

**BLACK WOMEN
MANAGERS: A
REQUIRED PRESENCE!**

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YONE

GONZAGA

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1. My origins

My full name is Yone Maria Gonzaga. People call me Yone Gonzaga. In the colonization processes, one of the things that our people lost was their names. Here in Brazil, they became Mary belonging to farmer X, Francis belonging to farmer Y. Although “our names” are “our colonial names”, we need to assert ourselves with name and surname, as Lélia Gonzalez said. So, I am Yone Gonzaga, a member of a large black family: father, mother, and six children, including me.

My parents are from the countryside of Minas Gerais. My father, Manoel Raymundo Gonzaga, is from Curvelo. My mother, Margarida Aparecida Gonzaga, is from a city called Rio Espera, close to Conselheiro Lafaiete. Both came to Belo Horizonte as teenagers and met here, in Belo Horizonte. My mother had lost her mother at the age of five. At 13, when she lost her father, she and my aunt, her older sister, decided to come to Belo Horizonte and bring their brothers. As soon as she arrived, my mother went to live around the Ipanema / Frei Eustáquio neighborhood, near the Dom Bosco Church. My father also lived in the area. When she got married - she got married

early, at 17 - she worked in a nail factory and the boss said: “people who marry need their own home”. So, he encouraged her to buy a plot where she already lived. So, she bought the lot where she lives until today. All my siblings and I were born and raised in the Ipanema neighborhood, in Belo Horizonte.

My parents' presence in me

My family is quiet, with a remarkably close and strict mother. I understand the weight of having to raise six children well. There was this huge fear that the daughters would get pregnant and that my sons would use marijuana. She said: “I don't want to have a pothead for a child” - that was heavy for the time. She insisted: “We have our work and our word”. So, things like honesty, truth, being very sincere in what is said, my mother always demanded that a lot. She also said that the studying created possibilities. My mother had several jobs. She was a domestic worker for a long time, a vegetable seller, worked in a restaurant. Around the time I was in elementary school, my mother had studied up to the third grade, in the countryside. It was only when I was a little older that she went back to school. When I was in high school, she passed in a public exam for the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), for the position of Operational Assistant for Diverse Services. She managed to have a civil servant job that provided better financial support for our family. After joining UFMG, she decided to study. She took the Nursing Assistant course and then the Nursing Technician course. With that, she had mobility in the career of administrative technician in the university and, when she retired, she held the position of Nursing Assistant.



Manoel Raymundo Gonzaga and Margarida Aparecida Gonzaga (in memoriam) at the end of their daughter Yone Maria Gonzaga's graduation.

By: Personal Archive

My father was a bricklayer, he worked civil construction. He was illiterate, so he didn't have this formal understanding of schooling. I say formal because he was always wise. He dealt with everyone, he was quite easy to deal with, he talked with everyone. Although he didn't know Durkheim, Marx and such, he had the baggage and knowledge of life, orality, tradition. Thus, he was able to be in any environment. As my mother says, he was much more tranquil about life. This made him have a different presence in our lives. He passed away in 2014 and the memory we have of him is of someone who whistled, who sang. With his grandchildren, there he launched into games, laughter, dances, and such. He was not like that as much with us, his kids. He always danced with us, but with his grandchildren he danced a lot more. My mother would say: "In your father's family, a fork dropping becomes a samba". Today, over 80 years-old, my mother is ill. Every now and then, to make her laugh, I throw my fork on the floor. I go take care of her every day. Then I sing, make noise, put on music. I like to play, laugh, and dance. She says: "Here comes the noisy one". To her, this belonged to my father and not her. I think I carry a lot of their presence, both of theirs, my mother's seriousness for the things I do and my father's lightheartedness.

I have an older brother and sister and three younger brothers. I am the third child. Our neighborhood has always been very peaceful, all getting along. Since my mother was a strict person, she didn't let us to go to the neighbors' houses. The neighbors, on the other hand, could all come to our house, so we welcomed a lot of playmates in the yard to play, eat fruit, things like that. I have many memories of a materially poor childhood, but rich in people. We did not have a television at home. We watched television at the neighbor's house. It was interesting. At her house, the room was very large, the television was there in the corner of the room crowded with people. The whole neighborhood went to her house.

2. Studies

My older brother didn't find himself in his studies. He ended up having to help the family financially, as there were many children. My sister had several health problems when she was little. This affected her possibilities a lot, she only finished elementary school after she was an adult. I'm the third daughter, so I managed to leave this place and had the chance to study.

I remember that when I was still little, I was already taking my sister's booklets, who is a year and a half older, and was in elementary school learning to read with difficulties. I already could read. So, when I entered the first grade, I already knew how to read. I remember the teachers saying: "Wow, you already know how to read!". Many of my memories have to do with the school. I have always been very studious, and I did well in all subjects, both Portuguese and Math. I wanted to travel, I dreamed of traveling; without the opportunity, I think I traveled through books.

In high school, I studied at Imaco¹. I was in love with that school that allowed me to move around in other spaces. There, I took the technical course in Accounting. At the end of the 3rd year², I was going to take the university entrance exam, but there wasn't a lot of information on majors. As a black teenager, I was not encouraged to think about entering university or the course I was going to take. No, there was no encouragement like that and no family reference. So, when I read the brochure for the exam in which came the syllabus of each course and which universities offered what, I only knew that I couldn't go to PUC³ or other private universities because I had no money; I would have to go to UFMG⁴. Then, I saw that the Literature course had many things that I liked (I always liked Literature) and I had the possibility of taking classes at night (I had to work, I couldn't afford to study all day). It was my first and only entrance exam, at 18, and I passed.

In 1981, I joined UFMG. I started studying at night and started to open paths for myself. At university, everything was hugely different from what I lived. At that time, the 1st semester was called the "basic cycle", which brought together the disciplines of social sciences and humanities, and the people in those courses studied at FAFICH⁵, at Carangola Street. For me, it was remarkably interesting and challenging, because, as I said, I liked to read, but Durkheim, Marx, Weber, that was a kind of reading that I did not have. The basic cycle, with this mixture, was a challenging moment, with new expansion of possibilities. Then, I went to the disciplines of the Literature major itself, which weren't that challenging, since they were about Literature, which I liked a lot. I did very well in them. My relationships during undergrad were limited since I had to work. I have no friends from my undergraduate years, my contact with my classmates took place almost strictly in the classroom.

I always wanted to study, I graduated, and soon after I got a postgraduate degree in People Management, also at UFMG. But I always did a lot of things at the same time. When I finished my degree, I had concurrent professional activities. I held the position of professor in Basic Education teacher in the State and the Municipal Educational Networks of Minas Gerais and Belo Horizonte, concurrently with the position of Assistant in Administration at UFMG. In addition, at 33 years old I got married. In 1997, I had my first child, Vitor Gonzaga, and the second, Tomás Gonzaga, in 2002. With young children, I had to make a choice and leave one of my professional activities. Even so, I soon joined the union activity. That is why I didn't get a master's degree right away.

1 Municipal school which functioned inside the Municipal Park back then; today it resides at Gonçalves Dias Street.

2 Final year of Brazilian high school.

3 Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais, a private university.

4 Federal University of Minas Gerais.

5 Faculty of Philosophy and Human Sciences, now in the Pampulha campus.

Master's degree: collaborating towards the racial identity literacy of a professional category

In 2006, I started acting in the Affirmative Actions Program at UFMG, which was coordinated by Professor Nilma Lino Gomes⁶. I participated in two studies coordinated by Professor Inês Assunção de Castro Teixeira: “Memories and trajectories of black students at UFMG” and “Memories and trajectories of black professors at UFMG”. When I started my master's degree in 2009, I wanted to research the memories and trajectories of black administrative workers. If the university has a tripod - professors, students, and admin staff - one of the bases was missing. That was my question for the master's. I was supervised by professor Nilma Lino Gomes, which was already prominent at the time.

But there were some stones in the middle of the road! There was no institutional information on university workers' ethnic-racial background, so one of the first challenges for my research was to build this database. When I moved to field work, one thing that came up very intensely was the white workers' questions. They asked why I wanted to talk to black people only. At the university, there was another type of discrimination, professor-admin discrimination. Unfortunately, the admin staff is a second-class citizen within the university. I ended up surveying people of all racial backgrounds. White people, who also felt discriminated against, appeared so frequently that Professor Nilma said: “We won't be able to disregard this fact, we'll have to work with white people too”. Thus, my research stopped being about black workers only and became about technical-administrative workers⁷, race relations, and actively produced invisibility.

Thinking about the technical-administrative category was thinking about the relationship between white and black people in the most diverse positions, in hierarchies, in the invisibility actively produced, both for white and for black people. You remember the saying: “those who can, give the orders, those who have good sense, obey them”? The technicians had to obey. But there was still a difference in this process, black technicians were much more discriminated against. In addition to being technical staff, they were black. I think this process was interesting because many workers recognized themselves in my research. The union has appropriated this category of invisibility and my text to think about and expand its own position in relation to affirmative

⁶ Nilma Lino Gomes, graduated in Pedagogy and held a Master's degree in Education at UFMG and PhD in Social Anthropology at USP. She completed a postdoc at the University of Coimbra. She is a professor at the Faculty of Education at UFMG. In 2013 and 2014, she was dean of the University of International Integration of Afro-Brazilian Lusophony (UNILAB), becoming the first black woman to occupy the most important position in a federal university in Brazil. In January 2015, she became Minister for the Special Secretariat for Policies to Promote Racial Equality - SEPPPIR, for the federal government, until 2016.

⁷ The name of the professional category studied.

policies. I like this work a lot because, in a way, it was a form of racial-identity literacy for a professional category of workers. People talked about the way they were treated by professors, but when I managed to categorize this form of discrimination, we started working on it, thinking about affirmative policies. I think that my work gave support to this movement.

PhD: reflecting on the management of racial ethnic diversity

I finished my master's in 2011. In 2012, I participated in the selection for the PhD, which I started in 2013 with the goal of thinking about the management of ethnic-racial diversity at UFMG. I was interested in knowing if the university's management changed with the presence of a larger number of black students. Again, the issue of institutional racism ended up appearing very strongly during the PhD. We observed that the university does not prepare itself to handle this black presence, it reacts to the presence of black students. Black students have a greater demand for retention policies. So, the university “puts out some fires” and provides certain things. By that, I mean, that it does not organize itself to meet the demands of these bodies, because it was not designed to receive these individuals. For example, it is more common among black students who, right from the start, need immediate access to the lunch voucher. The university was designed by white people to serve white people.

Another observation on the quotas issue is that just as the university does not organize itself to provide service to the students, it also doesn't organize itself to train its workers (professors and technicians) to work professionally with these individuals who arrive at the institution. It is one thing to talk about blackness, it is another thing to talk with technical competence about ethnic-racial relations in Brazil, because people think they can say anything about the racial issue, that they don't need training. The university agrees with this by not preparing its workers politically and affirmatively to deal with the racial issue.

The challenge of being in a space that my own did not access

In my family, both paternal and maternal, we are many cousins. In my generation, I was the first person to go to university. The first to graduate, to get a driver's license, to go to graduate school, the first, first, first! This ends up being a brand that I carry, for better or for worse.

My achievements were victories for my parents, but also for the family. When I graduated high school, Imaco had a graduation ceremony and a mass. I remember the whole family being there. At least one member in each family went to my graduation. For my undergraduate degree, it

was the same thing. For my master's and PhD, the closest family nucleus was there with me⁸. For my family, it has always been a source of great joy to see a daughter, a niece arriving at this place of doctor. Dad used to say: “My daughter is going to be a doctor” but, unfortunately, he had already passed away when I defended my doctoral thesis in 2017. My mother was present in all these moments. Since she worked at UFMG, it was common to have people saying that their children had started university. For her, it was a source of pride to answer that her daughter had also conquered this space.

Some people in the family sometimes don't understand my insistence on them seeking a different possibility in education. The cousins in my generation got married at 18, 20 years old. At 40, they were all becoming grandmothers. They had children when they were very young, and their daughters had the same trajectory as their mothers. I do not mean to say that motherhood is not a nice thing, but I think it is necessary to structure yourself to be a mother, to be a father. Having a job, a profession, having the minimum to offer the child. When I put this to my cousins and then to my cousins' daughters, not everyone understood. They didn't understand the need to build other possibilities for women. My sister and brothers didn't go to college, so it was always a challenge to be in a place that my own didn't access. I had to be able to cope with the university's grammar, vocabulary, and all the possibilities that being at the university offers, and at the same time, I could not forget where I came from. That is why I joke that it is for good and bad, because it demands a lot from me until today. There is another thing, being a doctor: there are few women doctors, few black women doctors. I am among the few black women doctors, dealing with that is a permanent challenge.

3. Professional trajectory

At 9 years old, I already helped my mother. She had a stall selling legumes and greens and I stayed in that stall. We thought we had an obligation to help. I always took on the educational responsibility of my younger brothers. My mother worked, she couldn't go to school meetings, so I went, helped with homework, took them to the pediatrician, and to get vaccines. They are memories of a childhood with a lot of responsibilities.

When I was in high school, my mom still worked at a restaurant. I interned at the Belo Horizonte City Hall (PBH), in the sector responsible for the Code of Urban Space Usage. From the PBH I went to work in an accounting office, where I stayed until I started university.

⁸ Brazilian Master's degrees and PhDs do not have graduation ceremonies, only the student's defense/viva, which is open to the public.

At the time I started higher education, I passed the UFMG public exam for the position of administrative technician. I was assigned to work at the UFMG's University Hospital. When I finished my degree, I became a Basic Education teacher. I kept the work parallel with that of the university for 12 years. When I had my first child, I left teaching. My salary at this job was lower, so I had to make a choice, and I chose to continue at the university.

At UFMG, when I left the University Hospital, I went to the Office of the Dean of Human Resources to advise on the Permanent Commission for Technical-Administrative Personnel (CPPTA). I worked there for two years and then went to the Human Resources Division, which was the central area for human resources (HR) at the university. I stayed for several years there and became coordinator of the evaluation field for a period. Finally, I coordinated the people management area at the Faculty of Dentistry. In the 14 years that I was there, I was a supervisor. Since the positions I held at the university were administrative, they were not seen as relevant within the university. There, positions are filled by the person who performs their duties well. I think that is why I got to those positions.

I expanded my union activity in the early 2000s. I was coordinator of social policies for the Workers in Federal Education Institutions Union (SINDIFES / BH) for some time. When I started university, the career plan for technical workers was from the 1980s. The process of discussing the career plan at the university had been in place for decades. With Lula's arrival in the government, the approval of a new career plan became more palpable. In 2005, a National Commission was formed to discuss the new plan and I was part of that commission. I went to Brasília and participated in the conferences by the Federation of Unions of Brazilian Universities Workers (Fasubra)⁹. At UFMG there was also a commission that discussed the career plan of the university's admin staff and I was elected by them to represent them. I served as a sub-coordinator of this commission. When my name came out in the university bulletin, my mother liked it, people told her: “I saw your daughter's name”, Margarida's daughter.

Agora eu sou professora contratada na Faculdade Latino-americana de Ciências Sociais (Flacso), onde oriento estudantes de Mestrado do Curso Estado, Gobierno y Políticas Públicas.

I also worked as a teacher in university extension courses. I was a teacher in for the Policies to Promote Racial Equality at the School course¹⁰, in the Youth Life Tutor Training Course and in

⁹ In 2004, there was huge mobilization and victories for the Federation. After a strike which lasted about 90 days, the category achieved the Career Plan for Technical Administrative Workers of IFES - Federal Institutions of Higher Education, established by Law No. 11.091 / 2005.

¹⁰ A partnership between the universities and the Affirmative Action Program for the Black Population in Federal and State Institutions of Higher Education (Uniafro).

training courses promoted by PRORH¹¹, in the latter case I worked for a long time as a teacher in the field of Instrumental Portuguese for technical-administrative workers. The teaching experience in university extension and training courses was also interesting. Now I am a teacher in the Latin American Social Sciences Institute (FLACSO), where I supervise master's students in State, Government, and Public Policy.

In 2016, I was allowed by the Faculty of Dentistry to assume the position of Superintendent of Affirmative Policies at the Undersecretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SUPIR), of the Human Rights, Participation, and Citizenship Secretariat for the State of Minas Gerais (SEDPAC), where I stayed until the end Governor Fernando Pimentel's term. I returned to UFMG and soon retired in 2019.

Today I have an ethnic, racial, and gender relations consultancy micro-company. Training managers has been one of our activities. My desire to work with managers is to generate institutional change. That is why I have specialized in this area. It has aspects of technical knowledge, political relationship, dialogic relationship with the various social movements. Some managers are stuck in their offices producing legislation and guidelines, without developing a dialogue with their surroundings.

Teaching in basic education, a time of great learning

As soon as I graduated, I passed a public exam for a state school and went to work at a small school at the neighborhood of Venda Nova, Teacher Maria Coutinho State School, which was starting an expansion process. I worked there as a Portuguese teacher for six years. I followed the creation of the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grades for the students of that time. In this region, on the outskirts of Belo Horizonte, families had migrated from cities in the countryside. The children came from Santa Luiza, Sete Lagoas, from the metropolitan area; for them, being in Venda Nova made a difference. It was an improvement: "I left Santa Luzia and now I'm here in Venda Nova". So, the students had an extremely positive reference regarding the school in Belo Horizonte.

In this school, the families established a close relationship and because in this region there weren't many leisure possibilities, on Saturdays, at the school, they played volleyball, soccer. We had a couple of teachers who taught agricultural practices and they made a vegetable garden. Thus, in addition to going to play in the schoolyard, on Saturdays the students also watered this garden. Thus, a closeness was developed, strengthening bonds and the school's protection network. Today, we see violence, invasions in schools. In the years that I worked there, there was no history of school depredation. The community, as a participant in the school, saw this as a space for possibilities.

11 The Pro-Chancellor at UFMG Human Resources offers employees a number of different types of training.

It was also there that I started to introduce the racial-ethnic question in my Portuguese classes, working with some texts and music. There was still no legislation on the insertion of the theme in the curricula, but I had already inserted it in this very articulated work with the Geography teacher and the History teacher, because I had learned about this necessity in the black movement. Another interesting thing is that some students had never been to downtown Belo Horizonte. We had a field trip to the UFMG campus since I also worked at the university. I took them to see the buildings, to see the Dean's Building and to understand what it was, to know the Faculty of Languages, where I had studied, and the library. This experience of knowing another space, another possibility, had never happened in my time as a student, so I always thought about providing this for my students.

I did another public exam for the Belo Horizonte municipal network, where I worked for five, six years. At a school in the northwest region, Father Edeimar Massote Municipal School. During this period, I found a group of teachers who already had a more focused activity regarding ethnic-racial relationships, a more open thought for education. It was a more left-wing group of political activists. Our school was one of the best in the city of Belo Horizonte. Several teachers later went on to become trainers at the Teacher Enhancement Training Center of the municipal educational network. I believe that there I was able to improve my teaching because I had already undergone through a teaching experience at the state school. When we leave college, we find a grammar of the daily life of the classroom, which we do not learn, that the day-to-day will teach us. In this school, the experience was much more worthwhile, in the sense of the perception of what I could do, how to dialogue with other educational instances outside the school, such as the theater, the cinema, the network of libraries. This school made all this possible and, as a Portuguese teacher, I made use of these possibilities. Thus, the 12 years in basic education were a period of great learning.

The management challenge at the Faculty of Dentistry

The Faculty of Dentistry operated in Cidade Jardim¹² and in the 2000s it was transferred to the Pampulha Campus. When I arrived, I was welcomed by my admin colleagues, many already knew me because of union action, but I was really rejected by the teachers. In addition, the presence of white people in places of command was much greater. They were used to doing things the way they wanted. In personnel management, a large part of the activities was standardized, and many didn't like it, they thought that I wanted to rule and not that that was the norm. My interpretation of this behavior was that, since they were mostly white and wealthy men, they had always been in charge. Suddenly, a black and poor woman arrived to give the orders.

12 Upper-class neighborhood in Belo Horizonte.

The person who preceded me had a more notary-like perspective - open the process, forward it, fill out the form. I wanted to look beyond the processes, for example, to pay attention to the people who were dissatisfied in certain sectors. Solving these other issues was a priority for me. The career plan was very recent and talked about the possibility of administrative staff having a salary bump when taking courses. So, I was very interested in enabling them to take classes. In a way, this interest of mine broke the logic that existed at the unit, as the staff arrived there at 8 am and worked until 5 pm to meet the needs of students and professors. From the moment that these technical-administrative workers started to take courses at HR central or in a college, it became evident that the teachers were not used to talking with them and understanding that they had rights. This beginning was challenging. Then, people learned that there is a law that lays out these possibilities for admin and professional responsibilities. I managed to show that, as an admin staff learned more, they gave a better return on the work he developed.

I think that, because of this, when leaving Dentistry, many professors said, “I will miss you very much”. I had already achieved an organization of work and an understanding of the insertion of workers as participants in what was produced at Dentistry. I always said that dentistry cannot only treat teeth, it is a unit linked to healthcare. Having this greater understanding, that the person is not just a mouth, but a whole, is part of a broader thing, health, SUS¹³. There were people who went on to get a degree in Dentistry, Social Work, Health Management courses, among others, based on this dialogue that I had been promoting about the possibilities that the career plan offered and what Dentistry was in the context of the university.

Understanding the workings of another public machine

I was appointed to the position of Superintendent of Affirmative Policies at the Racial Equality Undersecretariat (SUBIR), at the Human Rights, Participation, and Citizenship Secretariat of the State of Minas Gerais (SEDPAC) when this secretariat was created, under the administration of Governor Fernando Pimentel, from the Workers' Party (PT). The secretariat was coordinated by Nilmário Miranda. There was a wish for the undersecretary to articulate with the federal sphere, which was coordinated by Professor Nilma Lino Gomes, SEPPIR Minister.

I often say that the challenge for the secretariat was twofold. The first was to understand the functioning of this quite different public machine. As superintendent of affirmative policies, I had to give answers, I had to think about policies to serve the population sections based on ethnic-racial management, since we worked not only with black people, but also with indigenous people, gypsies, traditional communities, riverside communities. Thinking about policy possibilities for

all these segments was a challenge, because until then I did not know how the administrative machinery of the executive branch worked. For that, I had to search for other knowledge, readings, and people to think about projects, to think about the relationship with the Legislative Assembly, the relationship between secretariats. Our policy to promote racial equality was a cross-cutting and intersectoral policy. Understanding this and figuring out where and with whom we could talk to put in place a policy to promote racial equality was a challenge.

The second type of challenges was related to institutional racism. Until then, there was no undersecretariat or superintendency that had the policy of promoting racial equality thought of as public policy. When we said: “I am from the Human Rights Secretariat”, people had a notion, however vague; but when we said: “I’m from the Racial Equality Secretariat”, the person would grimace immediately. They started with those speeches built on equality, in a logic of exclusion of differences, as if everyone were equal and we didn't need a specific undersecretary for black people. In addition, people don't understand the racial issue for several individuals, they only think of black men and women.

The challenges posed by institutional racism were very intense. Getting people to understand that we need an affirmative policy because it works within the logic of reparation, within the logic of ensuring human rights, that these individuals are human and that social indicators show the inequality to which these populations are subjected to. This needed to be reiterated countless times during the day.

In addition, our articulation took place internally within the secretariat. So, understanding what was going on inside another secretariat, for example, what resources and policies that secretariat already had and that could be crosscut by the issue of racial equality, was not easy. For this, we created the Intergovernmental Forum on Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality, and we invited all the secretariats to participate explaining its objective. So, we started to find out where policies had already been designed that we could act on to promote racial equality. For example, a secretariat had a program that worked with community gardens, so we showed that in a quilombo there was a garden that could be enhanced by expanding the possibilities of own consumption, but also the economic possibilities of that collective - that is, making an affirmative policy. Having this view, being able to inform those who were in another office that quilombola¹⁴ is a subject with rights, and that investing in an affirmative policy there would bring significant returns both for that individual and for the state was challenging and interesting, and it allowed me to get to know the structure within.

13 Unified Healthcare System, the public healthcare system in Brazil.

14 Quilombo is a traditional Community descended from enslaved people; a quilombola is a member of that community.

I learned a lot. In some departments we had a lot of feedback from managers who said: “we were never asked / guided to think that way”, to think about these individuals based on this logic. Public policy is often thought of in the territory: “territory X has a larger number of poor people, so we have to have cisterns in the sanitation policy, for these people”. They never thought of those individuals as black individuals or as impoverished black individuals because of the historical past of enslavement, of colonization. Why do you have more quilombola territories in the north of Minas Gerais? These individuals left the coastlines and went deeper into the territory so that they could have possibilities for their lives. To think about this historically and politically was something new.



A SUBIR project that I'd like to highlight is the Program for Gender and Racial Equality, in which we worked with Rede Minas, COPASA, CEMIG, BDMG, and CODEMIG¹⁵, at the state level, and the Post Office, at the federal level. It was remarkably interesting when we went to talk at BDMG. One of the things we stated was the need to have different financing conditions for these groups, which constitute a collective that is more impoverished than the reality of Minas Gerais. Since BDMG is a bank that thinks about development, it was important to add these individuals and consider their specificities. The first time we said it, they look startled, as if to say: "What is this thing? Who is this madwoman?"

Another interesting situation at BDMG was that we had a great team of partnerships within the program. When we talked about the internship project that was offered to PUC and

In honor of the 70th birthday of Sueli Carneiro, philosopher, activist in the Black Brazilian Movement and the Black Women's Movement. June 2020.

By: Personal Archive

¹⁵ Respectively, the state of Minas Gerais's public television station, water company, electric company, development bank, and development company.

UFMG, we warned that, since the institutions where the program was made available were the best, the group of interns was very homogeneous, young white men and women. We insisted: if the bank is a development bank, it must have an affirmative policy. Then they opened the possibility of applications from other colleges. In one of the debates, we had on affirmative policy, a young black woman who lived in Ribeirão das Neves and took the business course at a private college, said that when she saw the call for the internship she had never thought about the possibility of working at BDMG. Before signing up, she thought about it a thousand times, then went to talk to a professor who said: "sign up, you already have a 'no', you can still get the 'yes'". And she had the 'yes'. A black woman, from Ribeirão das Neves, at a small private college, which she had entered thanks to the scholarship she got from Prouni¹⁶. This young woman already had a little daughter that she left with her mother to be able to work and pay for her studies, among other things. She said that being an intern at BDMG made it possible to have better pay, so she could pay a person to stay with the baby for a period and not overburden her mother. Affirmative policies change the gears and knowing that these gear changes are also a result of your work and effort is really cool.

Finally, being at the secretariat allowed me to get to know the quilombos outside the metropolitan region of Belo Horizonte - the indigenous territories, the gypsies, and therefore to know and speak about a reality that goes far beyond what one hears about.

4. Reflections

Constructing my identity

The construction of my identity has been present since always. Through all that racism produced, discrimination and fear, in my house my mother said: “you are black people, you have to know where you are going, with whom you are going, because with black people the weight [of police violence] is greater”. She guided us, especially my brothers, black men. Thus, we always understood ourselves to be black. Activism helped me to understand politically this way of being in the world. Not because I was worse, but because there was the pressure of racism, there was a hierarchy.

I only started to have a racial interpretation of how society treated us differently in my youth. In my day, the one who stood out in Math was the school's big shot. I was that stand-out in Math. In my class, from first to fourth grade, there was a boy who was also excellent in all subjects, but something was different, his mother was a teacher. My mother had studied in the countryside, she

¹⁶ University for All Program, which gives scholarships to low-income students to attend private colleges or universities.

didn't have educational opportunities. So, on the day of the diploma award in the fourth grade, he received a medal of honor, and I was surprised that I didn't receive a medal as well; his grades were the same as mine, I felt badly that I didn't get one. My fourth-grade photo with the diploma was not with my teacher. I took a picture with a third-grade teacher, who was a person who always valued me. These things are striking. I only realized this as a racial issue, as a discrimination suffered by black students, from the activism in the social movement and later, as a researcher, when I went to investigate the various racial violence suffered by black children at school.

I discovered the black movement in my teens. The librarian at the school where I studied always saw me reading, I went to the library a lot. One day she asked me: "why don't you join the youth group?". So, I started to participate in the group of young people at the Catholic Church. At one of the training meetings, one of the trainers spoke about a black awareness group, I became interested in it. He was a seminarian, he left the phone for us to call him, but we could only call at a certain time. Then I would call at that time, from a public phone, the coins would fall, and I could not speak properly. He then invited me to a meeting. I went to that meeting and then to others, and that is how I started to participate in the Black Unity and Awareness Group (GRUCON). A group that had national expression. It was organized in 13 states in Brazil and articulated a lot with the Unified Black Movement (MNU). I participated in many joint activities in Belo Horizonte. This gave me political knowledge, broadened horizons - I even had the possibility to travel. At around 22 I had deep knowledge of the black movement. This activism also opened doors for me. Today, I am part of the Black Women Network of Minas Gerais. We started in 2015, organizing the national march. In 2018, we held the Black Women March. The march is a manifestation of a continuous process of reflection and articulation.

The African worldview

Because of activism, I also had greater contact with religions of African origin. My mother was Catholic, so we were raised in the Catholic church. I know that my grandfather, my father's father, was Catholic, Vincentian, and had an Umbanda *terreiro*. But my mother didn't allow us to go to my grandfather's house on those occasions. My grandfather was well known in the neighborhood, we were known as José Júlio's grandchildren there. In my neighborhood there was Congado¹⁷ and we knew everyone, but we didn't participate. When they left for the streets, they passed through our

17 Congado is a mixture of the celebrations brought by enslaved Africans with colonial Christian religiosity. Its origins date back to an African rite, in which the subjects held a procession (or cortejo) in honor of the Congo Kings, to thank their rulers.

door. During my activism, I met the Community of Arturos¹⁸, with which I have a great affinity, a friendship. I was Festivity Queen there in 2007.

I learned that for African religions there is no division of things, everything is a construction. There are several paths. Many people say that they don't understand a person who goes, for example, to Congado and also to Candomblé. This is possible because African religions are not a closed box, you have the possibility of being this and that. The African worldview makes this possible. Since everything is construction and there are several gods, you don't need to be limited to a space or a religion.

Insertion of African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture in curricula

I like to think of Law 10.639 / 2003 that mandates the inclusion of African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture in the curricula as a result of the struggle of black activism. When we think about the Black Experimental Theater, we realize that Abdias do Nascimento¹⁹ and Guerreiro Ramos²⁰ already discussed the need to bring the cultural elements of Africanity to schools. Black movements were creating these possibilities. I have a letter in my house from 1989, scheduling a black movement meeting to discuss the racial issue in education. We were already thinking about ethnic-racial education, although we did not name it that way. The black movement questioned the absence of black people in textbooks and disciplines.

The law is fundamental, but the curriculum guidelines also need to be known. Knowing the guidelines and how to apply them at all levels of education is essential. The law has potential that needs to be further explored. Obviously, if truly implemented black women and men will be strengthened, because their origins will be valued. Unfortunately, it has not been implemented as it should have been and there's a lot of rhetoric to justify this. There are teachers who say until today: "I don't know what to do to implement it." Why don't they act as they do with other laws, and they are proactive? What is behind this passivity? There are teachers who say: "I don't use the law, because I don't have any material". I do not need to create material; I need to be critical of the

18 Community descendant from Camilo Silvério da Silva, who was enslaved and brought to Brazil from Angola in the mid-19th century. Their festivities are considered historical and cultural heritage of Brazil.

19 Abdias do Nascimento (1914-2011) was a black Brazilian politician, university professor, activist, and multi-faceted artist, including acting, poetry, and playwriting among his work. He organized the National Convention of Brazilian Blacks (1946), the First Congress of Brazilian Blacks (1950), and the Third Congress of Black Culture in the Americas (1982). He founded the Black Experimental Theater, the Black Art Museum, and the Afro-Brazilian Research Institute. In 2010, he was an official nominee to the Nobel Peace Prize.

20 Alberto Guerreiro Ramos (1915-1982) was a Brazilian sociologist and politician, having served as federal deputy and as a member of the Brazilian delegation to the UN. His books and papers have been translated into several languages.

material that is in the classroom. That rhetoric of not knowing or not having material to implement the law is part of the racist discourse.

When my children were in basic education, teachers often talked in a very caricature way or only talked about black people in culture, dance, music, and soccer. They didn't show the truth, that black people built our country. My children already knew this, but not everyone has the opportunity to have a mother who talks to them about the issue.

In early childhood, my children studied in municipal schools. Even before the law was passed, the municipal educational network already had an ethnic-racial training nucleus. At City Hall, this discussion was already being made within the Municipal Education Secretariat. Patrícia Santana, Maria do Carmo Galdino, Fátima Gomes, Mara Evaristo and her sister Macaé Evaristo formed a group of people who thought about social relations in education, who were also activists. One of the first things that this nucleus proposed, and that the city took on was the development of a literary kit. In this kit were placed books written by black people or that used the ethnic-racial theme. Thus, my children had the opportunity to reading these, as well as other children who were in the municipal network at the time.

The struggle for affirmative policies (quotas) at university

I was one of the people who fought for the quotas. I participated in the Zumbi dos Palmares March in 1995, in marches in Belo Horizonte, in the mobilization within UFMG. The university didn't implement quotas until it became a law. Our conflict at the university was very intense, but institutional racism prevented the university from making that choice. It was also the black movement that sensitized and politicized me to defend quotas, it was not the university. It was in the black movement that I started to understand the absence of black bodies at the university, in this place of knowledge production. I started working very early at the university and at a UFMG unit that had many black people, the University Hospital. But there, black people occupied, and still occupy, certain places: infrastructure, restaurant, nutrition, laundry, nursing, and other activities. I mean, there is a mass of black professionals, but those who command them, in general, are white professionals. This racial interpretation of occupational places, I started to do in the black movement.

When the quota debate was brought up by the social movements, I soon began to have this debate also at the university. I already understood that the black workers at the university were in more precarious jobs within the institutional organization chart. I noticed the absence of black professors, an evident split between white students and professor and black technical-administrative workers. This also made me engage in dialogue for the approval of quotas.

In late 2008, UFMG approved the bonus policy, I was part of that debate. Then I joined the Social Inclusion Monitoring Commission (Cais), for as long as it existed. The university created a social inclusion policy, not a quota policy. It is undeniable that as of Law 12.711 / 2012²¹, there was a much larger insertion of black students in the university, even though it is a social class law. I like to highlight this because people often forget that this is a social class quota law. Our demand as a black movement was for racial quotas, quotas for black students. In the current law, blacks are benefited in a second or third instance, they must be black and poor, while the racial quotas proposal was designed for historical reparation, it would be for blacks, regardless of social background.

As I said, there is a much larger influx of black students, but these students face institutional racism. Their lack of themes focused on racial issues in the courses is still immense. I interpret that as, although we have the disciplines of Portuguese language literature and Brazilian literature, racial issues were not present in my graduation. Cruz e Sousa, Machado de Assis and many others were not highlighted as black authors.

The absence of black knowledge in curricula persists. Since 2003, we have law 10.639 / 2003, which speaks of the mandatory insertion of African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture in the curricula and, however, the university, which is a professional training institution, remains without this guidance. In some areas, there is a little more of this thematic insertion, but in others there is not. For example, at the Faculty of Education undergrad, where I got my master's and PhD, there is still no specific subject in the history of African and Afro-Brazilian culture.

Academia and activism

I usually question how the issue of activism is presented by academia. I think there is a desire to hierarchize knowledge, distinguishing knowledge and practice, knowledge, and awareness. I understand that academia uses this dichotomous way to rank. I really like the book *O Movimento Negro Educador*²², by professor Nilma Lino Gomes. In it, she speaks a lot about the possibility of education and re-education that black movements bring to Brazilian society. Not only for the academic field, but for society.

21 Law No 12.711, 29 August 2012, provides for admission to federal universities and to federal high-school technical education institutions. Federal institutions of higher education will reserve, in each selective competition for admission to undergraduate courses, the minimum percentage of 50% of their places for students who have fully attended high school in public schools. When filling these vacancies, 50% must be reserved for students from families with an income equal to or less than 1.5 minimum wages per capita and also filled, by major and attendance shift, by self-declared black, brown, and indigenous people and people with disabilities. (BRAZIL, Law No. 12.711, 29 August 2012).

22 The Educating Black Movement.

Both in the master's and in the doctorate, I was asked in the jury if the themes I brought up weren't related to my activism only. When I started my master's degree, I wanted to talk about technical-administrative workers, I was with the union, activism was there, but activism is part of my life. There is no way to dissociate the activist Yone and the researcher. Because the researcher Yone was also built from this activism; it was the activism that expanded conceptions, perceptions, and values in a political context, and that gave me the knowledge I must question even academia. I think that activism and resistance by us, peripheral black women, helps us to have a different perspective on management and in the classroom. I cannot escape my corporeality, my ancestry, this is present in me.

Racism in public management

The racial issue is a barrier everywhere. This thing of being called the "n-word", "monkey", it happens to all black men and women. We live in a society that is racist and that denies racism. This story that racism in Brazil is veiled is all talk; it is in plain view! For example, I, a black woman, when I arrived at the secretariat, I could only be with the racial equality portfolio. They didn't think I was there because of technical competence, but because I was a party member. People were also surprised when I said that I was doing a PhD, some people were shocked: "what, you are getting a PhD?". I knew white women who were superintendents for 14, 15 years, a life built as Superintendents; but who understood almost nothing about the functioning of the secretariat to which they were assigned. I knew about the need to think about politics, transversality, intersectionality; but as this takes effect in everyday life, I went to talk. When talking about it with these Superintendents, they retorted: "Wow, never thought of that." They were never required to think about it because they were white, blond, blue-eyed women.

Hair and skin color are markers

In this hair thing, I went through everything! In childhood, our mother braided our hair. I went to school with my hair braided. I remember the boys pulling on my braids. When we started adolescence there was that thing of looking beautiful, going out at night, and needing to have presentable hair. This "presentable" was straightened hair. So, my mother straightened our hair. Today I understand that it was her strategy, to make her daughters presentable in the eyes of a racist society. I always had an aversion to these things. Saturday was the day of torture, we had to clean the house in the morning, do the chores, and in the afternoon go to the salon to get our hair done - straightened - and be able to go out dancing at night. At least there was the dance. I straightened my hair until I was 22, 23 year-old.

When I started activism, I discovered that my curly hair, my afro hair, was also a tool for presenting my identity. I met some people who were already in the process of braiding, then I migrated towards them. I remember that when I started braiding my hair, in my family they said: "wow what hair is this?". I wore my braided hair in a bun for a long time. The militancy went through another hairstyle phase, square, and I also cut my hair like that. Then, I accepted my curls and wore it down. The tall, afro hair was more challenging. The afro is part of the black beauty composition, but it is a painful process, because people are stigmatized the whole time, discriminated against, and abused because of their hair.

The looks say everything. For example, when arriving and introducing myself as Superintendent, there were people who looked me up and down several times. They said: " Ah, Superintendent!" I wondered: " Ah, why? I already know, needless to say, the look has said it already". One of the things that stand out in management is the issue of black corporeality. If you think of black women in management, you will see some who are brown. When the person is brown, they still have a degree of being able to "pass". I don't have that, I'm black. As black woman manager, it's something else. When we arrive and it is said "this is the Superintendent" people look up and down, look at the color, and look at the hair. There is no escape, these two markers are present all the time.

We were five black women, with black skin, in the Racial Equality Undersecretariat. In the Policies for Women Undersecretariat, there were four others. Two colleagues had dreadlocks. Sometimes it coincided that the seven others were with their hair loose and people passing through the corridors of our floor, in the Administrative City, stared. Superintendent, black and with black hair is a lot of transgression for colonized minds. It is a model that clashes with the preconceived idea of a manager: straight hair, high heels, makeup. We had another image. That was a learning process for white people, that black women can also be managers.

In the Gender and Racial Equality Program, we had several dialogues during the periods when policymaking for women was discussed. I talked to a colleague who worked with gender about the need to articulate gender and race. This articulation faces challenges all the time. I, as a woman, an individual who declares herself black, who positions herself, I end up being scary for some people.

Especially in this election year, it is important to think about black women and the space of power. Some women are present in these spaces that we call power, but in reality, they take on a space that until then was prohibited to black women because of racism, but these spaces are not necessarily spaces of power. Professor Nilma occupied the Special Secretariat for Policies to Promote Racial Equality (SEPPIR), then the Ministry of Women, Racial Equality, and Human Rights.

Benedita da Silva city councilor, vice-governor, governor, senator, state deputy, and federal deputy, the first woman to occupy all these spaces. It's not enough! We have some city councilors, very few deputies here in Minas. At the federal level, very few.

In public administration, women generally take on those departments that are more focused on working with collectives, that is, only the sphere of care ends up being destined for women - Social Assistance, Education, and sometimes Healthcare. There are few women who assume the Planning Secretariat, Finance, these are areas considered to be more masculine. We need to understand that, in general, these places of power occupied by black women have extremely limited power. They are spaces with few resources and power is linked to economic issues, to the budget. Did the occupied spaces represent advances? Yes! But in this trajectory of black women, we still need to ask what kind of power we have.

Racial education is fundamental

Racial education and training of managers are essential. It is difficult to understand that black people can talk about other things than just the racial issue. When I am talking about racial issues, I'm talking about life, so I'm talking about everything. When I say that black men and women have the worst social indicators, I am talking about economics. If I say that black men and women were not brought from Africa, they were trafficked from Africa, I am talking about a historical and political issue. Black people are participants in the construction of the Brazilian nation. For me, re-education in ethnic-racial relations is an ethical and political commitment, fundamental for people to understand the need for affirmative policies as a reparatory policy.

When I worked at Undersecretariat, we participated in the Applied Project discipline with professor Aparecida Shikida, at the João Pinheiro Foundation. We talked a lot with students about the need for them to become managers capable of reading the racial issue as a structural matter. To think of these individuals as individuals with rights. The potential that these reflections had and have is very cool. I hope they can handle that today, being within management and thinking about it. I also participated in the quota debate at FJP.

At our consultancy, a friend and I have been working on discussing the role of white people in the racial issue. Racism was produced by white people; the social and political construction of racism is white. The issue of anti-racist action involves white people realizing the racial dimensions, realizing the white privileges, realizing that they must be in this fight, because their ancestors were in the process of creating everything. White people must deal with the processes of deconstructing and confronting racism and thinking about politics, since structural racism prevents the functioning of society, for both white and black people. Racism is bad for everyone.

Raising male children and raising black male children

The coordination of motherhood and work was actually easy for me, considering the many experiences I see around. But it was only easy because I always had a lot of support from my family. My eldest son and my niece were born months apart, they were the first grandchildren, first nephew and niece, so there was an intense presence of my mother and sister. Then the others came, and that presence was also very affectionate. I had many women surrounding me, helping in this process of raising children. My children's upbringing is largely due to my sister's presence; she has no children, but my children are partly her children.

In raising my children, I highlight two dimensions. The first, raising boys; and the second, raising black boys. Raising boys requires the woman's effort to not reproduce sexist processes. I have a good reference in my mother; she used to say to my brothers: "What you don't want for yourself, don't want for others". She also used to say to my brothers: "What you don't want to happen to your sisters and cousins, don't do to the daughter of others". And I try to say that to my children. Pass on to them the importance of respect and dialogue. It is another thing to raise black boys. There is the dimension of structural racism, which shakes mothers of black boys to the core. When you talk about this presence of racism, the hierarchy of relationships, I feel that this process of educating black boys is the most perverse thing for black women. Racism shows her all the time that he is a young black man. That his hair is a symbol, a target. My son has the target-skin. Target of discrimination, looks, police violence, interpretation. If he is running, he can be suspected of something, he can be stopped, a bullet can hurt him. For black mothers, there is nothing that hurts more. Raising a child, boy or girl, a black person in this racist society, it is extremely violent.

It means having to say to your child: "don't leave without ID", "if the police stop you, speak softly", "tell me everything you're going to do", "don't raise your arms". My son is almost six and half feet tall, he wears dreadlocks, he is very assertive, he has a political discourse on the tip of his tongue. He's my son and his father's son, who are two politicized, militant people. To tell him "If they stop you, keep quiet" is violence, and another violence to me, considering the life that I have led.

The great challenge for black women

I think the big challenge for black women is to be able to live with dignity. There is still most black women who have nothing to eat, who don't go to school or who are beaten, because they are black. Their educational trajectory is interrupted, and this reflects on their psychological, emotional health. It will reflect on their work opportunities. The great challenge the racisms impose on us daily.

They say that our black lives matter. They need to matter in all dimensions, mainly in the possibility of people being able to live as human beings. When it comes to the dimensions of human rights, the first is the right to life, which has been denied daily. There are several ways to kill us, to kill us by silencing, by erasing our stories, by discrediting our words.

5. Thinking about my constructions

We do not stop and think about the constructions that we make. You go on making them, but you do not have time to have it all organized, synthesized, reflected. The urgencies of life do not give us time to reflect. Whenever I did something, I did not think about leaving a legacy.

Education has always been present in my life, that is what built me. I think I am remembered as a teacher, although I didn't get to be a teacher at a federal university, but some students see me in that place.



I would like to be remembered as someone who was in the process of struggle, of historical, social, and political construction so that black people would have opportunities. I think of the fight for the quotas, the fight for housing, the fight for political representation... my fight for the quotas at UFMG, both in undergraduate and graduate courses; then in the fight for quotas at the João Pinheiro Foundation. There were things that came on the scene for me and that I just did, because I thought it was important, necessary, strategic. Today, when looking at it from the outside, one can think: "it's a hell of a breakthrough". What does it mean for the João Pinheiro Foundation to have black students? I think of the seedling, the conversations with students in Aparecida Shikida's class. Today there is a formal course. These are things that we have been sowing and now seeing some fruits.

Speaking about the importance of including racial diversity in companies. Gender and Race Pro Equity Program developed when she was the Superintendent of Affirmative Policies at the State Secretary for Human Rights. Sebrae/MG, 2017.

By: Personal Archive

11 ELIANE DIAS

Eliane Dias
Rosânia Sousa
Sérgio Luiz Felix da Silva

1. My Origins

I'm Eliane Dias, born in Corinto, in the countryside of Minas Gerais. Corinto is a city that was well known at the time of the Rede Federal Ferroviária Sociedade Anônima (RFFSA)¹, before its privatization. Corinto was a rich city, not only for its work with the railway, but also because of the exploitation of the crystal. White quartz, which despite being scarce due to high exploitation, is still a source of income that feeds many in the city. I come from this city that has a very welcoming and creative people. My family is black, a former resident of the deep country, of the Roça do Brejo district of Curvelo, we're simple people. My father was a cowboy; my mother washed clothes, was a domestic worker, a cook, and she also took care of and grew a small vegetable garden to feed the family. We left the countryside and went to live in Corinto, which remains with its almost 25 thousand inhabitants.

¹ Federal Train Network Company.