

Colloque Enseigner les traites, les esclavages, leurs abolitions et leur héritages. Question sensibles, recherches actuelles. 18, 19, 20 mai 2011, Paris, France - Organisation : CIRESC & EURESCL

Paper proposal:

The forgotten past: slave trade, slavery and abolition in Portuguese High School Education

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Portugal was the second most active sea power on the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In Brazil, São Tomé and Cape Verde societies and economies were formed based on slavery. Also in Angola and Mozambique social and economic structures were highly shaped by the Atlantic and Indian Ocean slave trades and slavery. Despite this direct and deep engagement of Portugal with slave trade and slavery, Portuguese political authorities have not expressed their sorrow for the ‘wrongs’ of Portuguese colonial past, unlike the French and British leaders of government have done recently. Also in contrast with these countries, the UNESCO Slave Route project reached only small fringes of Portuguese public opinion and museums and memorial sites for the remembrance of slavery and the slave trade were not built. Additionally, the history of slavery was not incorporated into in the national curriculums at any educational levels – as a key subject of study. As a consequence, twenty-first century Portuguese society shows little awareness in regard to the country’s involvement in these historical processes and to its responsibility for these historical phenomena.

In this paper I will explore the relationship between education and the construction of a public memory of slave trade, slavery and abolition. Firstly, by examining national curriculums and text-books of History for the upper level of high school, I will demonstrate that slave trade, slavery and abolition is taught mainly based on historical facts and with little reflection upon the ‘wrongs’ of slavery and the ‘responsibility’ of the historical actors involved. Secondly, I will compare these approaches to the dominant perspectives of Portuguese overseas expansion and empire taught at the same school level. Thirdly, I will ponder the impact of the aforementioned approaches on the construction of a somewhat ‘distorted’ memory of the slave trade, slavery and the Portuguese Empire among students and civil society in Portugal. To finish, I would like to offer some suggestions on how to introduce changes to the current situation, by analysing new approaches adopted in disciplines such as ‘Citizenship and Security’.

Biographical information:

Filipa Ribeiro da Silva is currently at the Wilberforce Institute for the Study of Slavery and Emancipation (WISE), University of Hull, UK. She is working for the project *Slave Trade, Slavery, Abolitions and their Legacies in European Histories and Identities* (EURESCL), financed by the European Union 7th PCRD. At the moment, she is editing, together with Professor David Richardson, a collection of essays on the Southern Atlantic Slave Trade and creating two databases: one on the slave traders of Mozambique engaged in the Atlantic and Indian Oceans slave trades (18th - 19th centuries), and a second one on early slave voyages into Europe (15th – 16th centuries).

Filipa received her PhD in History Department from Leiden University (The Netherlands) under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Pieter C. Emmer in 2009 and her MA in Portuguese Overseas History from the Universidade Nova de Lisboa (Portugal) in 2002. Ribeiro da Silva's MA and PhD researches have been sponsored by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology and the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (Portugal). She graduated in History at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa in 1996.

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