

# Black quilombola literature in children’s education promotes identity making and alterity practice

Alexandre Briozo Gomes Filho / 14 de novembro de 2024 / In English



## Education | Master’s thesis analyzes the presence of Afro-Brazilian civilizational values in black children’s literary texts that have the quilombo as a background

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In 2003, in the face of the wide association of black people to slavery inside Brazilian schools, Law 10.639, that turned the teaching of Afro-Brazilian culture and history inside classrooms mandatory, was passed. The goal is to highlight the importance of Afro-descendance presence in society’s development, as well as have education institutions act as beacons of hope against racial prejudice and discrimination. Twenty years since the law was passed, the scenery that remains in schools is not yet the intended with the legislation, mainly when it comes to children’s teaching.

In this context, in her master’s thesis for the graduate program in Education at UFRGS (PPGEdu), pedagogue Luana de Oliveira Lehmkuhl explores the production of narratives and experiences of the quilombo inside children’s black literature. Drawing from works by black authors published by quilombo publishing houses (independent initiatives that possess the commitment of publishing books by black authors), the researcher explores aspects related to childhood in the quilombo context, within Afro-Brazilian civilizational values: territoriality, ancestry, orality, memory, religiosity, corporeality, and musicality.

In total, seven works from three distinct publishers were analyzed: “Pedras, pedrinhas e pedregulhos” and “Kabu e Ketula,” written by Pituka Nairrobi, illustrated by Levi Cinta, and published in 2017 by Nandyala; “Bucala – a pequena princesa do Quilombo Cabula,” written by Davi Nunes, illustrated by Daniel Santana, and published in 2018 by Malê Mirim; and the collection “Grãos de Taperá,” composed of the books “Dona Sebastiana e como tudo começou,” “Taperá encantada,” “As pedras da tapera,” and “Como proteger as crianças e fazê-las crescerem fortes,” written by Sinara Rúbia, illustrated by Ricardo Cafuzo, and published in 2019 by Aziza.

### From quilombola roots to quilombos publishers

“The publishing world has a market issue, but the quilombo publishers try to break through it,” says Luana. A member of a quilombola community in Santa Catarina, she was motivated by her own journey since her undergraduate studies. The initial plan of the educator was to research on cinema – due to its dynamic nature – for her master’s thesis. However, since cultural production in the cinematic industry is scarce regarding quilombola children, it was in literature that Luana found her research object instead.

Under the supervision of professor Fabiana from the Graduate Program in Education (PPGEdu), the narratives studied in the research were chosen based on three criteria: (a) published by quilombo publishers (a singular factor in the thesis); (b) focused on children’s literature; and (c) been set in quilombos. Through the selection of these narratives, the author was able to identify the application of the Afro-Brazilian civilization values. “I can visualize them [the values] the whole time in the writing and in the illustrations,” explains Luana, emphasizing the importance of literary presence within quilombos.

When the researcher says that the quilombo publishers try to break free from the market-driven aspects of the industry, it is regarding their commitment to publish narratives produced by black individuals regardless of profit. She explains that when a children’s literature book is published by a black individual that tries to rescue their reality into narratives, such author ends up disseminating it and enabling a broader understanding among people who experience similar situations. “This is important to white people as well, but mainly to foster identification among black individuals because literature is a space of dispute, just like many others within the culture,” says Luana.

“When we have a black individual in this prestigious position – in the position to have their work published – we also see a disruption of a place where the white individuals occupy the dominant role in literature, especially within the niche of children’s books, because children also identify with authors.”

— Luana de Oliveira Lehmkuhl

### In the classroom with the little ones

As a preschool teacher, Luana’s students range from 4 to 5 years of age. Now, the analyzed books in her thesis accompany her in her classroom teaching. She mentions that when she presents the students with this collection that brings other context, their initial reaction is strangeness. However, they quickly become accustomed to it: the realm of quilombola narratives becomes familiar to the little ones once the teacher helps them identify similarities and differences from narratives they already know.

Since many parents don’t have access to this material, the only place where children might encounter quilombo children’s narratives is at school – provided the institution includes works that incorporate this genre, something rare in early childhood education. “When we introduce quilombola literature, students start to think in other ways of being a child, and we start to work with the concept of alterity.”

“They [the children] start to think about others, so we create a distance from the self, in a relationship of respect with other ways of being a child that sometimes also resonate with their own experiences.”

— Luana de Oliveira Lehmkuhl

### The researcher’s baggage

To reach a desired destination, a direct flight isn’t always viable, requiring one – or more – connections. Besides the joy of conclusion and acquiring the master’s degree, this journey also brought Luana physical and mental strain. The research, as she said, is not easy and certainly not mechanical; it doesn’t just happen. It’s something that is ‘woven’ in encounters with authors and their texts, with fellow-researchers and supervisors. It takes time and dedication. “In a researcher’s life, we always carry baggage when we are writing a thesis. Even during vacation, this baggage accompanies us. It’s exhausting,” she says.

Now refreshed and with restored health, Luana is preparing to depart for a new journey – the doctoral training. The research object remains in the realm of ideas, but she certainly intends to continue working with children’s literature in the quilombola context.

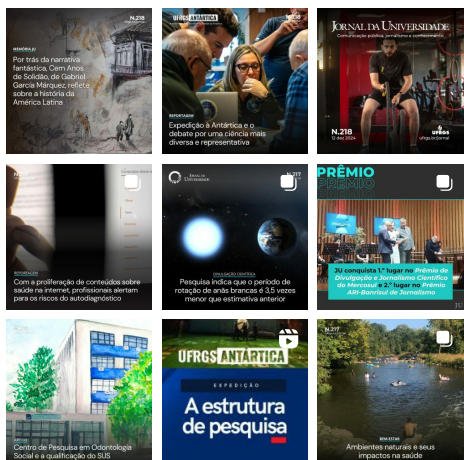
Translated into English by **Kethlyn Santos Machado**, undergraduate student enrolled in the course “Supervised Translation Training I (English)” of the Undergraduate Program in Language and Literature, under the supervision and translation revision of Professor Elizamari R. Becker (P.h.D.) – IL/UFRGS.

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