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**THE EFFECTS
OF THE COVI-D
BIOLOGICAL DISASTER
THROUGH THE
INTERSECSIONALITY
OF THE BLACK
POPULATION**

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Abstract: Modern society has its structural base founded on exploratory capitalism. This sedimented and limiting model keeps the Brazilian social structure stratified in relation to the ideal of economic and social mobility, so that the change in social condition is practically immutable since the slavery implemented in the country. This model has maintained for centuries the same social group jettisoned from power and decision-making, placing them in the position of object of policies and not subjects that guide them. These policies have resulted in an endless cycle of excluding policies for the poorest population, which is made up mostly of blacks and browns. Thus, this absence of an effective public policy capable of minimizing the effects of inequalities, proved to be a choice of the state for the death of some of its citizens.

Keywords: Environmental disaster. Racism. Covid 19. Coronavirus. blacks.

THE METHOD

The method used for the research is the analytical one, since bibliographic contributions were used for the present study, studying the static object, namely: research of governmental data and non-governmental organizations, in addition to doctrines. The analysis is concerned with the elucidation of discourses, propositions, concepts and arguments. It designates a process of knowing, which consists of explaining simple or complex elements of concepts, propositions or objects and the relationships between elements of these objects. In order to theoretically support the present work, a survey of bibliographic sources, quantitative research data and laws is carried out, followed by an attentive, critical, analytical and interpretive reading, in which support is sought in theoretical contributions that represent an expressive scientific contribution.

INTRODUCTION

The work seeks to conceptually classify the Covid-19 pandemic through established international interpretations of what an environmental disaster is and to establish how this phenomenon has unequally affected the Brazilian population, especially the black population. For that, there is a need to unravel, as a starting point, whether the Covid-19 pandemic can really be considered a disaster and, if so, what is the classification, by its nature, of this disaster.

With this starting point, the work proceeds to carry out a brief historical overview of the economic systems on which the national economy is based since the second half of the fourteenth century and how this system influences greater or lesser mobility between classes. social. It also assesses why pardos and pretos (blacks) are mostly part of one or more social classes and the policies that influenced this situation.

Finally, the work merges the two analyzes and establishes a parallel on the way the black population was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. It also evaluates the role of public policies and the results of the confluence of all these factors in an intersectional way on the black body.

THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC AS ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER

The classical and widely known and disseminated notion about the concept of disaster pointed to the idea that a disaster was a strictly natural event (such as earthquakes, landslides, tornadoes) that impacted human life and property regardless of human intervention, in a way that not usual, but with great intensity.

Nowadays, however, the evolution of technology and science, which occurred mainly in the 20th century, made possible the mapping and scientific interpretation of these

phenomena. Such advances indicated that, in almost all the so-called “natural disasters” there is the intervention of anthropogenic factors, resulting from the increasing capacity of the individual to intervene on nature.

In the lesson of Damacena, Fernanda and Carvalho, Délton, 2013:

“the formation of the meaning of disasters is found in a pendular semantic relationship between:

(i) *causes* and (ii) *highly specific and complex consequences, converging to the description of socio-environmental phenomena of great media appeal and polycontextual irradiation (economic, political, legal, environmental) capable of compromising the* (iii) *stability of the social system. Disasters conceptually consist of a systemic cataclysm of causes that, combined, acquire catastrophic consequences.”*

Thus, with this starting point, it can be said that natural disasters, according to their origin and nature, can be classified as climatic, physical, geological, meteorological, biological disasters, among others. Internationally, several agencies conceptualize disasters, but in general, all of them include among the main characteristics, the social magnitude of the event represented in the fact that a social or community group is affected, either by the loss, or by the impacts on human lives, whether for the material loss, economic, sanitary or environmental impact that the phenomenon implies, cumulatively or separately.

Within this spectrum of possibilities, we will analyze the covid-d epidemic which, in turn, among the possible classifications, must be classified as an environmental disaster, given its magnitude, impact and reflexes, and whose subclassification would be of a biological nature.

As of December 18, 2020, the website *covid.saude.gov.br* informs that Brazil reached the mark of 7,110,434 cases of people affected by the virus and 184,827 deaths from covid-d,

which, in itself, would be capable of elevating the pandemic to the status of a biological disaster. However, given the highly contagious nature of the virus, whose amplification agent is limited hospital capacity, the pandemic generates an underlying economic-biased disaster effect.

Thus, having developed this overview about the classification of the Covi-d 2019 Pandemic as a biological disaster, we will present, in the next chapter, some reflections on how this disaster affected the Brazilian population unequally, but in particular the black Brazilian population.

A BRIEF PORTRAIT OF RACIAL AND SOCIAL INEQUALITIES IN THE COUNTRY

Brazil fixed its modern economic base on capitalism. Initially, using the labor of enslaved men and women and, currently, using labor exploitation through wage labor. This phenomenon, in which an individual provides labor for the enrichment of another, is called exploitative capitalism.

This exploratory model, which originates in slavery, results in social stratification whose main characteristics are: Stratification in Brazil is general and variable; There is an unequal division of material and cultural resources; It transcends generations; It must be seen as a particularity of society; It must not be seen as a reflection of individual differences existing in society.

Stratification in Brazil is general and variable, as it crosses all social classes, which, as a rule, remain structurally in the same positions since the captaincy system that was implemented in colonial Brazil. This social stratification, therefore, has its origin in the system of exploitation of the labor force of enslaved people that lasted for more than 350 years in the country. This system generated the concentration of income in the hands

of those who were granted land and power by the Portuguese crown and, on the other hand, relegated to extreme poverty the more than five million enslaved people who, it is estimated, disembarked in Brazil between the years from 1535 and 1888.

After the abolition of slavery, Brazil, which at that point had a contingent of blacks much higher than that of non-blacks and, fearing the revolts and insurrections that were frequent at that time and which could generate social and political instabilities, adopted the migration of non-black Europeans, offering land distribution at low prices and opportunities for Italian and German immigrants. It can be seen that, at that same historical moment, the newly freed black and still seen as a commodity and financial asset, had no capital and, therefore, was excluded from access to land acquisition. This concrete abyss was only potentiated with the exponential growth of the Brazilian population throughout the 20th century.

This economic division directly affected access to material and cultural resources in an unequal way, as it allowed those favored by the process access to means of production, cultural goods, quality education and, on the other hand, relegated the exploited to the proletariat, transforming -them from enslaved labor, into labor exploited by this new model implemented by capitalism.

This stratification, therefore, spans generations, keeping each piece of this game, as well as the successors, in that social position that was originally assigned to their ancestors. Because the system of concentration and exploitation is aimed at keeping each of these individuals in the same positions, whether they are the bases or the top of the social pyramid.

Thus, it is important to emphasize that this system is generalist, that is, it must be seen as a state policy that seeks to determine the location

of individuals, as belonging to a certain social group and endowed with certain personal and whose historical and social origin is similar. This system, therefore, cannot be seen as a reflection of individual differences existing in society, since both stratification and social mobility are values that must be observed by segment and not individually.

This lack of social mobility that keeps individuals in the position of economically exploited labor also causes these individuals to have the same social experiences, which are predominantly marked by the absence of state protection and access to basic health, education, sanitation services, and quality assurance, among other inequality factors.

According to data from the National Household Sample Survey (PNAD) for 2019, 42.7% of Brazilians declared themselves as white, 46.8% as brown, 9.4% as black and 1.1% as yellow. or indigenous.

In the newsletter “Social Inequalities by Color or Race in Brazil”, published by the IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), despite the black population constituting the majority of the Brazilian population, in the stratum of the 10% with the highest per capita income, the whites represented 70.6%, while blacks were 27.7%. Among the 10% with the lowest income, this is reversed: 75.2% are black and 23.7% are white. In other words, the disparity between the black and brown population in different social strata is flagrant and widely mapped by the Brazilian state.

This way, it cannot be disregarded that the conditions in which people live, learn, work and have fun contribute to their health. These factors, all intersected with the fact that this population is only its third/fourth generation freed from slavery, directly interfere with each other. And these conditions, in turn, over time, lead to different levels of health risks, needs, and outcomes (Alkire; Foster, 2019).

According to data from the National Household Sample Survey (IBGE, 2019), the highest rates of informality in the labor market among women occur in domestic service activities (73.1%) and in agriculture (74.6%). Among men, the highest proportion of informal activity occurs in agriculture (65.0%) and civil construction (64.8%). These activities are characterized by high informality due to the dynamics of hiring (seasonality, contract work, greater sensitivity to conjunctural factors, etc.). Regarding the cut by race/color, it indicates that the participation of the black and brown employed population in informal occupations (47.3%) is significantly higher when compared to white workers (34.6%). This result reflects historically constituted inequalities, such as a higher proportion of black and brown workers among the segment of workers without a formal contract.

Data from the PNAD (IBGE, 2019) reveal differences between white and black families, whites with the same schooling earned 73.9% more than blacks and browns, and men earned, on average, 27.1% more than women.

Another factor of social inequality is rooted in educational disparity. The permanence of this pattern of educational inequality between blacks and whites is also made explicit in the work carried out by Ricardo Henriques (2001:27), where he demonstrates that *“a 25-year-old white youth has, on average, 2.3 more years of schooling than a black youth of the same age, and this intensity of racial discrimination is the same experienced by these young people’s parents – and the same observed among their grandparents. (...) The average schooling of both races grows throughout the century, but the pattern of racial discrimination, expressed by the difference in years of schooling between whites and blacks [2.3 years on average], remains absolutely stable between generations”*.

This general picture of the educational

situation of blacks in Brazil represents one of the main difficulties to be faced in order to generate greater equality of opportunities between whites and blacks in the country. Aware of this scenario, the president of the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research (INEP), linked to the Ministry of Education, stated in a recent article that the black population continues to have a lower level of education. This is one of the priorities for a policy of equity and socio-economic integration that requires more affirmative action by the government and society (Castro, 1998).

With regard to housing inadequacies such as lack of sanitation, the proportions recorded are higher among blacks and browns than among whites. This inequality is rooted in access to land, which is still not facilitated by a large part of the population. Currently, access to land and housing is mainly through government programs for access to real estate and credits for accessing and promoting land and agriculture. Credits that this population, in general, is not entitled to access.

Data from IBGE (2019) indicate that the black population represents a significant portion of traditional, quilombola, riverside communities, artisanal fishermen, those living on the streets, people deprived of their liberty, those living in extreme poverty and in households that they do not respond to the habitability standards, which do not have water supply and/or sanitation as in the favelas, of those who have lower incomes or survive on informality; of those who depend on garbage of a recyclable nature or not; of domestic servants; caregivers of the elderly, of the black elderly, of those in a situation of food insecurity; who have difficulties in accessing health, social assistance and education services and equipment (IBGE, 2019).

This black population, which is mainly among the poorest population in the country

and which, therefore, was already daily excluded from all the insertion processes guaranteed by capital, as they are, to a large extent, manual workers and service providers (the result of the stratification already addressed) in March 2020 remains exposed to the coronavirus pandemic.

At that moment, this group, which represents 56.2% of the Brazilian population, was thrown into a spiral of inequality, without any element that would ensure the fight against the virus on an equal footing with the non-black population of the country. In other words, the abysses that were already rooted in our society were amplified by the biological disaster.

THE INTERSECTIONALITY BETWEEN THE COVI-D DISASTER AND THE BLACK POPULATION

When the covi-d 19 environmental disaster began, the dominant discourse in the country was that the pandemic was “democratic” as it would affect whites and blacks, rich and poor and men and women alike.

With the advancement of contamination and the mapping of cases, hospitalizations and deaths, it was possible to trace the real panorama of those affected by the disease. And what was shown was that the unfolding of the Covid-19 pandemic in a society structured by racism penalizes vulnerable groups, especially black people, and is directly related to the health, social, political, economic, moral polycrisis, crisis in globalization and crisis of migratory flows etc. This situation influences and directs political decisions and the elaboration of social protection strategies, such as public policies in the social and health areas.

With these data, it was possible to perceive that the reality of the low-income working class, mostly composed of black

people residing in vulnerable territories, is different from the average of the Brazilian population. This is because this population is predominantly made up of precarious workers, who do not have the privilege of staying at home, working remotely; who use overcrowded public transport; they have precarious access to basic sanitation; and are at the forefront of serving the public in the service sector, including healthcare. In other words, these individuals, who, due to the stagnation of the country’s social substrate, are already at the economic limit, were not given the possibility of a real choice about whether or not to protect themselves from the virus.

As a result of this situation, an analysis by the NGO Pólis, which took place between March 1 and July 31, 2020, in the city of São Paulo, shows that, after arriving in the country with travelers from the middle and upper classes, the virus spread from to affect the black population more. In Epidemiological Week 15 (April 4 to 10), the white population represented 73% of hospitalizations and 62.9% of deaths. About a month and a half later, at Epidemiological Week 21, the data show similar proportions of whites and blacks in terms of hospitalizations. In deaths, however, the black population now represents 57%, while the white population represents 41%.

The study also points to the fact that the proportion of blacks is more expressive among deaths than among hospitalizations “reinforces the analysis of the difficulty of accessing this population to health services, especially those of greater complexity, such as care beds”. intensive”. In addition, the research also points out that there is a high percentage of absence of race and color registration in confirmed cases and deaths by Covid-19, despite the Ministry of Health’s Ordinance No. mandatory in healthcare services. It is worth mentioning that the very absence of recording this variable is a factor that reveals

racism, in institutional terms, as it prevents us from seeing the true magnitude of the exclusion of the black population. Collecting data, quantifying and analyzing them could mean targeting specific public policies aimed at the biggest bottlenecks. However, as the collection did not take place, the country again made the choice not to advance in the fight against racism.

This time, it is possible to perceive that this crisis of multiplicity to which the Brazilian population is subjected, but especially the black population (composed of blacks and browns) due to the intersectionality factors that permeate it, was amplified due to the pandemic phenomenon. That is, social and racial disparities, the result of a governmental choice, which chooses to protect a group, guaranteeing life, health and access to the most diverse goods and inputs to the detriment of another part of the community, have become a determining factor of choice. of who lives and who dies during the biological disaster caused by the covid-d 19 virus. This phenomenon has been extensively studied and demystified in the book *Necropolitics* (Mbembe, 2018). In the work, the author studies government choices about the availability of access to the most diverse inputs and instruments and assesses how this affects the population of a state. Furthermore, the author builds on how these choices determine who must/can die and who must/can live and how they are socially normalized through the idea of subgroups or subcategories of individuals. And that's exactly what it was possible to perceive with the pandemic that took place in 2020.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The biological disaster coronavirus certainly caused a lot of damage on a global basis, loss of economy, health, limitation of individual freedoms and loss of lives. All situations of a serious nature and with great

reach in the most diverse populations of the globe. In Brazil, the reach of the virus in the most diverse social segments and its action in the general population was also quite severe.

However, when the data collected by national research institutes such as PNAD and IBGE are cut from segments of the population, such as the black population as in the object of this study, the numbers acquire new contours that are outlined by the lack of state action to guarantee the dignity of the human person guaranteed in the constitution.

This is because the numbers point to the historical neglect of the Brazilian State in protecting and guaranteeing black people access to the same service provided to the non-black population. From this data analysis, the neglect to which this segment of the population is relegated is clear. Because the covid-d disaster was not the generator of this inequality. As demonstrated, it only meant the amplification and unveiling of this inequality that existed in a rooted way in all areas of the Brazilian state. The pandemic, like any other disaster, only meant the widening of the chasm that was already underlying in Brazilian society with respect to individuals of different races and ethnicities, reaffirming the established place for the Brazilian black population. That is, the place of non-existence, non-protection, non-care, exploitation and death.

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