BOOK REVIEW

“DECOLONIALITY AND AFRO-DIASPORIC THINKING”

By Joaze Bernardino-Costa, Nelson Maldonado-Torres and Ramón Grosfoguel

Criticisms of abstract universalism and of ontological and, consequently, epistemological generalizations are increasingly gaining body and space in the struggles for re-existence and resistance. The body is also understood as the materiality of the geopolitics of knowledge, the geopolitical body, denounces the invisibility and the silencing of peoples, knowledge and histories that were subjugated by the various hierarchies of coloniality. In this context, the following text is a welcome addition: “Decoloniality and afro-diasporic thinking”, organized by Joaze Bernardino-Costa, Nelson Maldonado-Torres and Ramón Grosfoguel.

Released in 2018 by the publishing house Autêntica, within the Black Culture and Identities Collection, the book has the editorial seal of the Department of Sociology (SOL, in Portuguese) of the Universidade Federal de Brasília (UnB) and support from the Research Support Foundation of the Federal District and is in its second edition, by Autêntica.

The work has three hundred and sixty-six pages, with a dense introduction and fifteen independent chapters that can be read sequentially or not. However, the connection between the texts is impressive, both for the use of concepts and for the ethical and political purposes, clearly exposed throughout the book.


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Decoloniality and afro-diasporic thinking contribute to the strengthening of the discussion on the effects of coloniality, bringing in Portuguese texts by renowned female and male authors such as Patrícia Hill Collins’, “Black feminist epistemology” and names that cross the Atlantic, like Oyèrónké Oyewùmí, who present an original perspective to study gender from African epistemologies.

Chapters of different authors have an intense intellectual proximity, for example, “Analyzing coloniality and decoloniality: some basic dimensions” and “Convergences between Black Atlantic intellectuals: Guerreiro Ramos, Frantz Fanon and Du Bois”, written by Nelson Maldonado-Torres and Joaze Bernardino-Costa, respectively.

There is also a complementarity of ideas between Nilma Lino Gomes, author of “The Black Movement and black intellectuals decolonizing curriculums” and José Jorge Carvalho, in “Meeting of Knowledge and epistemic quotas: a movement for the decolonization of the Brazilian academic world”.

By merging conceptual articles and others that share experiences, the book allows the reader to identify key definitions and clear examples for understanding the Decoloniality Project. Concept defined in the first chapter by Nelson Maldonado-Torres, which refers to the struggle against the logic of coloniality and its material, epistemic and symbolic effects. Unlike decolonization, that is, historical moments when colonial subjects rebelled against ex-empires and claimed independence.

As a form of activism, the valorization of the tradition of black thought in opposition to the constitutive, organized and hierarchical racism of peoples, knowledge, cultures, economic, political and social relations, the work recognizes the existence of other epistemologies, which aim to put race, sex and gender at the center of the debate, questioning narratives called “universal”, which have long reinforced the existing domination in the modern/colonial World-system.

In this way, the so-called universal, abstract and objective knowledge is questioned, for ideas with defined authorship, location and identity, with high theoretical-conceptual rigor, enabling the formulation of new questions in relation to the validity of knowledge.

Based on an intrinsic dialogue, the book presents the reader with the convergence of afro-diasporic thoughts, thus justifying its title and unity. In this sense, it has as an analytical axis, the displacement of subordinated knowledge, especially from black populations, from a locus of object to a subject of knowledge, in search of the decolonization of knowledge, power and being, belonging to a collective political-academic project.
For those who are interested in themes related to the decolonization of international relations, history, social theory, literature, educational processes and even philosophy, the book presents itself as an invitation, especially, for conceptual deepening, since the work contributes to a rigorous dissemination of the decolonial perspective, favoring that new voices be echoed and heard beyond the African diaspora.

Received on January 10, 2020
Accepted on March 19, 2020

Translated by Igor Estima Sardo