absent from his intellectual output, including the politicization of his racial condition, even in more intimate literary texts, such as poems. Indeed, he developed a racial consciousness, but the construction of his social and political thought extended beyond this perspective, surpassing purely identity-based or subjective perceptions. His commitment to a liberal orientation, one that valued representative democracy and individual freedom as universal virtues, led him to believe and defend that a person’s skin color should not determine whether they could live fully as a free citizen endowed with civil and political rights.

José Eutrópio’s intellectual production serves as a key to understanding his construction of identity as a Black intellectual. Through his public biography, he worked to develop and disseminate an original and critical perspective on race. These political uses of a particular notion of intellectuality, though in dialogue with the values and principles of his time, did not meet the expectations of many of his intellectual peers. This contributed not only to the contemporary and subsequent silencing of his political engagement and intellectual production on racial thought, but also to the creation of a public memory of his biography shaped by an ideology of whiteness.

José Eutrópio’s trajectory within the AMI illustrates this complex web of racial relations. Founded in 1920 as a scientific and mutualist organization, the AMI aimed to defend the professional practice of journalism and freedom of the press. The institution also encouraged the formation of a national consciousness by promoting the study of Brazilian history and cultural traditions from a regionalist perspective. AMI’s social composition prioritized both the intellectual output of its

members and their social relationships and economic profiles. From its inception, it became a space for the production of historical knowledge characteristic of the early twentieth century, similar to what occurred in other scientific centers such as ethnographic museums, historical and geographical institutes, literary societies, and law academies, as well as in the political associations of the press, like the *Círculo de Imprensa* and the *Associação Brasileira de Imprensa*.

The AMI's financial self-management by its members explains why these intellectuals turned it into a space for producing and disseminating narratives that presented their public biographies as exemplary models of intellectuality and political thought. Accordingly, efforts were made to associate their intellectual production with the political image of the institution. Like other members, José Eutrópio strived to imprint AMI's mark on his political and intellectual output. During his terms as president (1924-1925 and 1926-1927), he carried out actions that had significant impact in Juiz de Fora, such as the celebration of May 13th in 1924, support for the strike movement of the *Federação Operária Mineira* (1924), motions of congratulations to the Brazilian Black press (1925), and a proposal to affiliate these newspapers with the AMI, among other initiatives.

Similarly, his political chronicles published in *Correio de Minas* were signed as those of a representative of AMI, with the clear intention of framing his ideas as an institutional political analysis. As the reader will see in the following pages, José Eutrópio reflected on the influence of racial ideas in the scientific and cultural production of the first half of the twentieth century and proposed alternative models for analyzing racial theories. Due to his sharp critique of certain racial ideologies – such as social evolutionism grounded in the notion of cultural miscegenation – and his denunciation of racial inequalities, including racism understood as a structuring force in social relations, his political assessments directly challenged the ideological project upheld by many members of AMI.

An article published in the press by journalist, teacher, and AMI founding member Lindolfo Gomes (1875-1953) is illustrative in this regard. The professor's indignant text addressed AMI's commemoration of the May 13th, 1924 anniversary. The event celebrated the date on which the law abolishing slavery was signed in 1888 – a date that, between 1891 and 1931, was a national holiday dedicated to the unity of the Brazilian people. *Jornal do Comércio*, of Juiz de Fora, which had been specially invited by the president of AMI to cover the event, not only publicized the various attractions in the program but also highlighted a brief yet forceful speech by José Eutrópio during the event's opening. "In an impassioned impromptu that drew applause from the distinguished audience", the paper reported, "the president [of AMI], Dr. José Eutrópio, stated that 'national security and the greatness of the nation will only become reality when we build a society without distinctions of status and without prejudice of color. That is AMI's mission'" (13 de Maio, 1924, p. 1). Shortly thereafter, Lindolfo Gomes used the pages of *O Pharol* to voice his discontent:

When we set out to judge the issue of supposed racial intolerance among us in a biased manner, offering impassioned criticism, we come to the conclusion that the exploitation and exaggerated partisanship surrounding the subject magnify the proportions of this pseudo-prejudice and cast upon a people who uphold the

highest ideals of democracy and embrace Christian principles a burden of painful guilt that, in fact, does not exist. These borrowed lines of thought are impermeable to our needs as a people and useless to the nation's progress (Gomes, 1924, p. 2).

José Eutrópio's analyses on race were the subject of intense debate among his peers at AMI, becoming a counterpoint in the development of the other members' social thought. In general, they believed that discussing people, nation, society, and citizenship from a racial perspective stemmed from analytical models disconnected from Brazilian reality. As a result, José Eutrópio's writings were treated as insignificant and, at times, caricatured, particularly regarding his critiques of racial ideologies and theories. During his lifetime, his social thought was dismissed and marginalized within the intellectual circles in which he moved. After his death, this political dimension of his legacy was silenced.

These "controlling images", as Patricia Hill Collins (2019) argues, not only produce silencing processes but also promote the construction of imaginaries that frame and isolate certain individuals or social groups within an unchanging past – much like what occurs with photography, biography, or biographical aspects of their trajectories. In contrast, a critical approach to the public biography of José Eutrópio has allowed me to historicize how racism manifested (and continues to manifest) in the memorial production surrounding the lives of Black individuals. José Eutrópio, as a cosmopolitan subject with both racial and class consciousness, as well as a committed thinker, confronted in his daily intellectual and political work the various ways of being Black and of experiencing racism in Brazilian society during the first half of the twentieth century – and he turned those experiences into a subject of study.

Black Thought on Race in the Early 20th Century

José Eutrópio interpreted certain strands of racial theory, as well as the various expressions of racial ideologies circulating in scientific and intellectual debates in the early 20th century, as political and intellectual tools for developing educational principles that, in his view, should be incorporated into the realm of formal education in Brazilian society, both at a macro level, in the foundations of public education reforms and their related policies, and at the micro level, within the school environment and its specific practices of schooling, including school spaces and times, practices, and forms of knowledge. For this reason, I have taken this issue as the theme and object of study in the present article. This research is part of the preliminary results of a broader project developed within the Núcleo Interdisciplinar de Estudos e Pesquisas em História da Educação at the School of Education of the Sao Paulo University. The study investigates the role of Black intellectuals in formulating political projects for racial inclusion and antiracist pedagogical ideas within the context of elementary public schooling in early 20th-century Brazil.

Interested in understanding these historical processes and in examining how the school became an important metaphor in debates about civil and political rights, articulated by various

individuals and groups within Black communities, this article analyzes aspects of the historicity of racism in formal education and the processes involved in constructing ideas of racial inclusion as a means of confronting this social marker. As this text presents partial findings from an ongoing research project, the interpretive approach adopted here leans more toward a questioning narrative than a conclusive one. Without aiming to define or exhaust the debate, I believe that the many hypotheses and few definitive arguments put forth may offer analytical tools to expand research possibilities concerning Black experiences in – and through – the formation of the formal education sphere in the West during the early 20th century.

From this perspective, the theoretical endeavor undertaken here aligns with the assumptions of transnational history and is concerned with studying the historical processes shaped by the movement, dispersion, fragmentation, and symbolic or material exchanges that transcended, but did not erase, national borders. This analytical approach resonates with what Eugenia Roldán Vera and Eckhardt Fuchs (2021, p. 11) have referred to as the "diffusion of pedagogical knowledge", that is, "processes of translation, appropriation, and adaptation of pedagogical knowledge across a range of local contexts":

These are experiences that, moving away from simplistic narratives of contagion, challenge the very notion of "diffusion", instead seeking alternative categories such as "hybridism", "enculturation", or the creation of "transnational educational spaces". The latter approach proposes a view of the transnational as a domain in which temporary spaces of transnationality are constructed through personal networks, the reception of models from elsewhere, and institutional cooperation (Vera; Fuchs, 2021, p. 11).

Transnational history as an analytical perspective enables, for example, the examination of the production of racial inclusion ideologies in formal education, formulated by Black intellectuals, as part of a broad and diverse global phenomenon. In the West, from the late 19th century onward, Black intellectuals engaged in discussions about nation-building and societal projects in their respective countries sought to participate in debates concerning the modernization and democratization of schools and their formal schooling processes. They viewed this movement as a significant arena for contesting the meanings of racial ideologies and theories, racially based social inequalities, and civil rights and political equality. These issues were central in societies that had undergone the experiences of slavery and colonialism and that, in that historical conjuncture, were witnessing the invention of unequal conceptions of citizenship, as well as the spread of racial prejudice and discrimination, notably racism.

Conceptions of the idea of race were present in José Eutrópio's thought and works from his earliest writings published in the press beginning in the early 1910s. In fact, he recognized in the racial theories prevalent at the start of the 20th century crucial elements for his political projects concerning the social institution of the school. Indeed, José Eutrópio did not develop scientifically based theoretical conceptions of race but rather mobilized and engaged in dialogue with the notions

of race circulating in various intellectual debates of his time. There is an extensive critical literature on the historical experience of the political uses and disuses of the idea of race within Brazilian intellectual circles since at least the mid-19th century or earlier (Skidmore, 1976; Degler, 1976; Hasenbalg, 1979; Schwarcz, 1993; Cunha, 1999). In the interpretive exercise adopted here, I will limit myself to addressing the intellectual debates on race promoted by Black thinkers with whom José Eutrópio had contact and whose works he read and disseminated.

The African American sociologist William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868-1963) is considered one of the founders of modern sociology as an academic discipline. His thought and works, produced from the 1890s onward, quickly spread across various parts of the West, gaining readers and disciples worldwide. In his early theoretical formulations – such as in the seminal article *The Conservation of Races*, published in 1897, whose central arguments were later incorporated into the chapters of *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), his best-known book – W. E. B. Du Bois sought to shift the interpretation of the concept of race from the realm of biological determinism to the field of social action and human behavior, that is, as part of the historical formation of social groups. For the African American sociologist, from a sociological perspective, the notion of race could be understood as “a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life” (Du Bois, 1970[1897], p. 75).

One of the contributions of this *Dubosiana* analytical approach was to shift the debate on race from the realm of biological determinisms, so prevalent and increasingly entrenched in academic circles and scientific literature in the early 20th century, to the sociohistorical level. Race, understood both as cause and as result of racial relations, should be the object of research in the sciences, especially those concerned with the study of human life, such as History, Anthropology (including Physical Anthropology), and Sociology. Among Du Bois's interests was to historicize the prevailing ideas of race in order to comprehend such social constructions as part of a broader historical process, while also offering some form of intelligibility to an expression that was not limited to scientific discourses or the symbolic field but was also vividly experienced in everyday social relations. For Black intellectuals like W. E. B. Du Bois, “the idea of race [was] understood as part of the social structure, thus related to the subject-structure relationship and capable of being grasped by observing racist ideology as a translation of a social way of seeing the world and structuring forms of life” (Silva, 2014, p. 1268).

In this regard, what Fernanda Oliveira da Silva (2014, p. 1268) called the “process of racialization of the social construction of differences” was an ideological foundation present in Black thought that sought to study race as a social and historical construction and phenomenon. Interpreting the work of José Eutrópio, W. E. B. Du Bois, or other Black intellectuals who engaged in debates about race in the early 20th century through the concept of racialization (Albuquerque, 2009, p. 35; Fassin, 2018, p. 63) – even if they did not explicitly use this term – means examining “how the social process of this construction took place, insofar as race was understood as an ideological conception and as a socially constructed historical product” (Silva, 2014, p. 1268).

Indeed, in his theoretical formulation of concepts such as "historic races", "line color", and "double consciousness", W. E. B. Du Bois presented alternative epistemic possibilities for the critical adoption of ideas about race as an analytical tool for studying human societies that had undergone (and were experiencing) the realities of slavery, colonialism, and juridical-institutional racial segregation (Appiah, 1997, p. 53-76; Gilroy, 2012, p. 223-280). For Matheus Gato (2025, p. 5), this political-intellectual exercise of "elaborating a historical concept of race" aimed to create theoretical and conceptual strategies "for understanding and confronting colonial and racial regimes of domination". Thus, it was established as "a concept capable of specifying the nature and cultural significance of violence against Africans and their descendants in the many diasporas, while simultaneously fostering transnational political solidarity among Black people".

Juliet Hooker (2017) argued that the theoretical-political production on race by Black intellectuals was a crucial principle in advocating for discourses of equal rights, which intensified in the West, particularly in countries that had experienced slavery and colonialism, and which, by the late 19th century, were creating artificial political categories of citizenship and other forms of rights equality in the context of nation-state formation and societal project development. In this regard, such race-based social theories were used as a political resource to challenge and confront the scientific legitimacy of other racial theories, such as the ideology of racial determinism, which, in its various interpretations, defended the superiority or inferiority of individuals within the social hierarchy. In other words, it was argued that racially "different" subjects (in the biological sense) should be accorded distinct, and potentially unequal, citizenship rights.

Recent studies across various fields of the humanities have offered valuable interpretations for the debate on the historicity of the processes involved in the development of political ideologies and social practices that produced distinctions based on ideas of race in different historical chronologies since the 19th century. For example, Jean Frédéric Schaub (2022) emphasized the importance of considering the historical modes of production in processes of racialization. In a study on the political and cultural production of semantic fields of ideas about race, developed by Black African American individuals and communities in the 19th and 20th centuries, Lawrence Levine (2007) noted the polysemy of political meanings and cultural significances attributed to race. Thus, he suggested useful avenues for research on the meanings, associations, uses, and connotations that race – as an idea, concept, or ideal – has held in different contexts, chronologies, and historical realities.

Cynthia Greive Veiga (2022), in an analysis of the intellectual production of Latin American thinkers, some of whom were non-white and all engaged in transnational knowledge production circuits between the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, recognized that these intellectuals considered it essential that any conceptions of race be understood as local, historical, and cultural constructions. Such conceptions belonged not only to the realm of social representations – such as fantasies, myths, and ideologies – but also, and especially, exerted influence in the concrete world through the production and reproduction of individual and collective identities and social hierarchies, regulated by conventions and norms based on race and, often, racialized.

In Brazil, biological conceptions of race ideologically underpinned the construction of social orders guided by a political culture based on racial codes (Albuquerque, 2009). José Eutrópio engaged closely with these doctrines and challenged them through various strategies. One such instrument of resistance was the establishment of dialogues with intellectuals from different parts of the West who conducted historical and social studies that rejected the biological definition of race as a theoretical resource for understanding social relations. From the year 1919 onward, José Eutrópio emerged as a reader of the thought of the aforementioned W. E. B. Du Bois, as well as other African American intellectuals such as historian Carter Godwin Woodson (1875-1950), philosopher Alain LeRoy Locke (1885-1954), and educator Booker Taliaferro Washington (1856-1915); Haitian sociologist Joseph Auguste Anténor Firmin (1850-1911); and São Toméan journalists based in Portugal, such as Mário José Domingues (1899-1977). There is no space here to adequately address the biographical aspects, or even the rich intellectual production of these individuals, which would exceed the scope and possibilities of this text.

However, I would like to draw attention to the fact that José Eutrópio's engagement with the works of these intellectuals considerably influenced his political thought and intellectual production. This Black thought – less as a homogeneous bloc and more as a diverse set of ideas grounded in the attempt to construct a transnational Black racial politics – produced sophisticated and radical interpretations of race in the early 20th century, as well as originating studies that regarded race as a social construction and a category of cultural domination and political exclusion. Race, understood more as a metaphor for ideals of racial inclusion and as an epistemic perspective, and less as a concept rooted in biological determinism, came to synthesize a constellation of meanings. Among these, one of the most widespread within Black intellectual groups was the defense of race as referring to a social position/construction rather than a biological or natural condition.

José Eutrópio acted as more than just a reader of the thought of these intellectuals. In fact, he functioned as an agent in the transnational circulation of ideas and fostered the diffusion of forms of dialogue and cultural movements "that not only endeavored to observe, compare, and appropriate [...], but also to carry and disseminate multiple cultural references and thus provoke hybridizations" (Vidal *et al.*, 2024a, p. i). Nonetheless, his intellectual production on race was not limited to praising, empathizing with, or adhering to the diasporic thoughts of these intellectuals; it also revealed how he represented them, including his estrangements, rejections, projections, and appropriations.

From "Schoolmasters to his Race" to "educadores da raça"

From 1919 onward, especially in the texts of the political chronicle column "For Education" in *Correio de Minas*, José Eutrópio sought to establish alternative discursive strategies, different from those he had previously employed in his press writings, to generate debates on the cultural, political, and ideological dimensions of ideas about race. His texts addressed how racial ideals were used to qualify or characterize the organization of public education policies in the early decades of the

20th century. In these political analyses, race appeared as an adjectival qualifier, that is, associated with social or cultural attributes or stereotypes, rather than as a definition derived from biological determinism.

It is no coincidence that, in this political chronicle column, he assumed the role of a "thinker who cared about the interests of the people and the well-being of the community" (Eutrópio, 1919, p. 1), in the aesthetic sense of intellectuality circulating in academic circles during the 1920s. Consciously acting as a producer of political ideas, according to Michel Winock's (2003) conception, in one of these texts, symptomatically titled "Nurseries of Hatred" ("Viveiros de ódio"), José Eutrópio asserted that Brazilian schools adopted "prejudice against the colored race" as a teaching method. For him, it was necessary to create strategies for the "dissemination of knowledge and school practices", in the form of "pedagogical precepts", that would teach the "heroism and tireless valor of the race in the construction of [Brazilian] nationality", as did the "schoolmasters to his race, most noble *educadores da raça* in the U.S." (Eutrópio, 1924a, p. 1, emphasis in original).

The use of the expression "*educadores da raça*" introduces elements that expand the discussion on the transnational circulation of ideas about racial inclusion in the early 20th century. José Eutrópio used the phrase "schoolmasters to his race" only once in his text, preferring to employ its translation, rendered as "*educadores da raça*", in other passages of his political chronicle to discuss the experiences of African American educators proposing alternative educational models based on political projects of racial inclusion. Beyond a semantic juggling act, since José Eutrópio constantly dealt with the transposition of political and cultural meanings present in the original texts translated for the Brazilian audience, a process that Maria Lúcia Pallares-Burke (1996) referred to as "cultural translation", he also had to confront other discursive maneuvers related to the linguistic challenges of translating terms, as was the case with "schoolmasters to his race".

This expression, which in a literal translation into Brazilian Portuguese can be understood as "masters or educators of his race", was common and frequently present in African American intellectual production, especially when discussing teaching practices and the school knowledge deemed essential for the work of teachers and students in segregated Black schools in the United States. Jarvis R. Givens (2019) argued that the term was more closely linked to social meanings than to any rigorous scientific definition. "Schoolmasters to his race" was conceived as a valid category for the reality of American society, more precisely for African American communities afflicted by the violences of the Jim Crow system⁴. Therefore, it was seldom employed by Black intellectuals who, within a transnational circuit of idea circulation, problematized the processes of school modernization and democratization from perspectives of racial justice and equality.

Creatively employing transcreation as a semantic strategy to expand the literal scope of translation, José Eutrópio not only sought to define how the term "*educadores da raça*" would be

⁴ Jim Crow is the term used to designate the racial system based on segregation and social codes of racial subordination that prevailed in the United States, especially (but not only) in the Southern states, throughout nearly the entire twentieth century. For more details on the legal and judicial functioning of this system, especially regarding the establishment of educational structures in the U.S., see Anderson (1988) and Ritterhouse (2006).

understood by the Brazilian public in the context of the 1920s but also to express and simultaneously represent the role of Black intellectuals, their agendas, and political projects of racial inclusion within the social institution of the school. Thus, unlike "schoolmasters to his race", the term "*educadores da raça*" – and the meanings it could produce – was interpreted by José Eutrópio as a powerful political metaphor for the transnational circulation of ideas about racial inclusion in the early 20th century.

After the article published in 1924 in *Correio de Minas*, the term "*educadores da raça*" appeared with some frequency in other articles by José Eutrópio, with uses and meanings that varied according to the argumentative aims of those texts but generally referred to the political actions of Black intellectuals and their interventions within the realm of formal education. Its widespread use reveals the strategies and modes through which José Eutrópio inserted, or rather elaborated, his political-intellectual production within a transnational arena, in what some historiographical currents have termed the Black modernity of the first half of the 20th century (Barson e Gorschlüter, 2010; Nascimento, 2015; Francisco, 2016; Abreu, 2017; Guimarães, 2021; Galante e Bittencourt, 2024).

The idea of Black modernity as a political phenomenon has been interpreted as a broad cultural umbrella encompassing a multitude of political, cultural, and artistic movements of Black communities across the Western world in the early twentieth century, such as W. E. B. Du Bois's Pan-Africanism, Marcus Garvey's Garveyism, the Harlem Renaissance or New Negro Movement, the French Négritude, the Portuguese anti-colonial movements, among others. Adherents and followers of these political-cultural movements embraced the task of building a transnational political-racial consciousness among Black communities throughout the West, an essential strategy in the fight against racism, both locally and globally. According to Brent Hayes Edwards (2003), through these experiences, Black individuals and collectives contested the production of meaning around society and nation, and developed critical thought envisioning alternative futures – marked by greater equality in terms of citizenship rights, equal treatment, and opportunity.

José Eutrópio was deeply engaged with this world. I would argue, in fact, that he was not only shaped by the transnational circulation of Black political and cultural references but also contributed to shaping them. In a previous study, I analyzed his intellectual production in the realm of *teatro de revista* (revue theater), in which he wrote plays featuring storylines that directly addressed themes related to racism, making them the central focus of the plots (Ribeiro; Gonçalves, 2024a). Through the staging and performance of these plays, Eutrópio challenged the hegemonic aesthetic form of revue culture, which specialized in narratives dominated by images, stereotypes, and racist representations commonly associated with Black people and Black culture.

Informed by the political tendencies of Pan-Africanist modernisms that circulated within the transnational network of Black modernity in the 1920s, José Eutrópio devised strategies to redefine prevailing ideas about Black identity. In the case of revue theater, this meant constructing narrative repertoires aimed at fostering references of racial pride and modes of political struggle rooted in anti-racist principles. Eutrópio's engagement and alignment with Black modernist movements through

his work in the cultural industry of revue theater were, above all, the result of his connections with the transnational movements of Black political solidarity that circulated during the early decades of the twentieth century.

Regarding his discussions on the existence of forms of racism embedded in the everyday practices that shaped schools and their educational processes, the connection with the thought of Carter Godwin Woodson may have been crucial. This African American historian faced the challenge, in his work as a social thinker, of mobilizing ideas of race as social constructions to understand the structures and mechanisms that produced racial discrimination and inequality in early twentieth-century U.S. society. As noted by his biographers, this epistemological debate first emerged in his 1922 book *The Negro in Our History*, in which he presented his concept of "Black History". More than just a conceptualization, this episteme expressed a political project of Black emancipation, grounded in the recognition of Black political activism, Afro-diasporic cultural assets, and a Black political-racial vocabulary (Dagbovie, 2007; King; Davis; Brown, 2012; Snyder, 2018; Givens, 2021). Carter G. Woodson's "Black History" upheld the idea that only the creation, dissemination, and preservation of a history – both as an academic discipline and as school knowledge – written by Black communities themselves could confront and combat the stereotypes produced by racial (and racist) theories.

Carter G. Woodson believed in the thesis that formal education could serve as a space for inclusion and social mobility, particularly for the Black population. However, such advancement needed to occur in a broad and unrestricted manner, free from racism and other forms of racial oppression imposed by white supremacy and segregation, which, in the case of the United States, were upheld by the Jim Crow system. For this reason, he invested in the publication of textbooks (with *The Negro in Our History* itself being readable from this perspective) and in articles published in the African American press aimed at the work of students and teachers in elementary schools. In Woodson's view, these forms and cultures of schooling could become powerful political tools for fighting racism.

In the "Nurseries of Hatred", Eutrópio addressed racism against Black people, approaching it from a concept of race that went beyond the notion of "color prejudice" to describe it instead as "racial hatred". Indeed, it is worth noting that, unlike many strands of Black associational activism in various parts of Brazil, which often asserted the absence of racial prejudice and emphasized instead color-based bias, José Eutrópio posited the idea of "racial hatred" as a foundational element in the formation of Brazilian society⁵. While a more thorough discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of this article, I would like to highlight the originality of Eutrópio's formulation of "racial hatred", which closely aligns with the notion of "historical race", thereby revealing the influence of W. E. B. Du Bois's thought. The multiple conceptualizations of race produced by intellectuals across the Western world, as explanatory categories for the realities of their respective societies, had a significant impact

⁵ For a study on racial terminologies and identities formulated by Black intellectuals within their associative networks in early twentieth-century Brazil, see Alberto (2017).

on Eutrópio's thought and writings. In his work as a teacher, but especially in his role as a school inspector, these ideas of race gradually became central categories in both his professional practice and political agenda.

"Nurseries of Hatred" is one of the texts in which José Eutrópio articulated his conception of the term race. The article also contains an analytical attempt to construct a lexicon around the term racism. In his words:

The designation of race encompassed a principle (a moral system, more practical in nature than philosophical) in the service of upholding the infallibility of a law that dictated the currents of civilizations invested in dominating the world. It was a product of white superiority. It was a barrier, a block of stone ready to crush the race [...]. Racism is the ideological weapon of the white man's savage pride, of his illusory racial superiority; it is the evil of racial hatred (Eutrópio, 1924a, p. 1).

José Eutrópio informed readers of his political commentary column that he had come across the word racism in one of the issues of *Correio de África*, a newspaper published by African and Afro-Portuguese intellectuals in Lisbon (Portugal)⁶. Struck by the term – but even more so by its political uses, which until then had been primarily associated with the ideology of antisemitism – the Brazilian educator affirmed that the expression was a "timely adjective to [describe] manifestations of misunderstanding and savage passions stemming from the mediocre prejudice of race" (Eutrópio, 1924a, p. 1). It was the word racism itself, its lexicon more than its potential political meanings or social implications, which were not yet interpreted as ideology, that was at stake in this historical context. Still, for the intellectuals writing in *Correio de África*, as for José Eutrópio, and likely for many other Black thinkers, it was the various available conceptions of the idea of race that initially provided the conceptual framework for constructing racism as a sociological concept, or at least as something that should be understood as a result of social processes intrinsic to the racial relations within certain societies.

In this sense, racism could also refer to and signify social segregation grounded in ideas of race or in theories (scientific or otherwise) of racial hierarchy. Ynaê Lopes dos Santos (2022), reflecting on the historical experience of Brazil, and Francisco Bethencourt (2018), in an analysis of different Western societies, both observed, each within their own context, that historical conceptions of racism and its manifestations have always been in constant flux. Thus, there has never been – and there is not – a single definition of racisms, a single history of racisms, or a single cause of racisms. In this regard, as an object of scientific inquiry, racism is a phenomenon that reveals itself as neither self-evident nor simple. It is possible that José Eutrópio recognized such complexity. For this reason, he did not seek to establish a precise conceptual definition that could scientifically explain

⁶ In a brief and broad overview, I located the first mention of the word "racism" in *Correio de África* in the July 1, 1923 issue, in which the article's author discussed the need to build mechanisms for the implementation of a transnational racial solidarity project aimed at populations in African countries/colonies experiencing the violent realities of Portuguese colonialism. For a historiographical analysis of *Correio de África* and the group responsible for its production and circulation, see Roldão, Pereira, and Varela (2023).

racism. Rather, he was interested in understanding how racism operated and what its dynamics were within Brazilian society. Accordingly, he transformed the social institution of the school into a laboratory through which he could channel his concerns about racial hierarchies or patterns of social organization, and what he understood at the time as the phenomenon of racism.

In his article "Nurseries of Hatred", José Eutrópio once again provides elements that allow us to advance the discussion on the various forms of social manifestations of racism that existed at the time. For him, it was possible to conceive of such manifestations as doctrines and discourses, that is, as an ideology, since "the denomination of race encompassed a principle (a moral system, more practical in meaning than philosophical)" (Eutrópio, 1924a, p. 1). Racism, in his view, was a form of discrimination and differential treatment based on attitudes and values, as it was "the ideological weapon of the white man's savage pride, of his illusory racial superiority; [it was, therefore,] the evil of racial hatred" (Eutrópio, 1924a, p. 1). For this reason, it was essential to interpret this phenomenon in terms of its potential to promote forms of symbolic and spatial segregation within political institutions, social organizations, and broader societal structures. The Brazilian school system, in this interpretation, was a social institution segregated by racism, since, for José Eutrópio, "color prejudice [was] dishonoring the humanitarian sentiments of Brazilians [...] and producing pernicious consequences [in] schools" (Eutrópio, 1924a, p. 1).

For José Eutrópio, numerous forms of racism were present in Brazilian society. Despite the different interpretations that could be made of this social marker, racism was understood as a political strategy of racial domination. The attempt to frame racism not merely as a symbolic denunciation of the existence of racial prejudice, but primarily as an ethical issue affecting the school as a social institution, was, as we have seen so far, a political commitment staunchly defended by José Eutrópio. Although this analysis still lacks solid theoretical references and a more in-depth empirical foundation, given that it is part of ongoing research, I consider some of the arguments presented here to be relevant to the debate on the history of education in the early twentieth century.

For example, the political commitment to what Jarvis Givens has called "educational diasporic practice," developed by Black educators such as José Eutrópio, was shaped by transnational networks of racial solidarity (Givens, 2016). The political and racial debates surrounding the construction of antiracist-based projects for the school as a social institution formed one of the most important links connecting Black men, with different political trajectories, social conditions, origins, and nationalities, through a political activism that went beyond the idea of national borders or the nation-state. Even so, it is worth noting that José Eutrópio engaged with the works of intellectuals not with the intention of formulating a model of formal education that placed the United States or European countries at the center and, consequently, Brazil in a peripheral and marginal position⁷.

⁷ At various historical moments, certain aspects of Brazilian social organization were taken by U.S. thinkers as reference and model, in an unequal relationship in which Brazil appeared as a center within a center-periphery logic. David Hellwig (1992), for example, showed that from the 1920s onward, many Black intellectuals, such as W. E. B. Du Bois, regarded racial relations in Brazil – interpreted through a perspective of racial brotherhood – as a positive model for social organization in the United States. In fact, this political interpretation had been developing since the nineteenth century (Azevedo, 2003; Brito, 2023).

A critic of "the Americanisms that sterilely permeated Brazilian educational activity and development" (Eutrópio, 1924b, p. 1), as well as of the racial segregation that victimized African Americans, Eutrópio also condemned Europe as the "old continent, inventor of devastating colonialisms and imperialisms", from which "very little of moral value [came] to Brazil" (Eutrópio, 1924c, p. 1). As an attentive reader of Manoel Bonfim (1905[1903]), he regarded certain European nations – Portugal, Spain, France, and the United Kingdom – as responsible for the social, economic, and political backwardness experienced by Latin American societies. In his view, "European social parasitism on Brazilian soil stripped the country of its capacity to build a democratic nation and a free, sovereign people" (Eutrópio, 1924c, p. 1).

From this perspective, we can consider that José Eutrópio was interested in discussing racial inclusion projects within the realm of formal education through a "focus on the effects of the 'exchanges' through which it [was] possible to conceive and build schooling in different spaces [...], leading [him] to seek explanations that [were] not reduced to a kind of bipolar model of analysis" (Vidal *et al.*, 2024a, p. vi). In other words, José Eutrópio established transnational dialogues amid (and through) polycentric flows of circulation and forms of consumption of ideas (Vidal, 2024b). Although this cultural relativism was only minimally developed in Eutrópio's intellectual work, such a stance did not indicate a lack of awareness of the inequalities that afflicted Brazilian society. On the contrary, these inequalities were a constant focus of his intellectual interventions. What he argued, however, was that the origin of these ills – and the explanations for such phenomena – should be found within the country's own reality. From this standpoint, I contend that José Eutrópio adopted a transnational interpretation, one that operated as a lens through which various social contexts were not viewed as exceptions, but rather as intrinsic parts of a global process of (re)forming societies and nations founded on slavery, colonialism, and imperialism.

Partial Considerations

It is not common to begin a "conclusion" section with questions, hypotheses, and uncertainties. Still, I believe this narrative device offers a valuable opportunity to problematize some of the interpretive paths that have guided the research project of which this article is a partial outcome. To analyze how conceptions of race were mobilized in the vocabularies and political agendas of José Eutrópio within the field of pedagogical ideas and educational thought, I focus on investigating the construction of transnational networks and connections grounded in political-racial solidarity among Black intellectuals. These networks fostered discussions on the racial ideologies in vogue in the early twentieth century, including racism, and established channels for claiming full political rights for Black populations, such as citizenship, through the principles of the liberal-democratic framework dominant at the time, which José Eutrópio and other Black men supported.

I draw particular attention to José Eutrópio's skillful manipulation of the political meanings of the racial theories in vogue during the early decades of the twentieth century. Methodologically, I

seek to understand the many conceptions of race available in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as an epistemological issue that requires serious theorization and conceptualization, as emphasized by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2023). Thus, in dialogue with the concept of the "racialized social system", formulated by the sociologist, I have undertaken the effort to develop, through José Eutrópio's trajectory, a historical analysis of the construction of racial ideologies (especially racism) at the beginning of the twentieth century. This is a challenging task, and for that reason, I emphasize that I do not aim to produce a theoretical-conceptual investigation capable of precisely explaining how the various elements or aspects of racism were articulated, but rather to understand how Black educators perceived the ways in which this racial ideology operated in the societies in which they lived, and the political-intellectual strategies they created to investigate it.

This antiracist activism can only be fully understood when viewed in light of transnational movements that transformed ideas of race into social constructions and political tools within the intellectual debates of Black movements. José Eutrópio was deeply immersed in this context of proliferating intellectual and theoretical frameworks forged in (and through) transnational movements within various forms of Black activism. Struck by these experiences, the Brazilian educator began to critically examine the introduction of the idea of race – drawing on transnational references – as a tool of interest in the defense of a particular political project. Especially from the early 1920s onward, José Eutrópio developed educational ideas based on what he saw as the needs of Brazilian society, such as the proposal to organize public education around projects of racial inclusion. The identification, examination, denunciation, and confrontation of the racism present in the daily life of schools is one example of this effort.

I have focused on studying the originality and forward-thinking nature of the political-educational projects developed by José Eutrópio, seeking to identify elements within them that may contribute to the debate on the pedagogical dimension of early twentieth-century transnational Black political-solidarity movements. These projects advocated principles such as compulsory, free, secular, and coeducational schooling, aligning them with the political and ideological goals of other educational innovation and modernization movements that gained momentum in the early decades of the twentieth century. However, they also embraced a conception of moral education, regarded as essential for challenging and overcoming stereotypes rooted in racialized ideals of Black people's biological inferiority. In this sense, we can consider José Eutrópio a producer and disseminator of what Aderaldo Pereira dos Santos (2019) called "political-pedagogical antiracism" ("antirracismo político-pedagógico"), that is, a doctrine and body of thought grounded in the creation of social norms for racial inclusion and for the denunciation and eradication of racism within the realm of formal education in Brazilian society.

I interpret the political movement in which José Eutrópio was involved as a project of developing an "Engaged Pedagogy", according to bell hooks's (2017) interpretation. Thus, analyzing the writings of this Brazilian educator has led me to view the Brazilian school in the early decades of the twentieth century as a laboratory for producing racial asymmetries. A central question in my research has been to investigate the extent to which José Eutrópio's intellectual trajectory provides

historical elements for the debate on racialization, as well as for understanding the functioning of this power mechanism and its dynamics in Brazilian society, especially in the knowledge-power relations within formal education institutions.

Is it possible to conceive, based on José Eutrópio's involvement in transnational Black racial solidarity movements, a history of pedagogical ideas centered on racial inclusion? Did his political projects include fostering the development of a school culture oriented toward racial inclusion? Should schools and their agents act merely as neutral transmitters of a cultural ideology and policy crafted by a specific Black intellectual community (individuals, groups, or institutions)? Or should they be spaces where certain forms and school cultures of racial inclusion could be forged and disseminated? These are some of the questions that have guided the current directions (and challenges) of the ongoing research.

The "Black radical imagination" formulated by José Eutrópio, to use a concept from Saidiya Hartman (2022), produced political lexicons and shared vocabularies for (and within) the antiracist debates that gained momentum in transnational Black communities in the early twentieth century, an exercise deeply informed by political cultures shared among Black individuals dispersed across different parts of the West. In this sense, this "Black radical imagination" was "forged simultaneously from the margins and from within a collective experience" (Silva, 2024).

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