Summary

We constantly reinforce the idea that Brazil is the country of football. However, behind this narrative are very precarious structures when it comes to document archives of sports clubs. In general, these archives are poorly recognized, inside and outside these institutions, although they are essential for the advance of topics that are part of the sports imaginary. In this sense, we will show the progress made in the debate on the fight against racism in football, based on a thorough search in the archives of a club. The aim of this work will be to show that the fight against racism in Brazilian sport is much more about marketing actions than, in fact, an effort to change racist structures.

Racismo y fútbol: Inconsistencias del discurso sobre la lucha contra el racismo a partir de la indagación de archivos

(Racism and Football: Inconsistencies on the anti-racism narrative based on archival research)

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I can safely say that football is the sport of the 20th century. Football is the sport that generates the largest mobilization of people in the world and, therefore, the one that produces the largest network of connections with society. In addition, it has become one of the great products of our time. As it mobilizes more and more people and, above all, generates more and more economic figures, football has ended up becoming an event in itself, as no other sport can compare in terms of numbers

In Brazil, this is also the case. With Brazil's renown since winning the world championship for the third time in 1970, the country has taken a prominent place in the world of football. As a result, Brazilian players have become increasingly expensive "goods" and, consequently, football is now one of the most profitable businesses of modern times, also in Brazil.

However, despite football's prominence on the global sports scene and — particularly in the case of Brazil — the importance of this sport in the stereotype of what it means to be Brazilian, we can broadly confirm, at home and abroad, that only a small part of the actors involved share the huge amount of money that this game generates.

In this completely uneven structure, projects related to the history, memory, and preservation of heritage within football clubs are systematically discarded because they do not present immediate "results" and are not profitable for the clubs. Thus, even today, issues such as racism are still understood from a perspective consisting mainly of research conducted outside football clubs and,

above all, by hasty views on the subject, which are the result of a shallow reading, characterised mostly by the passion for a club and the stories told by sports journalists who, in general, reproduce these football “tales” as absolute truths.

In Brazil, stories about the fight against racism are part of the collective imagination of clubs. In general, clubs are involved in this debate because, at some point, they have allowed Black players to join their ranks as athletes. That is why they insist on self-legitimizing themselves as pioneers in the fight against sports racism in Brazil.

However, the experience within the archives of the clubs and, mainly, through a better-defined perspective on what racism in sport would be — particularly what the anti-racist struggle represents in this scenario — allows us to confirm that in Brazil there has been no real fight against racism in sport.

In fact, what we observe through the documents is complete silence on racial issues. Contrary to many people’s beliefs, the admission of Black players came mainly from the need to build good and winning teams, and not from a movement to help or support the general Black population.

In addition, archival research found that the clubs that consider themselves pioneers in this struggle also took measures of social and racial distinction that definitely compromise the narrative of the anti-racist fight. It is not surprising that some clubs have adopted very restrictive positions when it comes to enabling access to their archives.

Finally, the fight against racism in Brazilian sport has been linked to actions with little to no impact in the Black population. In general, activities that seek to make the fight against racism visible ─ such as banners taken to the playing field ─ are marketing actions that do not represent a change in the prevailing racist structure.