

Life in Colors: Writing to Echo Other Voices of Yellow Racism

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Abstract:

This research aims to reflect and understand how yellow racism occurred in Brazilian society and others, between 2020-2022, by analyzing texts found in two digital information platforms, *Estadão* newspaper and *CartaCapital* magazine, from which we selected eighty-two (82) publications and critically analyzed them. Besides scientifically contributing to the academic community, this research sought to be a space of representation for the Asian community. Moved by *escrevivência*, as experienced and theorized by Conceição Evaristo (2020), the experience between "living" and "writing" about racism in color anchored on the concepts about structural racism (ALMEIDA, 2019), recreational racism (MOREIRA, 2020), and intersectionality (AKOTIRENE, 2021) to establish the relationship that language(gem) and socio-historical relations have in the construction and deconstruction of yellow racism actions. The analyses guided us through the sea of the yellow racism, which has little visibility and occurs, above all, by factors of gender, race, and color.

Keywords: Yellow Racism; Representativeness; Asian Community; *Escrevivência*.

Introduction

In view of studies in Anthropological Linguistics, this research aims to study and analyze the different sociocultural phenomena that result in acts of yellow racism against Asian descendants in Brazil and around the world in the last two years. Due to the dimension of the problem and the relevance that such racist acts should have for language studies, studying these problems became pertinent to us, since little research and even news covering this racist issue can be found. Thus, it becomes interesting for this research to highlight the main points that encompass yellow racism, what characterizes it as being a type of racism, and to make this study a stage of representativeness and struggle to echo other voices that are victims of this racism.

First, is important to highlight that we kept some terms from Portuguese Language due to our Brazilian academic rules, putting the closest translation in the footnotes. So, during the elaboration of the project of the Course Conclusion Work (TCC) in 2022/1, we did a search through Google Scholar using the terms “preconceito amarelo”, “racismo amarelo”, “ódio contra asiáticos”³ we identified some situations: it was difficult to find studies before the pandemic on yellow racism to base our work on; there are few authors and researchers in this area; there are almost no news that reflect on the daily violence. However, it's possible to find recent publications on the subject of this research, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in which many reports bring the virus as a Chinese threat, which led to the dissemination and increase of hatred against Asians, which includes racist jokes, physical and verbal aggression, and even death.

Racist acts such as jokes about the Asian stereotype, "innocent" comments about the Asian culture, jokes and "pranks", social exclusion, the objectification of the Asian female body, as well as hatred and violence as consequences of the pandemic, motivated us to research why they occur and where. From this, the process of writing the project began with a lot of pain and revisiting the past, on which the research will be based to take the reins of a new path of struggle and resistance against racism, motivated by our color, culture, ethnicity or religion.

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³ “yellow prejudice”, “yellow racism”, “Asian hate”.

Evaristo (2020) calls *escrevivência* the fruit of the acts of writing and living throughout our lives, based on past events that are reflected in the present. Thus, the present research relates to our life experiences, being, therefore, a place of representativeness. Furthermore, we aim to give visibility and importance to the theme and to the group in question while seeking to understand how yellow racism happens in society and to analyze how the media (re)produces it and (re)treats it, becoming a means for the deconstruction of prejudices and preventing the consequences of this pandemic to spread in the future, regarding racial issues against Asians.

Brazil, considered a country of ethnic, cultural, racial, and linguistic diversity, has the largest Asian community in the world outside countries like Japan and China. Given this information, it is interesting to discuss the history of Brazilian colonization until the formation of the current society that, for Almeida (2019), is constituted by structural racism, since social, political, and economic relations have been rooted in society for centuries, the result of its historical process of formation and its features insist on being reflected today. Nevertheless, racism becomes a social process that tends to gradually intensify through institutions, power relations, the elite, whiteness, and patriarchy. Therefore, yellow racism becomes a category into which groups of Asian descent fit.

Thus, to conduct this research, we intend to anchor ourselves in the theories on Structural Racism (ALMEIDA, 2019), Recreational Racism (MOREIRA, 2020) and Intersectionality (AKOTIRENE, 2020). From their understanding, we will analyze the ways in which yellow racism occurs and is (re)treated in the Brazilian media, in *CartaCapital* magazine and *Estadão* newspaper.

1 Yellow Racism and other perspectives: a brief theoretical discussion

Yellow racism in Brazil has a colonial history, however, it became more evident after the Japanese immigration in the early twentieth century, as dated by Ueno (2019). This era was marked by European supremacy, which caused political and racial clashes in the world, spreading the negative view of the yellow race, as being a political and degenerative threat of races, if there was "mestizaje" within a "hegemonic" country. According to the author, immigration was divided into two phases: the experimental phase, in which the first wave of immigrants came with the goal of working on the coffee farms in São Paulo; and the "tutelage" phase, which refers to the coming of Japanese with the help of the Japanese government, essential for the construction of the first Asian colonies in Brazil (UENO, 2019, p. 104). The last phase became the opening key for yellow racism in Brazilian society, since there would indeed be the installation of the Asian community in the country and would intensify the idea of the "yellow danger", from which Brazilians claimed that the yellows would steal their job openings and there would be the mixing of races.

From the historical notion given above, we seek to understand what racism is, how and where it occurs. For this, we use some concepts of Silvio Luiz de Almeida (2019) regarding structural racism: in summary: racism is a consequence of the social structure itself, that is, of the "normal" way in which political, economic, legal, and even family relations are constituted, and is not a social pathology or an institutional breakdown. Racism is structural. Individual behaviors and institutional processes are derived from a society in which racism is the rule rather than the exception. Racism is part of a social process that occurs "pelos costas dos indivíduos e lhes parece legado pela tradição [...]" (ALMEIDA, 2019, p. 33, destaques do autor).⁴

According to the author, racism becomes a social practice resulting from historical and political processes that is continuously intensified by the media, the cultural industry⁵ and the educational system. Therefore, the racist ideology is the reflection of social reality and the portrait of a society driven by relations of domination and power, in which bodies are targets of verbal and physical attacks, are judged by their color and appearance, do not have a prominent place in the labor market, as well as the indigenous people who have their socio-historical-cultural identities erased by capitalism.

On the other hand, when humor exceeds the limits of respect, hurts individual and collective moral principles and values, it can be said that there is evidence of recreational racism.

⁴ "behind the backs of individuals and seems bequeathed to them by tradition [...]" (ALMEIDA, 2019, p. 33, author's highlights).

⁵ Concept created by the Frankfurt School to describe the different scenarios arising from the capitalist society of the time. Adorno and Horkheimer (1947) explain that when elements (artistic, culinary, clothing, etc.) of a particular culture are appropriated by the industry to manufacture its own products for profit, it is part of what they called Cultural Industry. An example of this is the Hollywood industry, which makes serial productions, aspiring to reach as large an audience as possible. Among its productions are contents related to Asian culture, however, its protagonists are not played or dubbed by Asian artists, but by white and "famous" Americans.

Moreira (2020) shows that this attitude is related to the stereotyping of minority groups in society that use humor as a resignifying instrument, that is, offenses are (re)transformed through irony. For this reason, the theorist explains that there may be other forms of aggression, such as microaggressions⁶, which occur in recreational racism. Establishing a paradigm between the above concept and intersectionality, one can discuss when these aggressions are aimed specifically at women in minority situations, due to their gender, race and color. Verbal or physical aggression, slander, teasing, exclusion, among others, may be directed, disregarding all social-historical-cultural baggage. Thus, Akotirene (2020) seeks to represent the feminist struggle for visibility, valorization, respect, and equality.

Based on these reflections, we address racism, especially yellow racism. It is important to emphasize that there is not a single type of racism, so Emanuel Fonseca Lima proposes, in *Ensaio sobre Racismos* (2020), to always use the plural and means to combat them.

In agreement with Lima (2020, p. 21), o racismo é uma construção social que, para viabilizar projetos políticos, atribui a determinados grupos étnicos características físicas e/ou culturais que seriam transmitidas a cada geração. Ele apresenta faces distintas de acordo com cada contexto histórico e pode se manifestar tanto na conduta de indivíduos quanto na de instituições e organizações.⁷

Thus, racism is plural because it passes through family generations and is practiced in diverse social contexts. Thus, "racisms" is duly put on the agenda, since it seeks to make explicit that the multiplicity of forms of expression of racism, even if arising from the same phenomenon, have "contornos distintos e que devem ser levados em consideração"⁸ (LIMA, 2020, p. 21).

According to Lima (2020), the concept of race equates to a relation of superiority and inferiority, in which strength and power are elements that differentiate the groups, leading to the control of one group over the other. Not always phenotypic characteristics were the main distinguishing factor, genetics was enough to prove the ancestry. However, European expansion caused stereotypes to be measured through physical characteristics passed on from generation to generation.

On the other hand, Lima (2020, p. 19) exemplifies in a simple and cohesive way (citing TURE and HAMILTON, 1992, p. 20), what institutional racism is and how it occurs:

Quando terroristas brancos promovem um ataque à bomba em uma igreja negra e matam cinco crianças negras, há um ato de racismo individual, amplamente lamentada pela maioria dos segmentos da sociedade. Mas quando na mesma cidade – Birmingham, Alabama – cinco centenas de bebês negros morrem a cada ano em razão da falta de comida apropriada, abrigo e serviços médicos, e milhares mais são destruídos e mutilados fisicamente, emocionalmente e intelectualmente por causa das condições de pobreza e discriminação na comunidade negra, isso decorre do racismo institucional⁹.

That is, this practice occurs when public agencies or the State omit relevant information about (un)cases of this dimension in society; do not manifest help; or when there is no space for these minority groups to participate. Therefore, institutional racism is closely related to colonialist practices of submission and subordination of peoples.

According to Lee et al. (2020, p.126), "[...] a homogeneização de etnias asiáticas no Brasil carrega traços do colonialismo ao simplificar e objetificar corpos, identidades e culturas diversas e, com isso, motiva a perda de

⁶ Moreira (2020, p. 52, emphasis added) defines it as a "[...] series of conscious and unconscious behaviors of a subtle nature that express contempt for racial minorities [...] feelings arising from differences in cultural status among racial groups present in a society. These acts, messages, and representations would then be what he called microaggressions."

⁷ racism is a social construction that, in order to make political projects viable, attributes to certain ethnic groups physical and/or cultural characteristics that would be transmitted to each generation. It presents different faces according to each historical context and can manifest itself both in the conduct of individuals and in that of institutions and organizations.

⁸ "distinct contours that must be taken into consideration" (LIMA, 2020, p. 21).

⁹ When white terrorists carry out a bomb attack on a black church and kill five black children, it is an act of individual racism, widely deplored by most segments of society. But when in the same city - Birmingham, Alabama - five hundred black babies die each year because of the lack of proper food, shelter, and medical services, and thousands more are destroyed and maimed physically, emotionally, and intellectually because of the conditions of poverty and discrimination in the black community, it stems from institutional racism.

memória e assimilação de povos”¹⁰. In this sense, the term "Asian" refers to only a few descents (Japanese and Chinese) and the color yellow, making us forget that Indians, Arabs, Israelis, other whites and blacks are also part of the Asian continent.

Thus, the appearance of Asians in Brazil begins in the mid-nineteenth century, when Chinese were brought to have their work explored. At the same time, Lebanese and Syrians also arrived in Brazil, but the policies adopted for this social group were different, not submitting them to slave labor. At the turn of the 20th century, the immigration wave brought new descendants to the country, especially Japanese, with the intention of placing them to work in tea and coffee plantations.

Also, according to Lee et al. (2020, p. 128), “em grande parte do território brasileiro, japonês é o termo utilizado comumente para nomear e designar corpos de fenótipo asiático que incluem, por exemplo, coreanos, chineses e seus descendentes”¹¹. That is, its use erases or camouflages the cultural, idiomatic, historical differences of other nationalities.

Even with the advance of modernity in the 20th century, Lee et al. (2020, p. 128) explain that colonization had its effects perpetuated in Brazilian society. When it comes to the beginning of Asian immigration, it can be said that individuals had their “cultura, língua e tradição atenuadas ou desmanteladas em suas relações com a sociedade brasileira através de debates eugenistas que consideravam se tratar de elementos de degeneração racial”¹². The first generation becomes the most affected, therefore, the later ones have the challenge of maintaining their identities and rebuilding their histories through the right to memory, because as already mentioned by Lima (2020) and by what we are studying, this research becomes important to deconstruct the racism that is passed from generation to generation.

Despite the welcoming policies offered to this group, the feeling of not belonging was still alive, since it was necessary to face the internal and external social conflicts of the Asian community in Brazil. It had never been easy to stop speaking our mother tongues, to be called by several codenames and terms, not to have a "totally defined race" and to suffer with the whitening of the yellow race, not to have space to express ourselves and, at the same time, to fight against the xenophobia¹³ and, still, to have our cultures appropriated by the cultural industry.

That being the case,

O direito à identidade étnico-racial é de grande importância no combate ao racismo, pois a partir dele pode-se desafiar conceitos de multiculturalismo e diversidade que enrijecem noções de cultura, raça e identidade no Brasil, o que chega a impedir o acesso pleno de certos grupos à cidadania (LEE *et al.*, 2020, p. 129)¹⁴.

This means that the concepts of multiculturalism and diversity serve the purpose of breaking down prejudiced barriers. By understanding differences, stereotypes, cultures, and origins, society starts to live together in harmony, because all these fundamentals shape the racial/ethnic identity of the country or place. Therefore, multiculturalism and diversity mean respect for what is different, so fighting prejudice becomes essential to eradicate other existing racisms. Therefore, it's wrong to qualify or place Asians on the same level as whites, since we aren't dealing with the same social experiences, nor origins, much less disregard efforts in what, for example, would be the field of academic-scientific merits of Asians. Such actions can lead to the social erasure of a people, and that is not what we want here.

¹⁰ “[...] the homogenization of Asian ethnicities in Brazil carries traces of colonialism by simplifying and objectifying diverse bodies, identities and cultures and, thus, motivates the loss of memory and assimilation of peoples” (LEE *et al.*, 2020, p. 126).

¹¹ “in much of Brazil, Japanese is the term commonly used to name and designate bodies of Asian phenotype that include, for example, Koreans, Chinese and their descendants”.

¹² “culture, language, and tradition attenuated or dismantled in their relations with Brazilian society through eugenicist debates that considered them as elements of racial degeneration”.

¹³ Xenophobia can be seen as an action that encompasses discriminatory, prejudiced, and/or intolerant acts against foreigners, ranging from verbal violence to physical violence. Vitorino and Vitorino (2018, p. 94, authors' emphasis) conceptualize the term foreigner as a non-national individual, that is, one who does not possess the nationality of the territory in which he is located. There is also an understanding that xenophobia applies to people from the same country, victims of discriminatory acts for being from regions seen as economically and politically poor, targets of hate speech and xenophobia, as discussed by WESTRUP and MELO (2022) among others.

¹⁴ The right to ethnic-racial identity is of great importance in the fight against racism, since it can challenge concepts of multiculturalism and diversity that stiffen notions of culture, race, and identity in Brazil, which even prevents the full access of certain groups to citizenship (LEE *et al.*, 2020, p. 129).

2 Escrevivência: a brief account of the challenges of being an Asian person in Brazil

In this section I took the liberty to write in the first person of singular in order to relate the challenges of being a Brazilian, of Japanese descent, born and raised in the countryside of São Paulo. I intend to expose facts, moments, and the good and bad consequences that I have experienced (and still experience) throughout my life, with the intention of reaching other voices that identify with the same situations. Therefore, the research, besides contributing scientifically to the academic community, seeks to be the representation of a certain social group that, through this, can reach its place of speech.

I remember when my grandparents told me about the Japanese immigration and their coming to Brazil: they spent two months on the high seas on the *Kasato Maru*¹⁵ ship and arrived in the country in mid-1930, taking refuge from a threat of war in an unknown land, which the world said was prosperous, with different culture(s) and language(s), and, thus, worked in the coffee plantations in the countryside. What nobody imagined was the extent of the difficulty in communicating and getting used to Brazilian soil, since society brutally imposed that every foreigner had to learn Portuguese as a condition to stay and work in the country, even foreseeing physical punishments and psychological tortures similar to the Nazi policy, creating concentration camps for Asians or exploiting them in the countryside farms. Although it is not the focus of this study, it is worth noting how linguistic violence played an important role in this oppression experienced by my ancestors, because without being able to speak their mother tongue, communication in Portuguese distanced them more and more from their culture, their land, and their ancestors.

With better living conditions, I was raised in the city of Matão, in the interior of the state of São Paulo, I attended one of the best schools in the city, but it was inside the school where I heard the first words that hurt me for years. As a child, I didn't know how strong, aggressive, racist, and prejudiced they were, and therefore, to me, they were normal. But as time went by, I began to understand those hidden meanings, which at first were harmless, but which carried a "purposeful" and rational sense disguised as a joke or a jest.

There were expressions such as "japa", "xing-ling", "olho rasgado", "japonesa feia", "pode ser inteligente, mas é estranha", "pastel de flango", "chinês e japonês é tudo igual", "que nojo de chinês, ele come cachorro", "tem que matar um asiático pra poder passar no vestibular", "abre o olho, japonesa"¹⁶, and other nonsense words used to imitate a Chinese person talking, and other expressions/gestures to imitate the Asian ways. There is also a feeling of not belonging to my own country, where I was born and where I vote, that seems to always put me in the condition of a foreigner.

The terms mentioned above are some of the acts considered microaggressions and are part of recreational racism (MOREIRA, 2020), which states that any "joke", a joke that causes embarrassment or other negative feelings is unacceptable and has a racial slant that is related to the person's phenotype.

Silently, these situations were eating me up internally, but it was at the University that I (re)discovered myself, (re)found myself and (re)built myself, because I understood the concept of diversity, plurality, respect and belonging. In this way, I intend to make this research a representative work, reaching other voices of yellow racism and being able to contribute scientifically to society, in order to discuss some social problems that are ignored and reflect on their impacts on people's lives. Thus, we will prevent these problems from becoming more widespread in the future.

3 Navigating the seas of hate: the research method

With the purpose of re-signifying what it is to be a Japanese descendant in Brazil, in this research I try to "open the sea" of hatred, by luring sayings in virtual pages. Thus, from a vast set of digital Brazilian newspapers, we searched and collected eighty-two (82) texts about the theme in two digital vehicles:

O Estado de S. Paulo (Estadão) and *CartaCapital*, one from the right-wing spectrum¹⁷ and the other from the left¹⁸, respectively, but the first one has paid access via subscription and *CartaCapital* is open access. Then, we

¹⁵ For more information about the ship that transported the first wave of Japanese immigrants to Brazil, access: <https://www12.senado.leg.br/noticias/materias/2019/07/04/senado-celebra-111-anos-da-imigracao-japonesa-no-brasil>. Accessed on: Jan. 31, 2023.

¹⁶ "japa", "xing-ling", "torn eye", "ugly Japanese", "she may be intelligent, but she is strange", "pastel de flango", "Chinese and Japanese are all the same", "how disgusting Chinese are, they eat dogs", "you must kill an Asian in order to pass the vestibular", "open your eyes, Japanese".

¹⁷ "The right party is the biological spectrum that intends to preserve or extend the powers of groups already adequately represented in the spheres of power," aiming to further empower groups already benefited economically and socially (SILVA, 2014, p. 156).

analyze how violence against Asians is portrayed in each of the eleven (11) texts selected for our discussion, considering the types of racism, the choice of words, and the relevance that both newspapers present. Thus, our research is mixed, since it was developed in two stages: a bibliographic one, from which the corpus analysis was theoretically based, taking as reference studies already established on the theme; and a documental one, which consists in the search for texts (news, reports and others) as the first subject of our study.

Based on these choices, we decided to search for keywords in the newspaper's search tab, as we would observe the total of texts found and which, within these, match the theme. From that, the articles were collected and separated in individual folders according to the keyword and the newspaper; then, a new selection was made, in which the texts that most evidenced yellow racism were chosen. Moreover, it's important to emphasize that, due to the short period of time (as mentioned above), we delimited a search period for the articles to be researched, looking for publications in the last three years (2020 to 2022), because in previous searches on search engines we noticed there were few publications on the subject in media such as those we took for the research corpus.

We chose these dates for the following reasons: emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent increase in the wave of violence and racist and xenophobic attacks against Asian groups inside and outside Brazil. Despite the few works and little visibility on the subject in previous years, this problem has reverberated in several Brazilian social media and the subject began to be addressed by Asian artists and, consequently, Brazilian citizens of Asian descent, imposing their place of speech and representativeness.

Searching by keywords in *Estadão*, we obtained a total of 64 publications found that referred to the theme yellow racism, being: "ódio contra asiáticos" (18), "perigo amarelo" (6), "racismo" (15), "racismo amarelo" (5), "racismo contra" (6) e "xenofobia" (14). Já em *CartaCapital*, encontramos 18 resultados, entre eles: "ódio contra asiáticos" (2), "perigo amarelo" (2), "racismo" (9), "racismo amarelo" (0), "racismo contra" (2) e "xenofobia" (3)¹⁹.

It's worth explaining that these keywords do not widely cut the approach of the texts, since to search the newspapers, it was necessary to use some criterion (in the case of this study and from previous readings, we chose the criterion of "keywords") and, given the theme of the research, we chose six (6) keywords. This explanation is relevant to anticipate any possible doubt regarding misinterpretation of the data of occurrences presented above, because, a priori, *CartaCapital* would not address the theme of yellow racism: the magazine didn't register, in the texts we selected, the term "yellow racism", but presented the subject in different genres, such as news, reports and opinion articles, under all the other keywords chosen for the search screen.

According to the data found, we expected that *CartaCapital* would provide us with a higher total of findings than the other newspaper, due to its "ideologia de espectro de esquerda"²⁰ (SILVA, 2014, p. 156), which seeks to exalt and give voice and space to minority groups in society. Furthermore, there was an expectation of ours to find critical and reflective texts that opined on the importance of studying racism against Asians. This hypothesis is confirmed to the extent that *Estadão*, being a daily newspaper, in 1095 days (three years) published only 64 texts (5.84%) about yellow racism/racism against Asians, while *CartaCapital*, a weekly newspaper, in 156 weeks published 18 texts (11.53%), including news, reports, short stories and opinion articles.

In order to visualize in the texts how newspapers treat racism against Asians, in the following section we present analysis and results of our study.

4 Fear, hate, and invisibility: how yellow racism hides and manifests in societies

In this section, we briefly analyze the collected materials, through a critical-reflexive view, dialoguing with the theories presented and to seek the expected result, which is to reflect and understand how yellow racism occurs in Brazilian society and others, especially between 2020-2022, from the occurrence of the theme in the two digital information platforms presented. We investigated their contents (verbal language and images) and the contexts they seek to signify. Thus, of the selected publications, two (2) address racism on social media, four (4)

¹⁸ "The left party is the biological spectrum that aims to empower groups underrepresented in the spheres of power," i.e., it is concerned with social causes of minority groups in society (SILVA, 2014, p. 156).

¹⁹ "hatred against Asians" (18), "yellow danger" (6), "racism" (15), "yellow racism" (5), "racism against" (6) and "xenophobia" (14). In *CartaCapital*, we found 18 results, among them: "hatred against Asians" (2), "yellow danger" (2), "racism" (9), "yellow racism" (0), "racism against" (2) and "xenophobia" (3).

²⁰ "Left spectrum ideology" (SILVA, 2014, p. 156).

relate to hate violence against Asians in the United States, and five (5) address acts of racism. We analyzed a total of eleven (11) texts: four (4) from *CartaCapital* and seven (7) from *Estadão*.

4.1 Coronavirus and the explosion of hate on social networks

The two texts that expose racism in the social networks were taken from *CartaCapital* magazine, which displays as its cover the image of Chinese people with protective masks and, as a highlight in the title, the words Coronavirus, Covid-19, social networks and Twitter. Both inform that the increase in the dissemination of hate by Asians in general, especially Chinese, is due to the emergence of the coronavirus. One of the consequences is the verbal attacks that this group receives directly and indirectly through social networks, in which individuals use some media, such as Twitter (AFP, CartaCapital, 2020), to express hatred and spread prejudice, racism, xenophobia against Asians through messages, cartoons, images.

The texts also assure that it is common to find images of the Coronavirus related to people with Asian features, meaning that the virus is of Chinese origin. Nevertheless, the Chinese are blamed for having carried and spread the virus around the world, leading to insults, exclusion, and aggression against them. Consequently, Chinese are banned from white supremacist countries, political relations with China are severed, and China no longer receives any kind of support; concomitantly, Asian communities are verbally assaulted, bodies are violated, and respect for their culture is gone.

In the United States, the proportion that this problem reached made police authorities create reporting apps for these types of crimes, while in Brazil, to a lesser extent, there was no visibility for the issue or any kind of social mobilization to minimize it. To complement this, the Brazilian government itself (2019-2022) did not take adequate measures to control the pandemic in the country, and the Minister of Education at the time made racist jokes about the Chinese way of speaking, associating them with the image of the character Cebolinha from “Turma da Mônica”, which contributed to the growth of hate speech.

One of the texts, which is a reportage, deals with “A sopa de Wuhan”²¹ (KUNIGAMI, CartaCapital, 2020), a literary work that concerns the epicenter of the virus and how it all began, through a bat soup. The animalized image of bats, pigs, rats, often associated with Asian people often refers to the “yellow danger”, an expression created by white hegemony between the 19th and 20th centuries. This fact reminds us of a racist Eurocentric vision that, to this day, tends to be repeated in the cultural and intellectual imaginary.

Although the texts have a political character when dealing with the socioeconomic impacts caused by the virus in the world, social and cultural aspects of a people (China) are highlighted when they gain voice and space to show the world that, besides being an economic power, it is a cultural power. Besides the geopolitical perspectives, one of them makes an association to the facts and events of the “yellow peril” era about the animalization of Asian bodies, bringing as a consequence the yellow racism according to phenotypical and cultural characteristics of these people. Finally, there is always a question: what do the media and social networks have to do with this? They’re means of propagation that “facilitate” the dissemination of prejudice, as well as the sharing of information out of context and that, in this case, contributed negatively to raise the number of hate attacks directed at Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Indonesians, and others.

4.2 Yellow racism in the United States

Most of the publications found discuss yellow racism in the United States (USA), especially when discussing the massacre in Georgia, which involved a white man and people from the Asian American community. Furthermore, the U.S. president himself reproduces yellow racism by treating the Coronavirus with the term “Vírus chinês”²² and claiming not to be racist. In view of the above, we analyze three texts from the *Estadão* newspaper and one from *CartaCapital*, establishing a relationship of information.

Initially, one of the news stories that gained prominence addresses one of the largest attacks against the Asian community in the US, which occurred in 2021 in Georgia. In that event, a white man broke into three massage parlors in a Chinese neighborhood and executed eight people, including six Asian women. The motivation is not known for sure, but the Asian authorities in the country blame racism for this attack and other hate crimes that the community has suffered (BROMWICH and HONG, Estadão, 2021).

²¹ “The Wuhan’s soup” (KUNIGAMI, CartaCapital, 2020).

²² “Chinese virus”.

After the attack, the authorities revealed the real danger that women with Asian phenotype are in a foreign country of white supremacy, since men tend to objectify Asian bodies, especially women, fetishizing them (CARVALHAES, *CartaCapital*, 2021). Besides this problem, the feeling of exclusion and not belonging to that country has been constantly elevated, since it is claimed that not every Asian is well accepted anywhere and, in many cases, people are treated as foreigners in the country where they were born.

On the other hand, the demonstrations taking place in the American country to stop the hatred and violence took on great proportions. Authorities, Asian American committee members, and the Asian community came together in order to protest against the attacks they were experiencing. One of the movements that gained visibility was #StopAsianHateCrime, which showed the indignation, mostly of young people, women and elderly people, also demanding that the authorities come out in defense of these people, because many registered cases are not judged as yellow racism, even though they have all the evidence proving the racist motivation (REDAÇÃO, *Estadão*, 2021).

Besides the political clash that exists between the greatest world powers (China and the United States), it was seen that President Donald Trump always sought to associate the "Chinese virus" with the supposed communism of that country, which caused the hatred that American patriots had to gradually increase (REDAÇÃO, *Estadão*, 2020). Structural racism in the U.S. brings us back to what Almeida (2019) assures us about a race that, to the detriment of its color and/or ethnicity, overpowers the other, establishing political, economic, and cultural power relations and privileging a certain social group.

After having reflected on the content that the news and reports from *Estadão* addressed, we could observe that *CartaCapital* brings the same subject about the rise of hate crimes, however, its approach is different when it brings in its article the concern and mobilization of Joe Biden's Democratic government (THE WASHINGTON POST, *Estadão*, 2021). The president and his vice president, Kamala Harris, were willing to make the country a country for everyone, since during Trump's administration Asians were treated as foreigners, different people who would never be part of the history of that country. Therefore, the publication brings ways to fight the racism that exists, but lives hidden in the shadows, and that the initial step would be to start by toughening the legislative and judicial administrative measures, to the point where the authorities would enforce the laws.

Therefore, what we can abstract from the materials is that they all report crimes of yellow racism driven by hatred aggravated by the Coronavirus pandemic. We note that the murders and the action of excluding Asians from the country belong to what we call structural racism, because they kill or attack them for their physical characteristics and for what they represent to the world: a yellow threat, naive individuals, animals, slaves, submissive, sexual objects.

4.3 Evidence of yellow racism in Brazil and elsewhere

In this section, we analyze two texts from *CartaCapital* and three from *Estadão*, seeking to present their content, identify the types of racism that are present in them, and reflect on the conclusions drawn from them.

Two publications (one from each site) concern the act of racism by the former Minister of Education of Brazil, Abraham Weintraub. According to the publications, the former Minister would have committed an act of racism by posting on his Twitter page offenses considered microaggressions, since they would mock the Chinese way of speaking, exchanging the letter R for L (in Brazilian Portuguese Language) and blaming China for the Covid-19 pandemic (VASCONCELOS, *Estadão*, 2020).

In the former Minister's post, it is possible to identify the association of the speech of the character Cebolinha from "Turma da Mônica" and the speech of the Asian trying to communicate in Portuguese. Although Weintraub denies having offended China and does not consider himself racist, according to *CartaCapital*, the former Minister should pay compensation and the money would be donated to human rights organizations that receive immigrants. The magazine also brings what the STF ruled about the case: a criminal offense at the end of art.20 of Law No. 7.716/1989, which determines crimes resulting from prejudice.

In another news item from *Estadão*, the former Minister still claims, in the form of a comment to a news item, that "não se pode imputar um crime nessas circunstâncias"²³, because freedom of expression is a major right of the citizen and therefore his speeches could not be considered racist. At one point in the current Brazilian government (2023), his acts of racial slurs may be equivalent to racist acts, which carry an increased penalty, according to Law 14.532/2023.

²³ "no one can charge a crime under these circumstances". Available in: <https://www.estadao.com.br/politica/blog-do-fausto-macedo/a-pf-weintraub-nega-racismo-alega-liberdade-de-expressao-e-ataca-partido-comunista-chines/>. Access in: Jan. 31, 2023.

Recalling the concept of race, it becomes interesting the definition that Moreira (2020) puts as being something that comes from meanings and cultural attributions to phenotypic traits, therefore, a joke that generates damage or moral embarrassment to a minority is considered a microaggression and is part of the so-called recreational racism, because it will be devaluing a particular person according to the color of his skin, his speech, his genetic traits, his intellectual capacity. This statement is reinforced by the researcher in the interview given to *CartaCapital* in 2021, in which he talks about the hostile humor that affects minority groups through the reproduction of stereotypes and aims to support discriminatory practices.

In addition, the *Estadão* has three stories about racist crimes directed against two Asian American athletes. One is Jeremy Lin, a Taiwanese-American and veteran player in an American basketball league, and the other victim is Sunisa Lee, a gymnast on the U.S. national Olympic gymnastics team. Both reports being targets of racism by being verbally and physically attacked while at work (REDACTED, *Estadão*, 2021).

An interesting point in the headline about Lin is that the player "says he has been called a 'coronavirus'". The way the expression "says he has been called" reminds us of something that is not true (yet), something that cannot be completely true or is not relevant. This made us uncomfortable, because in the midst of so much violence against Asians in that country and in the world, the newspaper, which is a vehicle of information, still generates a doubt in the reader, by writing "says he was called", but not that "he was called".

The player said on his social networks that he is tired of being the target of racists when he is on the court, that even being a basketball veteran does not stop people from making nasty comments that involve his appearance, his race, ethnicity and color. He still protests about the wave of violence in the USA and says that being an Asian-American in the country is becoming something dangerous and disturbing, because at any moment someone from the community can be attacked for racial reasons (AZEVEDO, *Estadão*, 2021).

Each and every comment is important to the social group in question, since Asians are invisible within a racist society when a joke about our eyes, our speech, our culture, becomes something "normal", funny and "without evil". To be associated with the coronavirus and to live with fingers pointing at you is something extremely painful and oppressive, because they generalize the blame for the emergence of the virus to any person with "pulled eyes, straight hair, yellow skin" for the creation of a virus, leading to other consequences such as being called "dirty, dirty, virus," and even being prevented from going to public places.

Unlike Lin, the gymnast Sunisa Lee was attacked by an anti-Asian group with pepper spray, in addition to being the target of racist slurs (REDAÇÃO, *Estadão*, 2021). According to the report, the gymnast was on the street with a group of friends, when some individuals arrived by car, verbally assaulting her and pepper-sprayed her. For Lee, this attitude is considered racist, since it isn't the first time she hears comments like that and, unfortunately, she doesn't know what to do about the case, because the aggressors fled and the authorities are not concerned.

One can notice that it's a clear case of racism, because the racists acted with the intention of attacking the image of the Asian woman at that moment. Therefore, besides the prejudice against her color, her race and ethnicity, the fact that she is a woman and that she has a different phenotype and a different cultural baggage, involves what we call intersectionality. Akotirene (2021) explains that factors such as gender, in the case of women, targets of the hetero-patriarchal society, and their race, origin, class, culture, religiosity, language, are factors that induce individuals like those to commit crucial acts and put them in a disadvantageous position in society. This is why feminist movements, especially of black and indigenous women, are carried out to give voice to the category.

In another similar situation, *CartaCapital* (2020) magazine briefly exposes a case of racism in the Rio de Janeiro subway, in which a Japanese woman is verbally attacked by an elderly woman, who said the following phrases: "chinesa porca!", "fica passando doença para todo mundo"²⁴. No one present in the wagon said anything about this action. Thus, we see here a case in which a Japanese woman was generalized as Chinese and associated with the virus, besides being accused of "spreading disease", due to the negative image that people concretize in their racist imaginary about Chinese culture, that they eat animals and transmit diseases.

What we abstract from these cases of racism is the fact that they are driven by hatred, by people considered phenotypically different, by cases of xenophobia in the country where they were born, by never being accepted for who they are, and by the lack of public safety and enforcement of laws for racist crimes. The violence against Asians still goes unnoticed or with closed eyes by the society that normalizes these prejudices.

²⁴ "Chinese pig!" "You keep transmitting illness for everybody!" (*CartaCapital*, 2020).

4.4 Still in the waters with *Kasatu Maru*...

From the analyses, we could identify the types of racism, how they happen, when and why. We evidenced that all the selected texts portray violence that occurred during the pandemic period and are related to the Coronavirus. That is, we did not find any other matter that concerns racism itself, only facts that are considered racist crimes, and even then, they did not arouse the involvement, commitment and solidarity necessary for the theme to be valued.

According to the data collected, the Brazilian media portrays cases that happened outside Brazil, as is the case of the United States, which has a larger dimension of racist cases and protests. However, with the range of ethnic and racial diversity that our country has, to cover only three cases of yellow racism in the country is very insignificant. The facts involving the powerful image in Brazil of a government authority, the former Minister of Education, also stand out. Therefore, it can be seen that yellow racism in the country is little discussed and still bears the consequences of racism structured and rooted in history, whose jokes, "jokes", oppressive comments, lack of respect for culture and for the different, are "normal" and "acceptable" things.

We analyzed crimes of structural and recreational racism, racial slurs, considering intersectionality, since violence against Asian women, according to the texts analyzed, was significantly noticed among women. Among some cases, we found racist jokes disguised as humor, which reflect the idea that making fun of the other's appearance is something "funny", making everyone forget that those who suffer the violence do not feel and think this way. Words constitute meanings and values that, expressed in racist speech camouflaged by laughter, hide the oppression that is to show superiority of the one who has spoken.

Another case was to highlight a structuralized society, such as the American one. The desire to show the world white hegemony has caused a president's hate speech to viralize in the virtual environment and spread hatred, disgust, and fear in society. Besides taking on political and economic dimensions, President Trump's speech has had a strong social impact in that lives of a specific group are/were threatened because of it.

On the other hand, thinking about issues of gender, social class, and place of speech has become significant to give voice to women who form a minority group in hetero-patriarchal society. And to collaborate with the struggle, Akotirene (2021) showed us the notion of intersectionality that reverberates the need to think about women in their constitutivity regarding their origin, ethnicity, beliefs, culture, class, and race. Thus, when a woman is attacked for being a woman and Asian, as were the cases of the gymnast and the woman in the subway, these acts of violence involve all the personal and historical formation of the victims and the group to which they belong.

As we sail through these waters where the waves of hatred try to oppress us by crashing on all sides of our ship, we are left with the need to re-signify, through reflection on language(gem) and the socio-historically constructed relations in us and by us, an indispensable route to prevent racism against people coming directly and indirectly from Asia from anchoring in deep waters.

Final Considerations

The research conducted sought to contribute to an emancipatory and transversal education through the presentation of a common theme, but little discussed when it comes to yellow racism. The choice for this theme was due to the proportion of racist attacks committed against the Asian population in Brazil and in the world, which had little repercussion in the media. Thus, we were interested in analyzing how this racism is (re)treated in the Brazilian media, aiming to reach new voices against yellow racism through the representation of those who suffer it.

First, we could conclude that before the Covid-19 pandemic there was already little notoriety about the research topic, especially in papers, publications, and news, and, although the cases of violence and hatred against Asians increased dramatically during the years of the pandemic, the problem always existed, but did not deserve importance or concern on this issue. The emergence of the "Chinese virus" became a justification for the rise of hate crimes, i.e., the pandemic only intensified racism, making it more common, frequent, open, and dangerous, increasing the violence motivated by the "yellow danger".

Furthermore, we notice that the two information vehicles used present reports and news in which yellow racism is more concerning in the United States (USA), for example, leading us to understand that there are not many cases in Brazil. However, although the data leads us to conclude that it happens frequently in the USA, in our country racism is rooted and normalized and is disguised, many times, in humorous tones. Therefore, there are already means to fight racism in society, but they are not fully efficient or the voices are silent for fear of not being heard, for fear that the authorities will not take appropriate measures to solve the case, and for shame of

exposing themselves. Thus, it becomes essential that what the laws impose is enforced, regardless of the color, race, ethnicity, or gender of the victim. And since one of the goals of this research is that there should be more spaces of representation, visibility, and solidarity for those affected by this racism, that their rights should be defended, that decolonizing and anti-racist debates should be raised.

Thus, the research was of great importance for our personal growth, as we put our emotions aside to make room for reason, considering the political, social, historical, and cultural process surrounding the history of Asian people and the emergence of yellow racism. In addition, the *escrevivência* was a remembrance method that opened doors for us to study new research sources, to search for immigrant accounts and documents, for example, that will direct us to new methods and new work in the future. Finally, "life in colors" reflected on how our lives are based on our colors: hair, eyes, and skin. And from this, we wrote our life experiences in yellow, in order to hear other voices that are victims of this racism echo so that all forms of oppression against all Asians will dissipate like waves on the beach.

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