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RESEARCH ARTICLE

WHEN WE RISE (2017) AND THE FIGHT AGAINST HOMOPHOBIA IN BRAZIL

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ABSTRACT

Critical film review of the American television series *When We Rise*. From the methodology of Cinematherapy, important and historical points are listed and analyzed in the light of the theories of sexuality and gender. Launched in January 2017, it runs through landmark events for the LGBT movement in the United States and shows how prejudice and homophobia have been institutionalized in the actions of culture, institutions and politics. In view of the current times in Brazil, the series comes together with the pertinence of discussing the presence of the theme in schools, as well as alerting to the fact that society has boycotted, through ignorance and fear, the presentation to be made in a systematized way, frank and unprejudiced in classrooms in elementary schools.

INTRODUCTION

When We Rise is a television series / documentary that debuted in 2017 and was inspired by the memoir of Cleve Jones (Guy Pearce), an activist of the LGBT movement in the United States, in which the main focus is the LGBT cause (GONZAGA, 2017). Those are stories of personal and political struggles of this group. In the current moment in Brazil, in which, through so much pain and struggle, several rights already acquired have been revoked daily, this series is pertinent and exposes, in a very human way, the difficult reality of many of these individuals and their search by fundamental civil rights that society ignores so much. One can perceive the privileges of one (heterosexual) group over the privations of the other, the exclusionary heteronormativity and apathy of a prejudiced government. Despite showing several challenges of different movements, such as the feminist, the pathologization of homosexuality and the AIDS epidemic, that was, and somehow still is, used to de-legitimize and even marginalize homosexuals in our society, we will focus here on

In this work, homophobia means fear, aversion, disrepute and hatred of gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transvestites and transsexuals (MARRETO; FILHO; BESSA, 2017). As in the series *When we rise* (2017), let's start with the historical context of LGBT in Brazilian history. Fachinni (2017) states that during the period of the military dictatorship (1964-1985) most of society's expectations were severely controlled, leading Brazilians to the streets demanding constitutional reforms. When we make a brief historical analysis of the Brazilian people, it becomes clear that, since the beginning of this civilization, one characteristic is peculiar to us: the capacity for social mobilization to seek change, whether social or political. Public policies aimed at the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transvestite, transsexual and transgender community gained strength only in the 1980s, since the outbreak of the HIV virus brought a veiled reality into our society (FACHINNI, 2017). There is also a need to include aspects of human rights related to these homoffective issues, since special measures needed to be built and solidified gradually with the Brazilian Congress to bring a better quality of life for this community. In 1996, homosexuals were included in the National Human Rights

Plan, which was the first official document of the Federative Republic of Brazil to cite homosexuals. In 2003, they received due preventive focus in the campaign "Brazil without Homophobia" (FACHINI, 2009). In 2008, the LGBT National Conference took place, which brought together about 10,000 participants, with the presence of the President Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, in which, for the first time in the history of the LGBT civil rights struggle, the representative of a nation heard the petitions of the LGBT (FACHINI, 2009). In the series, we see the positioning of medicine and psychology before and after homosexual movements around the world. In 1973, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) stopped categorizing homosexuality as a psychological disorder. In Brazil, the Federal Council of Medicine no longer categorized as a disease in 1985. The Federal Council of Psychology in 1999, due to claims received by the Brazilian Association of Gays, Lesbians and Travestis (ABGLT), also ceded and removed homosexuality the role of mental disorders (CFP, 1999). This resolution is the one that has been attacked by the evangelical group, proposing the so-called "Gay Cure".

From 1974 - year in which the series is happening - to the present day, the LGBT scene in Brazil and in the world is increasingly unstable. Rights were won and recognized over the last 45 years, visibility was achieved, but the price has never been so high. According to reports from the Gay Group of Bahia (GGB), in 2016 were recorded 344 deaths of LGBT individuals in Brazil. Homophobic character deaths. However, the conclusive data from this statistical analysis reveals that the deaths are increasing since the GGB started to monitor the statistics of obituary LGBT in Brazil in 2008 (AYER; BOTREL, 2017). One of the lines from the series' main character, LGBT gay activist Cleve Jones (Guy Pearce), is that he fears he will wake up one day and see what he fought for is destroyed. Today, we see that one of the fears of Cleve Jones may be about to come to reality. All the laws passed that guarantee equal rights for LGBT people are still standing, but there was also an uprising of those who reject and despise homosexuality, and because of it they felt insecure about the future of society whose rule is heterosexual, something like a gay anarchy would set in (OLIVEIRA, ALBERTO, 2015). And its not happening only in Brazil but in many countries around the world. In Brazil, this external conflict worsened in the 90s, when the LGBT community came to ask for their rights, such as: public policies that ensure health guarantees, reduction of violence, penalties for homophobes, recognition of the union between people of the same sex, distribution of educational kits about the LGBT community in schools, among other situations. Thus, in states such as Bahia (32 killed in 2016), Rio de Janeiro (30 killed in 2016) and São Paulo (49 killed in 2016), the situation is seen as war (AYER AND BOTREL, 2017).

According to Souza and Helal (2015), the public health issue for LGBTs encompasses a number of aspects that reverberate the size of the daily violation of their rights as citizens because of their sexual orientation. [...] *which seems to indicate how homophobia is present in the desire for destruction (physical, moral or psychological) not only of the specific person of the victims, but also of what they represent - that is, the existence of LGBT people in General* (online). Another situation of constant and very present conflict refers to the visions of a religious-political character, since even today homosexuality is considered by many to be the most clumsy, dirty and dishonest sin (OLIVEIRA, ALBERTO, 2015).

The character Cleve Jones (Guy Pearce), at one point, shows the church's sovereignty over local politics, since gays were beaten and persecuted by the police at the helm of this ruling hierarchy (church - politics). This data is reported in the series and reaffirmed by Correa (2009), whose work reports that homosexual behavior before being a subject of scientific character is a subject whose political influence is immense in our society (church - normality in force). It is an ancient institution that since the Middle Ages has been building a religious-political scenario widely accepted in our current society, since those against the Catholic norms suffered the consequences of the Holy Inquisition - find and destroy. Obedience without question has thus become part of the set of collective mental schemes necessary for a healthy routine. To the contrary, to the heretics: the bonfire. In dealing with internal strife, LGBT fundamental interests groups have been divided into their cross-sectional categories, becoming smaller and more specific, breaking down a chain of forces that took a long time to build. Therefore, external strikes were not the only concern. During the series, Roma Guy (Mary-Louise Parker) arrives in Boston in 1974 and comes across a group of feminists who reject coexistence with lesbians in their group, who were expelled as soon as they revealed themselves. The news leaves the character unguided, because her going to that destination started from the premise that together they would fight for equal rights for all women - an attitude that would eventually expand in Brazil.

The feminist colleagues in Rome (Mary-Louise Parker) in Boston realize that in addition to some members of the movement feel uncomfortable with the presence of the lesbian community, the congressmen, with whom they discussed their rights, shared the same sentiment, then they had to take measures that would keep them from the main idea of their cause - women for women. What happened was described by Fachini (2005): the groups started to organize better and behave in a more similar way to that of NGOs. In this way, they were given the power to deliberate with parliamentarians, but they distanced themselves of its base. It escapes the reasoning of the considered normal that our singularities integrate a whole. One should not contribute to the permanence of a segregated State, since it was never our characteristic homogeneity to seek it blindly, with persecution and death to the different. Our ethnic roots are beautiful examples of plurality. In numerous moments, it was noticed in the speeches of some characters and in real archival images, homophobic manifestations practiced by individuals who should discuss, promote and ensure basic conditions of well-being and health for all. Clearly we see this homophobic institutionalization in politics and in the way it has been given, especially in the present day, so that, just as in *We We Rise* (2017), many of the rights and demands we have acquired today that we know today by the LGBT group, and which are evidently necessary, have been annulled and / or not being approved or enforced in a forceful manner. This is the case with the law of Manaus 439 (Manaus, 2017), idealized by a politician who, much more in his capacity as pastor, has shown to consider the discussions about homophobia, which involve the reality of the LGBT group, chauvinism and that deal with unnecessary for elementary school education, thus resolving to create a law to prohibit them in municipal schools. A gag to the elementary and middle school teachers. The discourses that try to prevent such debates about and about the legitimacy of fundamental rights of this group are, as seen in the series, always the same: protect and watch over family, childhood and the construction

of values more pertinent to this phase of life, thus making their prejudices. As a social institution, school is therefore a privileged space for high discussion. Of course, this has always been and still is a very delicate subject and carries great tensions, however, among several speeches, those of some education professionals are too worried. Lack of preparation, fear, individual beliefs / positions and, especially, the refusal to deal with this issue are obstacles to pedagogical work in an integral way, which turns work into a redundancy limited only to the biological and informative aspect. Threatening professionals who try it deeper, as our politicians have done, seems to us criminal. Homophobia shows up with great attenuators in the school, being perceived in the own faculty as well as student. From a very young age, many of our students are repressed by certain behaviors that are directly or indirectly linked, consciously or not, to sexuality by some of their teachers, and as they grow, reproduce the same prejudiced behaviors. Our social institutions, especially those that legitimize rights, which produce knowledge and ensure well-being, are still far from promoting equality and respect for all. When We Rise (2017) clearly exposes the state's historical neglect of the LGBT group and how much earlier youth have struggled to make room for the current civil rights we know of.

This is definitely a power play, as Foucault (2017) shows us: "With respect to sex, power never establishes a relationship that is not negative: rejection, exclusion, refusal, dam or concealment and masking" (p.91). In this sense, and as the series shows in portraying the period when the AIDS epidemic began, we have seen an omission (both in the United States and in the world) that showed only concern when its women and children began to be infected, that is , when the primary attack group was no longer the only affected skin epidemic. Our heteronormative society demonstrates that its enormous prejudice comes precisely from fear. The misinformation and lack of empathy we are made to make us fearful, but this does not relieve us of guilt for the pain and lack of well-being of this group. The fight, at this moment, has been the opening of space for gender discussions in a systematized way and why not in school? Education needs to encompass society as a whole and, in the quest for the full and healthy development of our citizens, we teachers must do it fully, from kindergarten. This series and so many other films produce what Honorato and Deschamps (2009) call Reflexive Cinematherapy, reverberating socially and taking us to debates important for the present days. By highlighting so many stories that we have already known and often ignored, the series makes explicit that for more rights than this group - and we include other minorities here - have and will reach, there will always be someone (s) trying to overthrow them. So, what to do with so many extremely specific demands? It is our understanding that it will never be possible to massively attend to so many specifics. However, it is possible to carry out a survey of the causes common to all, and those that are of immediate request, to gather the forces of these mainstream groups and to fight for approvals of resolutions, resolutions and laws that bring a better quality of life and recognition of full rights to all the Brazilian citizen, making us a community whose sovereignty is inclusive and not separatist.

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