Inner Gaze: The Role of Prison Writings in the African American Struggles for Racial Justice

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General Theme and Objective
The research is based on a textual analysis of different forms of prison writings – letters, autobiographies, political manifestos, flyers, memoirs, articles and essays – elaborated by African American political prisoners between the 1960s and the 1980s in the USA. The main objective is to investigate how prison writings contributed to re-shape political theories and practices of struggle for the achievement of racial justice.

Secondary Objectives
- Prison writings as central instruments for a radical antiracist pedagogy;
- How the writings that recall and reflect the experience of incarceration exposed by African American imprisoned activists and intellectuals contributed to radically change the perception of racism in the USA, by underlining the link between slavery and the penitentiary;
- How prison writings helped to show the connection between State political repression and the system of contemporary racialized mass incarceration.

Theoretical Framework
- The research uses a postcolonial lens in reading the ways in which African American intellectuals and activists, in the space of the prison and through the experience of imprisonment, elaborated analysis, accounts and critical reflections on the historical interrelation of colonialism, slavery, incarceration, and racism;
- The research follows the approach of the Black Radical Tradition, the theoretical assemblage of political theories and practices of liberation, deeply rooted in the history of the African diaspora and African epistemologies.

Research Trajectories
- A historical overview on colonial captivity, slavery and incarceration;
- A sociological analysis of the radical movements and the urban space;
- A cultural study of processes of political subjectification, representations and discourses;
- A critical approach to radical anti-racist pedagogy.

Research Methods and Techniques
- Archival research at the "Freedom Archives" in San Francisco, California, USA. Analyzed collections: "Black Liberation Collection", "Government Repression Collection", and "Political Prisoners Collection";
- Textual and cultural analysis based on the close reading technique;
- Rhetorical analysis of political discourse.

Research Areas
African American studies and political sociology.

Publications and Communications
