


## **EDUCATION IN ANCESTRAL RHYTHMS: Black experiential knowledge in Afro-Carnaval music in Belo Horizonte**


EDUCAÇÃO NA RÍTMICA ANCESTRAL:  
saberes da experiência negra na música afrocarnavalesca em Belo Horizonte

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**Education in ancestral rhythms:**

**Black experiential knowledge in Afro-Carnaval music in Belo Horizonte**

**Abstract:** This article aims to highlight the knowledge and socio-affectivities that constitute the creativity present in the Afro-Carnaval music of the Bloco Afro Angola Janga, during the Belo Horizonte (BH) Carnaval. It highlights rhythm as a key element of Black Popular Education mobilized by the celebration. Qualitative and ethnographic in nature, the analysis is based on percepts and events gathered through participant observation during the *bloco's* rehearsals and narrative interviews with two associate members. It was understood that the percussive musical atmosphere, articulated through intersubjectivity and the mythopoetics of the *orixás*, holds the potential to instigate political-cultural imaginaries as a practice of recreating ancestral African and Afro-Brazilian knowledges, expressed in sounds, dances, performances, sensibilities, and other forms of learning. Thus, this research contributes to the implementation of Law No. 10,639/03 by highlighting an educational process rooted in Black corporealities and experiences within emancipatory movements.

**Keywords:** Afro-diaspora; Black Popular Education; Law 10.639/03; Black Educator Movement.

**Educação na rítmica ancestral:**

**saberes da experiência negra na música afrocarnavalesca em Belo Horizonte**

**Resumo:** Este artigo objetiva evidenciar os saberes e as socioafetividades que constituíram a criatividade presente na música afrocarnavalesca do bloco afro Angola Janga, no Carnaval de Belo Horizonte (BH), destacando o ritmo como um dos elementos da Educação Popular Negra mobilizada pela festa. De natureza qualitativa e de cunho etnográfico, a observação participante nos ensaios do bloco e as entrevistas narrativas com duas pessoas integrantes da agremiação foram as fontes dos perceptos e dos acontecimentos analisados. Compreendeu-se que a atmosfera musical percussiva, articulada através da intersubjetividade e das mitopoesias dos *orixás*, detinha a potencialidade de instigar imaginários político-culturais enquanto uma prática de recriação dos saberes ancestrais africanos e afro-brasileiros, plasmados em sons, danças, performances, sensibilidades e outros saberes. Desse modo, a presente pesquisa contribui com os conhecimentos referentes à implementação da Lei nº 10.639/03 ao destacar um processo educativo que ocorria desde as corporeidades e experiências negras em movimentos de emancipação.

**Palavras-chave:** Afrodiáspora; Educação Popular Negra; Lei 10.639/03; Movimento Negro Educador.



## 1 Knowledges to beats of atabaques

Mateus Aleluia<sup>1</sup> (2019) asserts that before the verb, there was music. Even before the emergence of the human species, the Earth already was and still is a great symphony. The murmuring of waters, the whistling of winds, volcanic explosions, the rustling of leaves, the crackling of flames, among many other movements, compose the primordial sounds of the planet. Hence, he claims, music is inherent to life and to the human being. In this sense, considering the Nagô cultural stronghold alongside Muniz Sodré (1998), I understand<sup>2</sup> that music – as with dances, mythopoetics<sup>3</sup>, objects, gestures, colors, voices, affections, and words – is tasked with activating interaction processes among people and between the visible world (*aiê*) and the invisible world (*orum*). Thus, entering the rhythm (hence the importance of percussion instruments) is a means of affirming life while symbolically reinscribing death within it. Given this cosmology, the question arises: Is it possible to envision the experience of the Carnaval<sup>4</sup>, with its varied Afro-Brazilian rhythmic registers, as being mobilized by the knowledges of Black experiences<sup>5</sup> and as a producer of emancipatory education practices? The premise defended in this article is that the answer is yes.

The defense of this premise stems from the learning acquired through involvement with the Bloco Afro Angola Janga, which emerged ten years ago in the most recent scene of the Carnaval of the Brazilian city of (BH). It did so by valuing and recognizing African and Afro-Brazilian histories and cultures, with the majority of this trajectory marked by explicit aims and actions to combat racism, based on affirming the rights related to culture, memory, citizenship, spirituality, and the education of Black people residing in BH or the metropolitan region. To this end, the Bloco (re) created various knowledges and practices, directly linked to the Carnaval or went beyond the scope of it, constructing its stance as an expression of the Black Movement. However, the understandings

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1 Mateus Aleluia is an Afro-Brazilian musician, singer, composer, and researcher, born in 1943 in the city of Cachoeira, in the Recôncavo region of the Brazilian state of Bahia. Aleluia is a remaining member of the musical group Os Tingoás, and through his poetic and rhythmic vocalities, he expresses in his work the cultural, musical, linguistic, and philosophical heritage of African peoples re-elaborated in Brazil.

2 It is worth noting that the choice to write this text in the first person singular holds significant meaning in this study, as it explicates an implicated form of research, in which the researcher's own Black body became an instrument for understanding and reflecting on the sociocultural body of Angola Janga.

3 Most African cultures integrate their wisdom in the form of myths. Eduardo Oliveira (2021) tells us that this may be because myths do not fragment the spheres of living—they do not separate religion from politics, ethics from work, or knowledge from action. Perhaps also because myth contains the power of secrecy and enchantment, merging ethics and aesthetics in narratives imbued with memory, values, and teachings. In light of this, I chose the word mythopoesis, as used by Abdias Nascimento (2019), to emphasize the complex and beautiful nature of these forms of ancestral knowledge.

4 In this research, the word Carnaval is written with a capital “C” because, in the approach adopted here, the festivity is considered a collective subject that produces political transformations through culture, enacting creative and emancipatory educational forms, with the central participation of Black intellectuals and corporealities in this process.

5 The term “Black” refers to people who self-identify as *pretas* (Black) or *pardas* (Brown) according to the data used by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). Moreover, this understanding follows the way in which the Brazilian Black social movement has re-signified and affirmed the category of “race” from political, historical, social, and cultural perspectives.



presented here truly stem from the profusion of the Afro-Carnaval creative agency present in the musical conducting and learning inherent to the Bloco's drum section, which is responsible for creating the rhythmic, percussive, and performative atmosphere involving multitudes in rehearsals and processions.

This approach articulates Angola Janga's actions as a means of diversifying the understandings of BH's Carnaval, which are still highly restricted to claims of the right to the city. After all, the trajectory of this Bloco Afro not only marked the combat against the structural and structuring racism of BH's urbanity<sup>6</sup>, but also resized and re-elaborated the Black presence through Afro-Diasporic cultural foundations, in the creation of varied artistic languages. It penetrated interstitial spaces, promoting the unfolding, permanence, and reinvention of symbolic matrices and Black corporealities in BH, as political educational modes shaped by festive poetics.

The understanding of Carnaval as a critical festivity contributing to the combat against racism is related, among other things, to Law No. 10,639/03 (updated by Law No. 11,645/08 and its Guidelines). It amended the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (Law No. 9,394/96), and mandates the compulsory teaching of Afro-Brazilian, African, and Indigenous Peoples' History and Culture in basic and higher education offered by public and private educational establishments (Brasil, 2003). This change challenges a rethinking of the elaboration of school and non-school educational practices based on new and different formative epistemological matrices, and addresses the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations (ERER) as proposed by Opinion No. 03-04 of Resolution No. 1-04 of the National Education Council and the Chamber of Basic Education (CNE/CEB), which institutes the National Curricular Guidelines for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations and for the teaching of Afro-Brazilian and African History and Culture (DCNERER), of which Professor Dr. Petronilha Beatriz Gonçalves e Silva was the rapporteur (Brasil, 2004).

Mindful of this, this article aims to highlight the Afro-Carnaval creativity as a producer of knowledges and practices within new/other epistemological matrices, especially concerning the rhythmic language of the drums. The percussive rhythms played and performed by the Bloco's drum section, constituted by the involvement of Black musicality with the mythopoetics of the *orixás* and the subjectivities of the members, mediated by the knowledge of the musical conducting experience. It was developed in the daily conviviality of rehearsals, in which processes of artistic and relational creation manifested most strongly due to their weekly frequency. This language articulated knowledges and doings that elected Afro-Brazilian musicality, with roots in African-matrix religious traditions, as one of the most vibrant educational elements present in the relational fabric of Angola Janga.

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6 For inquiries, tensions, and other political-cultural creations that emerge from the relationship between the Bloco Afro Angola Janga's parade and the planned urbanity of Belo Horizonte, see: DOS SANTOS, Marcone Loiola; DA SILVA, Natalino Neves. "A festa nas frestas de um país em ruínas: Reivindicação da memória e celebração da vida a partir do carnaval afro-mineiro." *Revista Contexto & Educação*, [S.l.], v. 39, n. 121, p. e14694, 2024. DOI: 10.21527/2179-1309.2024.121.14694. Available at: <https://www.revistas.unijui.edu.br/index.php/contextoeducacao/article/view/14694>. Accessed on October 17, 2025.



This text is part of a Master's research titled "*Poéticas das Corporeidades Negras: criatividades educativas que tramam o (com)viver do bloco afro Angola Janga*" defended by me, Marcone Loiola dos Santos, at the Faculdade de Educação da Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais.. The methodological foundation was qualitative, grounded in critical ethno-research (Macedo, 2004; Macedo & Sá, 2018) as the ethnographic framework. My memories<sup>7</sup> as a percussionist who participated in the drum section and other activities of the association for four years were interwoven with participant observation in the daily routine of rehearsals and the Carnival processions of 2022 and 2023. Content analysis of narrative interviews conducted with five other engaged members of the Bloco served as a basis for understanding the collective's complex and dynamic reality.

Due to the specific focus established in this article, I selected the narratives of two interviewees who occupied roles directly related to the Bloco's drum section. The fictitious names given were Dara (cisgender woman, lesbian, self-declared Black, Candomblecista [candomblé practitioner], and general drum master) and Osenga (cisgender man, bisexual, self-declared Black, ecumenical, one of the Bloco's vocalists, and drum section producer).

## 2 Poetic sonographies in the kinesis of rhythm

Coming into contact with the Angola Janga meant realizing, right from the first impressions that the Bloco Afro guaranteed spaces of prominence exclusively for people who self-declared as Black. Thus, its formation segments, composed of the drum section – called Compacta e Demolidora by members – the dance troupe, named Corpo de Dendê, the vocal group, and all management positions, were designated only for Black people (Black and Brown).

Nevertheless, the Bloco's "Afro element" – understood in this research as a bundle of inventive festive tactics, constructors, maintainers, and revitalizers of communal identities – was not constituted only by a predominantly Black presence. There were, mainly, socio-affective relations that produced, reinvented, and translated into diverse artistic languages, socializing elements of African and Afro-Brazilian cultures imbued in the creativity and lived experience of the Carnival. Therefore, it was the Afro element operating in the constant reconstitution of beings, knowledges, doings, and affects in opposition to the precarization of lives and subjectivities violently produced by Brazilian racism. In this context, the musical conducting and the rhythm were, together, some of the registers that composed the artistic language of the Angola Janga, with an emancipatory educational potential constituted by and constituting the daily lives and

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<sup>7</sup> Marcone was a member of the Bloco between 2019 and 2024. During this period, he participated in various activities, both those directly related to Carnival (rehearsals, events, processions) and those that extended beyond the festivity, such as the study group Conversas Pretas ("Black Conversations"). This group was organized and coordinated by the researcher throughout 2021 in collaboration with Angola Janga through online meetings. These gatherings addressed various topics related to ethno-racial relations, while also promoting and maintaining contact among the Bloco members during the social isolation period caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.



Black corporealities in their becoming. It is in the sway of this tune that this text involves and realizes itself.

Rhythmists ready, the *batuque* is about to begin! To enter the daily life of Angola Janga, I recall the rehearsal on July 17, 2022: the first after the isolation and social distancing caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Right at the beginning, the drum master Dara picked up the microphone and gave her welcome speech, expressing celebration and pointing out some changes in the *bloco*. Emotional, she also expressed her immense desire to be there at that moment and provoked the whole group with a powerful discourse on affections, love, and resistance. She asked that every person present there look into each other's eyes and say how valuable is each existence. At that moment, I saw myself reflected in some eyes shedding tears. One woman cried profusely as I, looking deeply into her retina, highlighted the importance of her life. Even without having seen her before, she took refuge in my embraces and stayed there crying for a few minutes. Soon, another member also joined our embrace of solace, saying, "How good it is to be back!" It was powerful, beautiful, and delicate. At that instant, the sensitivity of how much the resumption of the rehearsals for the Carnaval held profound subjective importance for each individual awakened in me. It became even more evident to me how cruelly the pandemic affected Black people and that being in the rehearsals, after so many challenges and physical and symbolic deaths was very powerful and significant on so many levels. It was, in some way, a space-time of safety and refuge. I realized how fundamental the moments of the rehearsals – promoters of gatherings and art – are for the well-being of many of those people, who were relieved and happy with the resumption of the Carnaval routine.

After this collective valorization of existences, Dara posed the question and comment: "What did you do during these two years to be alive here and now, to ensure you are here at this moment? You demanded of me several times when we would return. Well, you never left! We never left this place, everyone!" Affirming this belonging of each person to Angola Janga, Dara announced that the bloc's processes in constructing the 2023 Carnaval would be governed, more than ever, by love, affection, and politics. After all, we were in a full election year, in a violent and extremely apprehensive political context for the progressive sectors of society. In this, the drum master emphasized the importance of communication, of dialogue among the participating people, also in life beyond the Bloco: "To speak of love, we have to speak of communication." Immediately afterward, Dara asked: "And who is it that communicates?" At the same instant, several voices answered "EXU! Laroyê, Exu!" The musician calls for the delivery of the communication of love within the bloc, among Black people, into the hands of Exu, as it is in the spiraling of times.

Dynamics of interactions and discourses, such as the examples described here, were frequent in the routine of Angola Janga's rehearsals, especially at the beginning of each Carnaval cycle. They functioned as stimuli for contact among the people present and transformed the rehearsals into space-times closer to the life of each member. In this tune, artistic techniques gained density and subjectivity by blending into attitudes of ethnic-racial recognition and valorization among Black people.



The rhythmic composition of the Angola Janga was complex. Dara, with her fingers, hands, arms, and facial expressions, conducted us with the codes for *samba reggae*, *samba afro*, *pagodão*, *galope*, *afoxé*, funk, reggae, etc. Besides these, the *orixás*' rhythms also composed the bloc's sonorities. Thus, the Agueré for Oxóssi, the Ilú for Iansã, the Bravum for Oxumarê, the Ijexá for Oxum, among others, were noticeable to those familiar with the language of the drums. Since I became part of Angola Janga, the corporeal communication between the drum master and the rhythmists, which translated into sounds, has always caught my attention. By presenting the codes with her body, Dara established a language with the many other corporealities that formed the drum section. They responded to the codes with other corporeal movements that, in relation to the instruments, constituted the music that animated the rehearsals and processions. Body, instrument, and sound intertwined in the percussion, becoming rhythm. It was precisely this musicality that invoked the dancing corporealities of the dance troupe and the multitude of revelers in the streets or the audience that followed the rehearsals weekly. Thus, the body was and is the living, creative, and dynamic driving force of the Carnaval, be it individual and/or collective.

Conducting through gestures is not exclusive to Angola Janga. In all BH Carnaval *blocos* with a drum section, usually one or more drum masters guide the rhythmic flow of processions. However, drum masters develop their own communication, diversifying both form and content among *blocos*. What distinguishes Angola Janga, in this regard, is its effort to reclaim the Afro-diasporic foundations of rhythms that, in other *blocos*, are often detached from Black knowledge and treated as mere spontaneous inventions of the associations.

Participating in this daily rhythm, in my observations made from fieldwork in the rehearsals, the art of transmission with which Dara conducted the rhythmists in front of her frequently jumped out at me. Along with the other interactions and discourses that summoned subjectivities to engage intimately with the Afro-Carnaval artistic creations, there were moments when the percussionist made rhythmic learning a way of socializing certain knowledges and Afro-Brazilian and African philosophies. Before we started playing the Agueré, for example, Dara awakened the drum section through the mythopoetics of Oxóssi. Okê Okê Arô<sup>8</sup>!

The *orixá* of blue and green colors, in Nagô thought, is the one who dominates the noble art of the hunt. He is the caboclo of the forests, who opens paths through the dense woods with his *ofá* (bow and arrow) always in hand. Known for his shrewdness, patience, care, and attention with what he aims for, so as never to lose the launched arrow, Oxóssi defends himself but also cares for the community with plenty and abundance. Knowing this, at one point, Dara provoked each person in the drum section to visualize mentally a much-desired dream that was difficult to achieve, something that was in the dimension of what we thought to be impossible. She told us to play the Agueré with the intensity of our dreams, as if we ourselves were the hunters of the woods, opening the paths for achievements and for abundance in our lives. Thereby, awakening the rhythm

8 A Nagô salutation to orixá Oxóssi.



in connection with subjectivities, the Agueré began to be played with an overwhelming intensity, which still gives me goosebumps whenever I recall it, because the energy of the hunt, of the search, took over the atmosphere of the moment.

Constantly in the rehearsals, Dara emphasized to the drum section the importance of dance in the act of playing percussion. The movement of the body stimulates the creation of intimacy between person and instrument and, according to her, is the foundation of the rhythmic swing that is contagious and excites bodies, far beyond the mere mechanical repetition of gestures that, in interaction with the instruments, generates a sound malnourished of energy and intentionality. In this, it was possible to observe that some people, throughout the rehearsals, created their own relations with the different instruments, with varied corporeal movements. After all, bodies are unique, and the sizes and shapes of each instrument dictate how it will be placed in the dance. However, in the Agueré, all the rhythmists and the dance troupe repeated a specific body movement. Looking at my feet and the many other pairs of feet around me, I observed the constancy of a pendulum movement, backward and forward. In the hands of the dancers, besides the dancing of the feet, it was also possible to notice the index fingers of the hands extended like arrows, in a pendulum and circular movement, which followed the back and forth and the rotation of the bodies. All these gestures together refer to the philosophy of Oxóssi: the one who, to guarantee the hunt, takes two steps back before moving forward and who teaches that every arrow is pulled back before being launched ahead. So, in the movement of bodies and the rhythm of the percussion there were knowledges about will, patience, caution, hope, and resistance in the non-linear and inconstant trajectories of life. Black corporealities, therefore, inscribed poetic sonographies in the kinesis of rhythm in time and space.

As I see it, Angola Janga's conducting style, encourage rhythmists to move and dream with their bodies through while playing, embodying an expression of Black culture, placing sound at the core of its performance. This approach reveals a practice rooted in the rites of Afro-Brazilian religions, in which the act of producing sound channels the flow of *axé* – “the power or force of realization that enables the dynamism of existence” (Sodré, 1998, p. 20).

Sodré (1998) details, for example, how the Jeje-Nagô religious institutions are the guardians and transmitters of this power of sound, which requires direct communication and interpersonal contact for its transmission. Sound results from a process of the body's self-presentification that dynamically seeks contact with another body to activate *axé*.

As every rhythm is already a synthesis (of times), Black rhythm is a synthesis of syntheses (of sounds), which attests to the integration of the human element into mythical temporality. Every sound that the human individual emits reaffirms their condition as a singular being; every rhythm they adhere to leads them to relive a collective knowledge about time, where there is no place for anguish, as what ensues is the overflowing joy of activity, of induced movement (Sodré, 1998, p. 21)



By transforming the *orixás*' mythopoetics into pathways for learning and engagement with rhythm, the conducting style drew on knowledges rooted in mythological memory, understood as a collective subject of thought (Sodré, 2017). In this sense, memory is not confined to a doctrinal system, dogmatic exposition, or formal reasoning, but rather expressed through a cultural repertoire and cosmological symbols transmitted through initiation in the *terreiros* and, within the broader sphere of global society, expanded through written and literary interpretations (Sodré, 2017). Within the Bloco Afro, however, this repertoire unfolded into everyday and artistic Carnaval practices, as seen in the conducting and the drum section.

In light of this, in my view, the members of the Angola Janga had the opportunity to approach what I understand to be one of the most powerful educational elements that composed the collective's relational and daily framework, which held the capacity to strengthen the ethnic-racial belonging of Black people in the Bloco. In their narrative, Osenga highlighted such educational importance of the rhythmic experience in Angola Janga for their life:

And there I began to learn a lot about the notion of rhythm. And I think my belonging to Angola Janga started there. From the relationships I had in the sense of learning, but not only that. In the sense of appropriating something that was... That's not the best word, but something that was stolen, that was ripped out, that was appropriated from our culture by other voices. I started to reflect on what I knew about *axé* and *samba*. What was my idea about these musicalities? About culture? About African-matrix religions? What was my view on Black people too? All of this is involved. I was in a space that was not whitened. At least that was not the proposal.

It was through this learning of musicality, rhythm, and aesthetics that I began to belong and recognize myself as a Black person, actually belonging somewhere. And then the discussions about racism started popping up in my head, starting from this conviviality with other Black people from diverse places in the city. [...]

So it broadened my view on the world, on culture, especially on music, on what I value. It heavily impacted the spaces I am in and want to be in. So, like... I love samba nowadays, something I repudiated in my childhood. My family adored it, and I was like: "I can't be this rabble here, people! For God's sake!" And today I think, what is rabble? Anyway... I started to question all of this, you know? I think I started to question the imposed powers this way, through what I learned and through the conviviality I had in Angola Janga with these diverse people (Osenga, interview conducted in 2023).

In view of this, I understand that the involvement with Black musicality associated with the *orixás*' mythopoetics, steeped in a collective conviviality, held the power to raise individuals to Afro-diasporic cosmoperceptions. This occurred by establishing subjective bonds with rhythms that referred to Black-African and Afro-Brazilian knowledges and practices, disconnecting them from the racist perspectives that imprison them in the field of barbarity, of the "rabble"; which demonize them through the Euro-Christian colonialist logic. This logic still predominates in Brazilian society and in many educational settings, dismantling memories and meanings imbued in these sounds, turning them into trivial products of the hegemonic phonographic market, often associated with white individuals and artistic oligarchies not committed to anti-racism.



### 3 The knowledge of the black experience imbued in the conducting

Now, experiencing the drum section with a conducting style loaded with such educational potential as this one awakened my curiosity to understand how such a practice developed until then. During the interview, I asked Dara to detail her conducting style, which was embodied by such energy and mobilization of knowledges that summon the rhythmists not only to play with excellence, but to see themselves in the percussive action itself, imbued by the Black-African mythopoetics re-elaborated in Brazil. Then she shared a bit of her trajectory prior to Angola Janga that flows into and intertwines with her work in the Bloco:

I already had a great deal of musical experience when I joined Angola Janga. I started playing at eight years old, at my mother's city samba school. My father gave me my first instrument; it was a *tamborim* and then a guitar, which I soon cast aside. My thing was percussion, really. [...]

So, this identification with Angola Janga and with childhood comes from a place where I was allowed to play, that's where it starts. I played what I play and I played what I like, which were my Candomblé and my musical knowledges. My father gave me a vinyl record that was his. It was the first vinyl record he ever gave me. Actually, he gave me two on the same day. One by Banda Reflexus and the other by Michael Jackson... It's my first reference of a gift. My parents listen to a lot of good music. So, this flow, this link happened when I recognized myself as a person, for I entered Angola Janga when I was around 30 years old, right? 30 something years old... Coming from a Carnaval that was nothing like Angola Janga. I come from the Nova Lima Carnaval, I started in that town at eight and I played until I was 17 or 18. My family was all Umbanda, so I have been Umbanda since I was a child. From Umbanda, I became initiated in Candomblé. [...] It's been 22 years. I was initiated young. [...] Then I gave up Carnaval and went to experience Candomblé, very intensely... And Angola Janga comes in the middle of all this, where I could cultivate my religion without religiously practicing. I could play, it was permitted to play, because in Candomblé women don't play. So I could play a timbal, I could play a conga, there is this place that Carnaval brings. But what Angola Janga brings to our Black bodies, to my Black body is permission, something socially denied. So it comes from there, that's it, it links. Permission... maybe there's a better term to say... But it is permitted to be alive. It is permitted to be doing and being... Angola Janga brings all this together like that. Angola brings it together. It is permitted to live. Now it is permitted to be. Angola Janga comes from this place (Dara, interview conducted in 2023).

Possessing musical and ritual knowledges inscribed in the body, shaped by a collective trajectory, the percussionist arrived at Angola Janga as a rhythmic member, gradually ascending through conviviality and relationships, eventually reaching the position of general master. According to her, the circularity of experiences within the Bloco Afro, through the permission of becoming, as a Black Candomblé woman, was also fundamental to her development as a drum master:

Then I built my musical part together with the people, which is the most interesting part, until I became the drum master. [...] There was one thing that was mine: liking to listen to people. So, when I was inside the drum section and I was just a part of the ensemble, not occupying any other place, I was only a rhythmist... Listening to people, talking to them, understanding that there were



days when someone was menstruating, there were days when there had been breakups, like that... I learned to conduct by understanding that, if I shared other lived experiences that Angola Janga had brought me, I could conduct better. I don't know if you remember, I don't know if you were at that rehearsal... There was a time when we were going to play for Oxóssi, and we did the music and all that... And I said: "Folks, wait! Stop. It's great now, it's beautiful! But let's take this music to another place. You are going to think about things that you want to resolve in your life. You are going to tell Oxóssi to hunt for you there..." I learned that inside Angola Janga. I learned that from my lived experiences, from my life, but I knew I needed to bring life to that conducting. When we stop being just a *bloco*, Marcone, who is a researcher, is playing, but he is playing with another perspective. And I need to learn to communicate. What Angola Janga taught me was to communicate. And so, I say this: Exu is very present in Angola Janga, so much so that he is one of the godparents. They are Exu, Oxóssi, and Oxum. And it might seem obvious, but Angola taught me to communicate. To communicate what I wanted, to communicate what I wanted to hear, how to listen to people. Because even the way you ask (you are a researcher and you know it), will make the answer that is wanted or needed arrive like that. So I don't know if I am answering, if it is making sense, but I am learning, I am being educated in this Black education. This ancestral education of listening. Despite I already knew that, as in Candomblé everything is so oral. You have little writing, you learn things with little writing, everything is oral... Angola Janga taught me that this is even more so. I think that's it (Dara, interview conducted in 2023).

By saying, "I learned that inside Angola Janga", "I learned that from my lived experiences, from my life", Dara showed that her conducting style comes from a significant connection of events, of experiences. It is the becoming of a body that moves and plays in the Carnaval of Minas Gerais since childhood that is ritualized in *Candomblé* and that in the doing and remaking of itself together with the Bloco Afro at issue, (re) creates and socializes Afro-diasporic knowledges and practices. Thus, the way the percussion workshops were conducted in Angola Janga's rehearsals stems from a knowledge of experience that occurs in the relationship between knowledge and the human life of a person who was and is educated by what she herself calls "Black, ancestral education, of listening".

The notion of the knowledge of experience in this research is articulated according to Jorge Larossa Bondía (2002), who proposes thinking about education based on the pair experience/meaning. From this perspective, there is a transgression of the limits of Cartesian modern science transforming experience into a generic and replicable methodological experiment. Experience, then, ceased to be that which happens to us and the way we attribute or do not attribute meaning to it, and took on the sign of how the world reveals its intelligible face, the series of regularities with which we can access the truth of what things are and, based on that, dominate them. In this way, a paradoxical situation was formed: at the same time that technical artifacts and knowledges that are intended to be objective are accumulated, aiming to promote agreements, consensus, or homogeneity among people, since they institute truths external to human existence. It also establishes an enormous scarcity of knowledges that operate in human life, inserting themselves into it and transforming it.



The knowledge of experience also contests the temporality of modernity, eager for the increasingly rapid succession of events, in the frantic consumption of information, preventing experience and the formation of memory, “since each event is immediately substituted by another that equally excites us for a moment, but without leaving any trace” (Bondía, 2002, p. 23). Modern humanities emerge from this, anxious for stimuli from specific lived experiences, where everything crosses them, excites them, agitates them, shocks them, but nothing happens to them, nothing touches them. Human life in this sense became, then, malnourished of experiences and modern knowledge is no longer the active knowledge that feeds human existence, “but something that floats in the air, sterile and disconnected from this life in which it can no longer be incarnated” (Bondía, 2002, p. 28).

Experience that produces knowledge, on the other hand, requires allowing the event to gain the body in a singular way; it demands stopping to think, to look, to listen, to feel, dwelling on the details, suspending the automatism of action, talking about what happens to us, listening to others, cultivating the art of encounter, giving oneself time and space.

If experience is what happens to us and if the knowledge of experience has to do with the elaboration of the meaning or meaninglessness of what happens to us, it is a finite knowledge, linked to the existence of an individual or a particular human community. Or else, in an even more explicit way, it is a knowledge that reveals to the concrete and singular human being, understood individually or collectively, the meaning or meaninglessness of their own existence, of their own finitude. Therefore, the knowledge of experience is a particular, subjective, relative, contingent, personal knowledge (Bondía, 2002, p. 27).

In this tune, the logic of experience produces difference, heterogeneity, and plurality. The sharing of this experience reverberates in pieces of dialogic that function heterologically, open to the unknown, to uncertainty (Bondía, 2002)

The event is common, but the experience is everyone’s own, singular and in some way unable to repeat. The knowledge of experience is one that cannot be separated from the concrete individual in whom it is incarnated. It is not, like scientific knowledge, outside of us, but only makes sense in the way it shapes a personality, a character, a sensibility. Or, ultimately, a singular human way of being in the world, which is in turn an ethics (a way of self-conducting) and an aesthetics (a style) (Bondía, 2002, p. 27).

From this, I understood that the way Dara led her conducting role in Angola Janga, the ethics present in performing the practice, was based on communication which, according to her, was learned through the experience of conviviality and the relationships present in the association. In living and interacting with the diversity of black people intrinsic to the Bloco Afro, the percussionist made an effort to try to consider the multiple relationships and experiences present in the endeavor of producing and sharing musical knowledges. Hence, Dara sought paths in constructing non-Manichaean forms of conducting and stimulated the rhythmic individuals to speak and write in multiple languages circulated within the differences. This happened in playing,



dancing, or exchanging glances that valued existences, stemming from desires and perspectives that bloom from the singular trajectories present there. Thus, the conducting took on the meaning and intention previously desired by the drum master: it gained life! For it did not happen only based on the experiences and knowledges of the drum master, but expanded by believing in the confluence of the subjectivities of the members, which allowed the drum section to become a prospecting of black longings and creativities in relationship.

There was an ethical positivity magnetizing musical learning with other values, betting on a dialogical approach that relates to the achievement of dreams and utopias while playing. Therefore, it summoned us to re-signify our present through Afro-Brazilian and African knowledges and philosophies present in mythopoetics. Hence, the ethics that governed the conducting in Angola Janga stems from an educational process experienced by Dara since childhood and which found continuity in the intersubjective relationships present in the Bloco Afro. Sensitized by these collective learnings, she committed to the existential dignity of black people by expanding possible experiences through communication encompassed by black rhythms with their mythopoetic verves.

In this manner, the conducting practice is unveiled, for me, as a knowledge of experience that preserves Dara's particular, finite, subjective, relative, contingent, and personal dimensions. However, when woven and socialized within the black community, it also holds the strength of intersubjectivity that recreates, questions, updates, and incorporates this knowledge in different ways, in the composition of several other knowledges, experiences, and practices. Indeed, these knowledges also become rooted by a certain infinitude in the communal dimension, as they are in movement, unfinishedness, updating, tensioning, and dialogicality in the restitution of memory, in the fight against the erasure of black presences and creations in Brazil. They gain, therefore, a political and historical character.

In this case, what I am trying to clarify is that this knowledge of experience did not derive from an isolated and detached corporeality, but oriented the practice of an individual who was educated by the black community, grounded in the experience of race, where the production of meaning and non-meaning operated around black cultures and religious expressions. In this context, Angola Janga appears as a space-time where this knowledge was systematized and socialized in the conducting practice, culminating in the composition of the celebration along with other knowledges. In other words, it is a form of knowledge that differs greatly from scientific knowledge, yet under no circumstances can it be regarded as lesser or as "residual knowledge" (Gomes, 2017). According to Nilma Lino Gomes (2017), these are the knowledges produced within Black communities and systematized by the Brazilian Black Movement:

It is a way of knowing the world, of producing a rationality marked by the experience of race in a society racialized since the beginning of its social conformation. It means the intentional and directed social, cultural, and political intervention of black men and women throughout history, in life in society, in the processes of production and reproduction of existence. That is, these are not intuitive



actions, but creation, recreation, production, and potency. The experience of race is part of the regulatory processes of transgression, liberation, and emancipation experienced by Africans and their descendants (Gomes, 2017, p. 67).

In my view, such a way of knowing and producing potency can only emerge from corporealities that move in the crossroads, in the constant creation of the new, in the game evading colonial and rigid ways of feeling-doing-thinking. Even amidst the tense urban social fabric of BH, the precariousness of the artistic work of the people who produce the city's Carnaval and the conflicts that intensify with the forces of homogenization of the revelry perpetuated with state support, the crossroads point to multiple possibilities in the border zones. Not by chance, Dara highlighted Exu as an explanatory principle tied to the power of communication. To elaborate more on the *orixá*, Eduardo Oliveira (2021) states:

Exu is the synthesis of the wisdom produced by the African experience. The African cultural-based experience is an experience of the body – which is why Exu is the owner of the body! Such experience follows traditional ethics – which is why Exu is always beside Ifá, the guardian of the African ethical system. Exu is the condensation of this sapiential experience. This is why he communicates the fundamental elements of this civilizational experience. Thus, Exu is the *orixá* of communication, connecting and interconnecting all elements and all worlds (Oliveira, 2021, p. 158).

It is from this onto-epistemology that we can minimally comprehend why Exu is the principle that grounds a theory of life, conceiving it as a pulse of abundance and diversity in its multiple reinventions in the diaspora (Rufino, 2019). Thus, I analyze that a conducting practice imbued with the Exu principle, along with other practices, such as the processual aesthetic-corporeal, body-gestural, and vocal constructions, invests in the production of different discourses, expanding the power of communication and the production of meanings among the black community sensitized by the Bloco Afro.

#### **4 Black Popular Education shaped in celebration**

Given the above, I understand that the Afro-Brazilian musicality (re)created in Angola Janga as a social and political practice that constituted everyday life itself. By reworking other ways of saying/conducting/dancing/singing/playing/relating/beautifying, Black corporealities, collectively, drew on knowledges that pluralized the world. Thus, I believe that the modes of creating the celebration enacted within the group transgressed the colonial structures of feeling-doing-thinking, enunciating, valuing, and legitimizing existences, knowledges, and practices historically subordinated.

From this perspective, the rhythmic and performative composition of the Bloco formed a bundle of Afro-Carnaval poetics mediated by references drawn from African-based religious



traditions. In other words, in the making and living of the celebration, the values of Afro-Brazilian sacredness transcended the spaces circumscribed by worship and became cultural, social, ethical, aesthetic, and educational foundations of the group. This education, shaped by these Afro-Carnaval practices, requires us to learn to read the poetics in order to understand the politics and aesthetics (Simas & Rufino, 2018; Rufino, 2019), calling us to engage in educational processes as ways of sociability (Simas & Rufino, 2018). Carnaval must be savored with the whole body to be comprehended – making the body the living amulet of it, radiating the joy of creating beauty through shared laughter, experiences and sounds.

This educational mode, mobilized through Black political, social, spiritual, cultural, and ancestral experiences, is understood in this research as an expression of Black Popular Education (Silva, 2020). After all, Afro-diasporic and popular knowledges were realized through the rhythmic atmosphere of the celebration, within the flow of social practices rooted in everyday socio-affective experiences woven into the communal life of the Bloco.

Thus, what emerges from the educational potential of Angola Janga is the concretization of culture and education occurring through the integration of reason, emotion, and sensation – through the consistent activation of both the sacred and the profane – via social actions led primarily by Black political subjects (Silva, 2020). Thus, through the engagement of its members, the Bloco Afro contributed to making visible precious liberatory and emancipatory knowledges and practices, especially in a historical and social context marked by policies aimed at guaranteeing Black citizenship and socio-racial and cognitive justice through the recognition and appreciation of Afro-Brazilian and African culture (Silva, 2020) in BH.

Within this stance, I interpret that Angola Janga confronted one of the barriers that hinder the implementation of Law No. 10,639/03 in schools: racism toward African-based religious traditions (Conceição, 2016). I thus analyze that one of the greatest sources of transgression present in the Black Popular Education mobilized in the group's daily life resided in the emancipatory, affirmative, and valued treatment of these religious traditions. They carried the potential to educate for ethno-racial relations grounded in Black culture, understanding the values present in Black religiosities as formative and transformative of corporealities and subjectivities animating them. Carnaval, therefore, can foster new reflections and inspire the construction of one's own cultural identity through lived experience and immersion in the experiential process. Hence the relationship with culture and elements of Black religiosities, in this way, shifts meanings and concepts from mere distant perception to (inter)subjective re-signification through the body itself.

## 5 Final considerations

In light of the above, I understand that Afro-Carnaval creativities in Brazil in general, and in Belo Horizonte in particular, reveal that ERER extends far beyond a theoretical discussion or the



mere bureaucratic enforcement of a legal norm. After all, as emphasized in the DCNERER (Brazil, 2004), there are essential intersections among culture, education, and territory. ERER is, above all, an epistemological and political field that points toward other ontological becomings that, in multiple ways, transgress Euro-North American ethnocentric impositions. It therefore encompasses conflicts and tensions as it seeks to eradicate racism and the colonality of the being, knowing, and power. Its political, educational, and cultural conceptions arise as a field of possibilities for subjective and corporeal re-elaboration, broadening human experience through sociabilities decoded by art, struggle, and coexistence that (re)create affections, deeds, knowledges, and revelries.

In this regard, the educational nature emerging from Afro-Carnaval ancestral rhythmicity is even supported by Article 4 of Resolution No. 1/04 of the CNE/CEB, which encourages educational systems and institutions to “establish channels of communication with the Black Movement, Black cultural groups, teacher training institutions, research and study centers, such as the Centers for Afro-Brazilian Studies. The aim is to seek contributions and exchanging experiences for institutional and pedagogical plans as well as teaching projects” (Brazil, 2004, p. 2). I understand that the process of reeducation on the part of schools – toward the positive treatment and embrace of diversities – requires a closer relationship between formal and non-formal educational dimensions. The results presented here point to one of the fruitful paths toward constructing an education that truly contributes to the affirmative self-perception of Black people, their collectives, and their cultures. An education capable of recognizing antiracist educational processes taking place in everyday life, social interactions, intersubjective relations, and cultural expressions arising from social and popular experience across the multiple territories that compose Brazil.

Thus, by emphasizing the struggle for education as a social and human right from the perspective of Black Popular Education, this study reflects on the knowledges derived from Black experience in the Afro-Carnaval music of BH as constitutive of the expansion of formative, antiracist epistemological frameworks. In other words, the analyses undertaken here highlight that other languages are mobilized in the pursuit of the onto-epistemic and sociopolitical radicality involved in implementing Law No. 10.639/03 (updated by Law No. 11.645/08). These languages emerge and radiate from Black corporealities and experiences as they affirm their ethical, aesthetic, political, poetic, cultural, territorial, spiritual, rhythmic, socio-affective, and educational foundations.

Bearing this in mind, I understand that the knowledges, experiences, affections, and learnings woven and mobilized by Afro-Carnaval rhythmic poetics – within the relational experience of the Bloco Afro Angola Janga – constituted an expression of Black Popular Education capable of composing a diverse percussive musical atmosphere. Moreover, it fostered political and cultural imaginaries as a practice of observing, apprehending, and translating African and Afro-Brazilian ancestral knowledge – not as mere mimetic repetition, but as a way of renewing them through sounds, dances, performances, sensibilities, and other knowledges. Therefore, the educational event understood here, as part of the Bloco’s Afro element, functioned as an alchemical force, forming Afro-diasporic Black corporealities forged in revelry in Belo Horizonte.



Thus, education did not occur as a moment prior or subsequent to Carnaval with its creative and relational rehearsals. On the contrary, it was the very phenomenon of the festivity – its daily life and sociability – setting the emancipatory educational experience. It occurred through a circular and simultaneous process of producing, revising, and socializing knowledges, both constituting and constituted by Black corporealities in intersubjective relations within moments of conception, craftsmanship, and (co)existence within Carnaval.

I understand that, from Afro-Carnaval celebration in its broad array of elements, emerge emancipatory, divergent, and restorative educational processes. This happens by emphasizing the agency of the Black population agency creating and mobilizing practices and knowledges grounded in its cultural and historical foundations, opposing the hegemonic modes of education imposed by the State that exclude and distort Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous trajectories. Furthermore, the Black Popular Education does this without denying the importance of institutional educational spaces. On the contrary, it invites formal education to reeducate itself – to innovate its political-pedagogical projects, affirming the right to education as an ontological process that partakes in the right to life. In this regard, I envision the celebration as a call to the creation and reconstruction of worlds rhythmically shaped by ancestral knowledge.



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