

<https://doi.org/10.22398/2525-2828.09278-22>

# Us for us: black solidarity and creative economy

## *Nós por nós: solidariedade negra e economia criativa*

Lia Vainer Schucman<sup>1</sup> , Heitor Marques Santos<sup>1</sup> , Maria Eduarda Delfino das Chagas<sup>1</sup> 

### ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the meanings attributed by black men and women, participants of solidarity fairs, to informal work and entrepreneurship. To this end, we interviewed black participants of solidarity economy fairs in the city of Florianópolis in order to analyze how their activities relate to social movements. To understand these practices, we categorized the contents of these interviews into two major thematic nuclei; Surviving on Your Own: Innovation and Creativity; and Subjectivity and Creative Economy. The results obtained in this research point out that social movements and the creative economy are like mobilization tools to generate access, income, strengthening not only bonds, but also the positive black identity; however, it is evident that the black worker carries a unique history of racial discrimination and exclusion not only in the formal market, but also in support for entrepreneurship and creative economy.

**Keywords:** Racism. Race. Creative economy. Social movements.

### RESUMO

*Este artigo teve como objetivo analisar os sentidos atribuídos por participantes negros e negras de feiras solidárias ao trabalho informal e ao empreendedorismo. Para isso, entrevistamos participantes negros de feiras de economia solidária na cidade de Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, com o intuito de analisar como suas atividades se relacionam com movimentos sociais. Para a compreensão dessas práticas, categorizamos os conteúdos dessas entrevistas em dois grandes núcleos temáticos: “Sobrevivendo por conta própria: inovação e criatividade”; e “Subjetividade e Economia Criativa”. Os resultados obtidos nesta pesquisa apontam que os movimentos sociais e a economia criativa são como ferramentas de mobilização para gerar acessos, renda e fortalecimento não só de vínculos, mas também de identidade negra positivada. No entanto, fica evidente que a trabalhadora e o trabalhador negros carregam uma história singular de discriminação racial e de exclusão não apenas no mercado formal, mas também no apoio para o empreendedorismo e a economia criativa.*

**Palavras-chave:** Racismo. Raça. Economia criativa. Movimentos sociais.

---

<sup>1</sup>Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina – Florianópolis (SC), Brazil. E-mails: liavarners@gmail.com; psi.heitormarques@gmail.com; medelfinochagas@gmail.com

Received on: 08/01/2024. Accepted on: 10/02/2024

## INTRODUCTION

To think about the creative economy and the processes involving Black entrepreneurship today, it is important to historically contextualize the transition from the slave-based model to capitalism in Brazil and the legacy of slavery in the labor market. The history of Brazil is intrinsically linked to racism, and consequently, this is a relevant element in the country's social and economic structures. The labor market is one of the processes responsible for and foundational to shaping this reality, perpetuating inequalities and limiting opportunities for minoritized groups<sup>1</sup>. The consequences of slavery in Brazil are essential factors for understanding the current dynamics of the labor market and how they impact the creative economy. As mentioned by Moura:

[...] The abolition preserved the landowner-oligarchic structure. This rigidly hierarchical structure within the slave model was necessary to guarantee an economy based on the export of primary products subordinated to the interests of the global market. This excluded the possibility of social, economic, and cultural integration of the large portions of freed labor force, who would then form the marginalized masses, emerging from the slave quarters (Moura, 1988, p. 25).

In the post-abolition period, the lives of formerly enslaved people were marked by obstacles and neglect, as, in addition to the existing racism in Brazilian society, there were no initiatives to provide social, economic, and civil conditions to those who had gained their freedom. Few options, if any, were viable in this context, as there were no public policies to guarantee rights such as land and access to education, which forced freed Black people to continue working in low-paying jobs, often analogous to slavery (Schwarcz; Gomes, 2018).

José de Souza Martins (2010) points out that the abolitionist issue was portrayed in terms of the replacement of enslaved labor with free labor, which, in that context, meant the physical replacement of Black people by European immigrants. The result of this was not only a transformation in terms of labor but also the replacement of the worker (Martins, 2010). While some of the people newly freed by the Golden Law were marginalized in society in a minimal attempt at survival, European immigrants were given work, land, and access to education to reside in Brazilian territory (Fernandes, 2008; Jaccoud, 2008; Theodoro, 2008). Therefore, the post-abolition period, which could have been characterized by freedom and inclusion, was marked by new forms of social exclusion, the consequences of which are still present and reinforce the structural racism existing in the country (Schwarcz; Gomes, 2018).

In this work, the concept of race will be articulated according to the definition proposed by Guimarães (1999). Thus, race will not be understood as a biological or essential category, but rather as 'social constructs, forms of identity based on an incorrect biological idea, yet socially effective in creating, sustaining, and reproducing

---

<sup>1</sup> In this work, 'minoritized' groups will be referred to as people who have been historically marginalized for being outside hegemonic standards.

differences and privileges (Guimarães, 1999, p. 153). Although there is no biological evidence proving the existence of human races, Guimarães (1999, p. 153) points out that they are ‘fully real in the social world, resulting from ways of classifying and identifying that guide human actions’.

In this context, it is worth noting that the notion of race in the current popular imagination is still the same as that produced by modern science in the 19th and 20th centuries. This idea served to categorize human diversity into groups based on physical characteristics, which were considered responsible for determining people’s psychological, moral, intellectual, and aesthetic traits, thereby establishing a hierarchy of unequal values (Munanga, 2004).

This hierarchy of values can be analyzed in the context of the job market. The false idea that physical traits are related to moral, intellectual, and aesthetic values has contributed to certain professional occupations being less accessible to racially distinguished groups. In this sense, some data indicate that entrepreneurship, the creative economy, and informal work have been the primary means of survival for Black men and women in this country.

## **INFORMAL WORK, ENTREPRENEURSHIP, AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY IN THE LIVES OF BLACK BRAZILIANS**

According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics – IBGE (2020), the Brazilian population is predominantly composed of people who self-identify as Black and mixed-race, making up 56.2% of the population. However, this number is not fairly represented in the job market when we examine aspects such as income, salary, unemployment rate, sectors of formal employment, access to educational opportunities, and participation in leadership positions. According to a study conducted by Cesario (2017), only 6.3% of managerial positions in Brazil’s 500 largest companies are occupied by people from this group, with most holding technical and operational positions.

In light of this reality, it is evident that Black workers face challenges in sustaining and advancing professionally in the formal job market. Thus, the creative economy and entrepreneurship stand out as income options, with around 25 million people now working independently (Mick; Nogueira, 2023). This significant number reflects workers who operate autonomously, engaging with social movements, holding multiple occupations, and/or working under business contracts that intersect with the informal market.

We observed in the interviews conducted for this article that self-employment is connected to these individuals’ personal experiences; in other words, the area of entrepreneurship for the interviewees involves aspects related to their life stories, as well as moments of transition in which they linked their subjectivity to the products to be marketed.

The process of subjectivation, or what we can also refer to as a process of identity construction, refers to the way in which an individual internalizes and reinterprets social norms and values to build their subjectivity. These processes are dynamic

and continuous, occurring through the interaction between the individual and the social environment in which they are embedded (Maheirie, 2002). In the Brazilian racial perspective, subjectivation is shaped by racial relations — Black individuals, for example, are constantly in a process of reinterpreting their Blackness and the place they occupy in society (Schucman, Gonçalves, 2020).

This phenomenon occurs uniquely among Black people on Brazilian soil. The dialectic surrounding the inclusion of Black individuals in the capitalist model revolves around the myth of racial democracy and the idea that we are all equal, while at the same time it hierarchizes and discriminates based on both physical traits and stigmatized values attributed to the origins of Black and mixed-race people. This dualism directly impacts the formation of these individuals' identities, as it imposes the need to navigate the stigmas and negative meanings associated with race in their identity formation.

It is important to emphasize that informal work for Black people has been a means of survival since the post-abolition period. The livelihood of these individuals was directly related to strategies that generated income. The former president of the National Bank for Economic and Social Development (BNDES), Carlos Lessa (2003), classified these 'skills' into distinct groups of temporary insertion for income acquisition. The main activities described by Lessa (2003) were related to the logistics of the city, involving manual laborers and delivery people, another group of artisans, such as confectioners and seamstresses, as well as groups of merchants, such as street vendors and peddlers.

These groups operated in the fissure that divided the slow transition from the slave-based model to the capitalist model in Brazil. In an effort to survive financially, Black workers sought strategies to generate income from the demands arising from daily life and formal jobs, which were mostly occupied by white people. This large group of individuals served as both a source of materials needed for the execution of informal labor and as consumers of the services, which were mostly provided by Black people.

Currently, informal work in Brazil is characterized by the absence of formal employment ties, such as the CLT (Consolidation of Labor Laws) regime, which implies precarious working conditions, economic instability, and a lack of labor rights. According to data from IBGE (2021), about 40% of the Brazilian workforce is engaged in the informal sector. This phenomenon is more prevalent during periods of economic crisis, when opportunities in the formal market are reduced, as occurred during the pandemic, when various professions underwent restructuring or even ceased to exist, forcing workers to adapt to new forms of work and support each other collectively to generate income.

In this sense, creative economy has been identified as an opportunity for economic and social development. In Brazil, this sector encompasses various activities, from cultural and artistic production to technological innovation used by the media. This interaction through communication channels and social movements aims to generate income; moreover, it can also be analyzed during the period of transition

from the slave-based to the capitalist model between the 18th and 19th centuries. However, as a foundation for economic sectors, the creative economy is not exempt from the structural inequalities that mark Brazilian society, particularly those related to gender and race.

The discriminatory mechanisms faced by Black men and women in Brazil's creative economy are a reflection of the structural inequalities that affect our society. The lack of representation and recognition of these individuals in the economic sector not only limits their opportunities to generate income but also the potential for innovation and diversity, which are essential for the development of the economy.

Although the model presented by Lessa (2003) was conceived during the transitional period from a slave-based to a capitalist economy, Black people developed their own survival methods. These strategies were passed down through generations and, even with limited integration into formal work, they continue to resonate today. In this sense, these activities are viewed as forms of resistance, creativity, and learning, passed from one generation to the next, which can be referred to as oral culture and ancestry. These phenomena have been and continue to be responsible for the processes of identity formation for Black individuals in Brazilian society. They have also been a form of creativity for this population, which is why we interviewed Black entrepreneurs to explore how they give meaning to this work.

## **METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

To understand how the creative economy and entrepreneurship produce subjectivity among Black people, we present here some analyses of statements from self-employed workers in the city of Florianópolis, Santa Catarina. For data collection, we used the interview method. The fact that the research focuses on the relationship between the creative economy and the subjectivity of the interviewees allowed us the freedom to establish only two criteria for selecting participants. The first was that the person identifies as Black, both by themselves and by us, as researchers. The second criterion was that the person resides in Florianópolis and participates in solidarity fairs.

At the beginning of the interviews, the informed consent form was presented and signed by the participants. We asked if there were any objections to the use of their statements and names, and without exception, all of them agreed to be identified. However, we chose to use fictitious names, as the aim of this research is not to portray the uniqueness of each individual. To this end, five interviews were conducted with people who were working at the weekly fair held at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC). The first interviewee, named Edna, is 50 years old, identifies as a Black woman, and works as an entrepreneur selling traditional sweets and treats from the quilombo cuisine of the region where she grew up in Bahia. The second interviewee, Eliana, is 42 years old, identifies as a Black woman, and works in the sale of spiritual items and supernatural consultation sessions. The third interviewee, named Sônia, is 33 years old, identifies as a Black woman, and her entrepreneurial work is in the area of ceramic artifacts. Her works are created

according to the events and fairs she is invited to participate in, which, according to the interviewee, are related to fairs focused on Black and gender-based social movements. The fourth interviewee, Ivani, is 35 years old, identifies as a Black woman, and works in a thrift shop. Finally, the fifth interviewee, Douglas, is 36 years old, identifies as a Black man, and works in massage therapy and holistic therapy.

To achieve the objective of this work, we chose a qualitative method because we believe that the processes constituting the creative economy and entrepreneurship for Black individuals are a social production. Therefore, it is not necessary to quantify the people working in this sector, but rather to qualify the ways in which the process of subjectivation occurs, as the numbers are already provided by research institutes such as IBGE and the Institute of Applied Economic Research (Ipea). Our concern is to understand and categorize how the creative economy relates to the subjectivity of these individuals; for this, we believe that in-depth interviews can provide the necessary answers. The interviewees were chosen based on primary relationships, as, according to Bourdieu (2001), close and personal social interactions and connections are essential for understanding the dynamics of social fields.

Finally, to complement this methodology, the Thematic Analysis (Dias; Mishima, 2023) was conducted, as significant reflections emerged on how social structures are constructed, maintained, and transformed over time in the self-employed labor market. This approach allows for a broad understanding of social processes, contributing to a meaningful investigation of the actions that contribute to the maintenance of discriminatory mechanisms in the development process of self-employed workers. The objective was to categorize two main thematic areas: "Surviving on One's Own: Innovation and Creativity"; and "Subjectivity and the Creative Economy." The categorization of these themes allowed us to analyze how and when processes of subjectivation occur among self-employed workers.

## **RACIAL INEQUALITIES IN WORK: CURRENT DATA**

Data related to the unemployment rate, comparing the number of unemployed people from different racial groups, provide an initial view of the disparity in access to the labor market. Income and salary are also important indicators, as they reveal the difference in average wages between Black and white workers in similar positions with equivalent qualifications. Analyzing the occupations and sectors in which the population is employed is also relevant — if a group constitutes the majority in low-paying jobs, this is a way to identify inequality. Participation in leadership positions is also crucial, as the lack of Black individuals in these roles may indicate barriers to career advancement. Analyzing access to educational opportunities and qualifications reveals disadvantages in access to education, which can affect employment prospects. Another way to analyze this phenomenon is through the process of job advertisement, selection, and recruitment.

The Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socioeconomic Studies (DIEESE) published, in 2016, through its Employment and Unemployment Survey system, data on the Economically Active Population (PEA), participation rates of Black and

non-Black populations, unemployment rates, among other data, with the aim of researching Black people in the metropolitan labor market. Additionally, in November 2023, DIEESE also published a special report on Black Consciousness Day with more information on race and the labor market, making these the two most recent sources of quantitative data for verification.

The research analyzed the unemployment rate by race/color and gender and found that, in the second quarter of 2023, the unemployment rate for Black people was 9.5%, while for white people it was 6.3%. In the case of Black women, the unemployment rate is even more significant (11.7%), while the rate for white women is 7.0% and for white men it is 5.7%.

In the public sector, where entry occurs through competitive exams, DIEESE's (2016) research pointed to a low number of Black people in all regions investigated. When observed through the gender lens, the data is even more alarming, as the number of Black women in the public sector represents 8.7%, while their largest numerical presence is in domestic work, with 18.3%—compared to 4.7% for white people in the same role. The explanation for this difference can also be analyzed through the perspective that half of public sector employees have a higher education level, a determining factor for racial inequalities related to access to education and professional specialization.

According to the book *Trajetórias das Desigualdades* (Trajectories of Inequalities), organized by Marta Arretche (2015), between 1960 and 2010, research highlights gender and racial discrimination in the national labor market, helping to explain income and wage inequalities, even when these groups have the same level of education (Cacciamali; Hirata, 2005; Proni; Gomes, 2015). For example, strategic leadership and coordination roles continue to be predominantly occupied by men, making it more difficult for women to reach these positions (Comin, 2015). However, in order to highlight the minority of Black people in higher-income occupations, it is important to note that women are distributed across all social strata (Garcia, 2005). Although it is possible to observe an increase in the number of Black people in higher education, white individuals still make up 75% of the university population and dominate in careers of higher social prestige (Silva; Prates, 2015), factors associated with aesthetics, intellectuality, and morality. Thus, it is evident that the reduction of inequalities between white and Black people related to educational progress and professional development is slow and gradual (Proni; Gomes, 2015).

According to studies conducted by DIEESE (2016) on the white and non-white Economically Active Population (PEA) in 2009, 44.6% of Black and Indigenous workers could be classified as precarious informal workers, compared to 29.4% of white workers (including white and Asian individuals). By 2013, these percentages decreased in both categories: 38.7% versus 23.8%, but the ongoing racial disparity remains noticeable.

The most vulnerable labor situations, such as informal work, unpaid labor, and very low monthly income, are also predominant among Black people. In the case of informal work with low monthly pay (below the minimum wage), it is observed

that the economically active Black population in 2013 accounted for 17.3%, whereas the number of white people in the same group was 8.6%. That is, the proportion of Black people in this type of precarious occupation was twice as high as that of white people. The decrease in informal employment without a signed work contract for both groups continued to decline between 2009 and 2013, but the percentage was lower among white people than among Black people, at 2.9% versus 5.8% in the last year.

Based on studies of the Economically Active Population (PEA) (DIEESE, 2016), it can be observed that all cases of informal occupations with earnings lower than the minimum wage had a high probability of being held by Black workers (69% versus 31% for white workers). In the income range between one and less than two minimum wages, the differences were slightly smaller (59% versus 41%), but still significant. In summary, the majority of precarious occupations continue to be reserved for Black people.

The fact that the Black population represents the majority of workers engaged in occupations associated with precarious employment can be understood as a result of various mechanisms of racial discrimination still present in Brazilian society. Therefore, these issues deserve special attention from public policies aimed at promoting racial equality in the labor market (Próni; Gomes, 2015).

This disparity can also be observed in leadership positions within organizations. The prevalence of Black people in informal activities related to precarious employment is inversely proportional when compared to leadership positions in organizations. According to a study by Cesario (2017), only 6.3% of managerial positions in the 500 largest companies in Brazil are held by Black people, with the majority in technical and operational roles.

The aforementioned data also raise other important discussions to be considered at another time: if most of the people in strategic, prominent, and decision-making positions are white, under what conditions do Black professionals occupy these spaces? How do discriminatory mechanisms occur in these environments? What is the mental health status of Black professionals who access these spaces? It is important to note that the discussion on mental health is not limited to psychopathologies, as psychosocial factors precede issues related to health and illness, which are connected to the economic, social, political, and cultural aspects of each individual (Deon et al., 2020).

For this reality to be naturalized by the Brazilian population, false ideologies shape the collective imagination in social relations, and the idea that rewards and positions in society are distributed based on individual merit is one of them. It is believed that those who work hard or have talent are rewarded, while the failure of others is attributed to a lack of effort or skill, a paradigm known as the meritocracy myth. Another idea is the false representation of the country's racial democracy, in which it is believed that fair opportunities for access to education, housing, work, and social mobility are available to all people, as long as they put in enough effort to achieve them, without considering the transfer of inherited wealth across



generations (Fernandes, 1965; Guimarães, 2002). Despite the seemingly peaceful coexistence at certain moments between different racial groups, the reality is that Brazilian society is in constant conflict and the production of social and economic inequalities. As Lia Vainer Schucman points out, “Anyone who denies that the majority of positions of power are occupied by white people, due to structural advantages, can only truly believe in white superiority and, therefore, be using the racist key” (Schucman, s/p, 2021).

The dynamics of the labor market reflect the prevailing patterns of racial relations, which is why it is essential to highlight how public policies aimed at this goal play a crucial role in building fair opportunities for development and social mobility. Affirmative action policies aim to combat structural racism in the political, economic, and legislative spheres of institutions, with the intention of addressing practices that perpetuate racial discrimination in the workplace. They seek to reduce historical barriers that have prevented equal access to the labor market for Black people, as well as their retention and professional advancement.

However, for this reality within organizations to be validated and naturalized in the Brazilian social imagination, control strategies for explaining racial issues were disseminated. Ideological concepts tied to meritocracy and racial democracy propagated the idea that social and economic positions would be achieved based on individual merit, meaning that those who work hard and are talented would have the opportunity to succeed. The myth also persisted that Brazilian society was free from racial discrimination, with Brazil being a country where all races would coexist in harmony and have equal opportunities for access to education, housing, food, and, most importantly, employment, the central theme of this article.

However, the equality of opportunities has always been a fallacy, and self-employment and informality for Black or Brown people have historically been the way of survival for this group, who, despite the lack of rights, have reinvented the creative economy and given meaning to this social practice, as we can observe in the results of this research.

## **SURVIVING ON ONE’S OWN: INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY**

Even pointing to the individuality of the entrepreneurial process, as Edna refers to herself as “*equipe*” (a blend of “*eu*” and “*equipe*” meaning “I team”), one of the points questioned in the interview addresses the contribution of social movements to these workers. This is because, within the process of solidarity economy, the importance of “mutual help, solidarity, and equality of rights within enterprises” is understood (Gadotti, 2009, p. 13). This factor can be seen as an agent that contributes to the process of subjectivity and identity formation for people who work independently.

We are struck by statements like Edna’s, which point out that the participation of the Black movement goes beyond assisting in the process of work and income. The snack vendor, when asked about this aspect, says that the support comes in interpersonal relationships when it occurs:

[...] Both with events, financially, and also to provide emotional support, because we often need to vent. In some of the Black women's groups I participate in, one of the pillars is this as well, for us to help each other emotionally, because sometimes we're not doing well and need to talk, and then there's someone who can help, whether it's a psychologist or something else that can assist.

According to Hirata and Zarifian (2003), the modern notion of work has two definitions: the first, which presents itself as an anthropological conception, defines work as a generic formulation of human action. This definition, the authors explain, is based on the theory of the theorist Karl Marx (1965, apud Hirata and Zarifian 2003), who describes work as an essential act that occurs between man and nature. Man himself plays the role of a specific natural force in relation to nature. He mobilizes his intelligence and his strengths to transform materials and give them a useful form for his life. At the same time that he acts by this movement on the external nature and modifies it, he modifies his own nature and develops the faculties that were dormant within him (Hirata; Zarifian, 2003).

The second definition redefines the first, as it adds the fact that this relationship between man and nature, mediated by labor, is also shaped by determining social conditions: are we talking about artisanal, slave, or wage labor? According to this definition, the advent of capitalism is considered, in which wage labor is controlled by the employer who hires workers. In this logic, labor is the substrate of life, which does not sustain itself in the arrangements of capital (Navarro; Padilha, 2007). However, even within these interludes, labor continues to organize life and surround relationships, serving as both cause and effect of the social structure that influences the process of subjectivation of individuals.

At this moment, the social structure presents us with new ways of looking at work and workers, beyond its pragmatic aspect. With the deregulation of labor and workers' rights, the precariousness of working conditions, the informalization of employment, and the retreat of union action, the consequences for workers' physical and mental health increase (Navarro; Padilha, 2007). Modes of production that differ from industrial ones — such as Fordist and Taylorist models — echo the lack of stability and acknowledge the insecurity of employment relationships. And here, we arrive at work as a psychosocial phenomenon.

The concept of a psychosocial phenomenon leads us to think about the associations between work and social movements, as they are mediators of the processes of subjectivation. When asked about the subject, Sônia, a ceramicist, responds that the relationship for her is like a "support network." She says that it is "among friends" where recommendations are exchanged and adds: "We have a network of people, and when I find out about an event, I call them, and it's a mutual exchange, right?" Since solidarity economy is based on networks of social and economic solidarity and cooperation, the involvement of Black people in this movement can be seen as a way to confront the discriminatory mechanisms of racism in formal work environments. Moreover, this process reaffirms the identity of the individuals involved, proposing a process of positive subjectivation through race.

Ivani, a thrift store owner, however, says that there are differences in participating in fairs that are linked to the Black movement compared to those that are not, mentioning aspects such as feeling “at ease” because she can make sales and meet people from the movement. She adds that it also helps “through the experiences and the exchange with people.

## **SUBJECTIVITY AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY**

In the interviewees’ responses, one of the meanings attributed to self-employment is its connection to lifestyle and subjectivity. This relationship between identity and work, through the lens of the solidarity economy (SE), shows how people experience and give meaning to their professional experiences. Interpreting the relationship between individuals and work places us in the context of the historical, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds of those who engage in self-employment, as each time and social context gives rise to different modes of subjectivation (Nardi et al., 2006). If we analyze the relationship between enslaved individuals and plantation owners during the Colonial period in Brazil, the employer-employee dynamic after the Industrial Revolution, the self-employed individual in the neoliberal economy, or those involved in projects within the solidarity economy — the focus of this article — we can observe that the meanings attributed to work change according to the time and space in which we find ourselves.

The SE, or creative economy, can be defined as a form of work, income generation, and professional insertion through collectives and social movements that shape the contemporary labor market. The SE itself can be understood as a social movement that combats the discriminatory mechanisms of formal work, as access to this form of income often involves social demands that are exclusionary, such as specific qualifications, previous experience in certain activities, and even living close to central urban areas — for those living in marginalized regions, this requirement will not be met. Thus, we can consider that the SE offers a solution for access to income and social insertion through self-employment opportunities (Nardi et al., 2006).

During the interviews, we noticed that the self-management of these workers is directly related to the social context in which they are embedded, as well as their identity process, which reflects not only in the way they run their businesses but also in the products they sell (Ultramari et al., 2022). In a conversation with Edna, we were talking about her pastry process for making and selling sweets when she commented:

[...] what I see and study is that food for us is something sacred, because after the enslaved people were brought from Africa, it was something that was denied. So anything made for nourishment was considered sacred. It was made with love and care, so that it would nurture not only the body, but the soul. So my food, my recipes, are exactly for that – food made with affection, so that you are nourished not only in your heart, but also in your soul.

Furthermore, when we asked about the relationship between her methods of selling and her trajectory and identity, the interviewee responded:

[...]during the pandemic, I also sent little notes. My advertisement was: 'Warm your friend's heart with an ancestral sweet,' 'My sweet tastes like a hug.' I wrote these phrases because quilombola food is very comforting, full of affection and love. It's food of oral tradition, but it's also family food, passed down from mother to daughter, to cousin — it's family food, it's affectionate food. So I also used this a lot to promote my brand.

Thus, it is evident that work has become a mechanism that is directly related to the individual's identity process (Ultramari et al., 2022). In this case, Edna connects the culture of oral tradition and quilombola cuisine with her methods of commercialization, so that the meaning attributed to her sweets characterizes a particular form of social interaction that directly engages with the interviewee's subjectivity. The same can be identified for Sônia. When we asked how she became interested in producing ceramic pieces with ethnic-racial prints of African peoples and others related to sexuality, she shared:

[...] I think it's mainly because of the fairs I end up choosing to participate in, and also because I had to have a niche, but it's also something I address in my research, the issue of gender, African aesthetics, it's all connected. It's related to my life, and it's also a political issue for me. In my research, it's always been like this, my research has always had a political touch, since my first thesis, a long time ago, I've always been talking about racial issues, which is something that affects me, and I like to think politically in all my research. I wouldn't know how to research something that doesn't concern me, and it's the same with ceramics, right?.

Therefore, it is evident that work is intrinsically related to the subjectivity and the construction of racial identity of these interviewees. The solidarity economy is still present within specific social structures, which means it is not free from structural barriers that may hinder the financial return of self-employed workers, but it can provide new forms of social interactions that strengthen the identity and subjective process of entrepreneurs who find in social movements strategies for personal and professional development in their fields of activity (Ultramari et al., 2022).

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Throughout this article, we aimed to understand how the SE acts as a mediating agent in the subjectivation process of Black people who work for themselves. Each individual's experience crosses structural barriers to access formal labor markets, from entry to permanence and advancement within these professions. Discriminatory ideologies, such as the myth of racial democracy, contribute to a challenging identity formation process for Black people, as the idea of meritocracy is upheld, while discriminatory mechanisms act as mediators in the relationship between Black individuals and the much-desired opportunities.

These forms of exclusion not only affect economic opportunities but also the mental health and psychosocial well-being of individuals who have sought to find

in the creative economy a way to generate income. Moreover, it was observed that entrepreneurship is closely related to the formation of identity for these individuals, as the areas of work of the interviewees are connected to personal values and social movements that provide a space for resistance and empowerment (Schucman; Gonçalves, 2020).

In the analysis of the interviews, we can observe that social movements serve as mobilization tools to generate access, income, and the strengthening of not only connections but also a positive identity during the process of subjectivation for Black individuals who work on their own. However, these spaces are not immune to structural discriminatory mechanisms. The organization of fairs and events commonly occurs through power relations among individuals who are hierarchically above others, making participation in these spaces unfeasible. The exorbitant cost of participating in these brand-promotion events is an example of the structural barriers that ultimately hinder participation, as the amount invested does not correspond to the financial return.

We conclude this article by recognizing the dialectic inherent in the creative economy, as it has created a sense of belonging and ways to affirm Black identity. However, it is evident that Black workers carry a unique history of racial discrimination and exclusion in the formal market, as well as in support for entrepreneurship and the creative economy. Therefore, it is necessary to highlight the need for public and private policies that invest in the creative processes of the population that has built much of this country without support and on their own. This way, it will be possible to pave new paths that can contribute to processes of subjectivation free from racial and gender discrimination (Ultramari *et al.*, 2022).

## REFERENCES

- ARRETCHE, Marta (org.) **Trajetórias das desigualdades: como o Brasil mudou nos últimos 50 anos**. São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2015.
- BOURDIEU, Pierre. **A miséria do mundo**. 4. ed. Petrópolis: Vozes, 2001.
- CACCIAMALI, Maria Cristina; HIRATA, Guilherme Issamu. A influência da raça e do gênero nas oportunidades de obtenção de renda - uma análise da discriminação em mercados de trabalho distintos: Bahia e São Paulo. **Estudos Econômicos**, São Paulo, v. 35, n. 4, p. 767-795, 2005.
- CESARIO, Bianca. **Falta de políticas públicas explica desigualdades raciais no mundo empresarial, diz pesquisador**. Instituto Ethos, 2017. Available at: <https://www.ethos.org.br/falta-de-politicas-publicas-explica-desigualdades-raciais-no-mundo-empresarial-diz-pesquisador/>. Access on: May 5, 2024.
- COMIN, Alvaro Augusto. Desenvolvimento econômico e desigualdades no Brasil: 1960-2010. *In: Trajetórias das desigualdades: como o Brasil mudou nos últimos cinquenta anos*. São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2015.
- DEON, Ana Paula da Rosa; PEREIRA, Eliane França; DE SOUZA, Pâmella Batista; PELLEGRINI, Priscila Gasperin; TOLFO, Suzan. Saúde mental do trabalhador. *In: TOLFO, Suzana da Rocha (org.). Gestão de pessoas e saúde mental do trabalhador: fundamentos e intervenções com base na psicologia* São Paulo: Vetor Editora, 2020. cap. 8, p. 203-223.
- DEPARTAMENTO INTERSINDICAL DE ESTATÍSTICA E ESTUDOS SOCIOECONÔMICOS (DIEESE). **Os negros nos mercados de trabalho metropolitanos**. DIEESE, 2016. Available at: <https://www.dieese.org.br/analisede/2016/2016pednegrossintmet.html>. Access on: 5May 5, 2024.

- DIAS, Ernandes Gonçalves; MISHIMA, Silvana Martins. Análise temática de dados qualitativos: uma proposta prática para efetivação. *Sustinere*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 11, n. 1, p. 402-411, jun. 2023.
- FERNANDES, Florestan. **A integração do negro na sociedade de classes**. São Paulo: Cia. Editora Nacional, 1965.
- FERNANDES, Florestan. **A integração do negro na sociedade de classes** (O legado da “raça branca”). 5. ed. São Paulo: Editora Globo, 2008. v. 1.
- GADOTTI, Moacir. **Economia solidária como práxis pedagógica**. São Paulo: Editora e Livraria Instituto Paulo Freire, 2009.
- GARCIA, Vinicius Gaspar. **Questões de raça e gênero na desigualdade social brasileira recente**. 2005. Dissertação (Mestrado) - Instituto de Economia, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, Campinas, 2005.
- GUIMARÃES, Antonio Sérgio Alfredo. **Classes, raças e democracia**. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2002.
- GUIMARÃES, Antonio Sérgio Alfredo. **Racismo e anti-racismo no Brasil**. Rio de Janeiro: Editora 34, 1999.
- HIRATA, Helena; ZARIFIAN, Philippe. O conceito de trabalho. *In*: EMÍLIO, Marli. **Trabalho e cidadania ativa para as mulheres: desafios para as Políticas Públicas**. São Paulo: Coordenadoria Especial da Mulher, 2003.
- INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA (IBGE). **Características gerais dos domicílios e dos moradores: 2019**. ISBN 978-85-240-4530-1. Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 2020. 8 p.
- INSTITUTO BRASILEIRO DE GEOGRAFIA E ESTATÍSTICA (IBGE). **Síntese de indicadores sociais: uma análise das condições de vida da população brasileira**. Rio de Janeiro: IBGE, 2021.
- JACCOUD, Luciana. Racismo e República: o debate sobre o branqueamento e a discriminação racial no Brasil. *In*: THEODORO, Mário (org.). **As políticas públicas e a desigualdade racial no Brasil 120 anos após a abolição**. 1. ed. Brasília: Ipea, 2008. p. 45-64.
- LESSA, Carlos. Prefácio: Os ovos da serpent. *In*: BURSZTYN, Marcel (org.). **No meio da rua: nômades, excluídos e viradores**. Rio de Janeiro: Garamond, 2003, p. 11-18.
- MAHEIRIE, Kátia. Constituição do sujeito, subjetividade e identidade. *Interações*, v. VII, n. 13, p. 31-44, jan./jun. 2002.
- MARTINS, José de Souza. **O cativo da terra**. São Paulo: Editora Contexto, 2010.
- MICK, Jacques; NOGUEIRA, João Carlos (org.). **Viver por conta própria: como enfrentar desigualdades raciais, de classe e gênero e apoiar a economia popular nas periferias brasileiras**. São Paulo: Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2023.
- MOURA, Clóvis. **Dialética radical do Brasil negro**. São Paulo: Anita Garibaldi, 1988.
- MUNANGA, Kabengele. **Uma abordagem conceitual das noções de raça, racismo, identidade e etnia**. *In*: PROGRAMA DE EDUCAÇÃO SOBRE O NEGRO NA SOCIEDADE BRASILEIRA. Niterói: EDUFF, 2004.
- NARDI, Henrique Caetano; YATES, Denise Balem; FERNANDES, Janice Mendes; RODRIGUES, Manoela Carpenedo. Subjetividade e solidariedade: a diversidade das formas de implicação dos jovens na economia solidária. *Psicologia: Reflexão e Crítica*, v. 19, n. 2, p. 320-328, 2006.
- NAVARRO, Vera Lucia; PADILHA, Valquíria. Dilemas do trabalho no capitalismo contemporâneo. *Psicologia & Sociedade*, v. 19, edição especial 1, p. 14-20, 2007.
- PRONI, Marcelo Weishaupt; GOMES, Darcilene Claudio. Precariedade ocupacional: uma questão de gênero e raça. *Estudos Avançados*, v. 29, n. 85, p. 137-151, 2015.
- SCHUCMAN, Lia Vainer. À supremacia branca brasileira: que lógicas sustentam o arranha-céu cheio de brancos? *Folha de S. Paulo*, 2021. Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/mercado/2021/08/a-supremacia-branca-brasileira-que-logicas-sustentam-o-arranha-ceu-cheio-de-brancos.shtml>. Access on: May 5, 2024.
- SCHUCMAN, Lia Vainer; GONÇALVES, Monica Mendes. Raça e subjetividade: do campo social ao clínico. *Arquivos Brasileiros de Psicologia*, Rio de Janeiro, v. 72, n. spe., p. 109-123, 2020.

SCHWARCZ, Lilia Moritz; GOMES, Flávio dos Santos (org.) **Dicionário da escravidão e liberdade: 50 textos críticos**. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2018.

SILVA, Márcia Regina de Lima; PRATES, Ian. Desigualdades raciais no Brasil: um desafio persistente. *In: Trajetórias das desigualdades: como o Brasil mudou nos últimos cinquenta anos*. São Paulo: Editora Unesp, 2015.

THEODORO, Mário. A formação do mercado de trabalho e a questão racial no Brasil. *In: THEODORO, Mário (org.). As políticas públicas e a desigualdade racial no Brasil 120 anos após a abolição*. 1. ed. Brasília: Ipea, 2008. p. 15-44.

ULTRAMARI, Leonardo Roman; NAZARIO, Luciano da Costa; PACCE, Benjamin Dias; MARTINS, Eduardo Teixeira. Neoliberalismo e a construção do sujeito criativo. **Psicologia & Sociedade**, v. 34, p. e250709, 2022.

## About the authors

**Lia Vainer Schucman:** PhD in Social Psychology from Universidade de São Paulo.

**Heitor Marques Santos:** Master's student in Social Psychology and Culture at the Postgraduate Program in Psychology at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina.

**Maria Eduarda Delfino das Chagas:** Master's student in Social Psychology and Culture at the Postgraduate Program in Psychology at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina. Specialist in Mental Health, Attention, and Psychosocial Rehabilitation through the Multi-professional Residency Program at Universidade do Extremo Sul Catarinense.

**Conflict of interests:** nothing to declare – **Financing source:** none.

**Authors' contributions:** Schucman, L. V.: Concept, Methodology, Supervision, Writing – First Draft, Writing – Review and Editing. Santos, H. M.: Data Curatorship, Formal Analysis, Methodology, Writing – First Draft, Writing – Review and Editing. Chagas, M. E. D.: Data Curatorship, Formal Analysis, Methodology, Writing – First Draft, Writing – Review and Editing.

