



# Leadership for Social Justice in Education: The Legacy of Marielle Franco

## Leadership per la giustizia sociale nell'educazione: L'eredità di Marielle Franco

Giambattista Bufalino

Dipartimento di Scienze della Formazione, Università degli Studi di Catania (Italy) – gbufalino@unict.it  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7776-5592>

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DOUBLE BLIND PEER REVIEW

## ABSTRACT

This article delves into the unique intersection of politics, pedagogy, and leadership for social justice in education, as embodied in the life and work of Marielle Franco, a Brazilian sociologist, human rights activist, and politician. Growing up in the Maré favela of Rio de Janeiro, Franco developed an activist approach that redefined educational theory to address the specific challenges faced by marginalized urban communities in Brazil. The article offers a critical analysis of Franco's educational philosophy, her leadership in promoting inclusion and social justice, her application of intersectionality, and the broader implications of her work for contemporary educational practices. Additionally, it reflects on the impact of her assassination in 2018, which further solidified her legacy as a powerful symbol of resistance against systemic oppression. Franco's contributions present a compelling model for integrating education with political activism and intercultural dialogue, offering vital insights into addressing diversity struggles in today's globalized world.

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### KEYWORDS

Marielle Franco, Critical pedagogy, Leadership for social justice, Favelas, Education and politics

**Citation:** Bufalino, G. (2024). Leadership for Social Justice in Education: The Legacy of Marielle Franco. *Training. Formazione & insegnamento*, 22(3), 134-141. [https://doi.org/10.7346/-fei-XXII-03-24\\_15](https://doi.org/10.7346/-fei-XXII-03-24_15)

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**Conflicts of interest:** The Author(s) declare(s) no conflicts of interest.

**DOI:** [https://doi.org/10.7346/-fei-XXII-03-24\\_15](https://doi.org/10.7346/-fei-XXII-03-24_15)

**Submitted:** August 31, 2024 • **Accepted:** December 30, 2024 • **Published:** December 31, 2024

**Pensa MultiMedia:** ISSN 2279-7505 (online)

## 1. Introduction

The nexus between politics, education, leadership for social justice, and intercultural understanding is a central theme in critical pedagogy, particularly within contexts marked by deep social and economic inequalities. Education, as both a process and an institution, plays a crucial role in shaping the socio-political landscape (Hytten, & Bettez, 2011; Macrine, 2020; Darder et al. 2023). In settings of profound inequality, education can either reinforce the status quo or serve as a catalyst for transformative change. The life and activism of Marielle Franco, a Black woman from one of Rio de Janeiro's largest favelas, offer a compelling case study of how education, deeply connected to the lived experiences of marginalized communities, can be mobilized as a powerful tool for social justice and intercultural dialogue (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2003).

Born in 1979 in the Maré favela, Franco's life was shaped by the intersecting oppressions of race, gender, and class. Her journey from the impoverished streets of Maré to becoming one of Rio de Janeiro's most prominent city councillors illustrates her resilience and dedication to social justice. Franco was not only a politician but also a fierce advocate for human rights, particularly for Black women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and favela residents. Her tragic assassination on March 14, 2018, shocked Brazil and the world, turning her into an international symbol of resistance against state violence and systemic oppression (Barifouse, 2023). This article explores Franco's pedagogical contributions, how her work reflects and extends critical pedagogical theory, and the contemporary implications of her thought, especially in addressing ongoing struggles for equality, intercultural understanding, and justice in Brazil and beyond. Through this exploration, Franco is positioned not only as a pivotal figure in Brazilian politics but also as an influential voice in global educational discourse (Modestin, 2020; De Carvalho, 2024).

## 2. The context of favelas: sites of marginality and resistance

Marielle Franco was born in 1979 in the Maré favela, a sprawling and densely populated community in Rio de Janeiro. Favelas like Maré are informal settlements that emerged in Brazil as a result of rapid urbanization and stark economic inequality. These areas are characterized by precarious housing, limited access to essential services, and a pervasive presence of violence, particularly from state security forces (Perlman, 2010). The socio-economic conditions in favelas are the product of systemic neglect and exclusion by the Brazilian state. For decades, these communities have been marginalized both socially and spatially, creating environments where residents—predominantly Black and Brown—experience compounded forms of discrimination (Roth-Gordon, 2017).

Understanding the significance of Marielle Franco's work requires an exploration of the history of favelas and the specific educational challenges faced by their residents (Klein & Luna, 2020). Favelas began to form in the late 19th century as rural popu-

lations migrated to urban centres in search of work, only to find that the cities were unprepared to accommodate them. As these informal settlements grew, they became home to millions of Brazilians, many of whom lived in extreme poverty. The Brazilian government largely ignored the needs of favela residents, leading to a lack of basic services such as healthcare, sanitation, and education (Perlman, 2010). Education in favelas has historically been underfunded and undervalued, with schools often serving as instruments of state control rather than centres of learning and empowerment. The curriculum in many favela schools has been criticized for being irrelevant to the lived experiences of the students, focusing on rote learning and the reinforcement of social hierarchies rather than critical thinking, social justice, and intercultural understanding. This disconnection between education and the realities of life in the favelas has contributed to high dropout rates and limited opportunities for social mobility among favela residents (Loureiro, 2020).

The Maré favela is one of the largest and most densely populated informal settlements in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Located in the northern part of the city, Maré is a complex of 16 different communities, home to over 130,000 residents. The area is characterized by poverty, limited access to essential services, and significant social and economic challenges. Despite these hardships, Maré is also known for its vibrant culture and strong sense of community. However, the residents face daily struggles with violence, often caught between police operations and gang conflict (Iachan et al., 2023).

Growing up in Maré, Marielle Franco was acutely aware of the disparities between her community and the more affluent parts of Rio de Janeiro. She witnessed the daily struggles of her neighbours to access basic services and the constant threat of violence from both criminal gangs and the police. These experiences shaped her understanding of the intersectionality of oppression and the need for a holistic approach to social justice that addresses the interconnected issues of race, gender, class, state violence, and intercultural education (Crenshaw, 1991).

In 1998, after the birth of her daughter Luyara, Marielle enrolled in the 'Pre-Vestibular' course in Maré. At the time of Luyara's birth, Marielle was only 19 years old and had previously left school. Determined to pursue higher education, she resumed her studies, gaining admission to the Social Sciences program at the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro, supported by a grant for students from Maré. Unlike many of her peers, Marielle's university journey was unique. She began her studies at the age of 23, balancing the responsibilities of raising a young child while continuing to work, as she had done since she was 11 years old.

Her master's thesis (Franco, 2014) focused on the impact of state violence on favela communities, and she used her research as a platform to advocate for the rights of those living in these marginalized areas. Franco's education was not just a personal achievement; it was a tool she used to fight for her community and to challenge the structures of power that perpetuated their marginalization.

Her entry into politics was driven by a deep com-

mitment to social justice. Franco was elected to the Rio de Janeiro City Council in 2016 as a member of the Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL), where she quickly became a prominent voice for marginalized communities. Her work focused on issues such as police violence, gender inequality, and the rights of Black and LGBTQ+ communities. Franco's activism was characterized by her ability to bridge the gap between academia and the lived experiences of those in the favelas, using her platform to amplify the voices of those who were often silenced (Sawicka, 2019).

### 3. Critical pedagogy, leadership for social justice, and intercultural education

The present analysis adopts a qualitative methodology that centres on a critical review of secondary sources, including scholarly studies, reports, and analyses of Franco's legislative proposals and community activism. By drawing from these diverse sources, this research seeks to highlight the intersection of Franco's theoretical and practical contributions, acknowledging that her praxis itself embodies an alternative form of academic engagement.

This approach also problematizes the conventional boundaries of academic scholarship, recognizing that Franco's work transcends formal academic outputs to manifest in her political initiatives, advocacy for marginalized communities, and grassroots activism. As such, the analysis presented in this section situates Franco within the tradition of critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970), which emphasizes the role of education in fostering critical consciousness and empowering individuals to challenge oppressive systems (Misiaszek & Misiaszekis, 2024). However, Franco's contribution extends beyond pedagogy into the realm of leadership for social justice. Leadership for social justice in education is characterized by a commitment to equity, inclusion, and the transformation of oppressive structures, as emphasized by scholars like Theoharis (2007) and Shields (2010). Freire (1998) describes his view of leadership as "critical pedagogy" in which social justice, like education, is a deliberate intervention that requires the moral use of power. Foster's (1989) four criteria for thinking about leadership comprise a working definition and conceptualization of educational leadership from a critical perspective, claiming it must involve critical, transformative, educative, and ethical practice. Educational leaders are expected to develop critical awareness of the various forms of oppression and exclusion (Khalifa, 2018; Shields & Hesbol, 2020) and to analyze the impact of existing resource distribution, which disseminates power in the organizations, often favoring one group over others. In the light of these premises, the main concept of social justice leadership is conceived as a praxis, in the Freireian sense, involving both reflection and action. Social justice leaders are those who understand and actively challenge the structural nature of racism and other inequities in practices, while demonstrating strong commitment to inclusive practices (Bufalino, 2021; D'Aprile et al., 2023).

Franco exemplified what it means to lead with a commitment to social justice, challenging the govern-

ment's neglect of these communities by emphasizing the importance of giving voice to those traditionally silenced. One clear example of this was her fight to ensure that the voices of favela residents were included in discussions about public security, where she argued that the militarization of these areas only exacerbated violence rather than solving it (Open Democracy, 2023).

Freire's concept of "conscientization", the process of developing a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection and action, was central to Franco's approach (Freire, 1970). However, Franco expanded and adapted these ideas to address the specific challenges faced by marginalized communities in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro, integrating them with a strong commitment to social justice and intercultural education. Her leadership was not just about advocating for policy change but about embodying the values of critical pedagogy and social justice in her daily interactions and decisions, both as an educator and as a political leader.

Critical pedagogy, as articulated by Freire, emerged in the 1960s as a response to the educational and social conditions in Brazil and other parts of Latin America. Freire's seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, laid the groundwork for an educational approach that emphasized the role of education in challenging social injustices and empowering the oppressed (Freire, 1970).

Franco's adaptation of Freirean pedagogy involved a deep understanding of the intersectional nature of oppression (Karjalainen, 2020; Evans-Winters, 2021). She recognized that in the context of the favelas, education needed to address not only class struggles but also the intertwined issues of race, gender, state violence, and intercultural understanding. This required a pedagogy that was responsive to the lived experiences of favela residents and that empowered them to resist and transform the conditions of their oppression. In her work, Franco sought to create educational spaces that were not merely sites of learning but also spaces of resistance and liberation. She recognized that traditional educational models often failed to address the specific needs of favela residents and instead perpetuated cycles of poverty and marginalization. To counter this, Franco advocated for a form of education that was rooted in the realities of the favelas and that equipped students with the tools they needed to challenge and change their circumstances. In this sense, Franco's approach to education was inherently political, as she believed that education should serve as a tool for social transformation (Merian, 2024). She worked to develop educational programs that were inclusive and addressed the multiple forms of oppression faced by favela residents. This included not only addressing academic subjects but also fostering a critical understanding of the social and political dynamics that shaped their lives. By linking education with activism, Franco created a model of critical pedagogy deeply connected to the struggles of her community and aligned with broader theories of social justice and intercultural education (Giroux, 2003; Giroux & Giroux, 2016; Darder et al., 2023).

Therefore, at the heart of Marielle Franco's educational thought is the concept of emancipatory education. Emancipatory education, as articulated by Paulo



Freire and expanded by scholars like Bell Hooks (1994), seeks to liberate individuals from the constraints imposed by oppressive social structures.

Franco's work represents a continuation and evolution of this tradition, applying the principles of emancipatory education to the specific context of the Brazilian favelas. Emancipatory education is not just a theoretical concept; it is a practical approach to education that seeks to empower learners to take control of their own lives and challenge the social structures that oppress them. For instance, she strongly advocated for educational programs that would equip young people in favelas with the tools to navigate and challenge the oppressive structures that surrounded them daily. Her initiatives often sought to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and the socio-political challenges faced by these youth, particularly in their encounters with law enforcement and systemic racism (Open Democracy, 2023). In this sense, in the context of the favelas, where residents face multiple forms of marginalization, emancipatory education provides a framework for addressing these intersecting oppressions and fostering a sense of agency among students and community members.

Marielle Franco recognized that education could not be neutral; it is inherently political and must be wielded as a tool for social change. This belief is central to emancipatory education, which posits that education should not merely transmit knowledge but also empower learners to question and challenge the status quo (Freire, 1970; Lackovi et al. 2024). Franco's educational initiatives included organizing community workshops, cultural events, and political education programs designed to raise awareness about social justice issues and empower favela residents to take action. These initiatives were not confined to traditional educational settings; they took place in the streets, community centers, and other spaces where favela residents gathered. By bringing education into these spaces, Franco sought to make it more accessible and relevant to the lives of those she served (Sawicka, 2019).

Franco's emphasis on education as a means of emancipation is also reflected in her critique of traditional educational institutions. She argued that many schools, particularly those serving marginalized communities, often perpetuate the very inequalities they are supposed to address. This occurs through the reproduction of dominant ideologies, the marginalization of minority cultures and languages, and the reinforcement of social hierarchies. Franco's work sought to challenge these practices by advocating for an educational model that is inclusive, culturally relevant, and oriented towards social justice and intercultural understanding (Giroux, 2003).

#### 4. Intersectionality in action: Marielle Franco's educational and political Leadership

Marielle Franco's educational philosophy is marked by its intersectional approach, which is a key element in her broader commitment to social justice, intercultural education, and leadership in these areas. Intersectionality, a concept developed by Black feminist scholars like Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), highlights

how different forms of oppression—such as racism, sexism, and classism—intersect and overlap to create unique experiences of marginalization.

Elizabeth Ellsworth's critique in *Why Doesn't This Feel Empowering? Working Through the Repressive Myths of Critical Pedagogy* (1989) provides an important lens through which to understand Franco's contributions. Ellsworth argues that traditional critical pedagogy often fails to account for intersectionality, perpetuating universalized narratives that overlook the diverse experiences of marginalized groups. Franco's praxis directly addresses this limitation by situating her pedagogy within the specific socio-political contexts of the favelas, ensuring that her educational initiatives were both inclusive and responsive to the needs of intersecting identities.

Further expanding on the intersectional nature of Franco's approach, Diller et al. (1996) provide a complementary perspective by critiquing educational frameworks that perpetuate gendered inequities and underscoring the need for pedagogical practices that interrogate systemic power structures. Franco's leadership aligns with these principles, particularly through her work in empowering Black women and LGBTQ+ individuals within the favelas. Her initiatives sought to dismantle not only gender-based oppression but also the interconnected systems of racial, economic, and social marginalization that reinforce inequality in education and society.

Overall, Franco's approach to intersectional pedagogy emerges as both theoretically informed and practically applied. Her leadership exemplifies a commitment to addressing the intersecting oppressions faced by marginalized communities, bridging the gaps identified in critical pedagogical theories, and creating actionable pathways toward social justice. As a leader, Franco demonstrated how educational initiatives could be designed to address these overlapping forms of oppression, creating more inclusive and effective educational environments.

Leadership for social justice, as described by Theoharis (2007) and Bufalino (2018, 2020), involves not only identifying and addressing inequities within educational institutions but also empowering others to challenge these inequities. Franco's leadership exemplified this approach, particularly in her work with women in the favelas, where she developed educational initiatives that empowered Black women to resist oppression and advocate for their rights. Her leadership also aligned with Furman's (2012) framework, which emphasizes the importance of ethical leadership that is responsive to the cultural and social contexts of the communities it serves.

Franco's intersectional approach to leadership in education ensured that the specific needs and challenges of different groups within the favela communities were addressed in a culturally relevant and socially just manner.

Intersectionality provides a powerful framework for understanding the complexities of oppression and for developing strategies to address them (Harris, & Leonardo, 2018). In the context of education, intersectionality emphasizes the need for a holistic approach that takes into account the multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination that pupils may face. This approach challenges the traditional silos in education

that separate issues of race, gender, class, and other social identities, and instead calls for an integrated approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of these issues.

Franco's intersectional pedagogy is evident in her advocacy for Black women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and residents of the favelas, all of whom experience multiple and intersecting forms of oppression. She argued that effective education and activism must address these overlapping systems of discrimination to create a truly inclusive and just society. This perspective was not merely theoretical for Franco; it was deeply rooted in the lived realities of the communities she served. In practical terms, Franco's intersectional approach to education involved developing programs and initiatives that were responsive to the specific needs and challenges of different groups within the favela communities. For instance, her work with LGBTQ+ individuals was informed by an understanding of how homophobia and transphobia intersect with racism and poverty, creating unique barriers to education and social inclusion. By addressing these intersecting oppressions, Franco sought to create educational environments that were not only inclusive but also empowering, allowing all individuals to fully participate in the educational process and in the broader struggle for justice (Crenshaw, 1991).

Franco's intersectional pedagogy also extended to her work with women in the favelas, particularly Black women, who are often at the intersection of multiple forms of oppression. She recognized that these women faced unique challenges, including gender-based violence, economic inequality, and racial discrimination. To address these challenges, Franco advocated for educational initiatives specifically designed to empower Black women, helping them to develop the skills and knowledge they needed to resist oppression and advocate for their rights.

For Marielle Franco's speeches at the plenary sessions were consistently impactful; however, as a councillor representing a minority and opposition party, she often encountered significant challenges in getting her proposed laws passed. During her time in office, she introduced 16 bills, of which seven were successfully approved, with five of these being passed only after her death (RioOnWatch, 2018)

Marielle Franco's legislative initiatives exemplify her commitment to addressing systemic inequalities through an intersectional lens. One of Marielle Franco's notable achievements was the establishment of the Night Space Program for Early Childhood Care, commonly known as the *Owl Space Law* (PL 17/2017, Lei n° 6.419/2018). This program aimed to provide nighttime childcare services for families with parents who work or study at night, addressing a critical need for single mothers and low-income families (Mendonça & Passos, 2020). However, despite the law's passage, as of March 2023, the program had not been fully implemented, with city officials citing a lack of funds. Another significant initiative was the *Thereza de Benguela Day on Black Women's Day* (PL 103/2017, Lei n° 6.389/2018), which added *Thereza de Benguela Day* to the city's official calendar as an additional celebration on Black Women's Day. This legislation honors the quilombola leader Thereza de Benguela, a symbol

of strength and resistance, and aims to celebrate and empower Black women within Brazilian society.

Beyond education and gender equity, Franco authored the Carioca Woman Dossier (*Dossiê Mulher Carioca, Projeto de Lei n° 555/2017, Lei n° 6.394/2018*), which called for the compilation of annual statistics on women served by city government services. This initiative aimed to create a comprehensive database to evaluate the effectiveness of municipal programs targeting women's needs. With PL 515/2017 (*Lei n° 6.416, de 22 de outubro de 2018*), Franco established the *Program for the Effectiveness of Socio-Educational Measures in an Open Environment* within the Municipality of Rio de Janeiro. Focused on young offenders, this program introduced socio-educational measures to be implemented within their communities, avoiding incarceration. It promoted rehabilitation while keeping young people connected to their families, schools, and communities, thereby reducing the criminalization of youth, particularly Black youth.

Franco's initiatives extended to socioeconomic issues, such as fiscal oversight mechanisms for municipal contracts and work regulations for motorcycle taxi drivers, a common occupation in the favelas. Although not all her proposals were approved, initiatives such as the *Programa de Assistência Técnica para Habitação de Interesse Social* (Technical Assistance Program for Social Housing) and the *Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia* exemplify her holistic approach to leadership.

One of Franco's key contributions was her insistence that education must be relevant to the lived experiences of students. Franco worked to develop educational programs that were grounded in the experiences of the community, using these experiences as a starting point for critical reflection and action. Franco's intersectional approach was not limited to formal education; it also informed her work in political education and activism. She believed that political education was essential for empowering marginalized communities to advocate for their rights and challenge the structures of power that perpetuated their oppression. In her role as a city councillor, Franco organized numerous workshops and public forums aimed at raising awareness about the issues facing favela residents and at mobilizing them to take action. These initiatives were particularly important for women and LGBTQ+ individuals, who are often excluded from traditional political processes. By creating spaces where these groups could come together to share their experiences and develop strategies for resistance, Franco helped to foster a sense of collective identity and solidarity among marginalized communities. This, in turn, helped to strengthen the broader movement for social justice in Rio de Janeiro and beyond.

## 5. Global implications of Marielle Franco's thought

Marielle Franco's work has implications that extend far beyond the boundaries of Brazil. Her emphasis on intersectionality, critical pedagogy, intercultural education, and emancipatory education resonates with broader global movements for social justice and edu-

cational reform. In particular, Franco's approach aligns with the growing movement towards decolonizing education, which seeks to challenge the dominance of Western knowledge systems and create space for the voices and experiences of marginalized communities in the curriculum (Giroux, 2003; Barongo, 2016).

Decolonizing education involves rethinking the content, structure, and purpose of education to ensure that it is inclusive, equitable, and responsive to the needs of all learners. Franco's work contributes to this movement by providing a model for how education can be used to empower marginalized communities and challenge the systemic inequalities that perpetuate their marginalization. Her emphasis on community-based education and participatory democracy aligns with the principles of decolonization, which advocate for an education that is rooted in the lived experiences and cultural practices of the learners themselves (Bourn & Tarozzi, 2023).

In many parts of the world, education systems are still heavily influenced by colonial legacies, with curricula that reflect the values and priorities of the colonizers rather than those of the local population. This often results in the marginalization of indigenous knowledge systems, languages, and cultural practices, and the perpetuation of social inequalities. Franco's work challenges these colonial legacies by advocating for an education that is inclusive and responsive to the needs of marginalized communities. Also, education systems are characterized by top-down approaches that prioritize the transmission of knowledge over the development of critical thinking and active citizenship. Franco's work challenges this model by advocating for an education that is collaborative, democratic, and oriented towards social change. This approach aligns with global movements for democratic and intercultural education, which seek to empower students to become active and engaged citizens who are capable of shaping the future of their communities and the world (Biesta, 2011).

## 6. Marielle Franco's assassination and her enduring legacy

Marielle Franco's assassination on March 14, 2018, sent shockwaves through Brazil and the international community. Franco was returning home from a political event when her car was ambushed, and she was shot multiple times. The killing of her driver, Anderson Pedro Gomes, in the same attack further underscored the violence that is often used to silence those who fight for justice. Franco's assassination is widely believed to have been politically motivated, given her outspoken criticism of police brutality, corruption, and the systemic inequalities faced by marginalized communities in Brazil. The circumstances surrounding Franco's death remain controversial, with investigations into the crime marred by allegations of corruption and obstruction. Despite these challenges, her assassination has only intensified the focus on the issues she championed, turning her into a martyr for social justice and human rights (Modestin et al., 2020).

Franco's ideas also resonate with the global struggle for educational justice. Around the world, marginalized communities continue to face significant

barriers to accessing quality education, from economic inequality and systemic discrimination to political repression and cultural erasure. Franco's work provides a powerful example of how education can be mobilized to address these challenges and promote social justice on a global scale. This approach challenges the traditional economic measures of success, which often overlook the social and political dimensions of human well-being. By advocating for educational practices that enhance individual and collective capabilities, Franco's work contributes to a broader understanding of social justice in education that transcends these limitations.

Franco's emphasis on participatory democracy in education also has significant global implications. In many parts of the world, education systems are characterized by top-down approaches that prioritize the transmission of knowledge over the development of critical thinking and active citizenship. Franco's work challenges this model by advocating for an education that is collaborative, democratic, and oriented towards social change. This approach aligns with global movements for democratic and intercultural education, which seek to empower students to become active and engaged citizens who are capable of shaping the future of their communities and the world (Biesta, 2011).

The legacy of Marielle Franco's pedagogical thought continues to inspire activists and educators around the world. Her work has become a symbol of resistance and empowerment for marginalized communities where her life and death have transcended national borders to become part of a broader struggle for social justice and intercultural education. One of the most significant aspects of Franco's legacy is her emphasis on community-based education. She believed that education should be rooted in the lived experiences of individuals and communities and that it should be designed to address the specific challenges they face. This belief has informed a range of educational initiatives in Brazil and beyond, including programs that focus on empowering Black women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and favela residents. These initiatives draw on Franco's intersectional approach to pedagogy, seeking to create educational spaces that are inclusive, responsive, and empowering for all members of the community (Sawicka, 2019).

Franco's legacy is also evident in the growing recognition of the importance of intersectionality and intercultural education in both education and activism. Her work has helped to bring issues of race, gender, and class to the forefront of the educational agenda in Brazil, challenging educators and policymakers to adopt a more inclusive and holistic approach to these issues. This recognition is particularly important in the context of contemporary struggles for social justice, where the complexities of intersecting identities and oppressions must be acknowledged and addressed (Crenshaw, 1991).

Franco's assassination in 2018 was a profound loss for the social justice movement, but her legacy lives on in the work of those who continue to fight for the causes she championed. Her life and work highlight the vital role of integrating education and politics in the fight for social justice and the power of intersectional approaches to activism. The global resonance



of her story illustrates the ways in which Franco's life and death have transcended national borders to become a symbol of resistance against all forms of oppression (Modestin et al., 2020).

Overall, the global resonance of Franco's life and work highlights the power of education and activism in promoting social change. Her legacy underscores the importance of collective action and participatory democracy in the fight for justice and equality, proving that even in the face of violence and repression, the struggle for social justice continues to inspire and mobilize communities worldwide.

## 7. Conclusion

Marielle Franco's life and work offer a powerful example of how education, when combined with a commitment to social justice, intercultural education, and leadership, can be a transformative force for change. Her pedagogical thought, rooted in the lived experiences of marginalized communities and informed by critical theory, provides a model for how education can serve as a tool for empowerment and resistance. Through her application of intersectionality, her leadership in social justice, and her commitment to participatory democracy, Franco demonstrated the potential for education to not only address individual experiences of oppression but also to challenge the broader social and political structures that sustain inequality. In contemporary educational discourse, Franco's thought challenges educators and leaders to engage more deeply with the political and intercultural dimensions of education. Her work underscores the importance of fostering critical consciousness among students and encouraging them to become active participants in the struggle for social justice. Franco's approach to education as a form of resistance, liberation, intercultural understanding, and leadership for social justice offers a powerful framework for educators and leaders committed to social change (D'Aprile et al., 2023).

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