

**Project Title:** Seeds for Peace: Fighting Racism in Rio de Janeiro by Empowering Public School Teachers | **Country of implementation:** Brazil | **Nominating College:** Macalester College | **Designated Project Leader:** Valeska Kohan (Brazil, Macalester College) | **Additional Student Team Member:** Amanda de Souza (Brazil, Macalester College)

**Project Summary:** In Brazil, 84% of people killed by the police are Black, yet public schools rarely address systemic racist practices within classrooms<sup>1</sup>. Over half of enrolled Black students drop out before finishing high school, and only one out of ten schools attempt to diversify the curriculum to include racial and cultural diversity in the agenda<sup>2</sup>. The lack of racial justice education is a severe problem that leads to fears related to police brutality, racism, and structural oppression in future years. Moreover, it reinforces oppressive dynamics among students. This project proposes a weekender seminar for 80 public school teachers and contributes to long-term peace in Rio by empowering educators with anti-racist practices. These educators will teach thousands of students throughout their careers, and will use education as a force to reduce racial violence in the long run. The fight against racism requires multiple steps. We believe that more consistent access to racial justice education may lead to fewer negative classroom experiences, Black-youth empowerment, and potentially decrease racial violence down the road.

**Project Proposal:** After four years under the racist leadership of President Bolsonaro, schools have been silenced and teachers fear pursuing activities that engage in sensitive topics. Now, under a new government, educators feel safer including discussions on racial violence in their classrooms and are willing to gain further knowledge on anti-racist educational practices. This project presents an innovative approach to combat racism because we plan to 1) develop an anti-racism curriculum alongside specialists with our community partner, 2) use a comic book as the means to start dialogue across different audiences, and 3) promote a weekender workshop where the racial justice training will take place. This project represents a small yet important step toward the reconstruction of public schools as a place of resilience and resistance in the city. By empowering public school teachers from different regions of Rio de Janeiro, the project accomplishes the distinct goal of creating long-lasting changes in the regional public education system and promoting networking among teachers. In order to craft an anti-racist curriculum appropriate for students from different age groups, we will partner with [Marielle Franco Institute](#). This non-profit organization was founded in 2018 to honor the life and continue the legacy of Marielle Franco, an activist and politician, the only Black woman in Rio's 51-member city council, who was brutally murdered in March of the same year.

The Marielle Franco Institute recently designed and published a [comic book](#) telling the story of Marielle's trajectory as a Black woman living in the slums in Brazil. This comic book will be used as a central resource and tool for opening a dialogue between teachers and students on racial discrimination in Rio de Janeiro. Since the comic book can be used for different age groups, it will be a powerful material for teachers who work with students from multiple grade levels. The workshops will recruit 80 public school teachers, selected through an interest form released on the Institute's social media. They will take place at the Marielle Franco Institute headquarters in downtown Rio de Janeiro on the weekend of July 29-30th to honor Marielle's life, as she was born on July 27th. We will contribute by using our knowledge and experiences as public school students and peer mentors to design the curriculum, manage the logistics and organization of the workshops, and contact known public schools to gather prospective participants. Furthermore, we will translate the comic book designed by the Institute to English so that it can be available for Macalester students who are interested in learning about the work for racial justice in Brazil.

**Background:** Amanda and Valeska grew up in Rio de Janeiro and attended the public school system until they received scholarships to pursue the International Baccalaureate at different United World Colleges. Although they hold different positionalities, Amanda is a Black woman from a low-income background and Valeska is the daughter of Argentinian immigrants, they share the same determination to combat racism and promote an impact in the community that raised them. Amanda was a member of Black movements in Brazil, and founded a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee at UWC ISAK Japan. She is also the DEI coordinator for Adelante, Macalester's Latinx organization, and will use her

---

<sup>1</sup> "Blacks are 84% of the people killed in police actions in Brazil" *PT*, June 29, 2022, <https://pt.org.br/negros-sao-84-das-pessoas-mortas-em-aco-es-policiais-no-brasil/>

<sup>2</sup> "Black access to schools has grown in the last decade, but teaching Afro-Brazilian culture and history remains a challenge" *O Globo*, Nov 20, 2020, <https://g1.globo.com/educacao/noticia/2020/11/20/ acesso-de-negros-a-escolas-cresceu-na-ultima-decada-mas-ensino-da-cultura-e-historia-afro-brasileira-ainda-e-desafio.ghtml>

**Project Title:** Seeds for Peace: Fighting Racism in Rio de Janeiro by Empowering Public School Teachers | **Country of implementation:** Brazil | **Nominating College:** Macalester College | **Designated Project Leader:** Valeska Kohan (Brazil, Macalester College) | **Additional Student Team Member:** Amanda de Souza (Brazil, Macalester College)

expertise in drafting racial justice agendas to contribute to the curriculum development of the weekender. Valeska was a Supplemental Instructor at Macalester and crafted additional class sessions on a weekly basis for 25+ economics students. She also scripted workshops while interning at [Favela Orgânica](#), a slum-based organization combating food insecurity, gaining more experience with student-focused curriculums in Rio. Amanda and Valeska have previously worked together and established a positive collaborative working relationship. Amanda interned at the Institute for 4 months and established deep connections with the organization, which sounded extremely enthusiastic during a video call with Valeska and Amanda to formally discuss this project. Both students have strong ties with the place where this project will take place, and they will proceed with a deeper level of cultural understanding when following each step of the process. Amanda will be responsible for translating the comic book to English, setting up initial meetings to address project management, helping with contacting specialists, and co-authoring the curriculum for the workshop. Valeska will be based in Rio de Janeiro over the summer and will be responsible for co-authoring the curriculum, releasing the interest form, promoting outreach, selecting candidates for the seminar, arranging logistics for the weekender, and conducting the follow-up to the project to ensure the sustainability of the impact. Amanda and Valeska will be at the weekender in person.

**Project Sustainability in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and in Saint Paul, MN USA:** This project has three long-term impacts. First, the Marielle Franco Institute has confirmed that this workshop will serve as a prototype for potential implementation of similar seminars in different parts of the country. Second, our workshop will reach 80 educators that teach on average 100 students per year, meaning that we will be able to reach at least 8000 students already in the first year of the project. At Macalester, Amanda and Valeska will present this experience to the broader community at the annual Summer Showcase, and share the translated comic book. Amanda and Valeska will also serve as resources for future BIPOC students that want to apply for this grant and will share their experiences on social media to connect and inspire future applicants.

### Project Timeline and Outcomes

Phase	Timeline	Tangible Outcomes
<b>Project Management</b> Establishing our goals, needs, and expectations with the community partner. Identifying counselors and professors who we will invite to join us in the development of the anti-racist curriculum.	First two weeks of April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Define professionals to develop the curriculum alongside us</li> <li>Establish budget expectations and logistics to fulfill requirements</li> <li>Concretize roles with org partner and revise project timeline</li> </ul>
<b>Contact Specialists</b> Contacting and selecting specialists on anti-racist educational practices. Potential anti-racism professionals: <i>Eliana Alves Cruz, Djamila Ribeiro, Natiana Henrique, Nayla Oliveira</i> .	Last two weeks of April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guarantee high-quality specialists to promote impactful agenda</li> <li>Start curriculum building</li> <li>Expand community outreach to increase workshop attendance</li> </ul>
<b>Design the Curriculum + Comic Translation</b> Alongside the selected specialists, we will design the curriculum to be presented at the racial justice weekender and organize the weekender agenda curriculum as well. In addition, we will translate the comic book to English for broader outreach (currently only in Portuguese and Spanish).	May - June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weekender Curriculum</li> <li>Racial Justice Curriculum</li> <li>Comicbook in 3 languages (Portuguese, Spanish, and English), significantly increasing reached audience to +97 countries</li> </ul>
<b>Release Interest Form + Outreach</b> Release an interest form via the Institute's social media and website, use personal networks with the public school system to cast a broader net of teachers who may be interested in attending the workshop.	May - June 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather ~80 weekender attendees</li> <li>Broaden community-based connections with public school teachers, directors, and counselors</li> <li>Deepen relationship between community partners and the Institute</li> </ul>
<b>Weekender Workshop</b> Over the weekender, participants will gain essential knowledge on anti-racist educational practices for students from different age groups and receive a concrete curriculum + comic books to implement them in their classrooms.	29-30th July 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Train +80 professionals on racial justice, which may teach +8,000 students yearly</li> <li>2-day/16-hour intensive workshop</li> <li>Promote a prototype of successful weekenders which may be repeated on a yearly basis or in other regions of the country</li> </ul>
<b>Follow-up</b> Contacting the participants to learn about how they have implemented the knowledge gained during the workshops in their classrooms.	Aug - Dec 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Long-lasting report of community impact</li> <li>Learn concrete measures to improve future workshops</li> </ul>