

# Editorial

## A past that does not pass?

Maintained by Instituto Trabalho Digno, Revista Laborare consolidates its position of reference in issues related to the world of work, in a critical and transformative perspective. It is in this sense that we remain firm in the fight for scientific development committed to the defense of the human and fundamental rights of workers in this country.

The discussion of the challenges faced by the agents of the guarantee's system is important for the static work law to gain dynamism, always considering the guidelines that protect, at least in theory, those who live from work. This understanding becomes even more relevant in extreme situations, such as the exploitation of slave-like labor.

On the one hand, there is the classic view of slave labor, as an institute formally admitted by the State, which was extinguished on May 13, 1888. On the other hand, it led to the configuration of a formal framework for the protection of workers against situations of slavery.

Faced with the lack of a set of public actions that effectively protect the working class, a context of illegality was formed. They are so unworthy of exploitative situations that, if they cease to constitute slave labor, they can be understood as analogous to this figure. The reference to this new standard refers to the use of nomenclatures such as modern or contemporary slave labor, neo-slavery, and slave-like labor.

After more than a century, the state recognition of the persistence of contexts of work analogous to slavery included, among other measures, the creation of the Special Mobile Inspection Group. The functioning of the mobile group requires the coordination of

Editorial: A past that does not pass?

Labor Tax Auditors, organized in inspection teams, who plan and implement the public policy to combat this social scourge, which they do together with the police forces and other State agents, such as the Public Ministry of Labor and, at the procedural level, the labor judiciary.

Recognition of the problem is not enough; it is necessary to maintain a structure equivalent to the seriousness of a situation that, until mid-2022, resulted in the rescue of around 60,000 enslaved people. The condemnation of the Brazilian State in the Case of the Workers of the Brazil Verde Farm, before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, reveals the need for state advances consistent with the panorama of structural discrimination that feeds the vicious cycle of work analogous to slavery.

The expectation of consolidating the state posture engaged in the elimination of slave labor is not empty. This is a goal assumed and established in item 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals of the UN 2030 Agenda, which requires the adoption of immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, and human trafficking. However, the reality is different.

Brazil is far from the goal of ending the exploitation of labor in conditions analogous to slavery. It is the conclusion that results, for example, from the examination of the set of actions harmful to the autonomy and functioning of the labor inspection. Just to mention some of the factors associated with this reality, there is a lack of recompositing of the inspection staff, which totals around two thousand vacant positions; budget constraints; downsizing of occupational safety and health protection guidelines contained in regulatory standards; and the subsequent restructurings at the ministerial level, which reduced the Labor Inspection in Brazil to the level of sub-secretariat.

More broadly, attacks on the blacklist have made it difficult to maintain and update at certain times over the past decade; legislative proposals to revise the normative content of

Editorial: A past that does not pass?

article 149 of the Penal Code threaten the device whose content and clarity in definition is an internationally recognized achievement; and the ongoing judicial discussion in the STF, on the evidentiary standard given to inspection reports and the differentiated interpretation of the degrading condition in rural work in relation to urban work, aggravate the discrimination historically experienced by those who work in the countryside.

Seeking to understand this past that seems not to pass, in this issue of *Laborare* we present the Contemporary Slave Work Dossier: faces and interfaces of a historical problem, composed of ten articles. We were graced with the special coordination of guest editors, Prof. Dr. Valena Jacob (UFPA) and Prof. Dr. Suzy Koury (CESUPA), leaders of the CNPq Research Group "New Ways of Work, Old Slavery Practices".

We open this issue with an article on the impacts of Brazilian neoliberal reforms on union action and the precariousness of rural work, written by Everton Picolotto, Mateus Lazzaretti and Eduarda Trindade; The authors observed that the unions managed to maintain some rights of the associates and union contributions, in the negotiations of the collective bargaining agreements. However, in the face of legislative reforms and the Covid-19 pandemic, they highlighted the tendency to reduce assistance to the most precarious workers and, therefore, subject to degrading working conditions.

Next, we have a text on the intersectionality factors incident to domestic workers in the Covid-19 pandemic, by Pollyana Soares and Camila Bouth. The authors conclude that the pandemic generated economic losses and social costs. In addition to new problems, it aggravated others that were already implicit and naturalized, such as inequality, the devaluation of domestic work, the submission of women to slave labor and the absence of effective public policies.

In the text that opens the dossier, Aline Pereira addresses the need to expand the hypotheses of special protection for victims of slave labor in the Labor Court, through the

proposal to adopt the special testimony. The author argues that the expansion of the hypotheses of special testimony, to especially contemplate victims of conditions analogous to slavery, materializes the principle of human dignity and finds support in the theory of procedural justice.

Next, Hermes Costa and Eduardo Costa present contemporary Portuguese-Brazilian portraits, which demonstrate the relationship between precariousness and slave labor. The authors see in the mobilization of multiple protagonists the answer for the adoption of urgent measures based on the effective dignification of work.

Aware of the digital servitude at work, Talita Cardim denounces the configuration of slavery in modernity. The study provokes the reader to reflect on the importance of prevention and job security in terms of psychological freedom in the virtual environment.

From a historiographical point of view, Moisés Silva and Joyara Oliveira deal with the captivity of land and man, when analyzing slave labor in the production chain, specifically in relation to the paradigmatic cases of the Espírito Santo and Brazil Verde farms. They demonstrate that the occurrences of slave labor studied evidence the linkage of land concentration and slave labor in the South of Pará, and argue that the expropriation of properties caught in the case of slave labor for the purposes of Agrarian Reform is a way of effectively confronting violence in the countryside.

Addressing the contradiction between the evolution and the regression of labor protection, Geórgia Lima points out the precarious normative factors that lead to contemporary situations of slave labor. The author promotes reflections on combat and prevention practices, and the strengthening of preventive measures, with a view to eliminating structural problems.

From a perspective that perceives the configuration of discriminatory contexts in labor relations, Daniela Muller presents notes on slavery and racism in Brazil. The text reveals

the persistence of the myth of racial democracy and the ideology of whitening. The author emphasizes that the data on the race of those involved are still precarious and that the lack of perception regarding this factor prevents the adoption of affirmative measures aimed specifically at black workers, which limits the possibilities of eradicating contemporary slave labor.

The domain of Marxist reading is present in the study by Marcela Soares, on the nexus between slavery and dependence resulting from the oppression and overexploitation of the Brazilian workforce. The author points out that the data of contemporary slavery reveal permanent movements of expropriation of capital.

In defense of the jurisprudence standardization of the federal regional courts, Carolina Oliveira highlights the interpretative divergences associated with the processes that deal with work in conditions similar to slavery. She argues that the conception of degrading working conditions as mere expressions of rural realities in the country's rural zone, under discussion in the STF, would only reinforce the existing structural discrimination. In addition to perpetuating legal uncertainty, this notion offends human dignity and the social values of work.

To remove slave child labor from invisibility, Maurício Fagundes and Rafael Castro present the phenomenon in the light of Brazilian reality. The authors conclude that child labor appears as a kind of slave labor, which reveals the need for special attention and protective measures for children and adolescents subjected to such conditions. Acting against the grain only increases the invisibility of child slave labor and reinforces indicators of vulnerability to labor exploitation.

Finally, Adriana Wyzykowski and Thaís Ribeiro also dedicate themselves to A little perceived reality, which has been the target of inspection actions in the most recent period, which consists of domestic work analogous to slavery, analyzed from a case

Editorial: A past that does not pass?

study. According to the authors, the case study carried out indicates that the slave labor relationship is disguised by the apparent affection between the victim and aggressors, and the invisibility of the situation is aggravated by the confinement in the private sphere of the home and by the naturalization of the exploitation of the care work performed. by black workers.

These are texts that reveal the academic production guided by the study of problems that permeate the continuity of contemporary slave labor in the country. The reflections carried out feed the hope that the undignified labor exploitation will be, in a not-too-distant future, just a historical fact.

Good reading!



Este trabalho está licenciado sob uma licença  
[Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).