Popular education as an antiracist approach: pedagogical experiences for a decolonial learning

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Abstract

The strengthening of the European migration policies, the increase of hate speech from ultra-conservative social groups, and the partial victory of the extreme right in the recent elections generate a scenario of constant threats to the human rights of immigrant people. In this context, this study supports the hypothesis that popular education inspired by the theoretical-practical work of Paulo Freire is a powerful tool in the promotion of an antiracist and decolonial education in the associative and community spheres. Through an in-depth interview with a popular educator and the participant observation applied in a community workshop, this study aims to exemplify the connections between Freire's pedagogy and the political struggles for an antiracist education in the Spanish context. The results obtained demonstrate that the application of Freirean pedagogical fundamentals has a substantial transformative potential on the migratory field.

Keywords: *Popular education, antiracism, immigration, dialogicity, pedagogy*

Introduction

Nowadays, Europe becomes an increasingly excluding place where the border closures, the reception denial of a significant immigrant and asylum seeker population, the non-compliance with reception agreements, and hate speech produce a permanent human rights violation scenario. The recent European election results do not glimpse a promising future, given the positive results of the extreme and xenophobic parties, which aim to increase the levels of social exclusion of immigrant people. The total number of seats won by conservative parties in the European Parliament is 171, a rise of 53 compared with the 2014 elections, representing 22,7% of the European population. In the Spanish context, the results of the general elections held on November 10, 2019, according to La Vanguardia (2019), revealed that VOX party became the third political force in the country, having received 15.9% of votes, an increase from the elections held seven months before, when VOX obtained the support of 10.26% of the voters. In just half a year, their number of votes has increased by one million, from 2,677,173 voters in April to a total of 3,640,063 voters in November. The total seats of this political force in the Spanish Parliament now is 52, representing an increase of 28 seats in comparison with the elections held on April 2019, which confirms that Spain aligns with the majority of European countries in which these extreme-right political forces have been finding space during the last years.

Following the signs that the future social scenario will be difficult for immigrant people, this study proposes to face the problem through the implementation of new pedagogical methodologies based on emancipatory and popular education - inspired mainly from the Latin American experience - within associations and self-organized community spaces. For this purpose, it is necessary to revise previous experiences of Latin American popular education, taking them as a base for developing methodologies adapted to the new times that are arriving in which

the central singularity will be the hatred of the different when what should prevail is solidarity between peoples.

1.1 The Spanish and European context on migration policies

In recent decades, Europe has developed from a region of strong emigration to a territory of intense immigration. According to Ali Bilgic and Michelle Pace (2017), the militarized policies of immigration control and defense of EU territory - with the construction of fences, walls and treating immigrants as threats to national sovereignty - are strongly linked to the authoritarian past of fascism and racial supremacy of Europe. The borders of the EU are invested not only of a legal function but also of a strong symbolic and political component. The "shadow border" (Düvell 2014) of the policies of the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) transcend the boundaries of its territory, making agreements with other neighboring countries to prevent immigrants from entering the EU territory, creating centers for refugees, militarized operations and control areas. Examples of these agreements are the policies between Morocco and Spain, Turkey and Greece, Albania and Italy, Libya and Italy and Malta (Düvell 2014, 224).

Neighboring countries that agree with the demands for control and militarization of external EU borders generally sustain commercial interests or even the expectation of becoming an EU member, as the Turkey case. In March 2020 the tension in the Greek-Turkish border is raised after the Erdoğan government's decision of allowing the passage of Syrian asylum seekers towards Greece, besides sending 1.000 police guards to prevent Greece from returning people. Many testimonies denounced the extreme brutality against refugees by the Greek police forces. The political conflict between the EU and Turkey reveals how migrant people became a commodity for European and third countries' governments. Regarding the migration flows through the Mediterranean Sea, in

2019 the deaths recorded on the three main routes reach 1,885 people. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that since 2014 at least 20,007 lives have been lost, however, these numbers hide thousands of other deaths that have not been recorded.

The Spanish State has pioneered the implementation of the so-called "devoluciones en caliente" (hot returns), officially called "border rejection", and the implementation of agreements with third countries for expanded border control in their relationship with Morocco, which became widely adopted by the EU. The return is made by the police forces at the immediate moment of the attempted crossing without any legal or administrative procedure, without identifying if the person is a minor, an asylum seeker or someone needing medical attention. "Devoluciones en caliente" and returns through agreements with third countries violate the "principle of non-refoulement" that establishes the prohibition of deporting any person, regardless of legal status, to a territory where their freedom and life is seriously at risk, and other human rights conventions.

The Tarajal case is emblematic of the human rights violations perpetrated by the EU and the Spanish State's apparatus of border control. On this occasion, the Civil Guard operation led to the death of 15 people who were attempting to enter the Spanish territory by sea during the night in February 2014. After the tragedy, the government has openly admitted the practices of "devoluciones en caliente" and implemented efforts to legalize it through the Citizen Security law 2014, popularly known as the "ley de la mordaza" (gag law). In February 2020 "devoluciones en caliente" are again in public discussion after the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) decision has unanimously considered that the immediate return of two sub-Saharan immigrants in 2014 did not constitute a human rights violation (ND and NT vs Spain case n° 8675/15 and 8697/15).

According to data published by the "Defensor del Pueblo" (Defender of the People), Spain continues to deport asylum seekers who have emigrated from

conflict zones in Africa. In the first two months of 2020, at least 108 Malian people have been deported to a highly conflictive area, without being guaranteed their right of no return. Considering that the migratory balance in Spain has remained stable over the years (increasing and decreasing in proportion to the economic context) and that the majority profile of immigrants in Spain is of European and Latin American citizens, we can assume the function of the police apparatus on the southern border is mostly political and symbolic. For Jimenez (2019, 166), the police apparatus for the defense of the southern borders has the function of representing the strength and sovereignty of the Spanish State.

1.2 Colonialism and capitalism to 'make Europe great again'

The arrival of Europeans on the American continent in 1492 inaugurates "the myth of modernity" (Dussel, 1994), creating a periphery and situating Europe at the center of the world. The concept of humanity has long been in dispute, finding its origins in the belief of European superiority and rationality which colonizes and subjugates those who are said to be "irrational". The creation of colonies and peripheries has always been profitable for Europe while it allows the extractivism of resources and labor force. According to Coronil (2000, 55), America and African colonies brought to Europe slave and labor forces, agricultural products and many other mineral resources which allow the development of capitalism. For him, Europe made itself in the contraposition of the periphery cultures, establishing its hegemonic power embodied by the European man. Fanon (1968) establishes that Europe has multiplied divisions, oppositions, social classes and racisms trying to provoke the stratifications of the colonial societies. In this sense, Coronil states

> "From this perspective, the colonialism is the dark side of European capitalism; It cannot be reduced to a footnote in its biography. Colonial "primitive accumulation", far from being a precondition of capitalist development, has been

> an indispensable element of its internal dynamics. "Free wage labor" in Europe is not the essential condition of capitalism, but a dominant productive modality, historically conditioned by "non-free" work in its colonies and other parts, such as the current job productive of salaried workers depends on domestic work, "non-productive" of Women in the house." (Coronil 2000, 56) [our translation from Spanish]

Colonialism and capitalism are until today deeply connected and influence the exploitation of immigrant and racialized people living in European countries. Immigrant women, especially of African and Latin American origin (Moreno-Colom and López-Roldán 2018, 75), occupy the most precarious and unstable jobs in the European economy. The notion of intersectionality (Creenshaw 1989) is very important to understand how class, race, gender, nationality and other factors all together play a role in the oppression of Subjects in global capitalist societies. Domestic and care work are sectors with the greatest feminization and presence of immigrant women - sectors without which the European economy could not sustain itself.

1.3 Which popular education?

Understanding popular education as a polysemic term - considering it situates in different moments of Latin American history - it is necessary to define the conceptual boundaries of popular education for this study. The meaning of popular education in this work connects to the political and pedagogical practices of Paulo Freire's work. In Freire's perspective, the subaltern social groups own multiple knowledge that frequently is not recognized by the institutional educational system. As De Sousa Santos points out, the university cannot act as an isle of knowledge in a society of ignorants (De Sousa Santos 2010, p. 50). The fundamental starting point consists of assuming that all subjects own valuable knowledge. In this sense, one of the main contributions of popular education in the migratory context is its vocation to recognize that immigrant people bring

with them valuable knowledge built through singular experiences. In our perspective, popular education can be a great ally to fight the "white savior" mentality and the infantilization of immigrant people that persists in many governmental and association spaces in Spain.

Verdeja Muñiz (2018) emphasizes the existence of a plurality of interpretative perspectives on Freire's work, reminding us that Paulo Freire understood his pedagogy as the result of his personal experiences, of his interaction with friends, family, and community. Taking those premises into consideration and, at the same time, answering to the Freirean invitation to the constant renewing of popular education, the practical and theoretical perspectives here presented are also based on the personal experiences of the authors of this study. On the one hand, they are the result of the experiences of a Brazilian popular educator who nowadays finds herself as a researcher and an immigrant activist in Spain; and on the other, of the concerns of a Spanish researcher who aims to build transformative spaces of education within the social movements in Asturias. As Gloria Gohn (2017) indicates, we can agree that the transformative social processes are faster and more efficient when the political subjects are critical and aware of their role, but in which ways we can train these subjects? Popular education has proven to be a powerful tool in the Latin American context to empower subjects - collectives and individuals - in the task of provoking changes in their reality, as in the massive adult literacy during the 60s in Brazil through the I National Education Plan and in the creation of a new school model by Brazil's Landless Workers Movement as the Florestan Fernandes National School in São Paulo. Popular education is within today the main method of education for social movements in Brazil as the Homeless Workers Movement, Landless Workers Movement, feminist and student movement. Could popular education also be a powerful tool to change the Spanish reality of human rights violations of immigrant and racialized people?

1.4 Fundamentals of Freire's popular education

Dialogue constitutes the central axis of Freire's pedagogy as the production place of the truth between someone's gaze and the gaze of the others, where solidarity, alterity, and the encounter of subjects takes place. The understanding of the reality of those who are part of the educational process is produced from the dialogue, bringing elements for action and critical thinking. In the paradigmatic Freire's work Pedagogy of the oppressed (2005), the dialogicity is defined as the essence of education and as a practice of freedom. The practice of dialogue makes possible to break with the "banking" educational model in which the knowledge is transferred unilaterally, producing a new "problematizing" education able to transform the reality and the power relations: "To exist, humanly, is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming" (Freire 2005, p. 88). The dialogue brings the premise that horizontality must guide the relations between the people involved in the educational process. Pierre Furter in the preface of "A educação como prática da Liberdade"[1] (Freire 1967) points out that the orality express Freire's pedagogical style and reveals the fundamental of his praxis: the belief all humans were created to communicate with each other. Pierre Furter highlights, moreover, that orality must not lose itself in the emptiness of thought, in verbalisms and formalisms typical of social power elites. In this sense, the orality in Freire's practice takes into consideration the knowledge of farmworkers, urban peripheries workers, in other words, subaltern people who are not familiar with the academic lexicon.

To the dialogue with its transformative potency, and the orality as communicative ethics, we can add the lovingness as one of the bases of Freire's pedagogy. According to Freire, love must be established by overcoming the situation of oppression. The education must be loving and, being loving, it is dialogical. In this perspective, "love is an act of courage, not of fear, love is commitment to

others. No matter where the oppressed are found, the act of love is commitment to their cause, the cause of liberation" (Freire 2005, p. 89). The lovingness connects to the transformative will as a political commitment in the pedagogical practice. Freirean methodology provokes the understanding of the social and symbolical universe by considering citizen's reality the starting point in the pedagogical process, aiming to generate awareness about the oppressions that influence our being-in-the-world. The awareness process invites the citizen to expand the understanding of reality going beyond the local dimension, insofar as inviting to see oneself as a political subject in broader perspectives.

The choice of working from a Freire's perspective, bringing together the principles of Latin American popular education instead of relying on Spanish and European authors, is based on some premises: popular education focuses on horizontality to break with the "vertical" teaching logic widely spread in European models of education. Just relying on the work and experiences of European educators without going back to the fundamentals of Latin American popular education would mean to work in the same colonialist logic of assimilation and invisibility. In this sense, it is necessary to recognize that the practices of non-formal community education going on in Europe are inheritors of the pedagogies built in the South. These southern epistemologies are valuable as well as the knowledge that comes from the Subjects from the Global South - immigrant, asylum seeker, racialized people. The intimate connection of popular education with the deconstruction of traditional power relations (established between individuals, and between individuals and institutions in the most varied spheres) is in the very heart of a decolonial education once these oppressive positions of power are sustained by macro capitalist and colonial structures.

2 Study objectives

The study proposes to establish connections between the fundamentals and methodologies of Latin American popular education inspired by Freire's work, and the antiracist education in the Spanish context. Nowadays, groups of racialized and immigrant people, as well as associations and self-organized community spaces, produce new pedagogical methodologies that fight eurocentric standards of knowledge production. Those experiences are crucial in the fight against all forms of violence and social exclusion based on racist and xenophobic bias. The main objective is composed of specific steps towards the achievement of our primary goal, briefly summarized down below:

- Investigate in which ways popular education inspired by Freire's work can be a powerful tool in the educational processes on migration and antiracism in community spaces in Spain.
- Give some insights into the challenges and positive experiences led by educators who find in popular education a pedagogical horizon on the migration field in Spain.
- Project and connect the Freirean perspective to current experiences on popular education to respond to the needs of current times.
- Know the reality and the social issues faced by the immigrant population in the Spanish state from the perspective of our informants.
- Propose solutions through new educational methodologies to fight eurocentrism that generates prejudices and hatred of difference.

3 Research methodology

The research methodology is based on Latin American popular education and sustains a critical research paradigm. It will implement a qualitative approach of a dialectical nature that allows us to explore the world view of the social groups implicated. The research method is based on action research to know the

perspective of the social groups and, at the same time, to establish with them a transformative educational process. The techniques implemented are a) the in-depth interview with a social analyzer - a volunteer coordinator in an international cooperation NGO and specialist in themes of sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and migration; b) the participant observation of a community popular education workshop in which will be applied participatory and group dynamics. The collection of the social analyzer information took place through a structured interview and an audio recorder. The collection of the community workshop information received two perspectives: a field diary and participant observation of the researcher 1, and the non-participant observation of the researcher 2 based on an observation script, as well as the recorder to capture the testimonies of the participants. In the conclusion of the community workshop, a participant co-evaluation was made based on dialogue.

3.1 Key informant interview

The interview was held on June 24, 2019, and took approximately one hour; it was recorded in audio and subsequently transcribed. The analysis counted on the support of the software MAXQDA 2018 for the analysis of qualitative data. In this paper, we have translated all quotations from Spanish into English. The name of the interviewee has been changed to protect her privacy.

The educator has had a broad experience of over thirty years as a physics and chemistry teacher in secondary education in Asturias. Her life experience and background are used to develop educational actions from the international cooperation association in which she works as a volunteer. María José is about seventy years old and she has dedicated her retirement to focus her energies on new educational projects, beginning a lasting experience in an association of international cooperation with issues of gender and migration, which continues working today. The migration has always been one of her social concerns, given

she had emigrated with her family from Cuba at an early age. Her interdisciplinary interest in taking the physics and chemistry teaching beyond the strict limits of the disciplines has turned into an "educational will" that she defined as:

> "a willingness for people to put themselves in a position to enrich, expand their ideas and that leads to an empowerment process, then methodologically it can be achieved or not, with the strategies that you propose, with the materials, with the dynamics that you use, what underlies is the attempt that people want, if you get it, they want to use these ideas, move them and get into it..." (María José)

The interview revolved around a diversity of themes connected to migration and the educational interventions developed by the educator, offering us valuable information on the field. The activities carried by María José are mainly courses and workshops directed to women and immigrant people. The methodologies applied by the educator in her volunteer work in small or large groups are facilitating dynamics through different techniques as problem tree analysis, Venn diagram, roleplaying, the use of drawings, images, debates, and many other ways of exchange ideas.

The interview conducted reveals a significant level of influence of Freirean popular education in the practices of the informant, reflected not only in her methodologies but also in the ethical principles that guide them, despite recognizing that this influence was not always deliberately implemented. Regarding her previous relations with popular education, she affirms not having systematic learning in the subject, except for isolated readings, although she states her awareness of the objectives shared by popular education and the development cooperation work, she carries out:

"As I said, when I was working in [high school] education, some professors from the University of Oviedo from the Faculty of Pedagogy and education sciences, promoted an Asturian platform of critical education and we did many activities, and through this experience I was able to know popular education and read something from Paulo Freire, and very very generally I could know the basis of his approach. I am not sure if Sousa Santos is framed within popular education, but this reflection that comes from Latin America is very important, very interesting…" (María José)

Noting that she has not had systematic learning of Paulo Freire's work, she indicates that however, she has been in contact with some ideas of his work:

"... to connect education with people's basic needs, and when people feel oppressed, they feel they have common needs, that is a space to promote education, isn't it? To be able to give, maybe to understand, learn other tools that allow him/her to know that reality and be able to take steps in his/her liberation, to act in his/her discouragement in some way, I don't have many ideas, but education and that has always fascinated me ..." (María José)

She also tells us how the methodologies used with immigrant groups in the organization in which she volunteers take into account the specificities of a plural and diverse context:

"These methodologies try on the one hand to take into account the diversity of people with whom we work in these workgroups. It is not only a matter of language but also of other types of situations, capacities, right? There are some people who have been in their countries not only schooled, but with already superior training, and people who do not know how to read and write because they were practically not schooled; then, from knowing that the things we were going to deal with had to be approached in a very accessible way, I began to propose to myself to use also my previous experience with facilitating dynamics". (María José)

The methodologies used in the association connects with pedagogical practices oriented by Freirean principles when we observe the articulation of multiple elements such as playful games, images as mental dispositive to provoke reflections on the reality of the learners, open and horizontal dialogues, among other techniques:

> "(...) then the use of an accessible language, the use of images, the use of projection, the use of small workgroups to facilitate that some people can speak, because when they are in groups of three or four they can dare to speak and sometimes in a large group they can't, and then incorporate it into the sharing moments, well, all these methodologies that are not unknown to you. "(María José)

The arrangement of the methodologies is fluid and creative, always being open to new juxtapositions and changes according to the group's response: "... I don't have a pattern, but ideas that lead me to use dynamics that I have known and then based on that create some small things right?" (María José). This whole range of methodologies responds to the complexity of the challenges faced in antiracist education with immigrant people:

> "I think the biggest challenges have to do with the situation in which immigrant people find themselves, which is very diversified, with diversity not only of countries of origin or age but of the vital moment they find themselves. A person who has just arrived or it has been living here for a short time has not the same situation of who is looking for work because he/she is unemployed or has been here for a long time and already found a perspective... that is to say, the diversity of vital situations makes that when a group is organized, as what we are doing, there is little continuity in attendance, interest, and motivation, what is perfectly understandable... Because the most urgent need for a person is especially when he/she has a family to take care of here or there, or here and there, it has to be solved. As much as you think that all that [education process] can be useful, you also understand that the person may not experience it in this way, and then the

> biggest challenge is to keep trying with these interventions and educational goals, but making it compatible with the vital situation of these people and that seems very complicated to me." (María José)

The interviewee raises the need to recognize the vital context that immigrant people are going through, taking into consideration the challenges and violence that the immigration process in the Spanish context entails. According to her, the educator must be attentive to the responses of learners building spaces for dialogue and methodologies able to connect to their social reality:

> "...it has to do with finding methodological approaches, the tools to motivate people to get into the task and be able to understand the messages they give you if the methodology is working or not, if they are interested or not, if it is appropriate or not, right?, be able to understand that things are not going in a good way, that maybe they should go other way and be open-minded, I think I have to pick up those messages and translate them into changes." (María José)

According to the educator, significant community changes are more difficult to achieve, since they need a great social mobilization. On the other hand, the interpersonal relationships between the participants of the workgroups are positive, and frequently ties between people involved in the educational process are established, projecting the action far beyond the educational space. In her opinion, immigrant people experience fear and uncertainty because native people often make clear they are not from here, among other factors:

> "... fear because they know what can happen to them if they do not have their [legal] situation regularized, so I do not know how they live it in terms of challenge... I understand that they live with fear, uncertainty, distrust, and, above all, much fear, much fear... the biggest fear is to be returned to their country. And, according to experiences regarding the society in general, the feeling that they are not from here, that people make clear they are not from here, that in some dramatic situations

some people make them think that they are coming, although later they do not believe it, to take the husbands from the [native] women, to steal the jobs, that they come to ask for help, money. What happens is that I don't know, it's hard for me to see what it is like for them in terms of challenges, right? What would their challenge be…" (María José)

On the other hand, she considers the immigrant people's social situation shameful considering the social and legal framework on which the policies develop, whose ultimate purposes are to document, legalize and normalize their administrative situation. She is outraged at the southern border situation and not comforted by the commonplace idea that in Spain "people are treated a little better" than in other European countries, a very generalized idea that she puts into question:

"… It seems terrible to me what is happening on the southern border, it seems terrible to me that the Spanish State Government is participating in these policies, and it does not comfort me much to think that in Spain immigrants are treated a little better than in other parts of Europe or other parts of the world, if that were the case it would be a very difficult consolation, right ?; It seems to me above all outrageous. It gives me outrage and shame. " (María José)

Regarding the main difficulties faced by the immigrant population in relation to the state, she points out the fear of being placed in a position of inferiority due to race/ethnicity or language, or due to an eventual lack of primary education, and regarding society the main problem could be the feeling of distrust of immigrant people that frequently have to prove that it doesn't need to be this way:

"... regarding the state, there is much fear, and there is also probably a feeling of 'inferiority,' right? If people are black, if people do not know how to speak [Spanish], if they do not have an [school] education... and regarding the society, it is similar since society is continuously putting many obstacles to them, and that is how they feel, right? And how they express it in the discussion groups... A black

woman who works in a hotel, for example, and is treated differently from other workers…that is part of society, the owners of that hotel, the boss, right? And people who live with them in the same neighborhood or are inside a shop store and distrust them. It is like they have to demonstrate [their value] constantly, right? then certain things." (María José)

Besides this, she adds that the mass media is especially harmful in the construction of this exclusion social situation since it plays an essential role in the criminalization of immigrant people and the strengthening of racist behaviors in society.

In short, María José, despite not having received specific training in Popular Education, has assimilated its methodology through the work she carried out as a teacher, relying on basic Freire's readings and others in this field, which she has been applying over the years in her volunteer work. But the most important aspect to integrate the fundamentals of Popular Education in her methodology has been the need to adapt it to a plural and diverse context where she had to develop facilitating processes with the learners, either through games or visualizations that provoked reflection on reality and above all a horizontal and open dialogue about the social challenges they are going through. The educational process was involved in such vital aspects as their livelihood and employability promoting the feeling that the learners are developing actions to improve their lives, in contraposition to a society that does not cooperate with them but rather continues to generate stigmatization, a situation that is further enhanced by the lack of truthfulness and professional ethics shown by some mass media. But beyond these educational efforts, the great structural changes are seen by the interviewee as something much more difficult to achieve, what is manifested in the fact that certain inclusive actions promoted by some charitable institutions are highly debatable and do not represent a real social transformation.

3.2 Popular education workshop

After the reading of Bustillos and Vargas (2002), we had a clear idea that the thematic content of the activity should bring issues very close to the immigrant people's interests. We thought that from an open, flexible, participative, practical, and experiential approach, the workshop group could recuperate and analyze the collective experience to critically recognize the challenges and potentialities in our society to change reality. We knew, from theory, that it would be necessary to follow a process of understanding, systematization, and analysis of our knowledge about the social dynamics, bringing new points of view, interpretations, and other ways to respond to this reality. To reach this awareness, we should depart from the now, the group, and the local dimension to redirect our practice. We also considered as necessary to revise and evaluate the practice through a group conversation about the new ways of understanding reality and the new collective capacities that arose during the process. The techniques implemented would seek to provoke the participation in the analysis of the objective and subjective aspects of the experiences and social situation of immigrant people.

The workshop took place on June 27, 2019, and was developed in one session of 3 hours throughout the afternoon in a community public center in the Ventanielles neighborhood in Oviedo, a peripheral neighborhood with a large presence of immigrant workers, upon request of the research team for the space allowance. The advertising of the activity has been carried out through several websites and posters placed in significant places in the city. The attendance to the workshop can be considered adequate concerning the resources implemented in the publicization, although it is necessary to recognize that we expected more significant participation of immigrant people and women, given that the attendance of Spanish and immigrant people was uneven. Our initial purpose was organizing a workshop with ethnical and cultural diversity but mostly directed to

the participation of immigrant people - the real protagonists of the actions planned. The workshop assembled a group of ten people formed by five Spanish men, two Spanish women, two immigrant men, and one immigrant woman. The age range of the group was from the late-20s to 50 years old.

The workshop started with a brief introduction of the purposes and reasons why the workshop was planned based on concepts of popular education, departing from an antiracist conception as an alternative tool to put into practice in the Spanish context. It was explained that the organization of the workshop was originated by the encounter of the activist work on migration developed by the researcher 1 and the community education concerns of the researcher 2 and was also motivated by our great belief that the university plays an important role in the promotion of social engagement in the community. Our purpose was to contribute to keeping alive the new communitarian public center by bringing a social topic that is especially important for the neighborhood given its demographic composition. After this brief introduction, we have talked about our backgrounds as researchers, and then we started an activity of introduction called "the spiderweb" (*La telaraña*) – an icebreaking dynamic to allow everybody to introduce themselves and to know each other. The participants told aspects of their professional backgrounds, as well as the particular interests that motivated them to attend the workshop. The group included a Senegalese man who works in the service sector, an Argentinean man who works as a street artist, a Spanish man who works as a waiter, a Spanish man who is a volunteer in rescue missions in the Mediterranean Sea, and other people whose profession was not declared. Many of the people present indicated their concerns with the current situation of xenophobia and ultraconservative rise in Spain as the main reason for attending the workshop. As an introductory activity, "La Telaraña" fulfilled its role of bringing people together, and its configuration revealed precisely our intention that participants discover the need to "weave a net" among all, in addition to

transmitting the idea that our lives are necessarily "interwoven" as well as we need to be united with others in the community construction of a multicultural universe.

The second activity planned was the exhibition of a short documentary as a way to get into the thematic and start a group discussion. The video called *Mujeres migrantes y resistencias* (Manterola, 2016) - "Migrant women and resistances", talks about the point of view of immigrant women on racist experiences in the Spanish cities. The documentary depicted the experiences of multiple immigrant women, for instance, as we can see in the narrative of Victoria Mendonza, a Social Psychologist responsible for the Emotional Intelligence Center of Guipuzcoa in Spain:

"If I have felt racism? Yes, in some ways, yes, and many times occurs something curious, they think I am a gypsy. Many times when I say that I am a Mexican I don't feel so much rejection. I felt it in the stores as well, I can also add the issue of classism, I mean when the sellers point out where are the cheapest clothes and the expensive ones as if I couldn't buy it. And yes I feel racism in the job market, it has to do if we are Africans, if we are Latin Americans, and it has to do also with the cultural level, the economic and social status, but I believe there are collectives more rejected than others, because they say it clearly, if you are African, if you are black, there is no house renting to you, if you are Arabic there is no job, so well, yes, depends very much on the skin color." (03:59)

The visual production was useful to sensitize the group about social issues regarding the immigration process. After the exhibition, several questions were articulated to provoke group discussion: what do you think about the documentary? In your opinion, these kinds of problems happen in Asturias? Do you want to share some personal experience with these issues? The participants

have shown interest in participating openly in the discussion exploring several problematic aspects of the immigrant people's experience. For this reason, we decided to expand the time of debate to allow everybody to share experiences and participate in-depth. The documentary viewing fostered empathy with the protagonists of the video from a very close contextualization that favored personal reflections who were later brought to the group debate. It has been a way for them to externalize their initial reflections on the social issues and situations visualized, favoring with it the interaction of the participants and the creation of interconnected reflections. Beyond the personal feelings expressed by the participants on the viewing, there were also numerous interventions derived from the discursive line that was generated by the documentary at the beginning of the debate. The discussion revolved around close experiences of racism in everyday lives as an immigrant, the xenophobic and racist policies of the EU and the Spanish government, as well as the perceptions of racism as a social problem from the part of the native participants and their responsibility in relation to that.

The third activity was the reading and discussion of press news with a negative approach to immigration, directing the discussion to xenophobic bias and racism. The news brought headlines as "The Mediterranean is consolidated as the deadliest border on the planet" (Camacho 2019), "A decent burial for Sephora, the baby of the 'patera'" (Castellano 2019), "Migrant laborers in Murcia: 'We do the work that nobody wants to do and they don't want to see us, even on the streets'" (Reche 2019), "Family members of regrouped immigrants will not be entitled to Public Health" (Zuil 2019), "New case of racism in the subway: a man insults a Latin American woman for a seat" (20 minutos, 2018), "This is how deportation flights are: use of force, pacts of silence and forced sedation" (Sánchez 2017), "The 'manteros' union: 'The Madrid City Council criminalizes migrants'" (Franco 2018) and others. The news allowed us to approach racism and xenophobia at a cultural level manifested in the interactions of everyday life

and from an institutional perspective as a systematic governmental policy. The emotional aspects involved in discussions on such sensitive topics seemed to motivate the group to higher participation. Each person received two newspaper news to be discussed with the group. First, the newspaper content was exposed and later debated with the group, which points out the negative ways in which mass media depicts immigrant people in the news and the fundamental problems behind this approach. At last, the group discussed in-depth the projection of theses press news on immigrant people's realities and about the similarities between some violence news and some local stories, once cases of racism and xenophobic violence are not isolated but frequently occur everywhere.

After the collective reading of the news, some questions were made to stimulate the debate as, for instance, how the group conceive living in Spain as an immigrant person, how they conceive the realities depicted in the press news, and for them, analyzing several striking situations described in the news. The workshop dedicates a significant amount of time to this reflexive activity, given that the debate based on the press news was raising some valuable information. At this point in the workshop, we chose not offering other activities previously planned as the reading of positive news about immigration and the collective construction of a newspaper. The decision based on "less is more" took into consideration the depth of the debate, the variety of topics covered, and the group engagement in the activity in course.

Despite being individual-oriented, this reading activity aimed to concatenate the discursive lines according to the interactions established by the participants. It was the moment of greatest expressiveness, mainly manifested by the outrage of the participants to what they had recently read. The debate generated was evaluated by the researchers as a valuable moment of information and emotional externalization to which no limit should be set, but which demanded a careful mediation to assure a caring environment. Also, together we could verify through

the voice of the participants in which ways mass media can perpetuate social stigma towards immigrants, giving at this point correspondence between the key informant's point of view shown in the interview and the discussion group perspective. Another topic in which there was an agreement of opinions among the Subjects involved in the methodologies applied was the difficulty in proceeding with the change of the social and political macrostructure regarding migration. These macrostructures in capitalist global societies not just violently prevent people from crossing the borders freely but also obliges people to escape from their native countries to survive.

The last activity realized was the "doubt hat" ("sombrero de las dudas") - a simple hat from where were extracted questions allowing the continuation of the debate around topics of interest. The questions made sought to know how we can overcome racism and discrimination, which concrete actions we can put into action in our community, how racism affects the everyday life of immigrant people, and which kind of antiracist educational activities we can develop collectively to improve social reality. The activity sparked interest because it generated curiosity of the participants about the topics hidden inside the hat. Through this simple technique, we were able to conclude the debate on topics of interest that had not yet been addressed, intentionally introducing some important questions as "what can we do to fight racism in our community", "did racism affects all immigrant people at the same level", "do we need more antiracist education?". On the one hand, we could complete the thematic design of the workshop, and on the other we could provide the participants the theoretical and practical interconnection between all the topics that revolved around the central theme of discussion, thereby strengthening a group critical reflection towards action.

4.Results and Discussion

Starting from an in-depth interview with an educator about her theoretical-practical experience on immigration, and from our own theoretical-practical experience in the participant observation of a workshop on human rights of immigrant people, we offer the following results and central topics of discussion. Our purpose is, at first, offer new tools to face racism and social issues related to immigration and, at last, to collaborate with an ethical-social improvement in this field.

The results generated from the interview can be considered very revealing of the situation immigrant people are going through in Spain, from the perspective of someone who is in touch with personal stories of immigration daily. From the interview, we could better know some of the actions in course from NGOs and associations directed to immigrant people, and especially to know about the personal view of the interviewed educator from her volunteer work, going deeper about the current situation in the Spanish society regarding immigration. Especially clarifying were the testimonies offered about her methodological experiences, the communicative challenges in the immigration field, the educational challenges to be faced by the associationism. Furthermore, we could learn more about the particularities, issues, and more urgent problems we should face both at individual and collective levels to improve social reality around immigration. We could conclude that the state must develop a coherent and humanistic action regarding social rights on immigration and that, at the same time, society should build an educational process to increase the respect to the diversity as a fundamental value.

In this sense, the educational and communicative challenges require an antiracist pedagogical approach. The interviewee pointed out some critical educational challenges on immigration: to pay attention to multiples problematic situations in

which women and immigrant people find themselves responding to different needs and motivations, and trying to construct solutions to immediate problems from a flexible and open perspective. In her everyday work, the educator informs that it is vital to assume dialogue as a first-order concern. Nevertheless, she recognizes that building a horizontal and dialogical communication is not an easy task, given that many times, educators fail in the construction of a methodology that allows the Subjects to reach their full protagonism in the center of the process. The educator invited us to reflect upon the reasons why the horizontality is not fully reached and about the real protagonism immigrant people should be allowed to perform in the pedagogical process. According to her, it is necessary to make a practical-theoretical reflection about how we educators build pedagogical strategies in this field.

Questioned about the main challenges of the associations and NGOs, the educator indicates that the assistentialist task that many institutions frequently have to accomplish - offering to vulnerable immigrant population the most basic attention as clothes and food - makes the lack of resources one of the main challenges, since they must adapt existing resources to fulfill those urgent needs. The interviewee's association does not offer this kind of assistencial support, except for offering some material on sexual prevention, although she considers the real challenge is how to reach the immigrant population. According to her, at first, it is difficult for them to access the institution and establish the necessary connection that allows the professionals to carry out positive actions. Therefore, the main challenge is finding ways to create those links.

The communicative challenges are, apart from the language, the different cultural conceptions, since, for example, concepts such as "health and illness" do not necessarily lead to sharing meanings, since the codes in each culture can be significantly different. The real challenge is how to deconstruct different

positions of power which brings the false assumption of superiority of some over others, although without neglecting the challenges immigrant people face in their relationship with the state and with society in general regarding the constant violation and deprivation of rights, whose change ultimately depends on the action of the state.

Regarding the popular education workshop, we have been able to verify that the proposed activities were an excellent way to critically approach the reality of immigrant people through their representation in the mass media. We consider the level of involvement of the participants in the discussion of the news very high, as they have debated for a considerable amount of time, expressing clearly both the content of the news and their critical reflections on them. This activity allowed the group to bring out crucial topics of critical nature on the central themes of our study. The final sharing perception of the participants about the workshop also revealed the great interest aroused in them, as well as informing us about the positive and negative aspects of the methodology. We have also been able to value, together with the large group, the possibility of continuing to carry out these workshops more largely and regularly over time. The participants considered educational activities has to continue in order to promote social reflection on migration in the community.

Ultimately, the conclusions reached by the research team are optimistic, and the possibility of organizing new workshops in subsequent months is open, considering the positive feedback of the group. As a negative aspect, we can highlight the low participation of the immigrant collective, which we wish would have been more dominant. This aspect remains open to improvement for subsequent antiracist popular education workshops in the future.

In general terms, a confirmation result has also been reached in terms of the theoretical framework initially proposed, since from a practice guided by dialogicity, Freirean pedagogy offered tools to overcome one of the most significant challenges in popular education on immigration carried out in Spain: the unevenness of symbolic power between immigrant and native people derived from different intersectional positions of gender, race / ethnicity, nationality, administrative situation, social class, among other factors capable of generating different positions of power. We could verify that the premise of horizontality teaches people in positions of social privilege to listen more, let the other people talk, and deconstruct preconceived cultural ideas about their being and feeling in the world.

On the other hand, we verify that orality is an aspect of great importance in popular education in the migratory context. In educational work with immigrant groups, linguistic and communicative challenges are present, once the groups are usually made up of people who present different languages and levels of Spanish, from different cultural contexts. Following this same logic, educational spaces with groups of immigrant people leave aside the manuals and requirements of perfect grammar, developing communication processes where the most important thing is to generate empathy and human connections.

We consider that the amorousness in the Freirean perspective is present as an ethical horizon of pedagogical, political action with immigrant people in a situation of oppression, allowing to destabilize the barriers of social class, nationality, and all others that place people in different social positions. In this sense, education on immigration, from a Freirean popular education perspective, invites us to understand the daily oppressions involved in the immigration process - why do I feel intimidated in the health system? Why was my residence permit denied? Why do immigrant people have the most precarious jobs? - also enabling

an expanded vision of the diasporic experience within regional, national, and global contexts.

5. Conclusions and Proposals

The results generated through the interview and the popular education workshop also gave us the possibility to formulate some conclusions and proposals which dialogue with the theoretical orientations of various authors in this field, and that invite us to adopt actions both at a general and individual level to face the growing problem of racism in our society.

Antiracist education demands the deconstruction of the notion of race as a biological truth and resignifies it as a critical social category in the affirmation of human rights. The word "race," being resignified by racialized political Subjects, becomes an important sociological category in the antiracist struggle. To reaffirm the importance of respect for differences, as opposed to the classic "we are all equal" notion, is a way to combat assimilationist universalism that denies differences and subsumes "the Other as the same" (Dussel 1994, p. 61) which has been one of the historical strategies of European coloniality. In that sense, antiracist education vindicates the cultural differences that may come from the diversity of ethnicities and nationalities as a cultural richness element that makes up transnational societies.

In response to this, antiracist education proposes a new immigration model that is critical of the "integration" policies of the European Union and the Immigration Law in Spain. The idea of integration is often connected to assimilation policies where the immigrant population must prove their level of "integration" in the community in order to access visas and residence permits, as it is explicit in the requirement of DELE language exam and the CCSE exam of constitutional and sociocultural knowledge in order to access citizenship in Spain. Beyond that,

integration is an abstract and hard to measure concept, which ignores that many immigrant populations feel the need to form their own cultural and emotional communities in the Spanish territory, seeking to maintain the habits and languages of their place of origin.

Starting from the reflections of black feminism, Ribeiro (2019) draws attention to the fact that the individuals who form the social groups located in power, although they oppose injustices, structurally benefit from the oppressions that affect the subaltern groups. A white person may renounce some privileges in the individual sphere; however, he/she will continue to occupy a position of power in the social sphere that will make him/her to experience oppressions differently from the individuals who occupy the place of the subaltern Other. These aspects of the social experience make up a "place of enunciation" (Ribeiro 2019) and help us to understand that the social position of each individual allows accessing the world in different ways. In that sense, the perspective of the subaltern Subjects in the migratory process is fundamental to articulate effective antiracist immigration policies. Frequently the associations and community spaces working on immigration give protagonist roles to native individuals who, despite their good intentions, cannot offer to the antiracist debate the unique perspective of the Subjects who suffer oppression in the immigration process. The premise is simple. Nevertheless, common sense is not always common practice: antiracist education proposes racialized, and subaltern Subjects are the real protagonists of their political agendas, that spaces must be safe to their sharing experiences and that immigrant people should not be treated childishly through a native person "speaking for them." However, Ribeiro stresses that the "place of enunciation" does not mean that only racialized people can talk about racism, but that white Subjects do so from a specific social position and that they should think critically about it, acting with social responsibility.

The political protagonism of the subaltern Subjects must also connect to a decolonizing pedagogy. It is not enough to guarantee the immigrant population representativeness in the political-pedagogical spaces, but the entire educational process must be committed to the decolonization of practices and methodologies. According to Walsh (2013), we must build paths of being, thinking, looking, listening, feeling, and living, from a pedagogical and decolonial horizon. We must apply pedagogies as a path that leads to a new rehumanization. We must embrace pedagogy as an element that directs us to critical thoughts and understandings to achieve certain practices of intervention, construction, creation, and liberation. For this, we can rely on the Freirean dialectical method as a tool that allows us to visualize reality looking towards ourselves and, at the same time, taking distance from it, in order to carry out a theorizing and abstraction process. In that sense, the cultural baggage of immigrant Subjects is not limited to the elements that are usually exoticized by the European gaze as traditional clothes or gastronomy, but it includes many other forms of knowledge and "feeling-thinking"[2].

According to De Souza Silva (2013), we must have a critical pedagogical imagination to unravel the geopolitical and historical connection between the "idea of race" and the relationship between "power-knowledge," which is what conditions international relations, state dynamics and the nature of education, communication, cooperation, and innovation systems. We must go beyond the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being, and we must also direct our pedagogical imagination towards a critical, creative, and proactive process of cultural and mental decolonization of the idea of "progress/development". For this author, to build another world, fair, egalitarian, peaceful, supportive, and sustainable, we must cultivate our pedagogical imagination to reach the "day after development," freeing ourselves from classifications and hierarchies as developed/underdeveloped, developing/emerging, first/third world.

We will have to break with the mental chains that push us to the normalization of global patterns of power that operate on race, knowledge, being, and nature. It will also be necessary to build an "education for life" that forms citizens who think critically, creatively, and purposefully. In that sense, Quijano (2013) points out the need to promote initiatives, projects and practices that are directed towards a plural economic horizon formed by economies of solidarity, diverse and community nature, based mainly on sustainable work and community practices, also having mutual care and feminism as a horizon which offers alternative ways of facing the new global economy. Ferrão Candau (2013) indicates that we must promote processes of rupture and make explicit the network of stereotypes and preconceptions that populate our individual and social imaginary concerning the different sociocultural groups. We must also question the monoculturalism and ethnocentrism that are present in the school, in the syllabus and educational policies, questioning the criteria to select the contents and the foundations that sustain the "universality" and "neutrality" of knowledge, values, and practices forming educational actions. According to him, we must allow an articulation between equality and difference, recognizing and valuing cultural differences, knowledge diversity and practices, and the affirmation of their connection with the right to education for all. It is necessary to reconstruct what is considered "common" to all, guaranteeing that all sociocultural Subjects feel recognized in it, ensuring that equality bases on differences assumed as a common reference, thereby breaking with the monoculturalism of school education. We must promote the construction process of sociocultural identities, both on a personal and collective level through the use of life stories that can be told, narrated, recognized, valued as part of the educational process.

Briefly, in order to build education as an antiracist tool, we must strengthen education both in formal and informal contexts, including the mass media. An antidote to fight against the practices and logic of racism is to promote human

rights broadly in the individual and collective spheres, analyzing the root causes of racism and dismantle it, going beyond superficiality, and taking advantage of the potential of education for the modification of these false concepts. At the national level, general measures to be taken by governments are urgent: to eliminate bureaucratic obstacles and the current immigration law, remove border fence, change the immigration policies and establish measures that allow immigrant people to develop a decent life in the European territory. Socially, there must be a change of attitude of the groups in positions of power regarding the impoverishment generated by the capitalist and colonial processes, with the responsibility to work for the right of people not to be forced to emigrate due to social inequalities, and seeing immigration as cultural and social richness.

Notes

[1] Published in English as Freire, P. (1976) *Education, the practice of freedom*. London: Writers and Readers Publishing Cooperative.

[2] The concept of "feeling-thinking" (sentipensar) was introduced by Orlando Fals Borda (1984) in "Resistencia en el San Jorge," having reached it through his dialogues with fishermen from the San Jorge River. The concept of "thinking with the heart and feeling with the head" destabilizes the hardness of rationalism and talks about the processes of resilience to face nature's time and adverse social conditions.

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