



## Chapter 9

# Teaching History of Africa in Brazil based on Law 10.639/03

Núbia Aguilar 

Department of History

Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) 

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

### Introduction

Law 10.639/03 was promulgated in Brazil in 2003. This law makes it mandatory to teach African history and Afro-Brazilian culture in the basic education sector throughout the country. The main point regarding the establishment of Law 10.639/03 in Brazilian society is that, because of the instituted obligation, educational teaching has a legal framework to discuss the histories of the African continent and black peoples in the formation of Brazilian society. At the same time, this discussion is extremely important for addressing the epistemic and social racism that has been present in this country for years. In this way, education can be a pathway to confront prejudiced views. With these guidelines in mind, this discussion aims to make some remarks on how this law impacted the teaching of history in Brazil. I emphasise that the implementation of this law needs to be understood alongside political and social demands, with prominent participation from the Black Movement. Even today, it is possible to find racism ingrained in Brazilian society, as a factor that makes the struggles for a more equal society necessary and persistent, because racism is a deep problem. It is important to note the significance of understanding the writing about the past, which reveals how history is also a product of the social context to which it belongs. Considering this information, we can understand how history was, for a long time in Brazil,



an elitist and exclusionary discipline, and how the opening up of universities attributable to the implementation of public policies allowed for new questioning and the necessity to transform the teaching environment.

Circe Bittencourt (2018) has demonstrated how History is a discipline in constant transformation, because it meets the needs of the society in which it operates. As we will demonstrate, in the Brazilian case, this discipline received different names throughout its institutionalisation, and spent long years representing the interests of elites as a way of perpetuating and justifying spaces of privilege, focused on Christianity, above all, white men and their political and social interests. Over the years, with the inclusion of demands of social subjects, the discipline became more reflective and started to add other points of view, such as those Africans and Brazilians in all their social diversity. But the teaching of history has a relationship with understanding between times, understanding the past from the present, in which societies, groups and individuals seek their referents. In this way, thinking about teaching requires certain attention to the context in which this teaching is inserted, the audience with which it dialogues and which elements are used to portray the past (Silva & Fonseca, 2010). It is in light of these conditions that we can think about teaching African history in Brazil.

It has been 20 years since the promulgation of Law 10.639/03. In that time it has been possible to observe many gains and issues that still need to be improved. In this discussion we will demonstrate some important processes for the promulgation of Law 10.639/03, its insertion in the Brazilian curriculum and the social dialogues carried out with these obligations, with awareness that the enactment of a law needs to go hand in hand with other public policies, actions and attention to school environments so that it can have a more satisfactory development. It is also difficult to understand the history of Africa in Brazil without connections with the past, with the representations and links that connect the society, academically, socially and culturally, with the African continent. The teaching and writing of history need to consider the context

in which we find ourselves, which is why it is so important to take these elements into consideration when dealing with the history of Africa within Brazilian society.

## **Intersections for the formation of education in Brazil**

African studies in Brazil have an important cultural and political involvement which directly impacts school culture. It is important to remember that Brazil was the principal place in America when enslaved people arrived during the period of transatlantic slave trade. The institution responsible for reporting about the country 's demographic data, Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), estimates that around four million African people arrived in slave conditions in this territory. João José Reis (2020) highlights the complexity involved in trafficking and the arrival of slaves, as a process that lasted approximately 300 years, between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Reis analyses relations of these demographic estimates and their importance for the construction of Brazilian society. Based on this argument, we return to another reflection that points towards a geographical and imagined area of Um Rio Chamado Atlântico (One River Called Atlantic), of Alberto da Costa e Silva (2003), which is essential for understanding contemporary Brazilian society.

Um Rio chamado Atlântico is an important metaphorical expression that encompasses the relations established between Brazil and regions of the African continent, especially on the West coast, from where many slave ships departed. There is a variety of research that seeks to focus on these relationships, built through incessant exchanges, because the Atlantic as a space of interaction for Brazilian society is an enlargement of the work of Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic* (1993), demonstrating characteristics that resemble a general context, but that also demonstrate specificities depending on the excerpts given in the approaches for South American realities. There is a strong historiographical tradition inside Brazil that addresses the relationships that arose with the slave trade (Verger, 1987; Costa

e Silva, 2002; Cunha, 2012; Ferreira, 2012; Marquese, 2019) and studies that focused on social organisations, revival movements and cultural and symbolic expressions that developed throughout Brazil's period as a slave society (Nascimento, 1977; Slenes, 1999; Mattos, 2008; Abreu, 1995; Wissenbach, 1998; Santos, 2017). These studies reflect the social necessity of understanding this dense past, filled with difficult stories, yet so important for identifying present society. The pursuit of marginalised narratives becomes an incessant exercise in academic environments and is reflected in the education of many professionals today.

In addition to receiving a large number of people who were enslaved, Brazil was one of the last countries on the American continent to abolish slavery. Studies covering the post-abolition, after 1888 when slavery was abolished, have demonstrated how important Flux and Reflux, as Pierre Verger called it, of people, cultures and knowledge in the Atlantic were for the formation of Brazilian society. Brazil was constituted as a result of these meetings, from people in the past who donated part of themselves to give the current formats in Brazilian places, culture and diverse society, taking into account the genocide of Indigenous peoples and the forced labour of African groups who were placed in the condition of enslavement. But when we look at the past, especially at the writing of history, power projects that camouflaged or mythologised the participation of subjects in its entirety is part of the debates, and an interest, which lasted for years, in telling a story with only white protagonists. And what the most recent historiography has demonstrated is that there are many interests in disputes, many elements and narratives that come together to remember past events (Pollak, 1989).

The teaching of history proves to be fundamental in this process, as it is one of the links between what we research in academia and what is discussed in scholar formation. When we deal with the past, we cannot avoid this political function that the historical discipline performs, as remembering the past is a close relationship with the present. Selecting themes, narratives and writing about events are always in dialogue with current

demands (Rusen, 2001). When we ask about the reason why we should study the history of Africa in Brazil, we are confronted by this political factor, an urgent need in the present to study narratives that were distorted or silenced in the past. We can remember the political and academic aspect of the intellectual Beatriz Nascimento (1977) that relates to this relationship with the continent of Africa, so that people in Brazil seek its symbolic, cultural meanings and organise themselves as social groups.

In some spaces there is also the reinforcement of myths and stereotypes, which reinforce the image of a static Africa, of romantic relationships, with the other side leaning towards the construction of reductionist narratives. But what we would like to highlight is the importance of the representations of African studies for the composition of Brazilian society, which looks back to the need to recompose family trajectories, ancestral groups and the construction of their references (Munanga, 2015). Racism and stereotypes linked to the African continent also affect these histories and make knowledge of the continent's regions, in their diversity, pluralities and capacity to establish positive dialogues. On this side, closer to the networks and relationships, we realised that the stories are connected and that the racism that affects the African continent also affects the people in its Diaspora and those who consider themselves descendants of Africa, known as African Americans, in the specific case study of Afro-Brazilians.

It is very complicated when textbooks or classroom approaches only cover themes related to transatlantic trafficking and contemporary conflicts that have developed in parts of the African continent. In certain aspects, the history of Africa is displaced from approaches to global history, or temporal scales that mainly contemplate European history, being functional to tell narratives of suffering or create myths of overcoming, as this continues to tend towards reductionism. Between the two points there are multiple themes that also need to be addressed and deserve attention. Students' identification with these stories can be based on the understanding of social organisation and disposition, as events in which we ourselves are inserted, according to the time and space. It doesn't make much sense

for African history to fit into European history, based just on slavery, imperialism and liberation struggles. This approach, so commonly seen in Brazilian classrooms, imprisons other stories about the continent (Pantoja, 2004).

On the other hand, it's important to say that the implementation of Law 10.639/03 was a political decision that stemmed from social demands. Amilcar Araujo Pereira (2011) highlights the demand for a more inclusive education, one that brought the participation and contributions of black people to the history of Brazil as a part of the agenda of the Black Movement actions in the 1970s, with prominent involvement from the Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU). The establishment of Law 10.639/03, which made the teaching of African history in Brazil mandatory, was an important step to review reductionist approaches. When we have structural problems, such as racism, the establishment of an elitist education based on Eurocentrism, we need to consider the time for things to change and be persistent so that these changes are possible. Exclusionary teaching methods can be observed in the establishment of the Brazilian education system itself, which was initially dominated by the elites. Ruckstadter and Ruckstadter (2010) argue that the first efforts towards teaching models similar to Western structures were applied by Jesuit priests at the beginning of colonisation, beginning in the sixteenth century.

During the territory's colonial period, which lasted from the 1500s until the establishment of independence in 1822, the establishment of educational centres had a trajectory with specific characteristics, which is not the object of this chapter. However, it is worth noting that there was greater decentralisation in the handling of formal education, which was concentrated in the hands of Jesuits, private instigators and interference from the colonial government, mainly from the eighteenth century onwards. The arrival of the Portuguese court to Brazil, including the King of Portugal, D. João, fleeing the Napoleonic attacks on Europe, was a landmark moment for the restructuring of the colony. Banks, establishments and the National Library were created. In 1808, Brazil became the seat of the Portuguese government, intensifying the circulation of

people, ideas and intellectual thoughts in the territory, it also encouraged the creation of educational institutions (Sampaio, 1991). Furthermore, the nineteenth century is deeply marked by the need to build national symbols. The independent country was under the political regime of the monarchy, until the proclamation of the Republic in 1889. In light of all these events, which lasted approximately three centuries, the need to build a history for the recent country became more intense. History, not by chance, is focused on the political achievements of elitist agents who, in many ways, exclude the majority of the population. This model, even today, needs to be questioned and criticised as it has become a reproduction standard, that does not always dialogue with social demands in dealing with knowledge of the past, in the search for guidance, references and representation (Fiorin, 2009).

The Constitution of 1988, which is followed to this day, ratified education as a right for Brazilian citizens, in other words, it is the state's duty to guarantee this right. Based on the guarantee of this right, there are laws that aim to unify the parameters that are used throughout the national territory. In 1996, the National Education Guidelines and Bases Law - *Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional*- (LDB) was sanctioned, establishing the minimum criteria that must be followed in the area of education, involving states and municipalities. And since 2003 there has been an important movement towards the development of African studies in this country. Signed by the President of the Republic Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, in January of that year, Law 10.639/03 established the mandatory teaching of the history and culture of African and Afro-Brazilian peoples throughout the country's basic education system. The promulgation of this law was the result of intense movements in search of anti-racist education. The measure suggests the social need to teach the history of Africa, study and combat the strong stereotypical views that are still found in many narratives today.

According to the BNCC, there are different moments to work with the history of African peoples in the area of human sciences, more specifically in the History discipline, since ancient Egypt, African kingdoms such as Ghana, Mali

and Songhai, up to the independence and formation of new countries. There is also a need to work on themes related to transatlantic trafficking and its dynamics in the formation of Brazilian society. From this moment on, we cannot lose the axis of connected history, between the representation of Africa, with the movements of imperialism and post-independence, and the meaning of this for students who build their references with the past with the formation of a Brazilian society, deeply marked by African knowledge. We need to pay attention to contemporary times, with people who find themselves, in some way, with that past time, without falling into a romantic and static vision. What Law 10.639/03 also proposes reflects the political dimension that African studies gain. Having not studied any history by itself, we do not study slavery as a static movement, or the actions of people in the condition of enslaved people, but we revisit events as an exercise in understanding the present itself, where teachers and students find understandings and explanations. When we mythologise stories, our own references become blurred.

For many educators, it is a great challenge to deal with the history of Africa in the classroom, because of various circumstances. It is not uncommon for the history of Africa to appear in a fragmented form, both in the BNCC, where themes are placed more separately than in connection, and in teaching materials. Many textbooks, for example, fail to combine themes about the history of Africa within connected narratives. It is important to understand that the African Kingdoms and Empires were connected to an entire network of trans-Saharan trade routes, which expanded relations between the African continent and many other territories, from Europe to Asia (Ross, 2011). The Indian Ocean also played a prominent role in the circulation of people, goods and knowledge, connecting distant areas with routes that existed even before transatlantic trade (Pouwels, 2002). These stories are sometimes not told because we are still very close to Eurocentric approaches, and approaches that contribute to racism, from dating to event selection (Goody, 2008). Africa is not merely a big piece of land where people went there and did things. It is important to think about the

relationships, the social organisations of millennia, that donated more to our global formation, than were a specimen of victim to exogenous movements.

We add to this debate that the constitution of the school curriculum is permeated by fields of dispute. Recently, Brazil has been the stage for debates on the reform of the high school curriculum, which gained strength in the debate since 2016, a period in which the country was the target of a political manoeuvre that removed from power the democratically elected president, Dilma Rousseff. The proposal for the New High School, as discussed by Jenerton Arlan Schütz and Vânia Lisa Fischer Cossetin (2019), came into force with the format of Law 13.415, generally thinking about the job market and reducing the reflective potential that comes with a more comprehensive, non-sectoral curriculum, as proposed. This change is scheduled to come into effect starting in 2025, and currently, debates continue to extend throughout the country, revealing the tension generated in the education field. If this measure materialises, it could be even more challenging to achieve a democratic, reflective school education that encourages the breaking of social stereotypes for young people in their social and school formations.

Regarding the curriculum, focused on the BNCC, it is important to use the thematic opportunities to reflect on the construction of History as a science and put up for debate, when possible, the interlocutions with knowledge, with peoples and cultures, making it possible to look at the writing of the history of BNCC itself. Africa, with its political militancy in the 1960s in the need for affirmation as a field of knowledge, can be a first step towards entering this dynamic of criticising history, as a dynamic discipline for the students themselves. There are teaching resources, such as music, literature and films that can be useful to encourage this reflection.

What we encounter in teaching African history in Brazil is having to deal with prejudices and assuming that Brazil is still a racist country. Racism can be understood as one of humanity's most disastrous 'inventions', as highlighted by

Achille Mbembe (2019). The racism intertwines the material and symbolic fields, expressing itself in different relationships in which the conception of race is a basic idea, both in individual and collective contact. As a problem, it is not limited to a single time, but survives decades and reaches generations, and contemporary society affected by prejudices like this reproduce situations of violence and profound inequalities.

Brazil as a country where there are many racist attitudes within the population's actions, whether in everyday life or in more extreme situations, needs to consider a historical myth that had harmful impacts - the myth of racial democracy. For many decades, and to this day it is possible to find this discourse in Brazilian society, the general discourse was the denial of racism in Brazil. Supported by Gilberto Freyre's idea of lusotropicalism, the myth of racial democracy stated that Brazil constituted a harmonious society, without racism since miscegenation was a striking feature in Brazilian society. By constructing the great references of the historical past in a national project, the black population was marginalised, and an attempt at social whitening occurred. Abdias Nascimento (1978) demonstrates how the construction of racial hierarchies has made Brazil a country with a history of violence that is at the core of its formation To serve contemporary political interests was more interesting to say that Brazil was a mestizo country than a country made up of a large proportion of black people, who largely lived in situations of inequality when compared to those who dominated the great centres of power, mostly a white elite (Domingues, 2005).

Given this situation, it is more than legitimate to think about the teaching of African history linked to the needs and specificities that occur in the Brazilian context. Law 10.639/03 is assertive in this sense, as it combines the fight for the history of Africa in Brazil with the teaching of the history and culture of Brazilian peoples. On the other hand, the law concerns mainly the teaching of struggle, culture and the agencies of Afro-Brazilian peoples in the formation of Brazilian society, and the study of the culture and history of African society, mainly in the areas of artistic education, literature and history (Brasil,

2003. Lei 10.639). This, in a way, can generate an exception to other areas that could and should work with themes that are part of the entire social formation; after all, interdisciplinarity and other areas of knowledge also have contributions and expressiveness from African elements and formed by peoples and Afro-Brazilian groups.

Nilma Gomes (2013) highlights the positive movements that occurred after the approval of Law 10.639/03, as guidelines were approved by the National Education Council to assist the debate and implementation of the requirements in 2004. It is also important to point out that the law proposed revisionism that impacts several areas of education. Reflections on how to approach themes in classrooms, the search for complementary training by professionals, the promotion of extension courses and debates around the teaching of African history, as well as the production of teaching materials. Even though it encountered resistance to adhering to its criteria, it is possible to highlight positive balances for the growth of the large area of African studies in Brazil.

### **Law 10.639/03 and area of African studies in Brazil**

Even though Law 10.639/03 is directly aimed at the basic education system, it is undeniable how it affected the area of African studies in Brazil (Oliva, 2003; Pereira, 2012; Silva, 2022). The development of African studies in Brazil has great demarcation with policies from the 1960s, which saw an interest in approaching the recently independent countries of the African continent, in a foreign policy strategy because of the context of the Cold War. As Dávila (2010) demonstrates, diplomacy played an important role in this movement, with the formation of agreements, a greater presence in regions of the African continent, with the establishment of embassies. Linked to these actions, in Brazilian universities, there was a greater opportunity for the circulation of people and an important moment for the formation of centres focused on African studies in Brazil. As Zamparoni (1995) and Reis (2021) demonstrate, universities built these spaces that encouraged debates on the area of African studies, with students and professors from

African regions coming to Brazil. It was a moment for greater knowledge of debates, literature and research in which Africa became the protagonist of its own history.

It is also worth highlighting that these movements of rapprochement and formation of areas of African studies have several characteristics and situations that are not always linear. For example, in the 1950s, Brazilian intellectual Gilberto Freyre played an important role in the discussion about the way that the Portuguese carried out colonisation. Brazil, considered a mixed-race country, greatly affected by the myth of racial democracy, was an example given to corroborate this idea. In international politics, as independence movements were intensifying on the African continent, the Portuguese government was quick to use this argument as a justification for remaining in colonised territories in Africa. Gilberto Freyre, invited by the Portuguese government to visit these African territories, which were under Portuguese rule, published the book *Um Brasileiro em terras portuguesas* in 1953. Lusotropicalist discourses participated in an important moment in the attempt to delay the independence process of the Portuguese colonies and were reproduced in the most diverse social areas (Castelo, 1998).

Another important event to be considered in this rapprochement with the African continent in the second half of the twentieth century is the recognition of Angola's independence, with Brazil being one of the first countries to do so. The contradiction in such action is that since 1964, Brazil has been experiencing a period of military dictatorship, with a strong discourse against left-wing governments, in a context of the Cold War, in which communism presented itself as a danger to capitalist governments and the Brazilian dictatorial regime. Furthermore, the country received a prominent figure from the Salazarist dictatorship, Marcelo Caetano. Still, Brazil did not stop trying to ally itself with the newly formed Angolan government to guarantee a certain area of influence (Dávila, 2010). These relationships encouraged approaches that went beyond the institutional political sphere.

However, relations with Africa not occurred through diplomatic and institutionalised politics, but went further by being present in social interests, which mobilised and fought to create a more democratic and horizontal discussion on the African continent. Within Brazil, social movements, especially the Black Movement, played an important role in demanding an anti-racist struggle. Amílcar Pereira (2011) analyses how the teaching of African history and the struggle demands of the Black Movement, integrated into political sectors that were in the process of building a new Constitution for Brazil, replacing the years of repression that were in force with the military-civilian dictatorship, since 1964. The 1980s were an important period for reflection and the search for greater representation with the opening of the democratic period, but an opening that needed to be taken advantage of with a lot of struggle and militancy, for the inclusion of social groups that in the past remained on the margins of a more direct participation of public authorities.

As Amílcar Pereira (2011) discusses, the Brazilian Black Movement has a diversity in its components, in its areas of activity and also at a regional level, as is possible to notice in other social movements, but one of the objectives that united its intentions in the formation of the new Constitution was the search for affirmative policies, in the face of the profound social inequality that exists in Brazil. Santagada (1990) states that Brazil's social profile in the 1980s was hit by a drastic economic crisis, with basic needs for the quality of life of the Brazilian population. An attempt to repair many of these deficits that had persisted for years in Brazilian governments was a feature of the 1988 Constitution. This problem appears to be structural because of the history of slavery, accompanied by a post-abolition period in which there were no public policies for reparation or social integration (Rios & Mattos, 2004). The situation of the population considered black was formed in a scenario of vulnerability, with poor working conditions and dealing with a social mentality permeated by racism and material actions that aimed at the subordination of these groups. There were centuries of unfavourable material conditions, which also

affected identity perceptions and recognition as a social subject in its power, for many people, a process of understanding and initiatives to positively recognise what it was like to be black was necessary, a process that psychoanalyst Nelsa Souza Santos calls “becoming black” (Santos, 2021[1983]).

Neuza Santos’ (2021[1983]) argument resembles that of Frantz Fanon (1952) in *Black Skin and White Masks*, in terms of raising awareness, since racism and colonial discourses also affected mentalities. From this discussion, many theorists sought to think about the need to expand the political debate to the field of culture, representation, in search of what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o (1986) proposed as ‘decolonizing the mind’. In this way we can see that the struggles fought on the African continent are connected with some struggles that exist in the Brazilian scenario, not because the protagonists of these struggles are all the same, but because they seek to fight a common enemy, which affects them in different ways: Racism, stereotypes and the mythification of people and cultures not only concern the field of representation, but have disastrous material effects. Obviously, these struggles at many points diverge, but it is interesting to think about their connections to problems that have become global.

For the Law 10.639/03 to exist in Brazil, it was fundamental to the demands led by black movements. Amílcar Pereira (2011) highlights how the Black Movement, with the launch of the Charter of Principles in 1978, placed the importance of reassessing the role of black people in the construction of Brazil’s history. The author builds a connection between these social demands with the promulgation of Law 10.639/03, since it also concerns the Afro-Brazilian population. Petronilha Gonçalves e Silva (2007), rapporteur of the law in 2003, highlights the difficulties that exist in teaching the history of Africa and the Afro-Brazilian population in Brazil. The author draws our attention to interactions between people, the need to reduce the barriers that support systems of discrimination, notions of inferiority and superiority in establishing relationships, since the teaching and learning process is a relational one. The teaching of anti-racist education

is, in this sense, very important in promoting a more egalitarian society that is less likely to reproduce hierarchies, which not only concern race, but also gender and social class. and one of the most significant points regarding education in the Brazilian basic system concerns the area of training for professionals to work in schools.

It is also important to remember that Law 10.639/03 was accompanied by other public policies that directly affected the restructuring of universities, with the *Reestruturação e Expansão das Universidades Federais (REUNI)* - Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities - plan in 2007, which meant an increase in the number of places for students in these institutions. Affirmative policies actions, such as quota laws that began to be adopted in universities since 2012, were another preponderant factor for the diversity of the student population, as an opening, albeit slow, for the growth of a more diverse faculty, which caters to plural representations. The basis of this law establishes that 50% of the vacancies are reserved for students who attended high school in public schools. Other favourable actions that we find include the creation of the *Universidade da Integração Internacional da Lusofonia Afro-Brasileira (UNILAB)* in 2010, which was an important action in this context, as it brings direct relations with the African continent to the fore, in search of a more democratic and less Eurocentric curriculum. UNILAB is a federal university that seeks integration between Portuguese-speaking countries. The institution receives many students from African regions that have this language institutionalised. Márcia Guerra Pereira highlights how the number of vacancies for teachers in the area of African history increased between the period, while Moisés Corrêa da Silva (2022) demonstrates the growth in the number of theses and dissertations, also increasing, after 2003.

In this way, we can verify that the impact of Law 10.639/03 occurred in many ways, as the university is linked to a set of coordinated elements for teaching in the basic education system, whether in teacher training or in the participation of materials para-didactic or didactic activities and in the growth of African centres, which become important

for the development of the most varied disciplinary activities. In postgraduate programmes, students can delve deeper into their topics of interest in their research, which generates a diversity of knowledge and exchanges about African studies. Some programmes and professors enjoy the possibility of studying abroad, nurturing networks and gaining rich academic experiences to support their research proposals with funding from the federal government, by the programme Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior (CAPES). Today, a significant portion of Federal Universities, which train professionals in the field of History, offer the discipline of African History. Additionally, the country has important movements focused on research and teaching of African studies, such as the establishment of a group within the Associação Nacional de História (ANPUH) since 2011 and the formation of the Associação Brasileira de Estudos Africanos (ABEÁfrica) since 2014.

But the large area of African studies that Brazilian researchers are currently engaged in does not manifest total consensus. The Associação Nacional de História (ANPUH) – National Association of Historians, in 2011, discussed the parameters to outline the debates that would enter into research called African studies. This debate took into account the fragile limitations seen in Africa in its Diaspora, and the formation of an Afro-Brazilian history. Considering the multiple narrative identities and events of the past, the general interest was to avoid generalisations and develop a debate that averted the stereotypes that supported in the imagination both an Africa seen by pessimism, and the romantic narratives without problematisations. The debate, which in certain aspects continues to this day, brings into question the slave trade, considered by most experts to be part of the history of African peoples, and the developments in the Diaspora, with the formation of Afro-Atlantic societies. Not by chance, Law 10.639/03 concerns both themes, but considering the differences and identity limits to be worked on.

These debates demonstrate to us the growth of this large area, which works in conjunction with a law that seeks

to encourage teaching, and consequently research, in the area of African history. Twenty years after the promulgation of Law 10.639/03, we observe that much still needs to be achieved in Brazil, to have fairer, less unequal and better teaching conditions, to combat racism and other forms of prejudice. But we also consider the gains in these twenty years, recognising the diversity that African studies have gained in Brazil and how Brazilian society has important links to the teaching of these and other stories.

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## Chapter 9

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