

White **dentistry**

Armando **Hipólito**⁵



“Today, I’m going to promote to an important agenda. I’m not gonna give voice to it, because it already has one and it’s powerful. The column in this issue is not signed by me: let’s talk about a white dentistry. Read it calmly because there are syllables, words, that will echo in you.” (Felipe Rossi)

I grew up in the 90s, watching TV presenters and white dancers, blondes. Not even in school art class, I remember drawing or painting with black characters. As we mature, we realize that references, personalities, and black characters have been denied us since childhood. It’s automatic that a child always wants to be like someone, a cartoon character, from a movie, a comic book hero. As a child, my hero had no cape; he wore white, he was a dentist and black. My uncle was the first black dentist I saw and had contact with, and to this day, one of the few I’ve ever met. I remember very well always saying that I wanted to be like him, because I felt that I could be like him - I felt really represented. It took me a while to understand that he was a reference for me, and that references like him should be more common, considering that 55% of the Brazilian population is black or brown, according to a

survey released by IBGE. It took me a while to understand that he was a reference for me, and that references like him should be more common, considering that 55% of the Brazilian population is black or brown, according to a survey released by IBGE. Unfortunately, we live in a country where most of the black population is on the margins of society and far from professional positions. This lack of representativeness is also shown in universities and dental courses, where we add 2 or 3 blacks in classes of 40 or more students. Some people will say that the issue of prejudice and representativeness may seem like just whining.

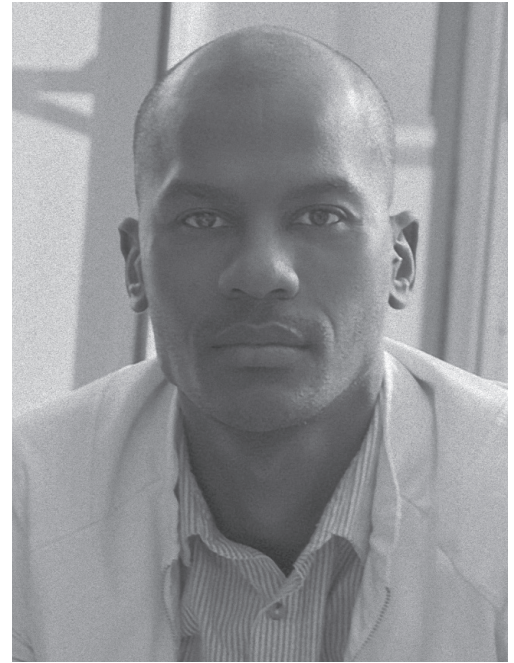
But having someone to mirror you in, someone to support you on a journey and not feel alone, is extremely necessary, both for blacks to feel included and for whites to realize that racial diversity exists. Most black dentists in the country go through, or have gone through, experiences in which seems to be the only black person (in a congress, for example).

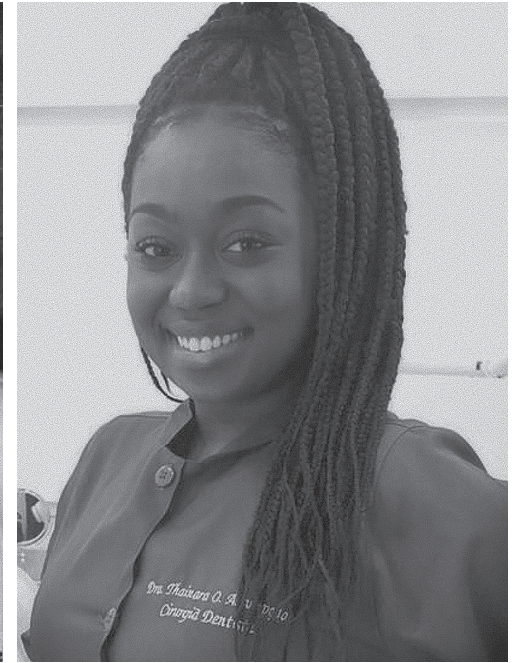
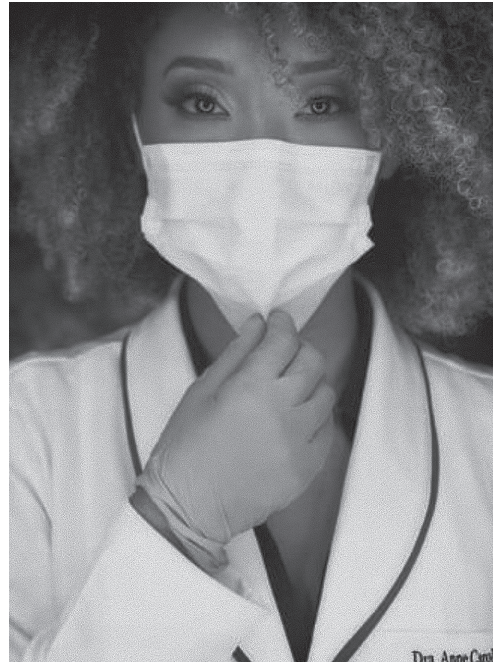
Make no mistake: this feeling is not of being privileged because you are the only one, but

of loneliness, a void because you see that you are not represented in any of the areas of the profession you have chosen. From speakers to representatives of major brands, black academics are rare; and the smaller or more elitist the congress, the fewer black professionals. Have you ever wondered why? Maybe not, because dentistry is predominantly white. In commercials, dentists and patients are white, and even the receptionist - who is mostly a black woman - this time is white! In our clinical life it's not so different from advertisements. In our offices, when they see us, black dentists in coats, we are confused with assistants, receptionists or trainees. How often do we experience a situation in which the patient, sitting in the chair, looking astonished, asks us if we are really the dentist? We are many, of all specialties, and we are struggling to have more space. Although isolated and spread throughout the country, initiatives such as UNOP - União Nacional de Odontologia Preta (National Union of Black Dentistry - @unopreta) present us to society, showing that, yes, we are at the forefront of the profession! Today, I see the importance of our representation for the black population,

but especially for black children. Just as I was inspired by a black dentist, I know we can and are inspiring others to be like us.

It is extremely gratifying when, in our offices, a patient does not just come showing his teeth, but showing a smile, with the soul full of happiness for having seen himself beyond his own reflection in the mirror. This is how we will continue caring and inspiring, so that the dream, which was once ours, becomes a reality in the lives of those children. For example, racial quotas in universities are an important public policy that, contrary to what many people think, does not make us inferior, but gives us the opportunity we need. Furthermore, it would be very important that the advertisements were inclusive, showing more black bodies in their whitened advertisements. It would also be transforming if companies and clinics mobilized to hire more black professionals and thus contribute to change the "face" of this predominantly white dentistry, turning it into a mixed dentistry. Therefore, I would say that if you haven't seen many black dentists, get ready, because we are coming, and we are many!





<https://doi.org/10.14436/2447-911x.17.2.098-103.bso>

Submitted: May 29, 2020

Revised and accepted: June 09, 2020

1. Specialist in Restorative Dentistry (USP-Fundectó).
2. Specialist in Periodontics (Cetao).
3. President and founder of the NGO porlsorriso.
4. Dental Coordinator of the NGO Missão África.

How to cite: Rossi FAR, Hipólito A. White dentistry. J Clin Dent Res. 2020 May-Aug;17(2):98-103.

E-mail: dr.armandohipolito@gmail.com