

# **Shadows of Prejudice: Racism Explored In “I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings”, by Maya Angelou**

Autoras: Ana Lara Alves Cutrim,  
Amanda L. Jacobsen de Oliveira

# 03

Enviado: 05/09/2023.

Aceito: 07/10/2023.

## **Ana Lara Alves Cutrim**

Graduada com Licenciatura em Letras-Inglês pela Universidade Federal do Sul e Sudeste do Pará. Tem experiência na área de Letras, com ênfase em Letras, atuando principalmente nos seguintes temas: inglês, professora e narrativa. Atuou como bolsista PIBIC pela Universidade Federal do Sul e Sudeste do Pará. Atua no momento como Instrutora de Língua Inglesa no Sesc Marabá.

Currículo

Lattes:

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/8349152051773784>

## **Amanda Lais Jacobsen de Oliveira**

É professora adjunta do magistério superior, na Faculdade de Línguas Estrangeiras e Tradução (FALET) da Universidade Federal do Sul e Sudeste do Pará (Unifesspa), na cidade de Marabá-PA. Possui graduação em Licenciatura em Letras Português-Inglês pela Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná - Campus Pato Branco (2014), mestrado em Letras pela Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM, 2016) e doutorado em Letras pela mesma instituição (2021), como bolsista Capes. Tem experiência na área de Letras, com ênfase em Literatura, atuando principalmente nos seguintes temas: literatura, cultura e

interdisciplinaridade, literatura comparada, teoria e crítica feministas.

Currículo

Lattes:

<http://lattes.cnpq.br/6189574099652665>

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6963-2458>

**Abstract:** Maya Angelou's autobiography is marked by many accounts of episodes when she witnessed and experienced racism in its various forms. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* tells the stories of a little Maya discovering herself and discovering new airs as time passed and she moved from one house to another, to a young woman who was ahead of her time, getting to be the first black woman to command a cable car in San Francisco. Maya Angelou's autobiography was released in 1969, but it is still used as an object of study and analysis around the world nowadays, having in its composition subjects that still linger, such as racism, sexuality and feminism. Based on bibliographic research, this study seeks to organize a survey of Maya's autobiography, analyzing it under the perspectives of racism, feminism and intersectionality. To make it possible, we are going to read authors like Patricia Collins, Helena Hirata, bell hooks and other authors, relating it to their books, taking into account the points highlighted above. Maya Angelou's 1969 book addresses the daily struggles of black women, addressing prejudice and promoting understanding. Through accounts, Angelou helps readers break out of their social bubbles, ensuring Maya's experiences are heard and prevents similar stories from happening again.

**Keywords:** Maya Angelou; *I Know Why Caged Birds Sings*; Racism; Sexuality; Intersexuality.

**Resumo:** A autobiografia de Maya Angelou é marcada por muitos relatos de episódios nos quais ela testemunhou e experimentou o racismo em suas diversas formas. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* narra as histórias de uma jovem Maya descobrindo a si mesma e explorando novos horizontes à medida que o tempo passava e ela se mudava de uma casa para outra, até se tornar uma mulher à frente de seu tempo, tornando-se a primeira mulher negra a comandar um bondinho em San Francisco. A autobiografia de Maya Angelou foi lançada em 1969, mas ainda é utilizada como objeto de estudo e análise em todo o mundo nos dias de hoje, apresentando em sua composição temas que perduram, como racismo, sexualidade e feminismo. Com base em pesquisa bibliográfica, este estudo busca organizar um levantamento da autobiografia de Maya, analisando-a sob as perspectivas do racismo, feminismo e interseccionalidade. Para viabilizar isso, vamos ler autoras como Patricia Collins, Helena Hirata, bell hooks e outros autores, relacionando seus livros, levando em consideração os pontos destacados acima. O livro de Maya Angelou de 1969 aborda as lutas diárias das mulheres negras, abordando o preconceito e promovendo a compreensão. Por meio de relatos, Angelou ajuda os leitores a sair de suas bolhas sociais, garantindo que as experiências de Maya sejam ouvidas e evitando que histórias semelhantes aconteçam novamente.

**Palavras-chave:** Maya Angelou; *I Know Why Caged Birds Sings*; Racismo; Sexualidade; Interseccionalidade.

## Introduction

Angelou was an American writer. In her youth, she was a dancer and singer and she was also the first black woman to drive a streetcar in San Francisco, a cook and became an activist, teacher and actress when she was an adult. She died at the age of 86 in 2014 in the United States, leaving several works ranging from poetry, cookbooks, autobiographies, plays and children's books. Her most famous autobiography, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, was written after the murder of Martin Luther King, a black activist who Angelou had as a friend.

*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is an autobiography. It is the first and most famous among five other autobiographical works. In it, Angelou tells the stories of her childhood years in Stamps, Arkansas, and St. Louis, Missouri, and her early adulthood in San Francisco, California. The book was first published in 1969, amid the fight for Civil Rights in the US, when Maya was 41 years old and had just returned to the United States after a period living in Cairo.

In the 1930s, segregation in Stamps in Arkansas was severe and society was divided into blacks and whites, ranging from how they lived to where they lived. Arkansas and the majority of the Southern United States lived under the so-called Jim Crow laws, a

Shorthand for the diverse practices, customs, attitudes, and legal frameworks that arose in post-bellum America, especially the former slave-holding states, to undergird a regime of compulsory race segregation. (Norman, 2015, p. 35)

Maya Angelou, who was not born in Stamps but moved there at the age of three, experienced and witnessed such segregation in its many forms as the separation of white and black people by neighborhood, school and access to opportunities. Stamps is the city to which she moved to live with her grandmother: Mrs. Annie Henderson, in the back of the Store, a market that had been hers for over 20 years. Even though Mrs. Henderson was not their mother, Maya and her brother took to calling her "Momma", as they became fond of her as a mother figure. Anyway, it was there that some of what Angelou describes in her work took place, as well as describing her thoughts and feelings when experiencing acts of racism in other places.

Her work portrays the intersection of racism and sexism on several occasions. Angelou is not just an activist for the black movement, she is also a symbol of the feminist struggle. The objective of this work, therefore, is to analyze this intersection in Angelou's autobiographical narrative, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* (1969), through the ideas of the writer and activist bell hooks in her book

Black Looks – Race and Representation (1992), around themes such as racism, feminism, sexuality. To analyze the other points, such as intersectionality, we will look through the ideas and theories of Helena Hirata (2014) and Patricia Collins(2021). Angelou was assertive when choosing the name of her book because it is named after the poem “Sympathy” (1899), by Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872- 1924). In this poem, the bird sings, but even though it is a beautiful song, it is not a song of joy, it is a prayer for freedom, just like the little Maya in this narrative.

## **The domination and subjugation experienced by Angelou due to racism**

When discussing the life and work of Maya Angelou, it is crucial to recognize the impact of systemic racism on her experiences. And when discussing racism, it is impossible to ignore how it intersects with sex and gender. It is important to examine these complex issues and work towards creating a more just and equitable society. In this sense, it is important to add what Helena Hirata discusses in her article “Gender, class and race: intersectionality and the consubstantiality of social relations” (2014).

According to Hirata (2014, p. 62, our translation), intersectionality can be described as the "interdependence of power relations related to race, gender, and class." In other words, the interdependence of these dimensions signifies that inequalities and forms of oppression cannot be fully comprehended unless we consider the intricate interaction among race, gender, and class. Therefore, intersectionality becomes essential for the study of Angelou's book, as even though racial issues are highlighted here as the focus of analysis, it is not feasible to solely analyze instances of racism without taking into account the additional oppressions experienced by the character.

Maya's account of her early life begins with her trip to Stamps, Arkansas, where she went to live with her brother, grandmother, and uncle. Stamps proved to be a city where segregation was very strong, and because of that, for a long time, Maya did not know how white people were. The following excerpts underline that issue:

[...] the segregation was so complete that most Black children didn't really, absolutely know what whites looked like [...] I remember never believing that whites were really real. I couldn't force myself to think of them as people. [...] These other strange pale creatures weren't considered folks. They were whitefolks (ANGELOU, 1969, p. 12).

The excerpt above is a testimony from Maya, and what is of utmost significance is that there are similar statements from the character, demonstrating that she was not the only one who grew up within this reality. In an interview with Brazilian researchers titled "Intersectionality, Epistemic Oppression and Resistance:

An Interview with Patrícia Hill Collins" (2021), Patrícia Hill Collins also discusses the necessity of not segregating the relationships of oppression based on race, gender, and class. This interview was given during the 2nd International Journey of Critical Applied Linguistics held in Brasilia/Brazil in 2019, the interview aimed to expand academic and public understanding of the concepts of intersectionality, epistemic oppression and resistance, using the theoretical perspective and contributions by Patricia Hill Collins, a prominent figure in gender, race, and oppression studies. In response to the first question, "Could you tell us a little about your story and efforts to build your voice and that of other black women and how this relates to your academic-scientific education and professional performance?", Collins conveys something that can be associated with Maya's text.

My neighborhood was racially segregated, but I didn't know it. For me, it was normal that I never saw white people before I was seven years old, except the few times that my mother took me downtown. (Patricia Hill Collins, Kleber Aparecido, Maria Carmen Aires, 2021, p. 329)

As we can read, the impact of racist policies can be seen in many forms in both narratives, one of which is the impression on black children, who did not truly grasp the existence of white people because of segregation, resulting in estrangement on the part of blacks and prejudice on the part of whites. This type of prejudice persists in contemporary times, with white individuals who choose to remain within their bubbles of reality, perpetuating and reproducing the system of racist domination.

In *Black Looks* (1992), bell hooks talks about the system of domination and submission present in the lives of black people. In the chapter "Loving Blackness as Political Resistance", bell hooks recalls a brief episode when she was lecturing when asked by a white listener if all people are not taught to be racist by a system, her point was that black people were just as racist as white people as we can read next:

She stated that the point she really wanted to make was that "blacks are just as racist as whites – that we are all racists." (hooks, 1992, p. 15)

When hooks explains that there is a difference between having prejudicial feelings (like the ones Maya had with the white part of town when she did not consider them to be real people, because preconceptions we have about someone can be first impressions, quite different from the explained domination system) and institutionalized white supremacist domination, the listener gets up and walks away, refusing to lend an ear to a perspective different from his own.

There is some resistance when attempting to grasp this difference (between prejudicial feelings and institutionalized white supremacist domination) some people now label “reverse racism” (as though such a concept actually existed) something hooks reinforces shortly afterwards with:

Why is it so difficult for many white folks to understand that racism is oppressive not because white folks have prejudicial feelings about blacks (they could have such feelings and leave us alone) but because it is a system that promotes domination and subjugation? (hooks, 1992, p. 15).

Accordingly, what the narrator recounts in the aforementioned passage of *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is a byproduct of this type of system, in which segregation by race is naturalized to such a degree that even those who are actively being excluded are not aware of their roles in this process. Djamila Ribeiro (philosopher, journalist, teacher and writer), which has bell hooks as one of her inspirations, explains in her book *Pequeno Manual Antirracista* [Anti-racism concise handbook] (2019) in the chapters “Recognize the privileges of whiteness” and “Perceive the racism internalized in you”. In these two chapters, she writes about how a person can begin to recognize racist aspects in their speeches and actions and how often there is reproduction out of ignorance. Another important point she brings up is about how it is necessary to recognize when a white person is receiving the fruits of privileges, not for their own merit. So, as bell hooks expresses in her book, there is a system where these types of behavior are repetitive and there are still those who do not believe in it; they would rather ignore this reality than confront it.

The domination and submission can also be perceived in the fact that Maya, despite not even knowing any white people, not even acknowledging that they were really people, was still afraid of them. She feared these people she had no contact with because that was how she had been led to feel since she was little, how she was taught to behave before them. In the following passage, she says:

We knew only that they were different, to be feared, and in that fear was included the hostility of the powerless against the powerful, the poor against the rich, the worker against the employer, and the poorly dressed against the well dressed. (ANGELOU, 1992, p. 12)

This segment demonstrates that the character is aware of one force against another, even if she does not fully know both forces, she only knows that one is stronger than the other: a commanding and an obedient one. This is the ingrained domination that hooks talks about because, in Angelou's autobiography, she does not explain who teaches her and the other people close to her that they

should fear white people, there is no implicit explanation in the narrative for such behavior, showing later to be a defense mechanism for the racism suffered.

Another remarkable moment for the character shows how white children are also aware of this system of domination and submission. Maya is almost ten years old when she receives a visit from white children at her grandmother's store. The narrator says that the children are extremely disrespectful and rude to her grandmother, provoking her with imitations and racist jokes because they know they can. They are somehow aware of their power to be oppressors, simply because they are white. We can notice the disrespect in the way white children imitate and make fun of Maya's grandmother:

One of them folded her arms, pushed out her mouth, and started to sing quietly. I realized that she was imitating my grandmother. Another said, "No, Helen, you ain't standing like her. This is it." Then she lifted her chest and folded her arms, copying that strange way of standing that was Annie Henderson. Another laughed, "No, you can't do it. Your mouth ain't pushed out enough. It's like this." [...] (ANGELOU, 1969, p. 15)

Angelou's grandmother, Mrs. Annie Henderson, stays firm and does not fight back, even though the children are acting in a disrespectful way. Mrs. Henderson just answers the girls as if it is okay because she cannot do anything else.

Maya, as a young child, does not understand the level of self-control her grandmother is forced to have (by the system), she questions herself when she hears her grandmother saying goodbye to the girls in a very polite manner after all that happened:

Momma never turned her head or unfolded her arms, but she stopped singing and said, "Bye, Miss Helen, bye, Miss Ruth, bye, Miss Eloise." I burst. How could Momma call them Miss? The mean nasty things. (ANGELOU, 1969, p. 16).

Constrained by the system hooks mentioned, Mrs. Henderson can do little but, at least in appearance, accept all the provocations and disrespect from the girls. Even though she is the adult and owner of the store, she is forced to be submissive to the white girls or she would suffer consequences later. This type of situation can still be observed today in the daily events of many black people, even though there are now laws to punish people with this type of behavior, it is still something that is repeated and many black people do just like Mrs. Henderson did.

## Exploring the Sexuality of the Black Woman in the Narrative

In this section, we analyze Maya Angelou's story on how one can see ambiguity towards a black community that both reinforces stereotypes of sexualized black women and struggles to protect their women from the consequences of such over-sexualization, as mentioned by Dana A. Williams (2009) in *Contemporary African American Women Writers*. As the critic points out, the character is raped by a member of the community, her mother's lover, a person that should have helped to protect her from such violence. At the same time, Williams states, the rapist is presumably murdered by males of her community, preventing her from having to encounter her abuser again. These events show a face of the black community that we can understand as a brotherhood, as Dana A. Williams (2009) says "From informal gatherings in her grandmother's general store to summer picnics, black folk congregate both to celebrate and to lament – the point is that they do it together", but without erasing that what happened to Maya in the book was also, in a way, a lack of brotherhood, as there was no one to protect her when it all happened.

Indeed, when we focus on the concept of brotherhood, we realize it has a limitation since it mainly revolves around men, leaving out the experiences of women. This points to the importance of combining discussions about race with those about gender and class, a viewpoint both Patricia Hill Collins and Hirata discuss. It is worth noting that the lack of support from the community, which affected Maya, could be seen as a lack of sisterhood, a lack of bonding among women coming together to understand and support each other. Or at least it could highlight the fact that the brotherhood to which black men belong to does not comprehend black women in the same way, or is not made for them. In fact, the challenges faced by black women are different from those experienced by black men and white women and this lack of support within Maya's own mother's home highlighted the importance of sisterhood. It emphasizes how the concept of brotherhood can exclude women's experiences.

When Angelou goes to spend a season with her mother in St. Louis, she stays with her mother and her boyfriend, Mr. Freeman. In the following passage, we have the view from the narrator about Mr. Freeman, her abuser:

Mother's boyfriend, Mr. Freeman, lived with us, or we lived with him. (I never quite knew which.) He was a Southerner, too, and big. But a little fat. Even if Mother hadn't been such a pretty woman, light-skinned with straight hair, he was lucky to get her, and he knew it. (ANGELOU, 1969, p. 27)

In the beginning, the narrator tells how Mr. Freeman appeared to be completely in love with his mother and waited patiently for her on the couch and when she arrived. It was as if she gave him life again, but everything changed when Maya started sleeping in the same bed as her mother and him. One day she woke up feeling that something was in her leg and when she turned to see what it was, she realized it was Mr. Freeman, putting his genitals on her legs.

Maya, as she was only 8 years old, had no idea what was happening to her and why what he was doing was wrong, so she just accepted and obeyed. She was very confused, this was the first time something like this happened to her and it was her first contact with sexuality. He used the child's innocence as a tool, as many abusers do, threatening her only brother so she would not report him. This enabled Mr. Freeman to continue his abusive episodes.

Mr. Freeman hugged Maya at the end, and as she was not used to receiving affection from a man, this caused her to develop a certain attachment to him, leading her to consider him to be her father figure. The fact that she did not wish him any harm contributed to that, she just wanted him to treat her like that again, she wanted to feel protected like that again. We can understand a little bit more about this in the following excerpt:

He held me so softly that I wished he wouldn't let me go. I felt at home. From the way he was holding me I knew he'd never let me go or let anything bad ever happen to me. This was probably my real father and we had found each other at last. (ANGELOU, 1969, p. 29)

This was another tool used by the abuser to gain free access to Maya. He took advantage of certain paternal or affection needs she had, leading her to believe that this was how a relationship between father and daughter was since she had not lived an example to use as a standard and be based on it.

One day, Mr. Freeman felt safe in raping Maya, since no one found out about what he was doing to her, and after all, he kept getting away with it, keeping her quiet about what was happening. In the book, she describes what it was like, and the pain she felt was so big that she could not stand it and passed out. "Then there was the pain. A breaking and entering when even the senses are torn apart" (ANGELOU, 1969. p. 33). This part of the book is very touching, Angelou reports what happened with a lot of details. After she woke up, she got a big fever that worried her mother, which led to her ending up in the hospital, letting Maya's mother know what was happening to her, finally.

Maya was just a child, who had her sexuality invaded and forced very early. A child is not expected to have these experiences at such an early age. This event caused a trauma that she carried for the following years. Later, in the book, the reader can understand that

Mr. Freeman was murdered. When Maya finds out about that, she believes that it is her fault and decides to stop talking (this remains for more than five years).

In the last chapter of the book, Angelou tells of another episode, when she was trying to understand more about sexuality and trying to have an experience to better understand herself. Maya is now sixteen years old and comments on how fascinated she was by lesbians and how she had doubts if she was a lesbian:

Not I was fascinated by lesbians and I feared that I was one. I noticed how deep my voice had become. It was lower than my schoolmates' voices. My hands and feet were not feminine and small. In front of the mirror I examined my body. For a sixteen year-old my breasts were sadly underdeveloped. The skin under my arms was as smooth as my face. I began to wonder: How did lesbianism begin? What were the signs of it? (ANGELOU, 1969. p. 93 - 94)

As a woman's body has always been very eroticized (with curves, petite, big breasts etc.), Maya held an image of what a heterosexual standard woman would look like, and when she compared her own body to this image, she could not perceive how she fit into that standard; her body did not conform to it. When looking at her friend, she says "She was a woman" as if she was not herself. All this generated many questions in Maya's head, who decided that to be feminine she needed the acceptance of a boyfriend and that this acceptance would lead her to femininity. This led her to make a proposal to a boy who lived in her neighborhood, Maya even thought that she would not be attractive to him for a relationship but at least she could get his attention just for interest just for sexual relations.

Maya says that at the end of their sexual relationship, she felt "used" and recalls the abuse that happened when she was 8 years old:

Not one word was spoken. My partner showed that our experience had ended by getting up suddenly, and my main concern was how to get home quickly [...] Thanks to Mr. Freeman nine years before, I had had no pain of entry, and because of the absence of romantic involvement, neither of us felt that much had happened. (ANGELOU, 1969, p. 95)

The person Maya became sexually involved with demonstrated that what had happened was just that, just a physical act and that made Maya want to leave immediately, reminding her of what Mr. Freeman had done to her when she was a child. When using "Thanks to Mr. Freeman" Maya is ironic, as her pain as a child was so brutal that as an adult she was able to feel no pain or emotional involvement in a sexual act.

As hooks (1992) stated, many anticipate a black woman to possess heightened sexual characteristics, and distinctiveness, or even be perceived as an exotic entity. The implications of hooks' assertion can be observed when there exists an anticipation that, due to being a black woman, Maya would embody a sexual adventurousness, evoking fascination.

We can find some relations with what Collins said in the interview "Intersectionality, Epistemic Oppression and Resistance: An Interview with Patrícia Hill Collins". This interview underscores the concept of intersectionality discussed by Collins. The intersectionality framework, as articulated by Collins, emphasizes how multiple dimensions of identity, such as race and gender, intersect to shape an individual's experiences and the expectations imposed upon them. The notion that black women are often subjected to sexualized stereotypes, as highlighted in the given excerpt, aligns with Collins' exploration of epistemic oppression— how dominant narratives and knowledge systems marginalize certain identities.

The interview also reflects the theme of resistance against these stereotypical expectations, which Collins discusses in her work. Black women, like Maya, who challenge and defy these imposed notions through their individuality and agency, exemplify a form of resistance against oppressive norms. This kind of fascination with black women's bodies can bring out many bad aspects of society, such as the examples we have of what happened to Maya, both as a child and as a teenager, since it is not thinking or treating the body or her as a person but as an object. Unfortunately, what happened to her is not an isolated case, it is just the result of what is still disseminated about black women, sometimes seen only as an object and not being recognized as a person.

## **Conclusion: From silence to empowerment: finding a voice against racism in “I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings”**

In this paper two aspects presented in Angelou's book were addressed: the first is racism and the domination and subjugation that we can perceive in society and that hooks explains in her book (black looks), and from this perspective we can analyze how this happened in Angelou's work; the second is the sexuality and hypersexualization of the black woman. One is related to the other.

Maya was living with her grandmother when she witnessed the scene of white children trying to humiliate her grandmother in her own market, something that marked her a lot, and something that led her to understand how the system of

domination and subjugation is present and strong because it is not only having racist thoughts, since just thinking of it was not enough, they needed to humiliate, because that was how they learned in their community. As we have seen, the segregation in Stamps was so strong that Maya did not consider the whites in the other neighborhood to be real people. She saw them as beings so different that they could not be real, they could only be "strange pale creatures" (ANGELOU, 1969, p. 12), as she says in the book. And even though she did not consider them real people, she had nurtured within her the feeling of fear, even without knowing the real reason, she only knew that she felt, probably from things they had heard about them in their community since they were little, taught to fear and accept them.

The second aspect is about the black women's sexuality in the narrative. Maya experienced a forced sexual act when she was too young, when she was just a kid because she was seen as a sexual being prematurely. While the abuser, Maya's stepfather, was discovered only because the act of abuse landed her in the hospital. hooks brings this subject up in her book *black looks* (1992) as well, explaining how the black woman is seen as a different and exotic being, something to be experienced, often not respected as a human being but seen as an object. After what happened with Maya, she went through some internal battles, she stopped speaking, believing that something bad would happen if she expressed herself.

She even felt confused about her sexuality, which led her to have her second sexual experience, to see how she felt with men, as she suspected that she could be a lesbian. Her second experience was like being used as an object again: something that should have been good turned into something embarrassing and shameful for Maya, all because she was seen as a sexual being too early (which had consequences that lasted her entire life), and later because she was seen as a sexual object, hypersexualized.

Maya Angelou's book, despite being written in 1969, still addresses current affairs about the daily battles of black people and especially black women who suffer not only from the prejudice of being black but also especially of being women. All of Maya Angelou's accounts serve for the readers of her works to understand a little more about the other's view (in this case, the view of black women) and get out of their social bubble. All of this is important so that what happened to Maya is heard, especially for those who believe they are alone but are going through similar experiences, thus preventing it from happening again.

## References

ANGELOU, Maya. *I Know Why Caged Bird Sings*. United States: Random House, 1969.

SILVA, Kleber Aparecido; GOMES, Maria Carmen Aires. Intersectionality, Epistemic Oppression and Resistance: An Interview with Patricia Hill Collins. Interviewed: Patricia Hill Collins. *Trab. Ling. Aplic*, Campinas, v. 5, n. 60, p. 328-337, jan./abr. 2021. Access in: <https://www.scielo.br/j/tla/a/mmH5wc3XC9KV4B7YxCZSqqq/?lang=en>. Accessed in: 03 feb. 2023.

hooks, bell. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston, MA: South end Press, 1992.

DUNBAR, Paul Laurence. *Lyrics of the Hearthside*. New York, United States: Dodd, Mead Company, 1899. p.40.

HIRATA, Helena. Gênero, Classe, Raça – Interseccionalidade e Consustancialidade das Relações Sociais. *Revista de Sociologia USP*, São Paulo, v. 26, n. 1, p. 61-73, 2014. Access in: <https://www.revistas.usp.br/ts/article/view/84979>. Accessed in: 03 feb. 2023.

NORMAN, Brian. *The Dilemma of Narrating Jim Crow*. *The Cambridge Companion to American Civil Rights Literature*. United States: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

RIBEIRO, Djamila. *Pequeno Manual Antirracista*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2019.

WILLIAMS, Dana A. *Contemporary African American women writers*. United States: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

LÓPEZ, Alberto. Maya Angelou, uma vida completa. *El país*, 04 april. 2018. Access in: [https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2018/04/04/cultura/1522818455\\_771877.html](https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2018/04/04/cultura/1522818455_771877.html). Accessed in: 01 dez. 2022.