Toolkit for an Antiracist Education

Introduction

Historically, the idea has been promoted that racism is more related to individual actions than to laws, regulations, protocols, or bureaucratic procedures. This open educational resource, designed to be adaptable to various educational levels, invites a broad and systemic approach to racism, breaking with the narrow conception that limits it to individual acts or moral problems. The aim of this resource is to contribute to a structural understanding of the phenomenon and to provide tools to combat it through education.

The toolkit is organised into ten thematic areas that explore how structural racism operates in everyday life, creating ongoing obstacles and harm for certain people and profoundly affecting their access to rights, work, health and education.

Each section of this resource offers teachers conceptual tools, concrete examples and practical activities to bring critical reflection on racism into the classroom. The activities are designed to be used from secondary school to university and include research tasks, mapping, analysis of fictional or real cases and guided debates. Teachers are encouraged to adapt the activities and vocabulary to the level of the group they are working with. The aim is not to point out racist opinions in the classroom, but to dismantle a narrow view of racism by providing theoretical and practical tools for students to develop a critical view of structural inequality.

The ten themes that make up the resource are:

1. **Structural racism:** understood as a series of institutionalised mechanisms that continuously disadvantage people of 'other' ethnicities, religions, origins or skin colours. This theme is introduced through Cristina Piffer's work *300 actas,* which exposes the structural violence of a system of classification and identity erasure.
2. **Institutional racism:** considered the fundamental force of structural racism, it manifests itself through policies, norms and procedures incorporated into the functioning of institutions, which disproportionately affect certain groups. Priscila Rezende's performance *Laços* helps to visualise the symbolic and material violence inscribed on racialised bodies.
3. **Epistemic racism:** addresses the question of what is meant by knowledge and how it is constructed, pointing to the fact that Western thought has established itself as the only legitimate tradition capable of producing universal, objective and neutral knowledge. Salmi López Valbuena's illustration connects memory, resistance and intergenerational transmission.
4. **Hidden rationalities of racism:** examines the normalisation of racism in common sense, which is hidden under arguments considered rational (such as political-legal discourses) to avoid its racial nature. *The Library of Missing Datasets*, by Mimi Onuoha, proposes a reflection on information gaps that are not neutral.
5. **Multiple borders:** analyses borders not only as rigid walls, but as a complex set of practices that operate both outside and inside nation states, functioning as key technologies of differential inclusion and the production of inequality. The installation *Something to Hold Onto* honours the migrants who have lost their lives on routes interrupted by border control.
6. **Racial capitalism:** argues that capitalist development cannot be understood without colonialism, with racism being a foundational element that intensified racial hierarchies to make the exploitation and accumulation of capital more efficient. Marilyn Boror's performance *Living Monument* denounces extractivism and structural violence.
7. **Intersecting oppressions:** addresses how the intersection of systems of domination (race, gender, class) generates specific and contextualised situations of oppression, following the reflections of black feminism and intersectional theory. *Estudio de*

color (Study of Colour) by Adriana Tomatis reflects on the invisible hierarchies that traverse class, race and gender relations.

8. **Digital racism:** analyses how contemporary racism manifests, reproduces and amplifies itself through digital technologies, such as algorithms, databases and artificial intelligence. Digital racism is not limited to hate speech on social media, but constitutes a structural logic that participates in the production and management of racial inequalities. Technology, falsely presented as 'objective' or 'neutral', renders the built-in racial bias invisible. This theme is introduced with *My Word*, by Carme Puche Moré, an audiovisual project that highlights the ideological biases produced and reproduced by artificial intelligence.

9. **Racialisation of educational exclusion:** examines the trajectories of school expulsion, where the hidden curriculum or low expectations of certain students normalise marginalisation. This theme is introduced with the animation *A World of Difference*, created by the feminist independent film collective Leeds Animation Workshop.

10. **Critical anti-racist pedagogies:** proposes to reconfigure education, valuing difference as a political and epistemic force capable of transforming the classroom into a community. A culturally relevant pedagogy must start from the lived experiences of students and directly confront power structures. This requires politicising the classroom and naming structural racism as an act of epistemic and pedagogical disobedience. Ana Cebrián's installation *Afro in progress* denounces the silencing of Black communities in formal education, highlighting the urgent need to build collective memory.

About the toolkit

This toolkit has been developed as part of the research project 'Crossing Borders to Connect Routes. Researching with educational communities to promote equity and fight racism towards immigrants in a post-pandemic world', an international case study led by the Nodes research group at the UOC and funded by the Spencer Foundation.

Participating universities

Structural racism

Cristina Piffer (Buenos Aires, 1953)
300 records, 2017. Installation.
Courtesy of the artist.
https://cristinapiffer.com.ar/obras/22/

In *300 records,* Cristina Piffer works from the baptismal records of Martín García Island—where, during the so-called "Desert Campaign (1878-1885)", indigenous people were imprisoned and Christianised. The work exposes the political and administrative mechanisms of subjugation. The artist selected and transcribed 300 records that contain information such as age, ethnicity, parentage, and imposed names, revealing the structural violence of a system of classification and identity erasure. The transcriptions are engraved on polished metal sheets, whose reflective surface draws the viewer's gaze into the work. The installation denounces the complicity between the Church, the Army and the State in the construction of a white, Eurocentric national fiction.

Contextualization

Historically, humanist institutions (the UN, UNESCO, etc.) have hindered the adoption of a broad and systemic conception of racism, relegating it to a moral problem associated with beliefs or explicit acts of rejection towards people on the basis of ethnicity, skin colour, origin, religion or language. In other words, the most influential institutions have promoted the idea that racism is mainly linked to individual actions, rather than to laws, regulations, protocols or bureaucratic procedures. At the same time, in the context of the Spanish state, the active policy of forgetting has meant that a wide range of processes, dynamics and situations are not labelled as racist. This has led to a narrow conception of racism, sometimes relegated to the irrational thinking of a section of the population or to acts of violence committed by individuals. Thus, racism is only 'seen' when it appears explicitly in the relational sphere.

To overcome this limitation, the first thing we must do is broaden our understanding of racism. We take as our starting point the conception of **racism as a structural system** (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). We could describe structural racism as a set of institutionalised dynamics and devices that, together and routinely, produce life trajectories that facilitate the lives of white people in all aspects, while generating continuous obstacles and disadvantages for people who are not

white. This has a profound impact on their education, health, access to work and the guarantee of rights, ultimately affecting the life expectancy of groups affected by racism. This position has consequences for all levels and shows us a vision of reality in which politics, economics, social formation, art, historiography and philosophy, as well as subjectivities, are permeated by dynamics that reproduce racial inequality.

The second point is that racism is cumulative. On the one hand, this implies that racism has memory: although the periods of religious, biological and scientific racism of the colonial era are perceived as officially over, the contemporary expression of racism – including, but not limited to culturalist expression – continues to contain vestiges of those historical forms. On the other hand, it also alludes to the systemic and interactive nature of racism: different systems (education, health, the labour market, housing, etc.) interact and produce cumulative processes of racial grievance.

In this regard, modern racism is linked to the history of colonial and post-colonial capitalism and, therefore, to slavery and forced or unfree labour of racially classified peoples. In this sense, it would be impossible to understand the phenomenon without a historical approach to global events. At the same time, not all forms of contemporary racism can be explained by referring exclusively to the historical narrative.

In this sense, the **persistence of racism** is due to its **capacity for adaptation and contextual transformation** in each historical moment and each place. In other words, racism (but also other forms of domination, such as heteropatriarchy, capitalism, or imperialism) constitutes a form of domination characterised by global (geo)politics, but takes on different forms through **nation-states** and their specific histories and external and internal relations.

In short, what we want to highlight is that the **structural nature of racism** affects the (non)distribution of symbolic and material resources (Hall et al., 2023): rights (citizenship, labour, protection, etc.), work, education and health; as well as global mobility and the way in which the state and institutional bodies relate to people affected by racialisation. And that if racism exists today, it is not because we have failed to rid ourselves of a denigrating past, but because it is produced through multiple mechanisms– some old and some new – in today's world.

Finally, it is important to remember that the dimensions that structure racism – its **cumulative** nature and its **symbolic and** material dimensions – are related through multiple (dis)continuous lines that come and go. In other words, there is a **co-constitutive relationship** between the **discursive** sphere of racism, which is related to discourses and all intellectual and knowledge production; the **attitudinal** sphere, referring to individual or psychological behaviours; and the **institutional** sphere, relating to norms, laws and protocols.

Examples

Different dimensions within structural racism

Racism has **symbolic and material** dimensions that are transmitted and reproduced through four predominant mechanisms: **institutional racism** (here we refer to the scope of public policy and institutional action or practices, whether by the state or private institutions with social impact); **discourses** (we refer, above

all, to public discourses, advertising and acts of enunciation with the capacity to produce social signifiers); **social racism** (attitudes and forms of relationship between individuals and groups); and **epistemic racism** (the question of what is considered knowledge, how it is constructed, and what falls outside that sphere). It is important to understand that the symbolic and material dimensions feed into each other.

Epistemic racism gives rise to worlds of meaning that are often based on enlightened reason, Eurocentric modern sciences, Western culture and the Christian religion. In other words, we call epistemic racism the fact that Western thought has established itself as the only legitimate tradition capable of producing universal (valid for all people), rational (based on enlightened reason) and, therefore, truth-associated knowledge as objective and neutral – the rest will be considered interpretations. This type of racism views knowledge that does not stem from these premises as inferior or less reliable. This has also been called **the coloniality of knowledge** (Lander, 2000).

Discourses, narratives and everything that circulates in written or oral form are also part of symbolic-epistemic racism and, at the same time, produce perceptions of the material reality that surrounds us. From a structural perspective, it is important to pay attention to the discourses and texts produced and disseminated by political parties, administrative or professional documents, media, social networks, academic publications, educational curricula, books and other similar outlets, as they constitute devices of social engineering. All of this production is part of the mechanisms that modulate social sensibilities and impact other spheres (political decisions, social intervention measures, vote manipulation, police impunity, etc.). We are therefore talking about a **cultural battle**, and how widely accepted – or contested – racism in this arena modulates the (lack of) perception of its existence.

Institutional racism is understood as the formulation of decisions and policies based on racial considerations, with the purpose or effect of subordinating a racialised group and maintaining dominance over it. These actions take the form of laws, regulations, programmes, projects or measures issued by institutions, administrations or public and political spheres of the state. These bodies are not mere observers, but **active agents** in the reproduction of racism (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1969).

In relation to the above, the attitudes, behaviours and gestures of people who work in institutions have more power than racist attitudes in the public sphere, and discourse in the media or in election campaigns has greater amplification than discourse on the street. Here, a **distinction** is made between **social racism** and **institutional racism**: although the former is also relevant and can seriously affect people's lives – especially when it occurs in groups or in a socially structured manner (e.g. denial of access to housing by private landlords, or socially condoned *bullying* and aggression) – it is institutional racism that receives institutional and legal protection. Therefore, it has the power and tools – in the form of administrative or criminal sanctions, binding reports, etc. – that are characteristic of institutions.

Activity

'What is racism?'

Objective

To introduce the notion of structural racism and break with the idea that racism only exists as individual aggression or prejudice (micro-racism).

Guided brainstorming

Dynamic

We pose the question:

- 'What is racism and where do we see it today?'

We ask the group to respond freely. All responses are recorded and grouped into three columns without explanations first:

- Ideas about people (e.g. 'insults', 'hatred', 'aggression')
- Ideas about institutions or norms (e.g. 'the police', 'immigration laws', 'school')
- Ideas about discourse or images (e.g. 'fake news', 'what's on TV', 'films', advertising)

Objective

To visualise how the collective imagination about racism is more focused on individual/social (micro-racism) racism than on institutional or structural racism.

What would happen if...?

Dynamic

We propose some scenarios:

- An undocumented young person cannot access vocational training, even though they have completed secondary education.
- A racialised family has been unable to find a flat for months because no one will rent to them.
- Textbooks do not mention slavery in Spain or colonialism in Asia.
- An undocumented migrant is afraid to go to the hospital.
- A political party launches a social media campaign saying that 'they are invading us'.
- A Roma person is constantly followed by security staff in shops when they go shopping.
- In the most-watched series among teenagers, the only racialised character is conflictive and represents a negative cultural stereotype.
- A secondary school does not translate communications for families who do not speak the official language.
- A young woman from a Muslim background does not put a photo on her CV because she thinks that if they see her veil, she will have less chance of being called for an interview.
- A girl without Spanish nationality cannot participate in a summer camp organised by the local council.
- The president of a North American country tells the president of an English-speaking African country that he 'speaks English very well'.

- A Roma girl says that she is never invited to birthday parties because she is 'difficult'.
- A group of boys laugh at a classmate's Chinese name.
- A secondary school refuses to enrol a young person in a vocational training course because he does not have a residence permit.
- A health centre requires a person to be registered as a resident in order to receive treatment, even though they need urgent medical assistance.
- A philosophy course only studies European thinkers.
- Mohamed changes his name on his CV to his middle name because he thinks this will give him a better chance of being called for an interview.
- A teacher explains that the veil is a symbol of oppression of women in a class where there are people who practise and have families of Muslim tradition.
- A young black man is identified by the police four times in one week while walking down the street.
- A migrant mother cannot apply for a school meal grant for her child because she does not have all the documents they ask for.

Questions for reflection and discussion in small groups:

- What is happening in this situation?
- Who does it affect and why?
- Is it an individual act or is it related to a norm or system?
- Do you think this type of situation is isolated or part of something broader?

Mapping structural racism

Dynamic

Group activity:

Based on the proposed scenarios, and returning to the initial reflection, work together to construct a 'map' of structural racism, including:

- Institutional racism (laws, regulations, protocols)
- Epistemic racism (what is taught/not taught)
- Discursive racism (discourse in the media, social networks, politics)
- Social racism (attitudes, relationships)

This can be organised as a cross-sectional or layered diagram. The idea is to show how different dimensions are interconnected.

The mapping can be done using physical materials or digital tools.

Sharing

We analyse the results of the mapping, where we will surely see more examples of social or interpersonal racism than structural racism, and reflect on why we are often taught that racism is only a personal attitude.

Pedagogical notes

- There may be differences of opinion about whether something is racism or not. The aim is not to point out racist opinions in the classroom, but to dismantle a narrow view of racism.

- The activity and language used can be adapted to the level of the group (secondary school, university, etc.). Vocabulary such as 'law', 'norm', 'media', 'representation', 'inequality' or 'discrimination' can be used instead of 'epistemic' or 'structural'.

Resources

Audiovisual material

- Video: Structural Racism explained
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lQ_8e0aiz8o

- Video presentation: Càtedra d'Anàlisi i Acció Antiracista
  https://www.catedraantiracista.cat/la-catedra/ (Available in Catalan)

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Institutional racism

Priscila Rezende (Belo Horizonte, 1985)
Laços, 2010. Performance. Photo: Luiza Palhares
Courtesy of the artist.
http://priscilarezendeart.com/projects/lacos-2010/

In *Laços,* Priscila Rezende addresses the symbolic and material violence inscribed on racialised bodies under structural racism. Through a binding device—14 pieces of jewellery attached to her skin and connected to the space by physical ties and tensions —the artist performs the condition of a body historically bound to stereotypes, expectations and social roles constructed since colonial times. The act of breaking these ties materialises a resistance to the logic that commodifies, classifies and exploits black bodies, especially feminised bodies.

Contextualization

Institutional racism is the fundamental force behind structural racism and, in this sense, **it institutionalises racism** in all its forms.

This term was coined in the American context of the civil rights struggles of the African American population in the United States during the 1960s and popularised in the book *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967). The authors used the term **institutional racism** to refer to the **legal systems** and **patterns of behaviour** embedded in structured institutional or social dynamics, through which white people oppressed black people.

What was particularly novel and useful about their proposal was the **shift in focus** from the human causes of racism – which, until then, had been explained as a matter of personal conscience and behaviour – to an understanding that situated it as a **matrix of social, structural and systemic functioning**, independent of the intentions and conscience of the actors.

In this sense, the authors emphasised the **more subtle, hidden or even invisible nature** of institutional racism, in that it did not require the explicit mention of racial categories in order to function. This quality contributed to its more effective deployment and, at the same time, to its going unnoticed or being less questioned by the dominant sectors of society.

> ❝ 'Institutional racism is less explicit, much more subtle, less identifiable in terms of specific individuals committing the acts, as it originates in the functioning of the established and respected forces of society and therefore receives much less public condemnation than the first type.' (Carmichael and Hamilton, 1967, p. 10)

Thus, **institutional racism** manifests itself through a network of **policies, rules and procedures,** which, when incorporated into the functioning of institutions, disproportionately affect racially diverse individuals and groups. These structural dynamics hinder equal access to **rights, resources and opportunities** through laws, regulations, administrative decisions, budget allocations or access mechanisms. Furthermore, this type of racism is expressed in the **specific practices** of institutional agents, whether in their discourse, in the exercise of their functions, or in their daily actions (Aguilar and Buraschi, 2021; Buraschi and Aguilar, 2017).

For all these reasons, **institutional racism** is considered a form of **legal, bureaucratic, technocratic** and often 'democratically' decided exclusion in political and administrative decision-making processes. Consequently, dismantling it involves **conflict with** state **institutions**, as it is the state that provides the means, mechanisms and tools for the **racial structuring** of society.

Examples

- Laws, rules, measures, regulations and bureaucratic procedures that **produce inequality** and **limit the social, political, economic and cultural rights** of migrants.
- **Public speeches** by politicians and institutional representatives that legitimise the rejection of migrants or racially diverse people.
- **Public policies** that have direct or indirect discriminatory effects in different areas. This includes both the state's migration policies and social policies on education, health, employment, social services, housing, etc.
- Actions (and inactions) with discriminatory effects carried out by people who represent and work in institutions. This includes discriminatory behaviour by **civil servants** and other public employees who represent the law and the state (police, judges, teachers, social workers, etc.); by the staff of civil entities (NGOs, foundations, etc.) that provide public services (juvenile centres, shelters of various kinds, etc.); and by staff who make decisions or manage entities of public interest.
- **Social integration programmes** that, explicitly or implicitly, reproduce **paternalistic, assimilationist or ethnocentric** models, either because of their design or approach, or because of the way they are implemented through the practices of their professionals (health, education, social services, employment, etc.).

Activity

Exploring institutional racism in school

Objectives

- To understand what **institutional racism** is and how it manifests itself.
- Identify forms of **institutional racism** in education.
- Develop a **critical view** of structural inequality based on institutional racism in schools.

Brief introduction to institutional racism

Main ideas

- Not all racism manifests itself through insults or aggression.
- Sometimes racism is found in the rules, decisions or ways of operating of institutions, such as schools, which make things more difficult/easier for some people than others, even if this is not explicitly stated.

First, ask the students if they can think of any examples and write them on the board (physical or digital). You can add additional examples or use the video in the resources section as a 'trigger' for group discussion.

Some topics that come up in the video

- Lack of representation of diverse content and sources in textbooks.
- Whitewashing of the historiography of racism (naturalised slavery; benefits of the slave trade presented as natural or positive, etc.).
- More frequent punishments or sanctions for migrant or racially diverse students.
- Difficulties in accessing school or extracurricular support.
- Differences in teachers' expectations based on the origin of the students.

Some topics that do not appear in the video but can be added (using the resources as a source of information):

- Classification of schools as 'highly complex schools', a metaphor for schools with a higher proportion of working-class and racially diverse pupils.
- Distribution of schools by urban areas: given the **racialisation of urban distribution**, so-called 'ghetto schools' are used to describe schools with exclusively racially diverse students (as opposed to schools that bring together upper-class or wealthy children, who are mostly white).
- Protocols for the prevention of violent extremism that call on teachers to monitor children from Muslim backgrounds in particular.

> It is very likely that examples related to the differential treatment of teachers will come up. It is important that the person leading the activity allows this space to be used to question teaching attitudes and practices and does not question what is said, however implausible it may seem. The aim is to engage in dialogue with what is expressed in the classroom and to provide tools for pupils to develop their analytical skills.

Group work – Fictitious case: 'Class 4B'

Based on the topics or situations mentioned above, each group is given a brief case study.

Each group analyses the case and answers the following questions:

- What situations arise that could be examples of **institutional racism**?
- Who are most affected and why?
- What could the students, teachers or school do to change this?
- (The situations can be acted out in the classroom by assigning roles.)

Sharing

Each group briefly presents its analysis.

The teaching staff collects the forms of institutional racism identified.

Encourage discussion:

- Have you encountered similar situations?

- Have you experienced anything similar?

Resources

Audiovisual material

- Video clip: «Parlem de racisme a les escoles» (Available in Catalan)

The video clip «Parlem de racisme a les escoles» is a product of the Human Rights Resource Centre. Five young people explain their experiences at school with teachers and students. The **inaction of teaching staff** in situations of racism, the lack of **racially diverse teachers** and the presence of a **hidden curriculum** are some of the issues addressed in the clip.

Readings and articles

- Project material: *Benvingudes a l'escola... Intercultural?*
- *How can we create a truly intercultural education system?*
  As part of a two-year process carried out by the **AICE Anti-Racist Collective**, a group of five young people with diverse migratory backgrounds enrolled in the Catalan education system developed a series of materials to work on anti-racism in schools. This collective was created with the aim of **exploring and questioning** intercultural education, focusing on their experiences and debates around the challenges and possibilities of achieving truly intercultural education in the education system.

  - Fanzine: https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/bcnacciointercultural/sites/default/files/documentos/fanzine_interculturalitat.pdf
  - Decàleg per a professionals: https://media-edg.barcelona.cat/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/01181258/Decaleg-Nuevo-doble.pdf (Available in Catalan)
  - Guide to presenting the fanzine: 'Benvingudes a l'escola... Intercultural?': https://media-edg.barcelona.cat/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/01181253/GUIA-PRESENTACIO%CC%81-FANZINE.pdf (Available in Catalan)
- Online magazine: *La Disruptiva*. It is a digital magazine on education, anti-racism and critical pedagogy promoted and self-managed by the **Col·lectiva Antirracista AICE**.
  https://ladisruptiva.cat/index-2/ (Available in Catalan)
- Report: Amazian, S. (2021). *Islamofobia institucional y securitización*. SOS Racismo Catalunya.
  The aim of this report is to provide a critical analysis of the impact of the securitisation of the lives of Muslim people as a result of measures to prevent

radicalisation and combat terrorism in the Spanish context. Information on the implementation of **prevention protocols in schools and social services** can be found on page 59 of the report: https://www.sosracisme.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/InformeIslamofobia_01072021_INTERACTIVO_CAST_.pdf (Available in Spanish)

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Epistemic racism

Salmi López Valbuena (Bahía Negra, Paraguay, 1982)
Untitled, 2021.
https://institutodevision.com/es/artistas/abel-rodriguez-2/
Courtesy of the artist and the mor-charpentier gallery

Salmi López Valvuena belongs to the Ishir community of the Paraguayan Chaco. For years, she travelled on the *Aquidabán* boat to reach Puerto Diana, a journey that was interrupted in 2023 when the service was suspended. In her community, where rituals have been reduced, traditions such as basket weaving and wood carving persist. She learned to paint by observing her grandfather Ogwa, a central figure in her life and education, whose legacy she shares with her uncles Rubén and Claudelino. Her works, inspired by Ishir culture, recreate rituals and everyday scenes, affirming the validity of other ways of life and knowledge. Using paper and canvas, her practice links memory, resistance and intergenerational transmission.

Contextualization

Epistemic racism is the idea that only one type of knowledge – that produced in Western universities, laboratories, or institutions, following scientific and rationalist logic – is valid as true or superior knowledge. This leads to other forms of knowledge, such as those that come from **indigenous**, **Afro-descendant**, **peasant** or **non-Western** communities, being considered less important, less valid or simply ignored (Lander, 2000).

This type of thinking has been heavily criticised by **decolonial and postcolonial studies** (Quijano, 2004; Mezzadra et al., 2008), because it reproduces a form of domination: not only economic or political, but also over how we understand the world and which voices have the authority to explain it.

In this sense, we speak of **epistemic racism,** when Western thinking is presented as the only legitimate way of thinking and producing knowledge that is valid for the entire population. It is associated with reason, objectivity and neutrality, while other ways of understanding reality are perceived only as beliefs, opinions or interpretations, and are therefore considered inferior or less reliable.

To overcome this, it is essential to address racism from a **structural** understanding. This distances us from its more **liberal** conception, which tends to explain it as a matter of irrational beliefs and attitudes, such as hate speech, which finds its explanatory roots in the rise of Nazism. The liberal tradition tends to see racism as a failure of democracy, undermined above all by right-wing political extremists who inflame racial hatred to gain power (Kundnani, 2024). Understanding racism as an element **interwoven** in the genesis, development and articulation of all political, economic, legal and cultural structures of social formation forces us to reposition the **temporality** and **genealogy** of racism in another socio-historical framework.

The tradition of **radical black** thought, for example, places the genesis of modern racism – as we know it today– at the dawn of **European proto-capitalism** (Robinson, 2019) and argues that its progressive expansion as a large system that organises and hierarchises territories and populations on a global scale cannot be separated from its function of distributing land, rights, resources and labour according to racial criteria established since the colonial era.

From the contributions of **decolonial thought**, the invasion of the Americas, as a historical process, established a **pattern of power** (coloniality of power) based on a **racial hierarchy** that justified the dichotomous logic **of superiority/inferiority** (Quijano, 2000) and imposed normative ideologies that positioned Europe as a supremacist hegemonic centre and the colonies as peripheries that 'needed to be civilised'. This division constitutes the foundation on which **Eurocentrism** was established (Quijano, 2004).

From this perspective, it is possible to understand how **relations of subalternity** (Spivak, 2011) have been configured, as well as the **control** and **denial of voices**, experiences and histories that are relegated to the margins or directly rendered invisible or invalidated, as developed in postcolonial theory.

All these traditions of thought are characterised by **their criticism of Eurocentrism** in the construction of knowledge. Criticism of Eurocentrism is central to all theoretical traditions that confront the vestiges of colonialism. The concept refers to the tendency of disciplines such as Western sociology, philosophy, and anthropology, among others, to consider the **European experience** as the normative standard from which theories and analytical categories are constructed. This leads to the marginalisation of **non-Western experiences and knowledge**, as they are presented as particular. The way in which this contributes to perpetuating forms of **epistemic exclusion** is that the particular is always situated as an exception to the norm.

Examples

- **Absence or marginalisation of non-Western knowledge:** in subjects such as history, literature, philosophy and social sciences, official curricula tend to focus almost exclusively on Europe and North America. For example, the 'Middle Ages' are taught solely from a European perspective, without including the history of empires such as Mali or Songhai, or the Andean and Mesoamerican cultures of the same period.
- **Social theories universalised from Europe:** theories such as the social contract, liberalism or Marxism are presented as global explanations without discussing their limitations in describing contexts in the global South or the experiences of colonised peoples.

- **Natural science programmes that only include 'modern science':** they leave out systems of knowledge about agriculture, medicine or the environment developed by indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants or peasants, which are dismissed as 'popular knowledge' or 'beliefs'.
- **Assessments that privilege Western linear and logical modes of reasoning:** sequential, objective thinking formulated in Eurocentric academic formats is considered 'correct', while narrative, symbolic or oral forms of thinking typical of other traditions are ignored or penalised.
- **Teaching methods based on individual competitiveness:** these are based on Western ideals of meritocracy, rather than the collective learning practices more common in many indigenous or Afro-descendant communities, where learning is a community process.
- **Implementation of intercultural activities with a superficial approach:** food festivals, clothing exhibitions or other actions that tend to exoticise 'other' cultures and avoid addressing the structural inequalities faced by these communities.
- **Demand for 'cultural adaptation':** for example, Roma, indigenous or racially diverse migrant children are forced to abandon their languages, customs or family socialisation patterns in order to fit into white, Eurocentric school 'normality'.
- **Linguistic integration plans that only recognise the native language as a legitimate language:** the use of other languages – such as Arabic, Wolof or Quechua, among others – is sanctioned, made invisible or associated with learning difficulties.
- **Lack of representation among teaching staff and management teams:** in most schools in Spain and Europe, teaching staff and management teams are almost exclusively white, sending an implicit message that only those who embody the 'European norm' can be sources of knowledge and educational authority.

Activity

Objective

To help students identify **Eurocentrism** and **epistemic racism** in their books, subjects and school organisation; to encourage critical thinking about which voices and knowledge are valued or made invisible.

Discussion starters

In a large group, ask questions such as:

- What stories do we learn in History class? Where are they from?
- Which authors do we read in Language and Literature? Do we include non-European voices?
- What knowledge is considered 'true' in Natural Sciences? Where does it come from?

Dynamic

The answers are collected in a document or on a board, classified by subject (History, Science, Literature, etc.) and the results are analysed: where do most of the examples come from?

Observation

Form groups of 4-5 people and ask them to analyse some of the subject syllabuses or textbooks they regularly use in class.

They are asked to answer the following questions:

- Which countries or regions do the people, events or theories that appear come from?
- Does knowledge or perspectives from indigenous, African, Asian, Arab communities, etc. appear?
- How are they presented? As equals, as inferiors, as curiosities...?
- They note down textual examples or images.

Guided discussion

Each group presents what they have found. Some questions to accompany the reflection:

- What do you think when you see that almost everything studied comes from Europe or the United States?
- What knowledge or perspectives might be missing?
- Why is it important to have more voices represented in what we learn?

Creative proposal

In the same groups, students are asked to review the content, bibliography or resources of a subject and suggest how global knowledge or perspectives could be included, rather than just Eurocentric ones.

Sharing and closing

Each group shares its proposal.

- How would our view of the world change if this knowledge were included in our textbooks?
- Why do you think it is not usually included?

Resources

Readings and articles

- Chakrabarty, D. [Dipesh]. (2008). El pensamiento postcolonial y el artificio de la historia. In *Al margen de Europa. Pensamiento poscolonial y diferencia histórica* (pp. 57–80). Tusquets Editores. https://tristesantrotopicos.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/chakrabarty_-_poscolonialidad_artificio_historia.pdf
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Quijano, A. [Aníbal]. (2000). Colonialidad del poder y clasificación social. *Journal of World-Systems Research, 11*(2), 342–386.

Robinson, C. J. [Cedric J.]. (2019). *Marxismo negro: La creación de la tradición radical negra*. Traficantes de Sueños.

Spivak, G. C. [Gayatri Chakravorty]. (2011). *¿Pueden hablar los subalternos?* El Cuenco de Plata.

Hidden rationales of racism

Mimi Ọnụọha (Nigeria)
The Library of Missing Datasets, 2016. Installation.
Courtesy of the artist.
https://mimionuoha.com/the-library-of-missing-datasets

The Library of Missing Datasets is a physical archive that brings together what has been excluded in a world saturated with information. The so-called 'missing datasets' are gaps that emerge precisely where data is most collected. In these hyper-recorded spaces, the absence of certain data is not accidental: it points to what has been ignored, omitted or considered irrelevant. In this way, the Library proposes a critical reflection on what we decide to keep, what we leave out and why. Gaps are not neutral.

Contextualization

The normalisation of racism as part of common sense

The fact that racism is perceived as normal reveals that common sense is steeped in **racial logic**. This process of normalisation is sustained, to a large extent, by the ability to **conceal the origin of its violence** – both symbolic and physical – under subterfuges that are not perceived as being influenced by the issue of race and racism. This invisibility serves precisely to keep it alive. The concealment is profound and takes many forms. This text will address only some of the faces that racism takes on.

Racism in political and legal rationality

When racism is cloaked in arguments considered rational – appealing to reason – such as political or legal discourse, it manages **to conceal its racial nature**. A clear example is the Immigration Law, which is presented as a purely legal norm, since it does not explicitly name racial categories and is justified by reasons such as 'resource management', 'orderly migration' or 'national sovereignty'. However, it is precisely these justifications that support the creation of **degrees of citizenship**, **labour exploitation**, the **restriction of fundamental rights**, and even **deaths during land or sea crossings**.

Thus, concepts that are presented as **neutral, universal, and ahistorical** – such as citizenship, democracy, or the rule of law – despite being deeply intertwined with colonial history and its consequences, are not perceived as part of the universe of

racism that must be confronted and dismantled (Douhaibi, Franco, and Contreras, 2025).

Racism hidden in narratives of development, progress and civic-mindedness

The ideas of **development, progress** and **civic-mindedness** are closely linked to the historical moment – colonialism – when Europe became the centre of religious, economic and military power in the world. This position was achieved through the massive extraction of resources and the forced and gratuitous exploitation of the labour of poor, indigenous and black people.

Racialisation, in this sense, should be understood as the process that allowed capitalism to organise the population into different levels of exploitation in order to maximise the accumulation of capital. This process constitutes the **material basis** that facilitated Europe's transition to industrial capitalism (Romero Losacco, 2018).

At the end of the 18th century and throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, the discourse on **European scientific progress** was used to legitimise both global domination and class inequality within nation states themselves. The image of a superior Europe was constructed, whose supposed intelligence and civility explained its success over 'backward' peoples (Dussel, 1994).

Despite the brutality of colonialism and the wars necessary to consolidate this position, Europe continued – and continues – to present itself as the **moral and political model** to follow, placing its way of life as a universal benchmark for progress. The notion of **civility** was built on this genealogy, and it was disciplinary fields such as philosophy, sociology and anthropology that produced the theoretical frameworks that reinforced it (Dussel, 1994).

Racism camouflaged in the culturalist paradigm

Since the South-North migrations of the 20th and 21st centuries, the **culturalist approach** has gained prominence in the analysis of racial conflicts. This approach attributes social conflicts and socialisation dynamics to fixed 'cultural expressions' that define people. Models such as **French assimilation**, **British multiculturalism**, and **Canadian interculturalism** present people as mere carriers of a 'national culture'.

This paradigm tends to **homogenise and simplify** reality, grouping profoundly diverse – and even conflicting – realities under the same cultural label: believers and atheists, indigenous and Creole, rich and poor, rural and urban, etc. Thus, factors such as social class, access to cultural goods, or whether one comes from an urban or rural context **are left out of the analysis**, displaced by a view that responds more to Western fictions than to real social complexities. This approach ends up **equating state and culture** (Shaimi, 2025), which is unsustainable in a globalised world, as well as producing representations that go beyond any concrete social reality. Internal tensions within societies **do not disappear with migration.**

In this way, **interculturality** has become an administrative management tool that uses culture as **a smokescreen** to avoid addressing phenomena with political and economic roots. By focusing on 'promoting cultural diversity' without guaranteeing rights and equality, it facilitates the disguise of racism with a friendly tone.

Ultimately, equality in access to rights **does not depend on the willingness** of migrants **to adapt**, but on **institutional structures** and **public policies**. When the distribution of resources and benefits is organised along racial lines, intercultural approaches, far from questioning this order, **often contribute to sustaining covert racial logic** (Douhaibi, Franco and Contreras, 2025).

Examples

- **Raids based on racial profiling** (police checks based on physical appearance) are justified as 'security' or 'immigration control' measures, when, in reality, they are directed almost exclusively at Arab, Roma, Black and Latin American people.
- '**Development cooperation**' programmes or international aid that impose conditions on countries in the Global South, based on the idea that they are 'backward' and must follow the Western economic, political or social model in order to 'progress'.
- **NGO campaigns** that show images of Black or indigenous children in extreme situations, reinforcing stereotypes of poverty and backwardness that justify the idea that Europe or the United States must 'save' them because they 'know better' how to live.
- The way in which the **media** presents conflicts on the African or Asian continents as the result of 'tribal wars', without mentioning the structural causes, such as colonial exploitation, military interventions or Western economic interests.
- **Integration policies** that require migrants to demonstrate their adaptation to 'the values of the host society' in order to access rights (e.g. through language and culture tests to renew permits), when many of these barriers do not apply to white migrants from countries such as the United States, Canada or Australia.

Activity

Uncovering invisible racism

Objective

To help identify how racism is normalised in laws, discourses on development and cultural narratives; to develop critical thinking in order to question these everyday expressions.

Brief introduction by the activity leader

- Explain, using language appropriate to the educational level at which the activity is being carried out, what structural racism is and how it can appear in hidden ways (as in the examples we saw: laws, discourses on progress or cultural ideas).
- Show one or two specific examples (e.g. police raids involving racial profiling or NGO campaigns that infantilise countries in the Global South) to illustrate the concept.

Group work

Divide the **students** into three groups:

- Group 'Racism in law and politics'
- Group 'Racism in the discourse of development and progress'
- Group: 'Racism in cultural narratives'

Guided research

Each group should:

- Search the internet, social media, newspapers, or recall their own experiences or those of people close to them that fit the assigned category.
- Write down at least two real or recent examples from their school, neighbourhood or city.
- For each example, answer:
  - Where is racism seen?
  - Why does it seem 'normal' or accepted?
  - How do you think it impacts racially diverse people?
  - How do you think it impacts society in general?

Note

Secure links to digital newspapers, activist websites, critical NGOs, or short videos can be provided depending on the context to facilitate the activity.

Sharing

Each group presents their examples to the rest of the class on a poster, mural or slide, briefly explaining their answers.
Other people in the classroom are encouraged to ask questions or share similar situations they know of.

Discussion and conclusion

Reflect with the group:

- Why do you think it is so difficult to identify these issues as forms of racism?
- What could we do in our school or community to challenge them?
- How do we feel when we see these situations happening today?

Resources

Readings and articles

- SOS Racismo website with videos of people talking about racial profiling: https://sosracismo.eu/tag/paraddepararme/
- SOS Racisme Catalunya. (2018). *Pareu de parar-me: L'aparença no és motiu. Guia de defensa davant les parades per perfil racial* [digital guide]. https://sosracisme.org/guia-identificacions-policials-perfil-etnic
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Romero Losacco, J. [Jesús]. (2018). *La invención de la exclusión: Individuo, desarrollo e inclusión*. Fundación Editorial El Perro y La Rana.

Shaimi, M. [Mostafà]. (2025). Superar l'interculturalisme. *La Disruptiva*. https://ladisruptiva.cat/superar-linterculturalisme/

Multiple borders

Cannupa Hanska Luger (North Dakota)
Something to Hold Onto, 2021. Installation.
https://www.cannupahanska.com/social-engagement/stho

What happens when borders cross bodies and memories? *Something to Hold Onto* collects more than 9,000 handmade clay beads from communities in Mexico and the United States to honour indigenous migrants who have lost their lives on routes interrupted by violence, confinement and border control. Each clay bead contains a human gesture, a trace, a story.

Contextualization

Borders should not be understood exclusively as rigid, unbreakable walls that clearly separate countries or citizens from non-citizens. In fact, even when we refer to them as dividing devices, they do not begin or end at walls and fences; rather, border externalisation can extend thousands of kilometres beyond the 'official border'. For this and other reasons that we will explain, it is more useful to understand borders as a complex set of practices that operate both outside and inside nation states, serving to maintain Western imperial order and white supremacy (Walia, 2022).

Rather than simply marking an 'outside' and an 'inside' of the state, borders articulate a network of devices that organise and hierarchise social space. In this sense, it is not enough to analyse how border controls reinforce differences between states or reify racial categories inherited from colonialism. It is also necessary to consider how these border logics are transferred within territories through multiple forms of social control: school segregation, criminalisation, police persecution, detention centres for foreigners, and prisons. Far from being an exception, these forms of internal borders are part of a privileged device for managing populations.

Thus, it is more useful to think of borders as 'categories that organise space' and as a 'device for articulating social space'. Far from being limited to a geopolitical line, borders are blurred in a multitude of mechanisms and institutions that penetrate the daily lives of individuals. These internal borders allow for the (re)production of multiple differential social positions, all of which are marked by varying degrees of inequality and vulnerability (Pérez et al., 2019).

Through a myriad of forms – laws, rules, directives, regulations, police controls, bureaucratic obstacles, administrative sanctions, or differential treatment – the population is distributed into positions marked by differences in status, income, education, or access to social guarantees. In this context, borders do not operate solely as mechanisms of exclusion: they are also key technologies of differential inclusion, devices that allow fragmented and unequal access to social, labour and economic rights (Pérez et al., 2019).

This logic is clearly evident in current legislation. An analysis of the main laws regulating access to basic rights shows that total legal exclusion does not always exist. What is most often observed is regulatory hyper-fragmentation that turns access to these rights into an obstacle course. The various immigration, civil law, supranational and European laws provide for a multitude of regularisation routes, resulting in a virtually infinite fragmentation of legal statuses. Each of these statuses is associated with differential and conditional rights, further reinforcing inequality.

This leads us, in turn, to demystify the liberal narrative that celebrated globalisation as the beginning of a 'world without borders'. What has actually happened is the opposite: an intensification and multiplication of border forms. Borders have not disappeared; they have been transformed into mobile and flexible mechanisms that operate beyond the territorial limits of the state. They manifest themselves in legal, digital or labour forms and selectively regulate who can move, under what conditions and with what rights (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2017).

In this way, the border becomes a central infrastructure for the production of inequality, both globally and locally. It is not a remnant of the past that globalisation has left behind, but a key technology of contemporary neoliberalism for governing labour and populations.

In short, it is no longer enough to think of the border as a line separating territories: today it is a distributed device that manages, classifies and hierarchises. It is deployed in migration controls, risk algorithms, visa policies, digital surveillance and corporate outsourcing. Its strategic function is clear: to regulate who can move, how they can do so and under what conditions they can be exploited or criminalised, upholding the promise of mobility for a few and the punishment of immobility or deportation for the majority.

Examples

Selective mobility: visas and passports

People with European or US passports can enter more than 150 countries without a visa, while those with passports from countries in the Global South face severe restrictions. For example, an Afghan or Eritrean person needs multiple visas to cross borders that a person with European citizenship could cross without additional checks. This clearly shows how borders operate differently depending on origin: they are not 'the same for everyone'.

Outsourcing of migration control

The EU signs agreements with countries such as Libya, Turkey and Morocco to control the departure of migrants before they reach European territory. The United States delegates control of migration flows towards its borders to Mexico

and even Central American countries.

This shifts border control outside the territory that is intended to be crossed (mobile border).

Digital classification and surveillance systems

In the US and the UK, risk prediction algorithms decide whether or not to grant a visa or allow a person to board a flight. Frontex and other EU agencies are developing predictive surveillance systems based on big data to 'detect migration risks' before they occur.

Legal fragmentation and differential citizenship status

The Immigration Act establishes dozens of legal categories (temporary residence, residence based on ties to the country, residence for humanitarian reasons, etc.), each with different rights and, in many cases, conditional permits. For example, a person with a permit based on social ties can access certain jobs, but is not entitled to unemployment benefits or immediate family reunification.

In turn, the extension of the permit is conditional on the continuity of their contributions to the public treasury.

Foreigners' Detention Centres (CIE)

CIEs are border facilities within the territory where undocumented persons are detained for not having a residence permit. There, an internal border of enormous clarity is created: deprivation of liberty without full judicial guarantees, inhuman treatment and institutional racism.

Unequal access to social rights

In Spain, public healthcare is not universal in practice: undocumented persons or those with precarious status must meet administrative conditions in order to receive regular healthcare. Although Royal Decree-Law 7/2018 (*) extended universal access to healthcare, many autonomous communities continue to impose barriers such as continuous registration for three months, which excludes persons who lack residence or who are mobile.

The practice of notifying the police authorities has led to the detention and deportation of individuals, increasing deterrence among the undocumented population and exacerbating their vulnerability.

School segregation and urban boundaries

What are referred to as 'high-complexity schools' are in fact schools with marked racialisation: they generally have a very high proportion of migrant pupils, continuous enrolments throughout the year, and, often, lower public investment in relation to the needs arising from these dynamics.

These 'urban boundaries' reproduce racial and class hierarchies from childhood, conditioning the future educational and employment paths of young people.

Racial profiling in police checks

Checks carried out in public spaces, such as transport stations or public roads, are a **systemic practice** that operates as **a** tangible **internal border**. This practice constantly reaffirms a **hierarchy of belonging** that distinguishes between people perceived as members of the community and those who are assigned a status of exclusion.

Activity

Where are the borders?

Reflect on how borders operate beyond walls: at school, in the city and in everyday life.

Objectives

- Understand that borders are not just physical lines between countries, but devices that operate within our societies.
- Identify specific examples of 'internal borders'.
- Recognise the effects of borders on people's rights, mobility and daily lives.
- Develop a critical view of institutional racism and normalised inequalities.

Warm-up: What is a border?

What comes to mind when you think of a border?

We expand on the reflection if it has not come up before:

What if borders were also here, in the city, at school, in access to a doctor, to work or even in bureaucratic procedures?

Group work: Mapping everyday borders

Divide the class into small groups. Each group is assigned several real examples of borders (see examples below).

- Each group should classify the examples according to the type of border (legal, social, police, educational, labour, etc.).
- Place these borders on a symbolic map: where do they operate? Who do they affect? What rights do they condition?

Sharing and reflection

Each group presents two or three examples that they found most relevant, surprising or little known.

Questions that can help guide the conversation:

- Which boundary did you find most invisible but most serious?
- Who is left outside or inside according to these borders?
- What role does the state play?
- How does racism manifest itself at these borders?

Closing

Briefly explain or summarise how the examples show that borders are more than walls: they function as tools for producing inequalities.

Introduce the idea that borders are not natural, but rather produced, historically situated and politically convenient for normalising forms of violence that a non-racialised common sense would lead us to question and reject.

The session can be concluded by showing a short video (5–10 minutes) that shows a real example (such as racial profiling at checkpoints, immigration detention centres, barriers to registration, etc.) to continue the discussion and reflect on the need for violence to maintain borders.

Closing or follow-up reflection:

What would a society without internal borders look like?

Examples of borders for mapping

You can adapt the number according to the group.
Each example can include a brief description + a guiding question:

Border 1. Immigration Law

Migrants are required to demonstrate employment or social ties and have a job offer in order to obtain a residence permit. This requirement often forces them to accept **precarious working conditions** as a condition for regularising their immigration status or maintaining their legal status.

What effects does this state regulation have on the labour niches where the majority of the migrant population is employed (hospitality, care, agriculture, etc.)?

Border 2. Racial profiling by the police

At stations and on public roads, the police often ask racially diverse people for their documentation under legal pretexts: 'they are looking for a suspect and you look like him'; 'they think you are a foreigner and ask you for your residence documentation'.

Does this affect everyone equally? How would you experience it? Which bodies represent the condition of (non) citizenship?

Border 3. Public and universal healthcare?

Undocumented people must prove three months of residence to access the healthcare system.

What happens if someone cannot register?

Border 4. School segregation

In most cities, public schools have a much higher concentration of migrant students, while private and state-subsidised private schools have a majority of native students.

Does this school segregation create inequality?

A very high percentage of migrant and racialised students' educational paths end before they reach secondary school and university.

Why and how does this happen?

Border 5. Precarious work

Many migrants work in sectors such as agriculture, domestic and care work, and catering without a contract, with abusive working hours and no legal protection.

Why is there less protection in these sectors?

Border 6. Impossible procedures

Although the law allows for the regularisation of a person's status, it often requires documents that are difficult to obtain (such as certificates from the country of origin); or it involves a complex bureaucratic obstacle course; or there are no appointments available for processing the documentation, etc.

What effects can these obstacles have on people's lives?

Border 7. Migration risk algorithms

Predictive algorithmic systems implemented in Europe assess a person's level of risk based on criteria that may include their nationality or history.

What are the effects and ethical implications of transferring decision-making responsibility to automated systems?

Resources

Audiovisual material

- Documentary: 'Tarajal. Desmuntant la impunitat a la frontera sud' (Tarajal. Dismantling impunity at the southern border)
  This documentary denounces the events that took place on 6 February 2014, when at least 15 people drowned in Ceuta, on the border between Spain and Morocco. A group of more than 200 migrants attempted to enter via Tarajal beach and were repelled by Civil Guard officers with rubber bullets and smoke canisters while still in the sea. https://www.filmin.cat/pelicula/tarajal-desmuntant-la-impunitat-a-la-frontera-sud (available in Catalan)
- Documentary: Express
  Audiovisual project by Next Project and the CIEs NO Madrid campaign (Foreigners' Detention Centres). Directed by Juan Herreros and Carlos Olalla. For the closure of the CIEs and an end to deportations. No person is illegal. https://vimeo.com/170911673?p=0l
- Conversación online entre Robin D.G. Kelley y la autora del libro *Border and Rule* Harsha Walia organizado por Haymarket Books (11 febrero 2021). Border and Rule: Global Migration, Capitalism, and Racist Nationalism
- *Border and Rule* offers an unflinching examination of migration as a pillar of global governance and the formation of racial and gender classes. Harsha Walia disrupts simplistic explanations of migrant and refugee crises, showing them to be inevitable outcomes of conquest, capitalist globalisation, and climate change – processes that generate massive dispossession around the world. *Border and Rule* explores a series of seemingly disparate global geographies with shared logics of border rule that displace, immobilise, criminalise, exploit, and expel migrants and refugees. With her keen ability to connect processes, Walia demonstrates how borders divide the international working class and consolidate the imperial and capitalist domination of elites. Ambitious in its scope and internationalist in its orientation, *Border and Rule* challenges exceptionalist and liberal American responses to the migration

crisis and offers a compelling analysis of the connections between state violence, capitalism, and right-wing nationalism on a global scale.

Readings and articles

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Racial capitalism

Marilyn Boror (Guatemala, 1984)
Living Monument, 2024. Performance as part of the exhibition *Fugas de lo nuestro. Indigenous Visualities from South to North*, curated by Cristián Vargas Paillahueque, at the Salvador Allende Solidarity Museum (MSSA), 2024. Photo: Benjamín Matte.
Courtesy of the artist
https://marilynboror.com/monumento-vivo/

Living Monument is a performance in which the artist, an indigenous Maya-Kaqchiquel woman, turns her body into a living monument of resistance. Dressed in traditional San Juan Sacatepéquez clothing, she remains motionless while liquid cement solidifies her ankles, symbolising the historical oppression of indigenous bodies and territories. The work denounces the extractivism that affects her community, where the cement industry has deprived the population of water. Through a commemorative plaque, Boror Bor pays tribute to defenders of the land and political prisoners. The use of cement refers to the structural violence of imposed progress. The action transforms immobilisation into an act of collective memory and resistance.

Contextualization

Broadly speaking, the term racial capitalism refers to the idea that capitalist development, as a global economic system, cannot be fully understood without taking into account the history of colonialism. In turn, the fundamental mechanism of the intertwining of capitalism and colonialism was the creation of law and, in particular, property law along racial lines. Brenna Bhandar (2018) uses the concept of 'colonial property regimes' to explain the process by which modern property laws – developed in colonial and settlement contexts – not only facilitated the appropriation of indigenous lands, but also defined racial structures of citizenship and rights.

The idea of 'racial capitalism' is best known through the author Cedric J. Robinson (1983), who, in his influential book *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*, took the term – used by South African Marxists and communists to describe how capitalism and racism reinforced each other in South Africa – and turned it into a theory capable of explaining not only what was

happening in that context, but also the general functioning of capitalism. His main contribution is to show that racism is not a side effect of capitalism: capitalism was born and developed on the basis of pre-existing racial hierarchies.

For this author, even before colonial expansion, discrimination and hierarchies already existed in Europe between different peoples, regions and cultures, which assigned greater or lesser value to lives based on their origin. This logic was transferred and amplified with colonialism. To explain this, Robinson introduces the concept of 'racial calculation'. By this term, he refers to a way of thinking, adopted by European elites, which combined cultural, religious or regional differences and reinterpreted them as 'racial differences'. This classification was not just an abstract construct, but was materialised in the organisation of labour, politics and the economy. Thus, categories of people who could be exploited more harshly were created, which served to justify extreme inequalities.

In this sense, capitalism did not seek to eliminate pre-existing social differences in order to produce a single homogeneous working class, but rather intensified them and transformed them into racial hierarchies with the aim of making exploitation more efficient and profitable. The process of racialisation therefore consisted of assigning a different value to people as a labour force: some lives were 'worth less' than others, and this devaluation legitimised particularly violent forms of exploitation.

Robinson insists that this process is not a mistake or an excess within capitalism, but one of its essential features: racism is not an accidental addition, but a foundational element. Therefore, according to the author, it is not possible to understand phenomena such as transatlantic slavery, European colonialism or apartheid systems as isolated episodes, but rather as expressions of the way in which capitalism relies on racialisation to exist and expand in different contexts.

From this perspective, the concept of racial capitalism becomes a key tool for analysing why such profound racial and economic inequalities persist today. These inequalities are the result of centuries of a system that uses the idea of race to divide and exploit working populations. White supremacy – understood as the idea that white people are superior – is thus configured as the ideological basis that allows capitalism to function the way it does.

Ultimately, from the perspective of the radical Black tradition, race and racism are central to explaining how inequality and dynamics of exclusion are maintained in the capitalist era. Therefore, when we talk about 'racial capitalism', we are referring to the way in which capitalism, anywhere in the world, creates and exploits racial inequalities to naturalise forms of exploitation aimed at obtaining greater profits. Furthermore, this analysis is linked to the gender system: patriarchy causes women, especially racialised women, to suffer specific forms of exploitation and dispossession.

Examples

Land (dis)possession: property regime in Palestine

A current example of the use of law as a mechanism for updating colonial property regimes is the way in which the Israeli regime applies property laws that allow land belonging to the Palestinian population forcibly displaced since the Nakba of 1948 to be declared 'absentee property', transferring it to the state

or to settlers. This use of property law to legitimise expropriation reflects what Bhandar (2018) documents in his work: law as an instrument for racialising land ownership and dispossessing the non-dominant population.

This logic is comparable to the concept of *Terra nullius,* meaning 'no man's land'. In international law, this concept has been used to justify the occupation of territories that were not under the sovereignty of any recognised state. It was particularly relevant in the context of European colonial expansion, where it served to legitimise the occupation of lands inhabited by indigenous peoples who were not considered legitimate owners according to European legal standards.

Gentrification processes in racialised contexts

In historically working-class or racialised neighbourhoods, gentrification processes resort to the logic of 'improvement' or 'sanitation' to justify the displacement of working-class, migrant or racialised communities. The purchase and transformation of real estate is based on a right of ownership that ignores pre-existing social relations, reproducing colonial dynamics of 'progress' and spatial planning according to white or bourgeois standards.

Immigration law in Spain

As Romero (2010) points out, the extension of residence permits for migrant workers is legally conditional on continued contributions to the Spanish tax system. By linking permanence in the country to economic contribution under threat of administrative sanctions, this regulation operates as an instrument designed to ensure the availability of labour for the productive system.

In this sense, it is the state itself that puts the mechanisms necessary for the reproduction of a logic of accumulation at the service of the interests of the labour market. By forcing the migrant workforce to comply with certain legal contribution parameters, migration regulation reinforces the dynamics of capital aimed at maximising economic profit through labour exploitation.

This mechanism not only guarantees the availability of labour, but also contributes effectively to reducing the price of labour in the most deregulated and precarious labour niches, such as agriculture, construction, and care and domestic work sectors (Douhaibi, 2022).

Activity

The Cost of Living

Objectives

- To understand what racial capitalism is in basic terms and how racism and economic inequality are interrelated.
- Reflect on examples from your own experience or from history that show how racial discrimination has been used to exploit certain social groups and generate wealth.

Activation

In a large group, ask the following question:

—Why do some people seem to have more opportunities than others from birth?

As a visual aid, you can project or distribute images of two clearly contrasting neighbourhoods – one with abundant services and the other deteriorated – as well as examples of job niches that demonstrate the racial division of labour.

The group is asked to describe the differences they have observed: who lives in each place? How do they think these situations came about?

In the case of an activity carried out over more than one session, a documentary or short film can be used to work on the content based on what has been observed. Two suggestions are offered in the resources section, although these can be adapted depending on the context and local variations of racial capitalism.

Brief explanation

Racial capitalism refers to a system in which racism operates as a fundamental instrument for the accumulation of capital, as it legitimises the devaluation of the work, lives and territories of certain groups of people. This logic is manifested, for example, in the disparity in value that the system assigns to different types of work: the labour rights and remuneration of those working in agriculture or the care sector are considerably less protected than those of professionals in fields such as graphic design, technology or programming.

These differences are not accidental, but are sustained by long-standing structural inequalities that allow capital to generate greater profits at the expense of the exploitation of racialised populations.

Group dynamics: 'The map of inequality'

The class is divided into small groups.

Each group is assigned a brief case study, for example:

- Cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of Congo.
- Evictions and dispossessions in urban neighbourhoods.
- Migrants in an irregular administrative situation working in the agricultural sector.
- The processes of colonisation and land appropriation from indigenous peoples.

Each group must answer the following questions:

- Who benefits financially from this process?
- Who is harmed?
- What role does racism play?

To conclude the activity, the groups can represent the 'map of inequality' using a graphic representation (diagram, chart or concept map).

Sharing and closing

Each group briefly presents the conclusions of their work.

The following question is then posed to the whole class:

Are there any recurring patterns among the different cases analysed? Why do you think this is?

The collective reflection is guided by the idea that racism cannot be understood solely as an expression of individual hatred or prejudice. This explanation is insufficient to understand the existence of an international and racial division of labour. To understand how racism has functioned as a foundation for the unequal organisation of the economy, it is necessary to identify and analyse different structural mechanisms, such as laws, borders, institutional racism and migration policies, among others.

Resources

Audiovisual material

- *Geographies of Racial Capitalism with Ruth Wilson Gilmore – An Antipode Foundation film*. https://antipodefoundation.org

- Appearance by *Jornaleras de Huelva en Lucha en el Parlamento Andaluz* (16/07/2024). https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RQVREt_7q8E (Available in Spanish)

Reading

- Kundnani, A. [Arun]. (2022). *Capitalismo racial*. Editorial Cambalache. (Available in Spanish)

Films and short films

- *Oro rojo* (2021), by Carme Gomila. https://www.filmin.es/corto/oro-rojo (Available in Spanish)

- *Hotel explotación: Las Kellys* (2018), by Georgina Cisquella. https://www.filmin.es/pelicula/hotel-explotacion-las-kellys (Available in Spanish)

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Robinson, C. J. (Cedric J.). (1983 [2019]). *Marxismo negro: La creación de la tradición radical negra*. Traficantes de Sueños.

Romero, E. [Emma]. (2010). *Un deseo apasionado de trabajo más barato y servicial*. Editorial Cambalache.

Intersecting oppressions

Adriana Tomatis Souverbielle (Perú)
Estudio de color, 2006 / 2007
Courtesy of the artist.
http://adrianatomatis.com/en/estudio-de-color/

In the series *Estudio de color* (Colour Study), Adriana Tomatis reflects on the invisible hierarchies that permeate class, race and gender relations. The title serves as a critical clue: it refers to the pictorial palette and the racialised categorisation that has historically placed racialised women–especially domestic workers–on the margins of social visibility. The work denounces the intersectional gaps that shape domestic intimacy: women of colour and working-class origin whose presence is silenced and aestheticised, subtly reproducing the violence of the colonial order in everyday life.

Contextualization

The question of how the co-constitution and intersecting of different systems of domination give rise to specific situations of oppression has been widely addressed by black feminists (Jabardo et al., 2012). These schools of thought fall within the framework of both feminist and anti-racist theories, and argue that sexism, class oppression and racism are closely interrelated. From this perspective, it is not possible to carry out a separate analysis – monofocal paradigm – or a merely cumulative analysis – multiple oppressions paradigm – of the way in which these systems operate and produce concrete and contextualised forms of oppression.

The black feminist movement emerged at the confluence – and also in the tension – between two historical movements: abolitionism and suffragism. Despite having a significant presence in both, the combination of racism and sexism ended up excluding black women from these spaces of struggle. Although the analysis of intersecting oppressions has become hegemonic in Europe based on the theory of intersectionality, formulated by black feminists and lesbians in the United States, there are theoretical frameworks and experiences of struggle that precede it by almost a century.

In this regard, as early as the 1980s, authors such as bell hooks (1981) and Patricia Hill Collins (1989, 1991) contributed fundamental reflections on the joint articulation of inequalities produced by different systems of oppression.

However, it was in the 1990s that Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) coined and popularised the concept of intersectionality, providing it with a specific analytical framework.

To better understand the scope of this analytical shift, it is useful to contrast it with the development of modern enlightened feminism, articulated around Simone de Beauvoir and her well-known statement: 'One is not born a woman, one becomes one'. In contrast to this formulation, black feminist gender discourses are based on an experience of denial and exclusion, expressed paradigmatically in the question posed by Sojourner Truth (*) at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in 1851: 'Ain't I a woman?'

In this regard, it is essential to mention Angela Davis' seminal work *Women, Race and Class* (1981), which develops a pioneering analysis of how the relationship between capitalism, race and gender relegated black women in the plantation economy to a social position that was not being challenged by the feminisms of the time. Taking the colonial history of the United States as her main frame of reference, Davis shows how black women, since the period of slavery, have been subjected to a specific form of exploitation that combines gender oppression and racial exploitation.

In her analysis, Davis argues that capitalist oppression cannot be adequately understood without considering the inseparable interweaving of race and gender dynamics in the lives of black women, who have experienced forms of subjugation distinct from both white women and black men. From this perspective, the author advocates for a conception of feminism that recognises the multiple forms of oppression and exploitation that affect black women and other racially diverse women in terms of gender, race, and class.

Another key author for this approach is the Jamaican sociologist Stuart Hall, who, based on his analysis of British society in the context of postcolonial migration from the Caribbean, made fundamental contributions to understanding how race and racialisation processes shape the class experience of new migrant populations in the metropolis (Hall, 1980, 1998, 2023).

In any case, the strength of an anti-capitalist, feminist and anti-racist analysis – that is, an approach that understands that systems of power cannot be analysed separately – lies in its critique of reductionist or monofocal theories. In relation to white feminism, this critique is articulated in two main directions. On the one hand, the invisibility of the voices and experiences of black or racially diverse women reinforces the exclusions they suffer. On the other hand, the separate analysis of the causes and consequences of patriarchy and racism contributes to a universalist and reductionist conception of women's issues, favouring the homogenisation of female subjectivity based on the experience of white, middle-class, heterosexual women.

Similarly, in the case of class reductionism, the critique formulated by Hall and other authors has highlighted the lack of attention to structural racism and the role of neocolonialism in shaping contemporary post-industrial societies.

Examples

Feminised and racialised work in the home and care sector

According to data from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 80% of paid domestic work worldwide is done by women, which is equivalent to approximately 67 million people. In high-income countries, 66% of these workers are migrants. Thus, the feminisation of poverty, the feminisation of labour and the feminisation of migration converge and articulate themselves in a matrix of racial, imperial and class power.

This intersection is evident, for example, in the analyses of Selma James (2023) and Maria Mies (2019), who explain how the work of migrant domestic workers contributes directly to the accumulation of wealth by middle- and upper-class women in advanced capitalist countries. The latter are 'freed' from domestic and care work – historically unpaid – in order to climb the professional and corporate ladder.

In this sense, as Harsha Walia (2022) points out, migrant domestic workers become "a colonial solution to the 'domestic labour problem'" for global capital. This racialised and exploitative division of labour consolidates hierarchies between, on the one hand, white middle- and upper-class women integrated into the so-called 'productive economy' and, on the other, low-income racialised migrant women relegated to an undervalued and poorly paid care economy.

This analysis highlights the limitations of the feminisation of poverty paradigm, which, by focusing exclusively on the wage gap or the so-called 'glass ceiling', fails to explain the intensification of poverty in terms of race and migration. The case of migrant domestic work thus underscores the need for an approach that explicitly incorporates the intersectionality of race, gender and class in order to understand the dynamics of inequality in contemporary capitalism.

Criminalisation of migrant children

The idea of childhood is deeply associated with the notion of protection. However, this association does not operate universally. A clear example is the legal-administrative and media-reinforced category used to refer to children and adolescents who migrate without the company of an adult: MENA. This form of categorisation has contributed to excluding these children from the hegemonic imaginary of childhood, and, consequently, from the supposed protection attributed to it.

This imaginary affects not only migrant children, but also children living in poverty, from the Roma community or other racialised groups, who are often treated as suspicious, dangerous or intrusive subjects, especially in migratory contexts. This case illustrates how a monofocal view, based on a universal and abstract category (*) of 'boy' or 'girl', is insufficient to understand the forms of institutional violence – and even neglect – to which these children are subjected.

Institutional racism and the expulsion of racialised young people from school in urban contexts

The Autonomous Community of Catalonia (Spain) has been trying for years to address the serious consequences of school segregation. For a long time, this debate has taken place without explicitly naming racism, until organised families directly affected have managed to bring it to light. In official reports and emergency plans to combat segregation, the tendency has been to favour a socio-economic analysis to explain the territorial configuration of the populations and schools affected.

As a result, the territorial distribution of children in public schools in the areas most affected by segregation continues to produce centres with high levels of enrolment and nursery classrooms in which there are very few or no children who speak Spanish or Catalan. In turn, internal segregation is reproduced in primary education through level groups that systematically place children of migrant families – whether born in the territory or abroad – at the lowest levels of the education system.

This is an example of how a single-focus analysis of public policies, centred exclusively on class, has failed to resolve the problem of educational segregation.

Activity

Am I not a woman?

Objectives

- To understand what intersecting oppressions are and how they operate based on a specific historical experience.
- Reflect on how race, gender, and class intersect in the production of inequality.
- To make historically silenced voices visible in educational processes.

Introduction

The speech is projected (link available in the resources section) or an excerpt from Sojourner Truth's speech is written on the board:

'I have ploughed, I have sown, and I have reaped in the barns, and no man could surpass me. And ain't I a woman? I could work as much as a man and eat as much as a man when I had food. And I could stand the whip too! And ain't I a woman? I've borne thirteen children, and I've seen most of them sold into slavery. And when I cried out with my mother's grief, no one but Jesus could hear me. And ain't I a woman?'

(Excerpt from the speech 'Am I Not a Woman?', taken from *Women, Race and Class* by Angela Davis).

Guided discussion

Based on the reading of the excerpt, a guided discussion is proposed based on the following questions:

- What is Sojourner Truth narrating in this speech?
- Who was Sojourner Truth and in which historical context did she speak?
- What did it mean to be an enslaved black woman in the 19th century?
- Which political struggles coexisted at that time (abolition of slavery and women's suffrage)?
- Did black women obtain the right to vote at the same time as white women in the United States? What happened in other contexts or countries?

Guided activity

The following questions are suggested for group work:

- Which injustices did Sojourner Truth experience that other white women did not?
- Which injustices do some women experience today that others do not necessarily face?
- Which connections can be made with the present day?
- How can these differences be overcome in order to articulate common struggles against injustice in a more solid and effective manner?

Each group writes down their ideas and shares them with the rest of the class.

Based on the collective reflections, each group – or individual – writes a short speech from a perspective that intersects several axes of oppression (e.g. that of a migrant woman, a migrant teenager, a transgender person, an impoverished person, etc.), questioning the notion of abstract universality using phrases such as the following:

- 'Am I not a woman?'
- 'Am I not a child?'
- 'Am I not working class?'
- 'Am I not…?'

Closing

The texts are read aloud, simulating a collective agreement.

Resources

Readings

- Lugones, M. [María]. (2008). Colonialidad y género. *Tabula Rasa*, (9), 73–102. http://www.scielo.org.co/pdf/tara/n9/n9a06.pdf

Audiovisual material

- Recording of Sojourner Truth's speech ('Ain't I a Woman?') https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V090_BhJw3Y
- Reproduction of Sojourner Truth's speech, subtitled in Spanish. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fu9vjEmGFjU
- *Feminismo interseccional: un feminismo diverso*. Short video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ixOlUfPSl-E (Available in Spanish)
- Brizuela, F. Video lecture on the background and genealogy of intersectionality. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_Ur1kSV1_Y (Available in Spanish)

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ley y el orden». Traficantes de Sueños.

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James, S. [Selma]. (2023 [2012]). *Sexo, raza, clase: Una perspectiva para vencer*. Traficantes de Sueños.

Mies, M. [Maria]. (2019). *Patriarcado y acumulación a escala mundial*. Traficantes de Sueños.

Digital racism

Carme Puche Moré (Barcelona, 1977)
My Word, 2023. Video.
https://www.carmepuche.com/my-word

My Word is an audiovisual project that uses latent diffusion models (LDM) to highlight the ideological biases of artificial intelligence. Throughout the video, a voice introduces prompts that define identities and professions, while we observe how AI responds with images modelled on patriarchal and colonial imaginaries. This is what happens in the sequence to which this image belongs. The prompt is: *I am a doctor. Not that one. I am a female doctor. Not a white female doctor. A black one.* Although the text incorporates successive clarifications, the AI initially produces portraits of white men, possibly European.

Contextualization

Digital racism is a contemporary form of racism that manifests, reproduces and amplifies itself through digital technologies. A critical approach to the phenomenon involves understanding that it is not only about racist discourse on social media, but also about a broader structural logic that explains **how digital systems** – algorithms, databases, artificial intelligence, platforms, among others – **actively participate in the production, reproduction, and management of racial inequalities based on dominant social, economic, and political interests**.

Various researchers and activists who analyse and combat digital racism (Benjamin, 2019; Phan and Wark, 2021; Eubanks, 2018; Noble, 2018) point out that it is particularly difficult to identify the inequalities generated by new technologies, as these are often presented as more 'objective', 'neutral' or even 'progressive' than traditional forms of social control and management.

The supposed neutrality of technology is a fallacy. By not operating through explicit racial distinctions, algorithms appear immune to bias. However, it is precisely this appearance of neutrality that renders the racial biases they incorporate invisible, making them more difficult to detect and, therefore, more dangerous. Algorithms do not start from scratch: their operation depends on large volumes of data that reflect a history of inequality, exclusion and discrimination. In this way, technology not only reproduces pre-existing structures of oppression, but also consolidates them and makes them less transparent.

The development of science and technology has historically been conditioned by power structures that have perpetuated forms of oppression based on race, class and gender. Consequently, contemporary technologies, including artificial intelligence, are not neutral: they replicate and, in many cases, subtly intensify these systemic inequalities.

From this perspective, various critical voices warn that tools such as artificial intelligence, *Big Data* and so-called 'smart' technologies are contributing to the automation of racial discrimination. This implies that racial bias is integrated into the very logic of how technological systems operate, allowing racism not only to persist, but to adapt, become more efficient and operate in an increasingly silent manner.

Finally, a look at technological infrastructures – from their material foundations to their ideological logics – allows us to understand that race and racism are not external or accidental elements, but rather constitutive of their very existence. From the natural resources extracted from the Global South for the manufacture of hardware, through the energy and cabling systems that support data centres, to the exploited labour and data used to train algorithms, the entire technical fabric of digital capitalism is permeated by racial power relations. Technology, therefore, is not neutral: at its most basic level, it incorporates a history of extraction, dispossession, and racialised hierarchisation.

Digital racism is thus not **a 'flaw' in the system**, but one of the ways in which it operates to sustain and reproduce racial hierarchies in a world increasingly mediated by digital technologies. Thinking about racial justice in the digital age therefore implies questioning not only the uses of technology, but also its design, infrastructure, forms of ownership and political logic.

Examples

Algorithmic racism

Algorithmic systems trained with historical data – data that is already racialised – tend to reproduce and reinforce pre-existing inequalities. A prime example is facial recognition systems, which have significantly higher error rates when applied to racially diverse people. However, these technologies are often presented as 'universal', as if they work the same way for everyone.

In reality, many of these systems have been designed with an implicit reference to a specific profile that conforms to the dominant social norm. Those who do not fit this norm – because of their skin colour, dress, accent, or any other socially marked trait – are more likely to experience failures, exclusions, or negative consequences when interacting with these systems.

A clear example of this is police prediction algorithms, which over-represent Black or migrant communities, as well as automated credit granting or personnel selection models, which systematically penalise historically racialised groups.

Furthermore, in many cases, data on people and communities in the Global South is extracted without consent to train technologies developed by companies in the Global North, perpetuating colonial relationships in new forms. This phenomenon has been conceptualised as **data colonialism** (Couldry and Mejías, 2019; Mejías and Couldry, 2019; Dicarlo and Moncada Niño, 2024).

Governance of populations through datafication

Datafication refers to the process by which aspects of social reality are converted into quantifiable and codifiable data that can be processed using technological tools. This process is preceded by the massive accumulation of data, known as *Big Data*. Datafication is based on the premise that a large amount of data, correctly selected, organised and processed using algorithmic formulas, can offer objective solutions to complex problems of our time, from biomedical issues to social conflicts.

However, in contexts such as border control, security, health, or social services, the use of digital technologies enables new forms of classification, surveillance, and exclusion that disproportionately affect migrants and racially diverse populations. These dynamics are linked to what some authors have conceptualised as 'automated state racism', in which discriminatory decisions are incorporated and executed through seemingly neutral technological systems.

Digital platforms and the circulation of racism

Social media and digital platforms facilitate the circulation and virality of racist discourse, often amplified by algorithmic logic that prioritises conflict, polarisation and sensationalism as drivers of interaction. At the same time, content moderation mechanisms tend to penalise anti-racist activists and discourse more often than those who spread hate messages, thus reproducing unequal power relations in the digital space.

Activities

Activity 1: Map of racist technology

Objective

To understand how racism permeates all phases of a technology, from its manufacture to its use.

Start

Briefly introduce a technological object used in everyday life (e.g. a mobile phone or a camera with artificial intelligence) and ask the group the following questions:

- What do we know about how this object is manufactured?
- What materials are used and where do they come from?
- Who is involved in its assembly?
- Who benefits from and who is harmed by its production and use?

Main exercise

In groups, construct a spiral or chain-shaped map representing the different stages in the life cycle of the technological object being analysed. For each stage, consider the following questions:

- Extraction of minerals and raw materials.
- Manufacturing and assembly locations.
- Who designs and programmes it (software and algorithms).
- What types of data it uses and where they come from.
- Where, how and for whom it is mainly marketed and where, how and by whom it is consumed.

Sharing and guided discussion

Based on the work done, a group discussion is held on the following questions:

- Which dimensions of digital racism are most invisible?
- How can these technologies be used for control, surveillance or exclusion?
- At each stage of the life cycle, which forms of racism – explicit or structural – can be identified?
- Which strategies can be devised to detect, challenge or resist these dynamics?

Final product

As a result of the work, a collective mural can be created in which the different objects analysed by the groups intersect. This mural can show international routes, connections between territories and power relations involved in the global cycle of technologies.

Activity 2: 'The algorithm that sees me'

Objective

To reflect on how digital systems – algorithms, networks, and platforms – classify and treat people differently.

Start

The following questions are posed to the group:

- Which social networks do you use regularly?
- What type of content appears most frequently in your *feeds*?
- Is there uniformity in the content that users are exposed to, or are there significant differences?

Main exercise

Small groups are formed. Each group creates a fictional character with a specific identity, with varying aspects, such as origin, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, social and political interests, or body types.

Next, the group imagines how this person would be 'read' or classified by different algorithmic systems:

- What kind of content would platforms such as Instagram or TikTok recommend to them?
- Which advertisements would they be most likely to receive?
- How would they be identified by a facial recognition system?
- Could they encounter obstacles in automated hiring or selection processes?

Sharing

Each group shares its case and a collective discussion is opened around the following questions:

- Who is most visible and who is most monitored in the digital environment?
- What roles, expectations or limitations do algorithms impose on different bodies and identities?

Final product

To conclude the activity, participants are asked to create a poster, infographic or mind map summarising the main conclusions of the exercise.

Resources

Readings and articles

- Marín Cisneros, A. *El algoritmo de la raza: Notas sobre antirracismo y Big Data*. https://cajanegraeditora.com.ar/el-algoritmo-de-la-raza-notas-sobre-antirracismo-y-big-data/ (Avaliable in Spanish)
- Una introducción a la IA y la discriminación algorítmica para movimientos sociales. (2022). *Algorace* https://www.algorace.org/2022/11/26/una-introduccion-a-la-ia-y-la-discriminacion-algoritmica-para-movimientos-sociales/ (Avaliable in Spanish)
- Phan, T. [Thao]. *Entrevista: «Avui, l'algoritme és clau per concedir o no una petició d'asil»*. https://directa.cat/avui-lalgoritme-es-clau-per-concedir-o-no-una-peticio-dasil/ (Avaliable in Catalan)

Audiovisual material

- *Racisme Digital: Conversa amb Ruha Benjamin*. Fundació Bofill. https://fundaciobofill.cat/actes/racisme-digital-conversa-amb-ruha-benjamin (Avaliable in Catalan)

- *The Coded Gaze: Bias in Artificial Intelligence*. (n. d.). Conference at the Equality Summit, with Joy Buolamwini. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRUEVYndh9c

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Racialisation of school expulsion trajectories
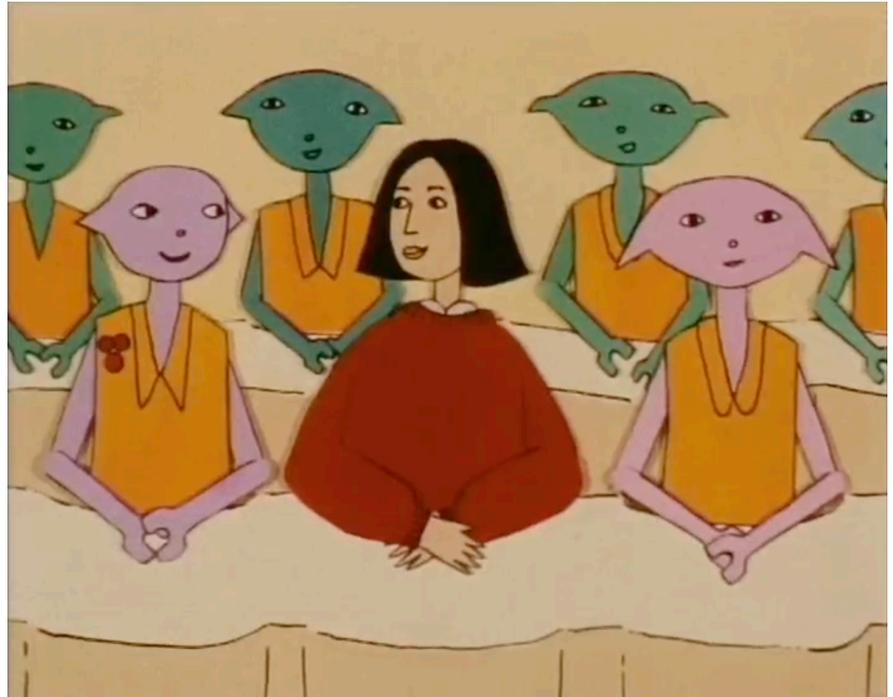
Leeds Animation Workshop
A World of Difference, 1997. Animation.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o0syCJA2KSI&ab_channel=leedsanimation

A World of Difference was created by **Leeds Animation Workshop**, a feminist independent film collective founded in 1978 and recognised for its commitment to critical education and socially conscious animation. In this short film, young Natalie is abducted by a spaceship and taken to Helicon, a planet where the school system reproduces institutionalised forms of racism and exclusion. Her mission is to understand why the students in the Purple group are underperforming. In this environment, bullying, segregation and cultural denial are part of the curriculum. From her floating saucer, Natalie observes tell-tale signs: protective uniforms, popular songs with disturbing meanings, disfigured self-portraits. Questions pile up: what happened to the Purple Studies? Why does no one question this normalisation of violence? Her experience in an Earth school that has made some progress allows her to intervene effectively. In Helicon, she promotes small transformations. Back on Earth, she is ready to confront those who harassed her.

Contextualization

For years, explanations attributing the misnamed 'dropout' and 'school failure' to psychological and individual causes, such as alleged learning problems, demotivation, lack of attention, or even a presumed absence of a 'culture of effort' in certain historically marginalised communities affected by processes of racialisation, have been taken for granted. When going beyond a strictly individual approach, sociological explanations have focused on pointing out deficiencies in the family environment, such as low socio-economic and educational levels, limited participation or communication with the school, or linguistic differences (Douhaibi and Franco, 2025).

This type of discourse, widely disseminated in both scientific literature and public policy, has contributed to reinforcing the stigmas that weigh on historically marginalised populations, attributing to them the responsibility for their

exclusion from the education system.

This fact sheet therefore proposes a shift in the narrative from which we observe and intervene in what educational sociology has termed 'early school leaving' or 'school failure'. Replacing these notions with that of exclusion allows us to focus on the institutional mechanisms that produce educational inequality.

> 'We refer to trajectories of school expulsion as a set of institutional educational actions and measures that create a path of educational exclusion throughout the different school stages, determining access to knowledge and learning opportunities and contributing to school expulsion'
> (Zhang, González and Guitart, 2025, p. 18)

When these educational actions and measures are carried out in a veiled manner – without naming racial categories such as 'migrant', 'diverse students' or 'Roma students' – or explicitly, based on racial markers, and contribute to the creation of unequal and exclusionary pathways, it is necessary to name them as practices and mechanisms of institutional racism in the field of formal education.

Understanding the forms that institutional racism takes in the education system in order to identify and highlight the mechanisms and practices that racialise educational trajectories – that is, that generate differentiated experiences and paths based on racial markers or constructs – implies, for example, asking how measures deployed under the framework of an apparently inclusive education are contributing to educational (in)equity and, at the same time, how they are tracing differentiated itineraries in young people (Zhang, González and Guitart, 2025).

It is very difficult to identify a specific practice or situation that has, in isolation, led to a person's definitive departure from the education system. Therefore, a comprehensive and critical view that aims to intervene in a recurring trend must focus on the mechanisms that contribute to producing it. In this sense, the mechanisms of school expulsion refer both to dynamics external to the school and to endogenous dynamics specific to education systems.

On the one hand, there are external mechanisms, such as educational laws and plans or the distribution of students among schools. On the other hand, there are internal mechanisms, such as pedagogical models, the creation of long-term special classrooms, power relations in the school-family-student triangle, discriminatory dynamics, and the hidden curriculum, understood as the set of 'representations of the social world, images, descriptions, explanations, and frameworks for understanding how the world is and how it works in the way it is said and shown to work' (Hall, 2010). These elements are interrelated and contribute jointly to the racialisation of educational trajectories.

Examples

Administrative and institutional practices or actions

These practices operate within the regulatory and organisational framework of the education system:

- **Unequal school zoning**: delimitation of enrolment zones that concentrate migrant or working-class students in certain schools, creating 'ghettoised' schools.
- **Seemingly inclusive protocols and plans** that result in forms of racialised separation, such as the unnecessary prolongation of reception classrooms.
- **Eurocentric curriculum design**: content and narratives that exclude the knowledge, languages and histories of racialised communities.
- **Ghettoisation of elites and marginalised groups**: coexistence of schools considered to be academically excellent with others that concentrate migrant or Roma students, classified as 'highly complex'.
- **Implementation of education laws** that introduce early pathways or standardised assessments, with disproportionate effects on racialised students.

Assimilationist, integrationist or segregating practices

These practices are linked to the pedagogical and cultural policies that operate in the classroom:

- **Pedagogical models that privilege the white norm**, denying the linguistic or cultural repertoires of racialised students, for example by sanctioning the use of other languages in the classroom.
- **Special or extended support classrooms**, which end up functioning as spaces of permanent segregation under the guise of 'reinforcement'.
- **Education referred to as inclusive under conditions of assimilation**, in which participation is only legitimised if students conform to the dominant codes.
- **Epistemic supremacy**, in which knowledge considered legitimate continues to be Western and white, rendering epistemologies and knowledge from other sources invisible.

Role of educational staff

This level encompasses the mechanisms of everyday institutional mediation, such as guidance, assessment and the expectations projected onto students:

- **Biased educational and university guidance**: systematic recommendation to migrant or Roma students of non-university pathways ('basic vocational training', 'the practical will suit you better'). Added to this is misinformation or a lack of support in accessing scholarships, university studies or mobility programmes, as well as the consideration of the academic aspirations of racialised students as 'unrealistic'.
- **Pygmalion effect (*)**: low expectations of the performance and abilities of racialised students, which ultimately become self-fulfilling.
- **Pathologisation of cultural difference**: interpretation of behaviours, communication styles or forms of relationship as signs of conflict or deficit.
- **Extension of social control**: transformation of teaching and guidance staff into agents of cultural and moral normalisation.

Direct educational interaction

This level refers to the everyday experience that occurs in the relationships between school, students and families:

- **Differences in everyday treatment**: increased surveillance, quicker application of sanctions or lack of trust towards racialised students.

- **Distrust of families**: attribution of disinterest or lack of involvement without recognising existing institutional, administrative or linguistic barriers.
- **White flight (*)**: withdrawal of white families from schools with a growing presence of migrant or Roma students, leading to processes of indirect school segregation.
- **Racialised hidden curriculum**: transmission of implicit messages about who legitimately belongs in the school environment, for example through the examples used, images or the assignment of leadership roles.

Structural dynamics (exogenous and endogenous to the education system)

These dynamics refer to structural conditions that permeate the education system as a whole and contribute to the reproduction of racial and class inequalities:

- **Unequal distribution of resources among schools**, which perpetuates educational gaps based on the racial and class composition of the student body.
- **Unequal power relations in the school-family-student triangle**, in which the voices of racialised families tend to be delegitimised or infantilised.
- **Standardised assessment policies** that penalise linguistic diversity and different learning styles.
- **Media and political representations of 'school failure'** that reinforce the image of certain communities – such as migrants, racialised populations or, specifically, the Roma community – as deficient or incapable of academic progress.

Activity

Beyond labels: the power of expectations

General objective

To reflect on how expectations – positive or negative – projected onto others influence their performance and self-esteem, especially in the educational context.

Specific objectives

- Understand what the Pygmalion effect is and how it operates in the educational setting.
- Recognise how prejudices and stereotypes influence the expectations that are built up about students.
- Promote equitable and respectful attitudes in teacher-student relationships.
- Design proposals aimed at building educational relationships based on the recognition of potential, rather than the imposition of labels.

Introduction: What do we know about the Pygmalion effect?

To begin the activity, hold a brief discussion in the classroom or write a guiding question about the concept on the board:

- 'Have you ever felt that someone didn't expect much from you?'

- 'Or, on the contrary, that they trusted you even without knowing you well?'

Next, show a short video to introduce the concept of the Pygmalion effect (short video: *¿Qué es el efecto Pigmalión?*).

Brief explanation of the concept

The Pygmalion effect is a psychological phenomenon whereby the expectations that one person projects onto another influence their behaviour and performance. In education, this can manifest itself when teachers have low expectations of some students based on prejudices or stereotypes, which ultimately has a negative impact on their performance. Conversely, high expectations can promote more positive learning processes.

Main activity

In groups, cards are made with labels and stereotypes that circulate in the classroom, in the school or in society in general. They may include labels linked to the educational sphere (e.g. 'lazy', 'repeater', 'absent-minded'), as well as social labels related to class, race, and gender (e.g. 'weak', 'dangerous', 'suspicious', 'strong', 'hard-working', 'docile').

Small group work

In groups of three or four, several cards with these profiles are distributed.

Analysis and discussion

Each group discusses or writes answers to questions such as the following:

- Are there groups of people or communities to which these labels are attributed regardless of their individuality?
- These perceptions are not always explicit. In what subtle ways can differences in expectations towards different people or groups manifest themselves in the classroom or in other educational contexts?
- How do you think these labels influence relationships within the classroom?
- What kind of expectations might teachers project onto a person associated with this label?

Production of a counter-narrative

Each group chooses a label or stereotype and develops a short counter-narrative in the format they deem most appropriate. Some possible options are:

- A proposal for a short podcast.
- A mural or poster.
- A short play or sketch.

Collective reflection and proposed action to prevent the Pygmalion effect and stereotypes

Based on the work carried out, each group proposes a commitment or specific action that both teachers and students can implement to prevent the Pygmalion effect and the reproduction of stereotypes in the educational environment.

Some examples of possible actions are:

- Avoid comments such as 'we didn't expect you to do so well', which reinforce low prior expectations.
- Do not make judgements based on appearance, accent or academic history.
- Recognise and allow multiple forms of expression of knowledge so that students can demonstrate their abilities in different ways.

Resources

Audiovisual material

Soler, Alberto. ¿Qué es el efecto Pigmalión? [Video]. Psychology Capsules. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_qC8Dtq-BcA (Available in Spanish)

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Critical anti-racist pedagogies

Ana Cebrián, Deborah Ekoka, Jose Oyono Ngalo, Yeison García López, Ken Province, Mariam Valencia, Yo Soy El Otro, Ityökó Bárbara Bolekia Morgades, Pablo Muñoz Rojo, Pour Meilleure Afrique, Nzola Sema, Shady El Sabbagh, Arturo Andersen Chinbuah.
Afro in Progress, 2015. Installation as part of the exhibition *Ni arte ni educación (Neither Art nor Education)* organised by Matadero Madrid.
https://www.niartenieducacion.com/project/afro-in-progress/

Afro in progress is an installation-archive conceived by artivist Ana Cebrián, which brought together proposals from the African diaspora on the references–texts, images, concepts, memories–that should form part of the education of young people of African descent. In response to the silencing of Black communities in Spain, where more than two million people of African descent live, the work denounces the gaps in formal and informal education, as well as the exclusion of this knowledge from the national narrative. The project highlighted the urgent need to build a collective memory that allows new generations to recognise themselves as historical subjects, creators of culture and agents of change.

Contextualization

On the path towards radical education in difference, it is useful to examine the link between critical pedagogies and anti-racist pedagogies in order to rethink education in contexts marked by structural inequalities and processes of racialisation of difference. Based on the contributions of culturally sustainable pedagogies (Paris and Alim, 2017), culturally relevant pedagogies (Ladson-Billings, 1995) and the pedagogy of the oppressed (Freire, 1970), a critical and anti-racist pedagogical proposal does not seek to adapt to the dominant educational model, but rather conceives of difference as a political, epistemic and affective force capable of reconfiguring the classroom as a learning community.

As Ladson-Billings (2006) argues, a culturally relevant pedagogy must start from the lived experiences of students and explicitly confront the power structures that place them in positions of otherness. From the perspective of critical anti-racist pedagogy, difference is understood as a field of social and political dispute, in which schools often function as an extension of the racial hierarchies present in society, reproducing inequalities through their content, methodologies and

institutional relationships (Ladson-Billings, 1995). In this sense, talking about diversity without naming racism means sustaining the very structures of inequality that we seek to challenge.

From a methodological perspective, critical pedagogies also imply a profound transformation of the different levels that make up educational work. Among their central axes are the critique of the hidden curriculum, the Eurocentric logics of knowledge production and the institutional forms of control that reproduce processes of exclusion from the earliest stages of education.

The hidden curriculum (Apple, 1979) is one of the most effective mechanisms for reproducing racial inequality. It refers to those lessons that are transmitted and acquired in a non-explicit manner within the framework of educational practice. It includes the set of norms, values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours which are implicitly conveyed through school organisation, power relations, institutional habits and everyday practices in educational centres, but which are not formally part of the official curriculum or study plans.

Examples of these dynamics include the absence of non-white histories, knowledge or languages in school content, which legitimises a Eurocentric view of knowledge; 'coexistence' protocols that apply more severe considerations, controls or labelling to racialised bodies or non-hegemonic forms of family life; institutional discourses that associate the language, religion or culture of the other with failure, risk or threat; and low academic expectations of certain students, which anticipate their failure and normalise their marginalisation.

Examples

There are numerous practices, experiences and initiatives in critical pedagogy throughout the world. Some of the best known are presented below.

Pedagogy of the oppressed (**Paulo Freire, 1970**) is a pedagogical proposal formulated by Paulo Freire based on the lessons learned from his work with oppressed communities in Brazil during the 1970s. The genealogy of this proposal lies at the intersection of broader theoretical frameworks, such as the Marxist tradition and Christian-based liberation theology, in the Latin American context.

Pedagogy of the oppressed conceives of education as a practice aimed at the liberation of oppressed peoples. To this end, it not only establishes a theoretical and political framework for education and pedagogical work, but also proposes the need for coherence between theory and practice — that is, between reflection and action — as the central axis of its proposal. In this sense, it contributes a series of pedagogical methods whose goal is to overcome different forms of oppression.

Critical pedagogy, strongly influenced by the thinking of Paulo Freire, seeks to transform education and society through conscientisation, understood as the ability to critically read the world in order to intervene in it. Freire questions so-called 'banking education', in which students play a passive role as recipients of information, and proposes instead an education that promotes critical reflection and transformative action.

The **critical sociocultural approach**, which builds on the contributions of Lev Vygotsky (1978), emphasises the role of cultural mediation and the importance of social interaction in learning processes. The relationship between scientific

knowledge and everyday knowledge is central to understanding how learning is constructed in diverse educational contexts.

Cultural mediation is key to the development of meaningful learning, as it allows students to go beyond what they can do independently, facilitating the acquisition of new skills and knowledge. In this approach, the presence of other people with greater experience in the learning process responds to the need for dialogic relationships in education, in which participants learn and teach reciprocally, breaking with unidirectional models of teaching and learning (Vossoughi and Gutiérrez, 2016).

In this sense, Vygotsky – in dialogue with Freire's pedagogical proposal – proposes the notion of the 'zone of proximal development' (ZPD), understood as the distance between what a person can do on their own and what they can do with the support of more experienced people. Working from the ZPD in an anti-racist way involves promoting learning that questions the hierarchies of knowledge, language and power present in the classroom, recognising the situated knowledge of students as a legitimate starting point for the educational process.

Activity

Words that name the world: from experience to action

Based on Paulo Freire's pedagogical proposal of conscientisation, which uses words drawn from the everyday lives of oppressed people to facilitate literacy processes that are also processes of liberation, learning does not begin with imposed content, but with lived reality. This reality becomes the object of critical reflection and transformative action.

General objective

To develop critical awareness based on the students' lived experience, promoting the reading and transformation of the world through their own words, knowledge and issues.

Specific objectives

- Identify themes and generative words based on the realities of the students.
- Transform the classroom into a space for collective research that recognises and activates prior knowledge.
- Highlight life experiences and knowledge as legitimate sources of knowledge.

Dialogue research: which words affect us?

- In small groups, students discuss **everyday situations** that are difficult, unfair, painful or invisible in different areas of their lives (school, neighbourhood, media, family, etc.).
- Based on these conversations, each group selects a **generative word** that summarises the problem identified, for example: racism, shame, silence, fear, passport, accent, gaze, uniform, injustice, control, border.

Note

The aim of this phase is to identify key words based on collective experience. This corresponds to Freire's stage of exploring the lived world in order to turn it into an object of critical reflection, recognising experience as a source of knowledge.

Visual or narrative coding

- Each group creates a representation of the situation linked to their generative word through an image, a drawing, a collage, a short theatrical scene or a short narrative.
- The productions are not explained or evaluated at this stage; they are only presented or shown.

Note

Freire calls this process 'codification': the symbolic representation of a lived situation that allows its complexity to be observed without yet interpreting it. The aim is to create a critical distance that makes subsequent collective analysis possible.

Problematising dialogue in a circle

- Each group presents its coding and the whole class participates in a guided dialogue based on questions such as the following:
  - What do we see here?
  - Why is this happening?
  - Who benefits from this situation?
  - Is this a fair situation?
  - Could it be any other way?

Note

This dialogue promotes a critical reading of the world. Teachers do not offer definitive answers, but rather accompany students in discovering the social and political meaning of their own experiences. The aim is to denaturalise what is represented and critically question reality.

Collective writing: words that transform

- Based on the collective analysis, the groups come up with a new word or phrase of action that expresses an alternative, a form of resistance or a horizon of transformation – for example, voice, organisation, recognition, linguistic justice, questioning, disobedience, solidarity.
- These words or phrases are integrated into a collective classroom manifesto entitled 'Words to transform the school'.

> **Note**
>
> The aim of this phase is to rewrite reality from a critical consciousness oriented towards transformative action.

The words and issues worked on can be linked to the curriculum or the subject in which the activity is carried out. Some examples are:

- **Language and Literature**: narratives, oral stories and silenced histories. Oral expression, argumentation, written production and critical literacy are worked on.
- **Social Sciences, Geography and History**: deconstruction of the Eurocentric canon, identity and community, recognition of racially diverse experiences, situated knowledge and collective construction of meaning.
- **Ethics and Civics**: critique of models of citizenship, ethical reflection, rights, justice and collective agency.
- **Foreign or co-official languages**: cultural translation, linguistic resistance, linguistic awareness and analysis of language as a tool of oppression or liberation.
- **Plastic and Visual Education**: visual expression of non-hegemonic knowledge and symbolic representation of situated experiences.

> **Note**
>
> The role of teachers in this activity is to act as facilitators in the zone of proximal development (ZPD), helping to broaden reflection, document processes and link emerging knowledge to broader frameworks, such as colonial history, migration or collective resistance. Teachers do not need to be experts in the specific issue chosen by the students, but rather to accompany the process of critical knowledge construction.

Dialogue forum: 'What kind of school do we want to build?'

A horizontal assembly is organised, in which the different groups present the maps and productions developed throughout the activity.

Based on these presentations, a collective dialogue is opened with questions such as the following:

- What would need to change in the classroom for all this knowledge to form part of the learning process?
- Which rules, forms of communication or assessment criteria make what each person knows and experiences invisible?

Public action: collective intervention in the school space

The group decides collectively how to share the work done with the educational community (families, teachers, faculty or management team). Some possible options are the creation of a mural, an exhibition, a school newspaper, a video or

a collective manifesto.

> **Note**
>
> The aim of this phase is to ensure that the experience is not confined to the classroom, but challenges institutional hierarchies of knowledge and highlights the collective and situated production of knowledge from a perspective of difference.

The activity can be expanded and turned into a longer-term project, incorporating, for example, interviews with families, analysis of media discourse, writing public letters or community actions linked to the words and issues worked on.

Resources

Web page

- **Fronteres invisibles.** Website of a youth collective that promotes activities in educational spaces in Catalonia around migration, racism, and borders. The site includes teaching materials and links to educational and community projects. https://fronteresinvisible.wixsite.com/frinvisibles (Available in Catalan)

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(*) Content available only on the web.