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Food and nutrition education as an emancipatory practice: Toward an engaged and popular praxis

Educação alimentar e nutricional como prática emancipatória: por uma práxis popular e engajada

Abstract

This theoretical essay aims to critically reflect on the approximations between the ideas of bell hooks and Paulo Freire in contributing to the construction of a popular and engaged Food and Nutrition Education (FNE). The methodology we adopted was analyzing the works of these authors to understand their intersections and specificities without pretending to exhaust them. The engaged pedagogy proposed by hooks, together with Freire's liberating pedagogy, seek to transform not only Education, but society, with the subjects as the leading figures of their learning and emancipation process. When incorporated into FNE, these approaches can promote healthier eating, considering the issues of race, gender, culture, and power in food inequalities in the most diverse territories. Popular and engaged FNE is also related to promoting food and nutritional security, respecting cultural diversity, and fostering people's political participation and autonomy in the decision-making process related to food and health. Moreover, training health professionals committed to this approach is fundamental to promoting significant changes in educational paradigms and understanding important gaps in this staff's training of health professionals regarding social and human sciences content. In the current context, marked by the strengthening of agribusiness and the loss of food diversity, grassroots and engaged FNE is a way of defending food cultures, fighting for food sovereignty, and a more diverse and sustainable diet.

Keywords: Food and Nutrition Education. Health Education. Human Right to Adequate Food. Social Sciences.

Resumo

Este ensaio teórico visou trazer uma reflexão crítica sobre as aproximações entre as ideias de bell hooks e Paulo Freire em contribuição para a construção de uma Educação Alimentar e Nutricional (EAN) popular e engajada. A metodologia adotada foi a análise das obras desses autores, buscando compreender suas interseções e suas especificidades, sem a pretensão de esgotá-las. A pedagogia engajada proposta por hooks, aliada à pedagogia libertadora de Freire, buscam transformar não só a educação, mas a sociedade, tendo os sujeitos como protagonistas de seu próprio processo de aprendizagem e emancipação. Essas abordagens, ao serem incorporadas na EAN, podem ser promotoras de uma alimentação mais saudável, levando em consideração as questões de raça, gênero, cultura e poder presentes nas desigualdades alimentares nos mais diversos territórios. A EAN popular e engajada também se relaciona com a promoção da segurança alimentar e nutricional, respeitando a diversidade cultural e fomentando a participação política das pessoas e sua autonomia no processo de tomada de decisões relacionadas à alimentação e à

saúde. Além disso, a formação de profissionais de saúde comprometidos com essa abordagem é fundamental para promover mudanças significativas nos paradigmas educacionais e na compreensão de lacunas importantes existentes na formação dos profissionais de saúde, no que se refere aos conteúdos do campo das ciências sociais e humanas. No contexto atual, marcado pelo fortalecimento do agronegócio e pela perda da diversidade alimentar, a EAN popular e engajada se mostra como um caminho para defender as culturas alimentares, lutar pela soberania alimentar e por uma alimentação mais diversa e sustentável.

Palavras-chave: Educação Alimentar e Nutricional. Educação em saúde. Direito Humano à Alimentação Adequada. Ciências Sociais.

INTRODUCTION

Food and Nutrition Education (FNE) has been a growing field of study in recent years. The current National Food and Nutrition Policy (PNAN) defines it as a “set of educational practices to train individuals and communities in promotion of healthy eating. Thus, FNE is crucial in promoting healthy eating and valuing food’s cultural, social, and environmental dimensions.¹

The Reference Landmark of food and nutrition education for public policies, an essential milestone in the area, was published in 2012. From then on, FNE developed into an intersectoral, cross-sectional, and emancipatory practice to be promoted in several spheres of society, including schools, health units, and public spaces. This landmark also emphasized the need to promote healthy and sustainable eating, valuing cultural diversity and individuals’ food choices.²

Over the last ten years, we have witnessed a significant change in theoretical approaches in the food and nutrition (FN) field. Nutrition science has become closer to social and human sciences, enabling interdisciplinary reflection and dialogue with other areas of knowledge, such as Education.³ This approach has generated important debates on social inequalities, Food and Nutrition Security (FNS), and criticism of nutritionism.

Scrinis defines nutritionism as an approach that prioritizes food’s biological and nutritional aspects, neglecting its cultural, social, and political dimensions.⁴ This view devalues individual food choices and facilitates the marketing of food products by mega-corporations, contributing to the existence of “food swamps” where access to healthy food is limited.

Bell hooks’ engaged Education and Paulo Freire’s popular Education are essential milestones for promoting healthy and sustainable food. hooks’ engaged pedagogy prioritizes critical and emancipatory Education, valuing cultural and social dimensions of food. Freire’s popular Education emphasizes the active participation of subjects in the construction of knowledge, valuing their experiences, cultures, and popular knowledge.⁵ These approaches appreciate food’s social, cultural, and affective dimensions, reviving food experiences beyond the nutritional focus.

Based on the proposed theme, the methodology adopted in this theoretical essay to draw Paulo Freire’s and bell hooks’ thinking closer in order to contribute to FNE will consist of a critical analysis of some of these authors’ works, looking for similarities between these theoretical approaches and their possible inputs to the construction of what we are calling *popular and engaged FNE*.

This essay aims to draw Freire’s and hooks’ thinking closer together, identifying their contributions to FNE. Specifically, it discusses how Freire’s liberating pedagogy and hooks’ Black feminist perspective can lead to a highly critical, emancipatory, and transformative FNE. It also seeks to underscore FNE’s relevance as a practice that can foster significant social change, not just in food and nutrition, but from social, environmental, and health justice perspectives.

From Nutrition Education to Food and Nutrition Education

FNE is an area of knowledge and practice that aims to promote adequate and healthy food, prevent food-related diseases, and ensure the population’s Food and Nutrition Security. In Brazil, FNE’s history is rooted in the 1930s, when the first campaigns to combat hunger were conducted in the country. In this context, Education had a strong hygienist and eugenicist nature. Severe malnutrition and hunger cases were understood as resulting from a nutrient-poor diet, which could be reversed with pedagogical actions without

any critical reflection on social and political issues. The “Myth of Ignorance” prevailed, i.e., it was believed that people were malnourished because they did not know how to eat properly.^{6,7}

With the end of the Second World War, measures emerged in a challenging political context that shaped Brazilian Food Education actions. The U.S., with large cereal reserves, launched foreign aid programs to keep prices on the global market and gain the “sympathy” of developing countries by donating food to the Southern Hemisphere, which led to the use of Food Education to teach the Brazilian population to consume non-traditional foods, such as soy, distributed in public schools through the School Meals Campaign, now known as the National School Food Program (PNAE).⁶

In the 1960s, Paulo Freire’s figure emerged in Brazil when he published the book “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, a milestone for the field of Education, which took time to be incorporated into FNE practices when the meaning of educational practices began to transcend the teaching of nutrition science. Besides eating better, it was necessary to debate the social, economic, and political factors that affected access to food that was insufficient in quantity and inadequate in quality.⁶

Between the 1960s and 1980s, in the context of military governments, the food-education binomial that guided actions in the field gave way to the food-income binomial, which saw income as the main obstacle to healthy eating.⁷ During this period, educational activities lost ground and were seen as unethical because they were invasive and did not consider popular food wisdom. However, on the flip side, research began to develop and demarcate other perspectives in the field.⁶

In the 1990s, three factors marked Brazilian FNE’s trajectory. The nutritional transition, with increased obesity and chronic non-communicable diseases (NCDs), questioned the belief in individual responsibility for food quality. It was essential to consider not only the subjective context, but also the social, economic and cultural.

The strengthening of the Health Promotion (HP) movement was another important element, influenced by the First International Conference on Health Promotion in Ottawa (Canada), which impacted the establishment of the SUS. HP strengthened FNE by highlighting the importance of Promoting Healthy Eating in the fight against obesity, stressing the relationship between food and life contexts.⁶

Still, in the 1990s, the first National Food and Nutrition Policy (PNAN) was formulated as part of a State Reform that abolished the National Food and Nutrition Institute (INAN) and the first National Food Security Council (CONSEA). The first PNAN focused on strengthening Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) and intersectoral coordination. Although FNE was not a prominent field, it began to gain ground, primarily in the “Promoting healthy eating practices and lifestyles” guideline. Food and Nutrition educational processes were emphasized, albeit without explicitly defining the theoretical and conceptual bases.⁸

In the 2000s, FNE gained even more prominence with the creation of the *Bolsa Família* (Family Aid) Program, which incorporated actions to promote adequate and healthy food as part of the program. It held several national conferences on food and nutrition and Food and Nutritional Security, which discussed and drew up public policies aimed at FNE.

Given the institutional advances in FNS and the SUS, primarily in nutritional healthcare, the second edition of the PNAN was formulated in 2011⁹. It emphasizes the Promotion of Adequate and Healthy Food, emphasizing FNE as essential for achieving FNS.

FNE in Brazil has also been influenced by other areas of knowledge, such as Popular Education and Agroecology, which have brought the perspective of social participation and sustainability to food and nutrition-oriented actions.

The FNE landmark and paradigm shifts in the field

The publication of the Reference Landmark of food and nutrition education for public policies in 2012 marked a breakthrough in the consolidation of FNE in Brazil. Prepared by the Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger with several civil society and government stakeholders, the document defines FNE and presents objectives, principles, and guidelines for its implementation.²

One of the main changes brought about by the FNE landmark was the concept of food as a human right, which broadens FNE's scope, now seen as a health issue and a matter of human rights, citizenship, and social justice. Another meaningful change is the understanding that FNE should be a cross-sectional and intersectoral policy involving health and other areas such as Education, the environment, social development, and agriculture.²

Furthermore, the FNE landmark recognizes the importance of social participation in the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of public FNE policies, which means that civil society, non-governmental organizations, and social movements must be consulted and involved in all stages of the process, ensuring the transparency and democratization of FNE policies.²

We can also see in this document an appreciation of cultural and food diversity, recognizing that food is a cultural manifestation and that each social group has its own traditions and food knowledge, which means that FNE must respect and value cultural diversity, promoting dialogue between different food knowledge and practices.²

Moreover, the Reference Landmark of Food and Nutrition Education for Public Policies adopts a critical approach to food and nutrition security, understanding it as a complex issue related to social, economic, and cultural inequalities. FNE seeks to promote reflection and transformation of unjust social structures.²

We can affirm that FNE's history in Brazil is marked by the historical, social, and political development of Brazilian society, which has become a field in the search for the promotion of appropriate and healthy food and the guarantee of the human right to adequate and healthy food and food and nutritional security over the years. However, significant barriers to these agendas have marked recent years.

Paulo Freire's Popular Education and the promotion of a popular FNE

Paulo Freire is one of the leading figures in critical educational theories in Brazil and worldwide and is recognized for his invaluable contributions to this field. In his work "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", published in 1968, Freire developed a pedagogical theory to liberate the oppressed, mainly the poorest and most marginalized.¹⁰

From a dialectical view of education, Freire proposes a learning process that values the subjects' knowledge, experiences, and know-how, seeking an emancipatory education that transforms social and political reality. He advocates a pedagogical practice of dialog and active student participation, with the educator acting as a mediator and facilitator.¹¹

Paulo Freire argues that Education is a continuous and universal process in which everyone constantly learns and develops. He emphasizes that there are not entirely educated or ignorant people, only different levels of knowledge, all relative and subject to change. Freire emphasizes that wisdom arises from ignorance and that all human knowledge can be surpassed. He advocates educators' humble attitude, recognizing and valuing the students' knowledge, and promoting an exchange of knowledge based on popular communication.¹²

In "Education and Change", Freire highlights the importance of love in Education and firmly rejects imposition in educational practice. He defends an approach that values feelings of love and mutual respect between educators and students, which is essential for confronting selfishness and promoting a deeper and more respectful understanding of others. This genuine love is fundamental to creating an educational environment free of fear and full of mutual trust and collaboration. Freire also emphasizes that social transformation results directly from human action, contributing to creating a world of its own: the cultural-historical world. Influenced by human praxis, this world encompasses diverse elements, from events and values to knowledge systems, exerting a profound influence on human nature. Therefore, the connection between Education based on love and autonomy and social transformation is evident, reflecting the capacity of human beings to shape and be shaped by the world around them.¹² So, we could reflect as follows:

Education is an act of love and, therefore, an act of courage. It cannot be afraid of debate. The analysis of reality. It cannot shy away from creative discussion, otherwise, it will be a farce. How can we learn to discuss and debate with an education that imposes? We dictate ideas. We don't exchange ideas. We give lectures. We don't debate or discuss topics. We work on the student. We don't work with them. We impose an order on them that they don't adhere to but accommodate to. We don't provide them with the means to think authentically because when they receive the formulas we give them, they simply keep them. They don't incorporate them because incorporation results from searching for something that requires those who try to recreate and seek it out. It requires reinvention.¹³ (pag.128)

From this perspective, Paulo Freire's contributions are fundamental to developing a critical and emancipatory educational practice in FNE. Freire argues that Education is a collective process of building knowledge, in which people take ownership of the content and apply it to their daily lives. This requires a contextualized approach to FNE, considering the reality of individuals, their dietary practices, and the influence of the social and cultural environment.

Moreover, Freire argued that Education should be at the service of social transformation, fighting against societal inequalities and injustice. Thus, social workers committed to change are neither afraid of freedom nor do they seek to impose their will. Their approach is centered on communication and demystifying the world and reality, recognizing the humanity and dignity of the people they work with. He sees them as active subjects, not objects, and they aim to promote overcoming the social structure that dehumanizes individuals, allowing them to become autonomous subjects. For him, change is necessary, not a threat, and he sees himself as one agent among many in the quest for social transformation. He believes in the potential of all individuals as agents of change and encourages them to do so. When the social structure hinders this transformation, their function is not to reinforce the object state, but to question it and stir reflection on this condition.¹²

From this perspective, FNE can be essential for promoting FNS and social justice through tools that generate awareness and mobilize individuals around the human right to adequate and healthy food.

The Freirean perspective is as critical in training new health professionals as it is in the work of these professionals, who are educators by nature. In training, faced with a context whose training grounds are still essentially biologicist and hospital-centered, with little space for disciplines in the social and human sciences, it is a challenge to exercise analytical and critical reflection on social events,⁸ resulting in fragile training, with professionals strongly guided by nutritionism, with a reduced view of food, without understanding the role of food relationships with individuals inserted in a unique social setting.

We live in a context where food and nutritional insecurity occurs from different perspectives, from the lack of access to food to the consumption of inappropriate, low-quality food far removed from our traditional cultures and ways of life. This setting reflects political projects that do not take responsibility for people's lives, the same project that makes quality public Education precarious and neglected, namely, necropolitics, which produces death and maintains the status quo. In this sense, training professionals from a Freirean perspective who can critically reflect and take the lead in transforming social reality, breaking with exclusionary structural constructions forged in racism, patriarchy, and colonialism, is a fundamental task.

bell hooks' Engaged Pedagogy and the construction of an engaged FNE

As we have already pointed out, Brazilian FNE has edged closer to popular Education, seeking social transformation that places the subjects as leading figures in their learning and emancipation process. From this perspective, the work of bell hooks is highly relevant and makes vital contributions to the field.

hooks is a Black feminist theorist who highlights the importance of a critical perspective on race and gender in Education. Her writings, which address issues such as feminism, violence, culture, and art, have inspired several fields of knowledge, including FNE.

The author proposes a praxis close to Freirean pedagogy, calling for action to build a critical and liberating education. This engaged praxis is an educational practice that seeks social transformation through critical reflection on power relationships and transformative actions toward social and environmental justice. Therefore, engaged pedagogy "emphasizes mutual participation, because it is the movement of ideas, exchanged between people, which builds a relevant working relationship between everyone in the classroom" and, thus, "creates a classroom where being whole is accepted, and students can be honest, even radically open" (p.49).¹⁴

In "Writing Beyond Race: Theory and Practice", hooks mentions the idea of an empirical practice evidenced by ideas and theories. Theory can guide us towards freedom, especially by expanding our awareness of how we are all affected by living in a culture of domination, the "white, imperialist, capitalist, and supremacist patriarchy". In this context, the author argues that Education is not restricted to the transmission of knowledge but seeks to enable individuals to understand and transform their reality. She emphasizes that Education is a political and cultural process, involving power, values, and interests. Therefore, it should promote awareness and critical reflection on social inequalities and encourage the active participation of students in the search for change.¹⁵

Educators and students are encouraged to develop critical thinking: the teacher is not seen as the absolute holder of knowledge but as a facilitator, a mediator between knowledge and the student, encouraging curiosity, dialogue, and reflection. The student, in turn, is not just a passive recipient but an active subject and protagonist of their learning.¹⁶

In an excerpt from the book "Belonging: A Culture of Place", hooks warns: "Creativity is not quiet" (p.193).¹⁷ This summary statement is filled with implications and brings to the surface the reflection on the educator's expectations when building collective spaces for producing knowledge. How can we build student protagonism, develop critical thinking, and stimulate creativity in spaces that are supposed to be quiet?

The traditional classroom model with profiled desks, lectures, and teacher-centeredness is what Freire calls "banking education". This concept refers to a traditional teaching model where knowledge is passively deposited in students, who are seen as empty vessels to be filled by the teacher. In this system, students are treated merely as recipients of information, with no incentive to question, reflect, or actively participate in the

learning process. In "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", Freire criticizes this model, arguing that it perpetuates relationships of domination and alienation, preventing students' critical and autonomous development.¹⁷

So, how do we engage students in this collective construction process? In her work, hooks argues that belonging is closely linked to the construction of identities, and a powerful way of cultivating this is by valuing local culture. hooks argues that writing and recovering memories are essential as they enable individuals to recognize and celebrate their roots and personal histories. This understanding empowers educators to create more inclusive and receptive learning environments, where each student feels recognized and valued. By integrating knowledge about local culture and encouraging sharing personal experiences, educators foster a classroom that respects and celebrates diversity, cultivating students' sense of belonging and identity.¹⁷

Not least, the author emphasizes that Education must include affection, because it is through feelings that trust and empathy are established between teacher and student. hooks affirms that love in Education is not cheesy or romantic but a practice of care and respect. It is a reception that recognizes each individual's uniqueness and potential transformation.¹⁸

In the FNE context, hooks' work broadens our understanding of the field's challenges, underscoring that these issues are not just individual but part of a broader social context. Her critical approach to race and gender reiterates how food and nutrition are connected to social, economic, cultural, and gender inequalities, stressing the relevance of intersectional approaches in the FNE.

Popular and engaged FNE to promote food and nutrition security

The rapprochement between bell hooks' and Paulo Freire's ideas enriches the construction of a FNE that seeks social transformation through critical and emancipatory Education. The engaged praxis proposed by hooks and Freire's critical pedagogy can help build a FNE that places the subjects as protagonists of their learning process and social transformation, promoting healthier, fairer, and more sustainable food. With this in mind, when revisiting the Food and Nutrition Security concept, understood as

the realization of everyone's right to regular and permanent access to sufficient, quality food, without compromising access to other essential needs, based on health-promoting food practices that respect cultural diversity and are socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable,

we understand that it is only possible to respect cultural diversity and consider social and environmental sustainability if people participate in this process and the experiences and culture of each territory are respected.

The National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (PNSAN), approved in 2010, included FNE as one of its eight guidelines.⁸ In this sense, critical Education is fundamental so that people can undertake their experiences with food, keeping their emotional food memories and traditions alive and feeling free to choose. It also helps to critically analyze exposure to ultra-processed foods and misleading advertising, recognize the precarious supply of real food, mainly in vulnerable territories, and know their rights and ways of claiming them. An essential element in guaranteeing Food and Nutrition Security is food sovereignty, which implies the autonomy of communities in their food choices and production, including the right to decide what they plant, produce, and consume, reducing dependence on imports and market fluctuations. Critical and emancipatory Education is fundamental to making this autonomy possible.

With the current strengthening of the agrifood system based on agribusiness, there is an alarming increase in the amount of land devoted to producing a small group of foods recognized as commodities, i.e., products for export and animal feed production. As a result, we have lost the opportunity to produce a vast variety of foods from our food culture, which is increasingly under threat. Belik¹⁹ makes an essential point about the monotonous Brazilian diet, where, in both rural and urban areas, and regardless of the region, just 10 foods account for more than 45% of what we consume in our country, a contradiction compared to the diversity of what could be produced and consumed. Monoculture leads to monotony.

The threats in this context are economic and political disputes within food systems. Food cultures are not static and given; they are dynamic and an organic part of reality, a central element of educational practices from a Freirean perspective, which understands the learner's knowledge as a fundamental part of the process, knowledge that is built on their experiences and culture. From this perspective, citizen educational processes, imbued to bring about social change, are crucial in defending heritage and food cultures.⁸

hooks' engaged pedagogy is a critical praxis, uniting theory and practice for social transformation. It is not limited to the formal educational environment but extends to other areas, such as health. In training health professionals, this pedagogy can develop critical and reflective subjects who can grasp health's social and political dimensions and act consciously to promote health and seek better living conditions.

Training health professionals committed to this popular and engaged FNE presupposes significant changes in the paradigms adopted as priorities in undergraduate courses. The interface between the social and human sciences and the field of food and nutrition is vital if we should overcome the nutritionism paradigm and promote training that understands that the food event exceeds the limits of the health field.

In "Raise Your Voice", bell hooks highlights how academia influences us to think and write in a standardized way distant from our personal experiences. She says experiences bring us together, connect us, and make us accessible and understood. Building pedagogical approaches to a FNE that consider this connection is vital.

We are constantly fed nutrients, food, memory, culture, and comfort, all linked to our experiences and lifestyles. This perspective needs to be incorporated into the practice of future professionals, so that they continue to fight for food sovereignty and FNS.²⁰

From this same perspective, the field of Food and Nutrition is permeated by a matrix of oppressions, starting with the permanence of hunger in our society, hunger that has race and gender.²¹ The concept of healthy eating is often rooted in a white, Eurocentric perspective of what is "healthy" without considering other cultures and ways of life.²² The concept of "commensality", so important to our scientific field, can be called *white*. Who can sit at the table with their family to eat? Can the one who prepares the food be with their family at that moment? Black women have a sociohistorical role at the head of the kitchen that was forged in slavery and becomes more sophisticated daily.^{23,24} Nutrition needs to challenge this oppressive matrix that has always run through us. The most fruitful way to confront these oppressions within Food and Nutrition is by critical formation of future professionals, educators in essence, who will be included in the most diverse work areas.

The university quotas are one way for this training to meet this challenge, as they have allowed people from the most diverse backgrounds and lifestyles to enter university.²²

Besides the fundamental debate on historical reparation, this change alters the topics debated and researched in undergraduate and postgraduate courses, which have always been chosen by groups, primarily white and Eurocentric: the voices heard.^{25,26}

In this context, in “Raise Your Voice”, bell hooks underscores the relevance of breaking the silence, especially for oppressed groups. It is about understanding domination and cultivating a critical consciousness that can transform society, encouraging the act of “raising one’s voice”. For the oppressed, transitioning from silence to speech is a challenging and healing gesture. It is not just an expression of empty words but the manifested transformation of the object into a subject, where “the voice liberates”. Therefore, Education as a practice of freedom is only possible if the learner has the space to “raise their voice”.²⁰

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

FNE has gained prominence in recent years. It aims to promote health through food and nutrition, considering cultural, social, and environmental aspects. In Brazil, Reference Landmark of food and nutrition education for public policies was established in 2012, when the FNE approach was understood as an intersectoral, cross-sectional, and emancipatory practice. This milestone highlighted the relevance of healthy and sustainable eating, valuing cultural diversity and people’s food choices.

A notable increase in theoretical approaches in the field of food and nutrition has been observed recently, brought about by the rapprochement with social and human sciences, which has led to critical debates on issues such as social inequalities, food and nutritional security, intersectionalities, and criticisms of nutritionism.

This theoretical essay aimed to join the thoughts of Freire and hooks, identifying their contributions to FNE. It explored how Freire’s liberatory pedagogy and hooks’ Black feminist perspective can enrich a highly critical, emancipatory, and transformative FNE. Moreover, it highlighted FNE’s crucial role in promoting comprehensive social change in food and nutrition and social justice, the environment, and health.

Throughout this essay, we have discussed how Freire’s liberating pedagogy emphasizes dialogue, active participation, and the debate on social, political, and economic issues that affect life, including food and nutrition. This approach recognizes that FNE exceeds teaching nutrition science and promoting healthy habits. It encompasses social justice, human rights, and citizenship issues. In turn, bell hooks’ perspective, based on the idea that Education is a collective construction, underscores the importance of considering food’s cultural, social, and political dimensions, which means valuing cultural diversity and popular knowledge, respecting individual food choices, and combating the devaluation of traditional and ancestral food practices. Inspired by this vision, popular and engaged FNE can promote greater inclusion and respect for different food traditions.

FNE is not restricted to individual actions but also seeks to influence public policies, food systems, and unjust social structures. Through social participation and dialogue between stakeholders, including civil society, non-governmental organizations, and social movements, FNE can become a powerful tool for promoting social change.

Ultimately, in the current context of escalating violence, the authors’ choice is also about a way of doing FNE that takes loving care of and responsibility for the lives of the students who will become care professionals and educators and the lives we care for as professionals.

We strive for loving care, not from a romantic perspective, but from a feeling of responsibility, humanity, care, and respect for lives in their most diverse subjectivities because engaging is an act of resistance and opposition to all forms of domination, which will never end as long as we are taught to devalue love.¹⁸

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Marinho V and Sá Brito FRS worked on the conception and design, data analysis and interpretation, and final version review and approval.

Conflict of Interests: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Received: June 30, 2023

Accepted: April 4, 2024