Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean
Civic Engagement and the Democratic Mission

Ronaldo Munck, Yadira Pinilla,
Rita A. Hodges, Catherine Bartch

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Ronaldo Munck (coordinating editor), Yadira Pinilla,
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ETHNICITY/RACE, LANGUAGE AND INEQUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION.

Daniel Mato

Racism, as both the founding ideology and regime of power constitutive of the Modern World, is a crucial cause of pervasive inequalities in all of 'Latin American'[6] societies. As an ideology, it rests on the assumption that human beings would be classifiable into 'races' and that some of them would be 'superior' to others. In Latin America, this ideology and regime of power date back to the colonial period. They are constitutive of the establishment of postcolonial republican States, continue in force, and their consequences primarily affect persons and communities of African descent and indigenous peoples.

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[6] For ease of communication, I use the term 'Latin America' to name the American continent countries whose official languages include Spanish or Portuguese, even though it is questionable. On the one hand, it is problematic because the name 'America' was given to this continental mass as part of the European colonization process, ignoring the fact that the Cuna (or Guna) Indians called it Abya Yala. For this reason, many indigenous leaders and organizations increasingly use the term Abya Yala instead of America. On the other hand, the adjective 'Latin' ignores the presence of Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples. According to the most recent census data, jointly taken, these two population groups constitute about 30% of the total population of this region of the world. The expression 'Latin America' was not part of the lexicon of the independence movements of the early nineteenth century, which usually used the term 'Hispanic America'. Both terms hide the presence of Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples. The idea of 'Latinity' and its application as an adjective was proposed in 1836 by the French intellectual Michel Chevalier. 'Latin America', as a compound name, first appeared in a book by the Colombian intellectual José María Torres Caicedo in 1865 (Ardao, 1980).

Histories and current situations vary from country to country, often between regional contexts within countries and in the cases of specific peoples and communities. However, beyond those differences, some commonalities are clear. Since the founding of postcolonial Latin American states, hegemonic social groups have legitimized their political and economic dominance over Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples through racist public, cultural and educational policies. Over time, they have increasingly used the press and other mass media to strengthen this endeavor. They have been so successful that racism is currently 'naturalized' in these societies to the extent that most of the population often limit the usage of the concept of racism to explicit facts of 'racial segregation' and 'racial discrimination', particularly concerning cases of police brutality in other world regions (Mato, 2021). This reductionism is indicative of the generalized ignorance of the role of racism in the historical origin of social inequalities, and how it currently permeates hegemonic forms of 'common sense', and is permanently reproduced through institutional norms, mechanisms, and practices.

Higher Education systems and institutions[7] have not been alien to the reproduction and naturalization of racism in Latin America societies and, in fact, worldwide. They have historically played several significant roles in this regard. Historically, they excluded the Afro-descendant's and indigenous peoples' world visions, histories, languages, and knowledge and learning systems from the curricula, or even presented them as backward or openly invalid. In practice, most of them have jeopardized

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[7]I use the expression 'Higher Education Institutions' (HEIs) to refer to both universities and other kinds of higher education institutions as 'tertiary institutions' or 'higher education schools', among other names they receive in specific countries. I use the expression 'Higher Education Systems' to name the applicable laws, ministries, or secretaries in charge, quality evaluation and accreditation agencies, their norms, and practices. I indistinctly use the expressions 'Higher Education' and 'Higher Education systems and institutions' to comprehensively name the social field of both systems and institutions.

these peoples' access to Higher Education and the quality and success of the trajectories of those who managed to gain access. Several naturalized mechanisms have been instrumental in this regard, such as economic barriers, distant locations, monolingual education, and the absence or insufficiencies of reparatory or affirmative action programs. They have also trained professionals mono-culturally in every discipline. Because of this biased training, most of these professionals reproduce racism in their professional practices, including teachers for entire educational systems, journalists, historians, sociologists, physicians and nurses, and economists, among others.

Moreover, they have also projected their racist mono-cultural bias as public opinion producers and citizenship education institutions. In sum, most of them have significantly contributed to the reproduction and naturalization of racism. However, a few Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and some issue-focused teams, within some of them, have developed valuable critical practices to fight or contest racism in HEIs , and even beyond them, in their respective societies. Some of these critical agents have built networks that work collaboratively to fight racism in Higher Education and transform universities to further contribute to the eradication of racism in our societies (Mato, 2022).

This chapter seeks to contribute to the debate on eradicating racism in Higher Education systems and institutions in Latin America by contextualizing and disaggregating the idea of 'structural racism', to study the specific ways it operates in this particular social field. Thus, it hopes to facilitate the construction of concrete ways of intervention to eradicate it.

On the idea of 'structural racism' and the problematic consequences of some of its usages

Racism is not only expressed and exercised through openly visible norms and practices, which is what the expressions 'racial segregation' and 'racial discrimination' designate. It also operates through economic, political, and social disadvantages,

accumulated over centuries, whose existence has been 'naturalized' and therefore has become almost 'invisible' to most social agents. These disadvantages result from inequities and forms of inequality and exclusion initially built up during the colonial period, and subsequently deepened and extended by the political and economic social groups who ruled the postcolonial independent states. The new ruling social groups furthered the colonial practice of seizing the indigenous peoples' traditional territories. Moreover, they also reduced many of the indigenous people to diverse forms of forced work, and displaced others as landless populations who, in practice, were forced to enter the labor market in particularly unfavorable conditions. These new ruling groups also continued to exploit the enslaved afro-descendants for a period, the length of which varied from one country to another. Then, at the time of their emancipation, the formerly enslaved persons did not obtain any economic reparation, not even material resources to ensure their daily life.

These have been the adverse conditions, which set the context for the indigenous and Afro-descendant populations and their lives in the new republican 'democracies'. Since that initial period, multiple laws, public policies, and institutional practices have continued to reproduce those initial inequities, efficiently legitimized through cultural and educational policies that produced the current hegemonic forms of 'common sense'. The idea of 'structural racism' refers coherently to these historic inequalities and their ongoing reproduction through many means (Almeida, 2019; CEPAL & FILAC, 2020; CEPAL & UNFPA, 2020; United Nations, 2005).

Even though the concept of 'structural racism' is correct to stress the role of racism in the construction and reproduction of contemporary societies, some usages of the term may be misguided in designing and implementing effective interventions to fight racism. We must contextualize and disaggregate this broad category and identify how racism operates in social spaces and institutions. It consistently lies hidden, or almost invisible, to most social agents, who perceive

it as a problem, taking place solely 'outside' of their respective context of practice. The idea of 'structural racism' is frequently understood as if racism were 'coming from outside' and therefore beyond one's capacity to intervene. In this sense, it works as an "epistemological obstacle" (Bachelard, 1972 [1934]), an assumed truth that blocks further inquiry and, what is particularly problematic in this case, blocks any action.

I have had numerous opportunities to observe how particular representations of the idea of 'structural racism' operate in Higher Education.[8] For instance, significant decision

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[8] It seems necessary to explain the basis for my statements in this paragraph and others throughout this text. The analysis and interpretations offered in this chapter do not only rely on published sources but also on my involvement in the field. Apart from bibliographical and documentary research, they are based on personal learning, achieved through participant observation, interviews, and other exchanges with numerous university teachers, students, and authorities; Afro-descendant and indigenous intellectuals, leaders, and other activists; and governmental officials. I derived those learning opportunities from lectures, seminars, workshops, advisory missions, and other activities in which I engaged at over a hundred universities and other institutions and related social organizations in fourteen Latin American countries since the 1990s. Two specific engagements greatly enhanced my knowledge about the matters discussed in this chapter. Firstly, a fruitful source of learning has been my position as director of three region-wide research and policy advice projects on Higher Education, Afrodescendants, and Indigenous Peoples in Latin America, commissioned by the UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO-IESALC). The development of these projects involved the participation of about eighty colleagues from twelve countries and took me into field research and advisory activities throughout the region between 2007 and 2018. The second enriching source derived from my role as the director of the Programa Educación Superior y Pueblos Indígenas y Afrodescendientes en América Latina (Programa ESIAL), at the Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, since 2011. From this program, we promoted the creation of the Red Interuniversitaria Educación Superior y Pueblos Indígenas y Afrodescendientes en América Latina (Red ESIAL), which currently has the participation of

makers, and other parties in Higher Education, often assume that the absence, or small proportion, of teachers and students of Afro-descendant and indigenous populations in HEIs is 'simply' the consequence of 'structural racism'. This established assumption prevents contextualized empirical research about the matter and facilitates the conclusion that Higher Education systems and institutions cannot do anything to fight this problem. Something analogous happens with regard to the absence of these peoples' worldviews, languages, epistemologies, and knowledge systems in the curriculum. These assumptions place the problem and any possible responses outside of the control of Higher Education.

Eradicating racism in Higher Education is crucial to democratizing contemporary societies because it affects, not only the lives and human rights of Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples, but also the quality of Higher Education at large. This, in turn, has severe consequences for the respective societies. HEIs train professionals that occupy social, economic, and political positions of significant influence in their societies. They train teachers who play critical roles at all educational levels. They train experts in social communication, sociology, political science, and related fields that guide public opinion trends and public policy orientations. They train specialists in Health, Agronomics, Engineering, and Economics, who make decisions for whole 'pluricultural' societies based on

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sixty universities from eleven countries, and has sponsored six region-wide working meetings that included presentations on more than one hundred experiences in this field. Co-working with participant colleagues and students at these meetings has been a most valuable learning experience. From the Programa ESIAL, we have also launched the Iniciativa para la Eradicación del Racismo en la Educación Superior en América Latina, and three regional campaigns, involving the participation of over fifty university teams from seven Latin American countries. I do not pretend that these antecedents grant any 'truth' status to the discussion offered here, I only present it to illustrate the types of empirical referents on which it is based and my relationship to the field.

their 'monocultural' knowledge and prejudices. HEIs not only constitute spaces for technical and professional training, but also carry out research, engage in public issues and projects, and form citizens and public opinion.

Multiple racism factors challenge the equity and quality of Higher Education

In Latin America, HEIs have historically played essential roles in hiding cultural diversity, through the building of homogenizing representations of the supposed majorities of the respective countries' populations. On the other hand, they have 'otherized' indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples and transformed them into objects of study, even against their will. They have done so from Eurocentric research approaches that produced disqualifying representations of the ways of life, worldviews, languages, knowledge systems, and future projects of their 'races'. Moreover, they have trained professionals in every discipline on this basis, thus contributing to naturalizing and reproducing racism throughout society.

Fortunately, mainly since the 1990s, in an increasing number of Latin American countries, various intervention modalities have been implemented to fight racism, or at least contain its consequences, in Higher Education systems and institutions. There is a large set of very diverse initiatives. A few of them have been established by governments and international agencies, but most of them by 'conventional' HEIs, 'intercultural' HEIs, and 'own' HEIs as created by Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples' organizations themselves.[9] It is beyond the aim of this

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[9] I indistinctly use the adjectives 'monocultural' and 'conventional' to name the predominant kinds of HEIs whose mission, institutional design, or curriculum does not explicitly consider the rights or demands of Afro-descendant or indigenous peoples. In contrast, following the predominant usage by Afrodescendant and indigenous peoples' organizations, I employ the adjectives 'intercultural','own','indigenous', or 'Afro-descendant', depending on specific cases, to identify those other universities that these peoples' organizations have created. Several publications discuss the reasons

chapter to discuss these different kinds of experiences; many of which have been examined in former publications (See: Baronnet & Bermúdez Urbina, coords., 2019; Casillas & Santini., 2009; Ceto, 2019; CGEIB, comp., 2004; Di Caudo, et al, coords. , 2016; Dietz & Mateos Cortés, 2019; Hernández Loeza, et al, coords., 2013; Hooker Blanford, 2018; Mandepora Chundary, 2016; Mato, 2016, 2019, 2021, 2022; Mato, coord., 2008, 2009, 2017, 2018, 2019; Mazabel Cuásquer, 2018; Palechor, 2017; Sarango, 2009; Schmelkes, 2008; Similox, 2019).

To advance towards the eradication of racism in Higher Education, it is not only necessary to differentiate between racism and its most visible forms of expression, 'racial discrimination' and 'racial segregation', as pointed out above. It is also imperative to refine the analysis of the broad and relatively imprecise set of problems that are often referred to by the term, 'structural racism'. In order to design and implement effective actions aimed at eradicating racism, it is essential to disaggregate this concept, not as a merely conceptual exercise, but as a purposeful one. However, as the first step in this endeavor, it is advisable to distinguish between the main factors of structural, systemic, and institutional racism. Although in practice these factors are not independent from each other, this analytical effort may contribute to envisioning better ways to fight racism.

Structural racism factors, in a restricted sense

Fighting racism in Higher Education demands responses to the challenges placed by certain social factors, whose roots lay beyond this field, but are accountable for specific forms of racism that affect its systems and institutions. We might name these 'structural racism factors, in a restricted sense' to mark a difference between them and the more comprehensive concept of 'structural racism'.

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and criteria for distinguishing between these different types of universities and provide numerous examples (Mato 2016, 2019; Mato, ed, 2008, 2018).

Examples of these factors are the historically accumulated disadvantages that stem from the dispossession of the territories of indigenous peoples that began during the European invasion and colonization of the continent, which came to be Euro-centrically named 'America'. This dispossession continued in the post-colonial republics, often through the action of military or paramilitary forces. Consequently, these peoples were deprived of their food sources and shelter and compelled to seek new forms of livelihood. In many cases, they were also forced to work in mines, mills, and estates in significantly disadvantaged conditions. Similar problems affected Afro-descendant communities who, after fleeing slavery, or when slavery ended, established territorial areas of subsistence (*quilombos*, *cumbés, or palenques*, among other denominations, in various countries) from which, in many cases, they were later expelled. With variations in form, these problems have continued to affect the region's communities of Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples up to the present day. Some economic policies and the businesses of agriculture, cattle ranching, oil, mining, urbanization, and tourism development are among the factors that continue to affect these peoples' traditional territories and ways of living.

Associated with the formerly mentioned factors, sanitation issues and unequal access to justice, health, housing, and education usually motivate the displacement of entire communities, or some of their members, towards urban centers. Their arrival and inclusion into these new contexts usually occurs under even more disadvantageous conditions than those suffered by other sectors affected by economic poverty. These additional disadvantages relate to the combination of a number of factors: their status as domestic migrants lacking market-value work qualifications relevant in their new places of residence; lack of sufficiently effective social support networks; cultural differences, and in many cases, linguistic differences. Because of the hegemonic usage of the expression 'vulnerable populations', it has to be stressed that, as the former brief account illustrates, they are not 'vulnerable populations' but

'wounded populations'. Therefore, they do not 'need help' but instead, deserve 'reparation'.

These complex historical processes have a range of consequences. In education, they can be seen in the illiteracy levels of Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples as well as in the fact that their incomplete primary or secondary education rates are frequently higher than those of other sectors of the population. In this sense, these problems generate inequality and exclusion and constitute 'structural causes' for the low participation rates of indigenous and Afro-descendant people among students, teaching bodies, authorities, and other workers in 'conventional' HEIs (see, for instance: Cervantes Anangonó & Tuaza Castro, 2021; Da Silva, M.N. 2021; Da Silva Ferreira, et al., 2020; Gomes do Nascimento, 2021; Mato, 2020; Mato, coord. 2020; Ocoró Loango & Mazabel, 2021; United Nations, 2005, 2010, 2014, 2019; Varela Huerta & Pech Polanco, 2021).

Little can be done directly, and immediately, by 'conventional' HEIs to reverse these problems. However, it is possible to contribute to change on a longer-term basis through the research these institutions carry out and the professional training they provide. All students must learn about these historical and contemporary processes and understand and appreciate the need to respond to them. It is necessary to dedicate research initiatives to the study of these problems and to design responses to them. It is also essential to work jointly with these peoples' communities to develop 'conventional' HEI social engagement programs to ensure their rights, and to strengthen the primary and secondary educational institutions that serve them. In the same vein, it is necessary to establish HEIs' facilities in localities close to their communities. Additionally, the creation of affirmative action programs is a way to improve access, training, and graduation of students from Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples' communities to 'conventional' HEIs, as well as to increase incorporation of teachers, officers, and other workers from these same peoples (Mato, 2020, 2022).

These diverse initiatives represent an appropriate response to the 'structural racism factors in a restricted sense' that affect the quality of conventional Higher Education, and jeopardize the educational rights of Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples even if they are insufficient to solve them. To advance to the point of solution demands a comprehensive response to systemic and institutional racism factors, as discussed in the following paragraphs.

Systemic racism factors

The systemic factors that ensure the naturalization and reproduction of racism are generally not overtly evident. The expression 'systemic racism factors' may help to highlight the significance of the norms, policies, and practices of each country's Higher Education system, in particular. For example, current regulations in all Higher Education systems in the region establish the need to hold a higher education degree to teach at any HEI, which might be considered a 'normal' requirement. The problem is that this type of regulation prevents 'wise persons' from indigenous or Afro-descendant peoples, who do not have such a degree, from teaching at a HEI. The paradox is that, despite not having a title, they may be the best equipped for a particular post or, even the only ones who can impart the specific knowledge required (Cervantes Anangonó & Tuaza Castro, 2021; Da Silva, M.N. 2021; Da Silva Ferreira, et al., 2020; Gomes do Nascimento, 2021; Mato, 2020; Mato, coord., 2020; Ocoró Loango & Mazabel, 2021; Varela Huerta & Pech Polanco, 2021). An example of this is the case of indigenous or Afro-descendant 'wise persons' who are the best-qualified specialists in the therapeutic uses of certain plant species, the management and improvement of some seeds and tubers, or the cures for certain illnesses. Even in the rare cases where these people are allowed to teach, under the regulations, they are not recognized and paid as teachers on equal terms with those with university degrees.

These provisions reflect the 'monocultural' nature of Higher Education systems, which scorns valuable knowledge that is not

academically certified. In doing so, they not only deprive HEIs of this knowledge but also reproduce forms of 'invisible' racism. They restrict the possibility of the best speakers of indigenous people's languages teaching their language at universities, or of being paid fairly when they are sometimes allowed to do so. These 'monocultural' and racist norms contrast with the approach of pharmaceutical and agro-industrial corporations', who actively search for these types of knowledge and dedicate efforts to obtain and patent them for their corporate benefit.

In response to this problematic situation, some governments have established intercultural HEIs, while some indigenous peoples' organizations have created their own HEIs. There are significant differences between these two kinds of universities, nonetheless to discuss them is beyond the remit of this chapter. However, they are well illustrated in several publications (See.: Baronnet & Bermúdez Urbina, coords., 2019; Casillas & Santini., 2009; Ceto, 2019;CGEIB, comp., 2004; Di Caudo, et al, coords. , 2016; Dietz & Mateos Cortés, 2019; Hernández Loeza, et al, coords., 2013; Hooker Blanford, 2018; Mandepora Chundary, 2016; Mato, 2016, 2019, 2021, 2022; Mato, coord., 2008, 2009, 2017, 2018, 2019; Mazabel Cuásquer, 2018; Palechor, 2017; Sarango, 2009; Schmelkes, 2008; Similox, 2019).

Institutional racism factors

'Systemic' and 'institutional racism factors' tend to be closely aligned, or work complementarily. At one or other, or both levels, they tend to inform regulations that confine the teaching spaces of many disciplines exclusively to classrooms and laboratories, ignoring valuable places outside of them. However, it is almost impossible to graduate in some disciplines without interning in off-campus settings. The fields of Agronomy and Ecology are among the best examples of this off-campus requirement. Practice-based learning processes are also vital in training health professionals, although in that case, the training is carried out almost exclusively in academically controlled spaces, such as hospitals. In certain medical specialties, efforts are made to complement academic and

hospital-based training with field experience. In some countries, those undertaking professional training to work in the 'social services' do placements in communities of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples. However, carrying out these activities in those settings does not necessarily mean they are free of racism. On the contrary, given the systemic and institutional norms that regulate the activities, they often reinforce it. To respond to these challenges, it is not enough to have initiatives at the level of departments, faculties, or institutions because their actions are subject to evaluation by quality evaluation and accreditation agencies. Instead, it is necessary to have appropriate systemic regulations and accreditation processes in place.

In the fields of most humanities and social science disciplines, it is less common to see training modalities outside of traditional classrooms, than it is in the professional training areas as discussed above. However, in some innovative universities, and in some particular disciplines, learning experiences in the field and collaborative work with Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples' communities are training approaches that have been gaining ground for several decades. Usually, these innovative forms of learning have been developed and implemented beyond the systemic regulations and institutional curricula. Unfortunately, most institutions do not recognize the value of these work modalities, because these field experiences are not validated by evaluation and accreditation agencies.

While 'institutional racism factors' are present in virtually all HEIs, they may differ from institution to institution, associated as they are with each institution's set of particular courses, study plans, and learning activities. Most HEIs´ courses do not include the particular professional training demanded by Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples' communities. This gap is particularly remarkable in HEIs located in regions where these communities have a significant demographic presence and an obvious training need. For instance, in most universities, professional training in Agronomics is almost exclusively oriented to serve the demands of large agricultural and cattle

ranching corporations. It rarely provides training opportunities in areas such as community or family agriculture, or small animal husbandry livestock. Moreover, in most HEIs in those regions, the worldviews, values, languages, knowledge systems, and learning styles of the Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples' communities of the territories do not make part of the curriculum of any of the courses. In fact, they are often scorned in teaching practice.

This institutional racist bias in professional training is especially concerning in the case of specific fields of study, such as health. In Latin America, most health professionals graduate without receiving teaching input on local Afro-descendant and indigenous communities, their therapeutic knowledge and practices, or the diseases endemic in their communities. This is quite worrisome, when we consider that, according to the most recent census data from Latin America, 8% of the population identify themselves as members of an indigenous people, while 21.5% identify as Afro-descendant. Similar gaps exist in the training most HEIs provide to those studying agronomics, law, economics, and other fields in which the differences between the hegemonic paradigms and the peoples' knowledge systems are highly problematic.

The 'institutional racism factors' described above, not only affect the quality of training received by students, they also serve to alienate students from Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples' communities, thus jeopardizing their ability to achieve academically. Numerous publications illustrate further how these factors and 'racial discrimination' practices significantly affect Afro-descendant and indigenous students' performance in most Latin American countries (See: Bedolla Mendoza, 2020; Calambas Pillimué & Tunubalá Yalanda, 2020; Castillo Guzmán, 2020; Cervantes Anangonó & Tuaza Castro, 2021; da Silva Ferreira et al., 2020; da Silva, M.N., 2021; Diniz, 2020; Gomes do Nascimento, 2021; Gómez Gallegos, 2018; Ivanoff et al 2020; Luciano & Amaral, 2021; Luiz Paiva, 2020; Mancinelli 2019; Mato 2020, 2022; Mato, coord., 2018, 2020; Ocoró Loango & da Silva, 2018; Ocoró Loango & Mazabel, 2021; Olaza, 2021;

Ossola 2013; Quintero, 2020; Rea Ángeles, 2018; Rebolledo Cortes, 2020; Ribeiro de Vargas & Bonin, 2020; Soto Sánchez y Berrio Palomo, 2020; Valdez et al, 2020; Varela Huerta & Pech Polanco, 2021; Velasco Cruz, 2018).

Final remarks

The concepts of democracy and racism are antithetical at their core. Racism is a crucial cause of the pervasive reproduction of inequities and inequalities in all contemporary societies. In Latin America, racism mainly affects persons and communities of African descent and indigenous peoples, where hegemonic social groups have legitimized their political and economic dominance over Afro-descendant and indigenous peoples, through racist public cultural and educational policies.

Higher Education systems and institutions have historically played a significant role in the institutionalization of racism, and they can play a role in eradicating it. HEIs educate and train professionals who play influential roles in every social field: including teachers; journalists; historians; sociologists; physicians, and other medical practitioners; and economists; to name just some. Moreover, they are also significant public opinion producers and citizenship education institutions. Eradicating racism in Higher Education is a prerequisite to eradicating racism throughout society.

The concept of 'structural racism' stresses the role that racism plays in the construction and reproduction of contemporary societies. However, the term is sometimes used in an absolutist sense by institutions to excuse a lack of effective intervention against racism in their specific case. Thus, it is necessary to contextualize and disaggregate the broad category of 'structural racism' to identify the concrete ways racism operates in each particular social space and institution, and to identify the ways in which it can be countered. In Higher Education, the idea is often understood as if racism were 'coming from outside' and therefore beyond the institution's intervention capacity. In this sense, it works as "an epistemological obstacle" (Bachelard,

1972 [1934]), an assumed truth that blocks further inquiry and, more worrisome, blocks any corrective action.

It is necessary to differentiate between the factors as defined in this chapter - the 'structural factors in a restricted sense', the 'systemic factors', and the 'institutional factors'. It is hoped that this analytical breakdown will contribute, in the first instance, to the conduct of empirical research to analyze the particular ways in which racism is reproduced and naturalized in Higher Education systems and institutions. Secondly, it is hoped that it will contribute to the design of effective ways to combat and eradicate it.

The design of such modes of intervention will require analysis, in a disaggregated way, of the social representations, norms, institutional practices, and other factors that continuously reproduce racism, and the social agents involved in these processes. The magnitude and complexity of the problem require that these interventions be directed beyond the academic sphere. They also require the active participation of Afro-descendant´s and indigenous people´s organizations and communities at all levels of research, design, and implementation of anti-racism interventions.

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