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**OUTRAGED MOTHERING:**

**Black Women, Racial Violence, and the Power of Emotions in Rio de Janeiro's African  
Diaspora**

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**OUTRAGED MOTHERING:  
Black Women, Racial Violence, and the Power of Emotions in Rio de Janeiro's African  
Diaspora**

**by**

**Luciane de Oliveira Rocha, B.A.; M.A.**

**Dissertation**

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## Dedication

For the mothers in my life

Natalina and Otavina, who mothered me as a grandchild.

Nilza, my forever-loved godmother.

Nésia, *Iya mi*, forever connected through birth.

To my fieldwork mothers who made me *filhinha*.

To Marilene, *outraged mother* who died while I was conducting this research.

To the children in my life

Alexandre, who made me *irmã*.

Ana Luiza and Rafael, who made me an aunt.

Pedro Leonardo, Gabriela, Miguel Felipe, Sofia, and Miguel, my godchildren.

To the future.

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## **OUTRAGED MOTHERING:**

### **Black Women, Racial Violence, and The Power of Emotions in Rio de Janeiro's African Diaspora**

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

Supervisor: Edmund T. Gordon

This dissertation argues that Black mothering is the re-creation of Black sociability in the African Diaspora in the face of the ways in which genocide attempts to eliminate black existence. Therefore, I argue for an approach to African Diaspora as creating, nurturing, resisting, and recuperative acts as an alternative to genocidal practices, which constitutes black mothering. Concerning genocidal practices, this dissertation focuses mainly on anti-black violence, specifically male-on-male and state-sponsored violence; although with an understanding that genocide also manifests itself through many other ways. The choice to focus on male-on-male and state violence is because I understand them as being the ultimate alternative to put forward genocidal ideologies when others fail. Thus, understanding the violent killing of the black population as the most visible expression of genocide in the African Diaspora, I want to confront them with their alternative, which is the given social, cultural, and biological significance of motherhood, i.e., to generate and nurture life. Therefore, my ethnographic project explores Black mothers' experiences of

violence in Rio de Janeiro's poorest areas. Their struggle to survive encompasses not only their own fight against poverty, racism, patriarchy, and gender discrimination but also entails the consequences of violent acts perpetrated or facilitated by the state upon their families. Engaging with the analytical concept of *Outraged Mothering*, this dissertation builds bridges between African Diaspora Studies and the Anthropology of Emotions by applying a Black Feminist perspective in order to perceive Black mothers' social-political insertion in society as well as their pedagogies of resistance. My research methods include participant observation, semi-structured interviews, oral histories, and documentary photography conducted in an extended period of seventeen months of fieldwork research between 2011 and 2012. This project embraces activism as a learning experience in the collaboration with the mothers in struggle, and employs auto-ethnography as a way to think critically through the researcher's emotions while conducting and writing the project. This project aims to enhance developing literature on Black motherhood in Brazil and explores Black lives in the African Diaspora through an analytical framework that presents emotion as a catalytic stimulus for the rise of radical political projects.

## Table of Contents

<b>List of Tables</b> .....	xvi
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	xvii
<b>List of Illustrations</b> .....	xiv
<b>INTRODUCTION – TOWARDS AN OUTRAGED ANTHROPOLOGY</b>	<b>1</b>
A certain night after work - Of Sorrow and Anthropological Interest .....	3
The Organization, the Movement and the Vizinhança – Building a Collaborative Project	12
Theory Confronts Reality – The Activist Filhinha Researcher .....	21
Towards an Outraged Anthropology .....	28
Chapters Design - Black Mothering as African Diaspora .....	43
<b>CHAPTER 1 - OUTRAGED MOTHERING: APPROACHING BLACK MOTHERHOOD IN THE AFRICAN DIASPORA</b>	<b>49</b>
Brazil – The Patria Mãe Gentil.....	52
Black Motherhood in (White Male) Brazilian Racial Formation .....	52
Black women’s Thought and Motherhood .....	72
Diaspora - Looking for Mothering in the Mama Africa.....	80
Of Iyalode, Abiyamo and Iya mi – Black Mothers in Outrage .....	81
Conclusion.....	90
<b>CHAPTER 2 – VIOLENT PEACE: THE “TRADED SYSTEM” AND GENDERED ASPECTS OF BLACK LAND OCCUPATION</b>	<b>92</b>
Deals for “Peace” .....	98
A Favelada e o Caveira – Symbolic Violation and the Consumption of the Black Female Body .....	117
“The positive results of pacification” - The consumption of pain in Baixada Fluminense .....	122
Black motherhood De-killing acts.....	128
Funk Party in Cantagalo - “Antes de ir pra baile eu fico parado na esquina” .....	134
Conclusion.....	145

**CHAPTER 3 – INTIMATE DEATH: PRESERVATIVE MOTHERING AND  
OUTRAGED GRIEF ON GRAVEYARD STREET 147**

Black Mothering Structure of Feelings .....150

Ethnography de vizinha on Graveyard Street.....156

Seven mothers, nine boys, telling feelings .....161

    Martha and Alda - "Now we are here in nostalgia" .....161

    Olinda - "Now I'm stuck with this child" .....168

    Dora – "I miscarried many children, but this was the first child I lost." .....171

    Carla – "Searching for Pieces in Trash Cans" .....178

        An Ethnographic Nightmare .....181

    Nia – "With my own suffering" .....184

    Joana Dark – "With those bones in my lap" .....185

Conclusion – Intimacy of death in the maintenance of the African diaspora.....192

**CHAPTER 4 – BLACK MOTHER’S PEDAGOGIES OF RESISTANCE 194**

"... But the state killed my daughter" .....199

    Deize Carvalho – Testifying for Andreu .....204

        2008 – The Outraged Year.....210

        Autobiography .....227

    Marcia Jacinto - Justice for Hanry.....229

        Raising the Mãe Ultrajada .....232

        The Trial .....234

            Worms’ code of conduct .....241

    Zoraide Vidal - "Ludmila was murdered only because she was a cop" .....248

        "Take it easy" .....252

*Macarronada* with a Cop.....260

Conclusion - Black Mothers Epistemologies of the Antagonism.....262

**CHAPTER 5 - "WE DEMAND!": PERFORMANCE AS PROTEST AGAINST  
RACIALIZED VIOLENCE 267**

Of Strange Fruit and A Carne.....	270
Solos.....	277
Deize Carvalho .....	277
Marcia Jacinto.....	282
Collective.....	288
Vigília da Candelária .....	288
A Parade in Cidade Alta .....	297
March 31st: Black Mothers’ Walk For Memory And Awareness of Anti-Black Violence .....	300
Dia com Mães de Maio.....	308
Mother’s Day .....	315
Mães da Plaza de Mayo in Rio .....	317
Conclusion – Refashioning Black resistance.....	319
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	<b>321</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>328</b>
<b>VITA</b>	<b>346</b>

**List of Tables**

Table 1 - Victims of Homicide by sex and by year .....7

Table 2 - Female Victims Profile .....8

Table 3 - Homicides related to domestic violence .....8

Table 4 - Relationship between Victim and Accused.....9

Table 5 - African Diaspora as Black Motherhood.....46

## List of Figures

Figure 1 - Baile do Galo .....	143
Figure 2 - Baile do Galo 2 .....	143
Figure 3 - Birthday cake between barred windows .....	177
Figure 4 - What is the difference? .....	180
Figure 5 - Birthday Cake .....	185
Figure 6 - Cowardice .....	217
Figure 7 - Charge Latuff Caso Andreu .....	217
Figure 8 - Justice for Andreu .....	218
Figure 9 - Placards Andreu .....	219
Figure 10 - Placards Andreu 2 .....	220
Figure 11 - Police arrive at the demonstration .....	221
Figure 12 - After the Judicial Hearing .....	226
Figure 13 - Exposition .....	235
Figure 14 - Loved Hanry .....	236
Figure 15 - Autopsy .....	236
Figure 16 - Posters of Hanry .....	237
Figure 17 - Newspaper Clippings .....	238
Figure 18 - T-shirt Hanry my friend .....	238

Figure 19 - Zoraide at Home .....	251
Figure 20 - Zoraide's Clipping Archive.....	254
Figure 21 - Bookmarks Ludmila .....	255
Figure 22 - Revista Isto É.....	258
Figure 23 - Deize's Public Speech.....	278
Figure 24 - Debora and Jade.....	292
Figure 25 - Banners Candelária.....	293
Figure 26 - Banners Andreu and Julio Cesar.....	294
Figure 27 - Banners Candelária 2.....	294
Figure 28 - Altar .....	296
Figure 29 - March 31 <sup>st</sup> walk .....	305
Figure 30 - Placing Flowers .....	305
Figure 31 - Flower in the Tree.....	306
Figure 32 - End of the March .....	306
Figure 33 - Soirée .....	314
Figure 34 - Balloons .....	314

## **List of Illustrations**

Illustration 1 - Cartoon Emotions and Anti-Black Violence .....	34
Illustration 2 - “The Redemption of Ham” by Modesto Brocos (1895).....	55
Illustration 3 - Parem de Matar.....	85
Illustration 4 - Image of the Duloren Campaign.....	119
Illustration 5 - Jornal Nacional News Coverage.....	124
Illustration 6 - Capturing Suffering .....	125
Illustration 7 - "Actions and Reactions" .....	126
Illustration 8 - Party I love Baile Funk - Club Vivo Rio .....	138
Illustration 9 - Timeline of an outrage.....	233

## INTRODUCTION – TOWARDS AN OUTRAGED ANTHROPOLOGY

Those of us who research race, racism and inequality must continue to name racism without sugarcoating it; to analyze the ways in which racism is maintained and produced inside and outside of our discipline without overtly targeting its victims; and to use the tools of anthropology to identify the underlying social relationships and informal workings of racist projects.

(Mullings, 2012)

Strong passions are necessary to sharpen the intellect and help make intuition more penetrating... Reality is a product of the application of human will to the society of things... Only the man who wills something can identify the elements, which are necessary to the realization of his will.

(Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notebooks)

*Outraged Mothering: Black Women, Racial Violence and the Power of Emotions in Rio de Janeiro's African Diaspora* theorizes Black women's love and *luta*, and argues for a notion of Black mothering as the re-making of black sociability in the African Diaspora in the context of black genocide. Following Afro-Pessimists scholars Saidya Hartman (1997) and Frank Wilderson III (2010), I examine African diaspora as a condition of violence and death patterned in deadly encounters with the state that shape Black sociability and emotions, and also Black women's experience of motherhood. However, in contrast to these thinkers, I understand the role of Black motherhood through the loving, nurturing, and nursing of their children before the violent encounter, and of re-creating and

recuperating their families and communities after the fact of violent death. Together these practices forge the basis of a redemptive politics in the African Diaspora. This dissertation is an account of Black maternal politics aiming to ensure the possibility and continuity of Black women's mothering in a global racial formation that condemns black youth, mainly young black men, to face violent deaths. In the mothers' re-making efforts, they achieve a web of support that entails other women in their families, such as their daughters, sisters, mothers and other female subjects that create an alternative to genocidal practices where black mothers are the center of the power of love.

This introduction theorizes my fieldwork experience and is divided into five sections. First, I provide information about how my work at the NGO Criola and my own experience with sorrow, due to a violent death in the family, sharpened my anthropological interests. Second, I explain how this project was constructed through and defined by my engagement with my collaborators. Third, I discuss the challenges and difficulties of conducting this research and how my positionality in the field emerged. Fourth, I advocate for an *Outraged Anthropology* by using a Black feminist perspective as a bridge between African Diaspora Studies' methodologies and the Anthropology of Emotions. Finally, I introduce the dissertation chapters by presenting an image of Black motherhood as creative, nurturing, resistant, and as recuperative acts to posit an alternative to the genocidal practices that constitute the African Diaspora.

## **A certain night after work - Of Sorrow and Anthropological Interest**

April 10, 2007 was a long day for me. I spent the day in a meeting in the office of the Black women's organization Criola in downtown Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. As usual, we organized a meeting with our partners participating in the *núcleos de saúde* [health cluster] to strategize and evaluate actions regarding the improvement of black women's health in the peripheries and poor areas of Rio. The fourteen women at the meeting were leaders in their communities located in different neighborhoods across the city. They develop actions to raise awareness about black women HIV/AIDS, breast cancer, and domestic violence. However, despite their organizational skills and commitment to work, they faced difficulties in having women participate in the activities they prepared. They evaluated that in addition to the lack of interest that many women had in participating in their events, the increasing violence and homicide rates in the areas where they lived were creating barriers to organizing. Some of the problems for them were drug trafficking disputes for territory, the growth of paramilitary groups formed by the military police controlling transportation, and unexpected crossfire, which was common in many areas and put their lives at risk.

The meeting ended around 4 pm and I stayed in the office for another two hours preparing a report about the meeting. When I left the organization, I felt very sad and did not want to go straight home. Instead, I went to the nearby street where there were several stores and stayed for a while looking around. On my way to the bus stop, my mother called me and asked if I was staying late at the office, which was customary when we were working on finalizing a project. I let her know that I had already left and asked why she wanted to know. She said, "Nothing, just checking." When I arrived at my matrilineal

family's communal yard, two female cousins were waiting on the sidewalk, and we walked together towards the gate while I told them about the difficult day I had just had. At some point as we walked into the yard heading to the houses, I saw my mother and two aunts with their heads down and swollen eyes. "What happened?" I asked. "He is dead," a voice let me know. My heartbeat sped up. I went inside his mother's house and saw a devastated woman. Embracing a picture of her son, she was lost in her suffering and sorrow. I knew that there was nothing I could do at that moment to help her or myself. I touched her arm, left the house, and started to cry. My uncle, father of the deceased, hugged me, dried my tears, and said, "Stop crying. We knew this day would come. Stop crying." My uncle's apparent coldness was because my cousin, at some point in his short life, got involved with the neighborhood's militia,<sup>1</sup> and was forced to snitch on the rival criminal activity in the area. In spite of all the family members' pleas for him to stop, and my aunt's struggle to rent a house in another city for him and his girlfriend to live in, he was deeply seduced by the fetish of power, the alienated devotion to an imaginary authority and the possibility of power by getting involved in criminal activity.

We heard rumors that he could not be buried in the neighborhood cemetery because of his snitching in the nearby *favela*, and that the gang would dig up his corpse and hide the body. Afraid of this possibility, my aunt decided to bury my cousin in another cemetery.

---

<sup>2</sup> In Rio, the militia was created by military police officers and civilian armed people who organized to exert the power of policing and take control of certain areas of the city, eventually either expelling drug gangs or associating with them. Its actions are mainly to take control of activities that could bring them power and financial returns, such as the control of taxis and vans, the distribution of Internet, gas, and cable TV, but they also organize assaults and robberies.

She also decided not to press charges and start an investigation of the murder. After the three bullets that penetrated his back were taken out, his parents preferred to stay in silence about his activities and their aftermath, and helped raise his two children from different women. The days after his death were of sorrow and struggle for Aunt Joana Dark, the name she asked me to use as her pseudonym in this dissertation. She had to deal with my uncle's drunkenness, which was the way he coped with his sorrow. She was the main one comforting my cousin's older daughter, who was 5 years old at the time of her father's death; and Joana had to continue working. For about four years, we took the same bus almost every morning from our city to downtown Rio, and the hour of travel was the time she had to vent about what was going on inside of her home. Although our family loved him and tried to rescue him, it was my aunt's family, the nuclear family, who had to deal with the everyday fear of death. If before his death she talked about her preventive mothering strategies, after she talked about her strategies to recreate herself and her family.

Although my uncle probably will never read Frank Wilderson's intellectual production, his words "we knew this day would come" echoes Wilderson's reasoning that the Black body "magnetizes bullets" (2010, p. 3). My cousin was not the first and is far from being the last to be killed in Rio de Janeiro or elsewhere in the African Diaspora. Unfortunately, in the last thirteen years, ten young Black men met violent deaths on the street where my family lives. Some of them, like my cousin, could be buried; in the case of others, family members were told about the death but they never found the body. Death was made intimate to Graveyard Street with these thirteen lives taken: a simulacrum of the vulnerability to violence that African Diasporic people face daily.

In Brazil, violent deaths have increased consistently among Black youth. The publication *Mapa da Violência 2013 – Homicídios e Juventude no Brasil*, which analyzes data from the Ministry of Health, shows that more than half of the 52,198 deaths from homicide in 2011 in Brazil were youth (27,471, equivalent to 52.63%), of which 71.44% were *Negros* (blacks and browns/mixed) and 93,03% male (Waiselfisz, 2013). For the state of Rio de Janeiro, the publication *Vidas Perdidas e Racismo no Brasil* [Lost Lives and Racism in Brazil] from IPEA – *Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada* (Institute for Applied Economic Research) shows that the number of Blacks murdered is twice that of whites. According to the research, Rio is one of the 10 capitals in Brazil where most of those killed are black and brown men. Although young black women are 20 percent less likely than young black men to be homicide victims (Peres, 2007, p. 132), they are also affected by violence.

According to the *Dossie Mulher* [Dossier Women] published by the *Instituto de Segurança Pública* [Institute for Public Security] of Rio de Janeiro (2013), in 2012 every three days a women was killed and 16% of the deaths were associated with domestic violence. The tables below shows the gendered aspect of violence in Rio in 2012.



Table 1 - Victims of Homicide by sex and by year

Table 1 shows the percentage of homicide deaths in the state of Rio de Janeiro from 2008 to 2012. The blue column refers to the deaths of women, the plum column the deaths of men, and the pink column refers to the cases where the victim's sex was not reported. The table shows a relative change in the death rate with a difference of 2% in both sexes throughout the years. It is important to notice the disparity between the sexes, and that men constitute the majority of the victims of violence.

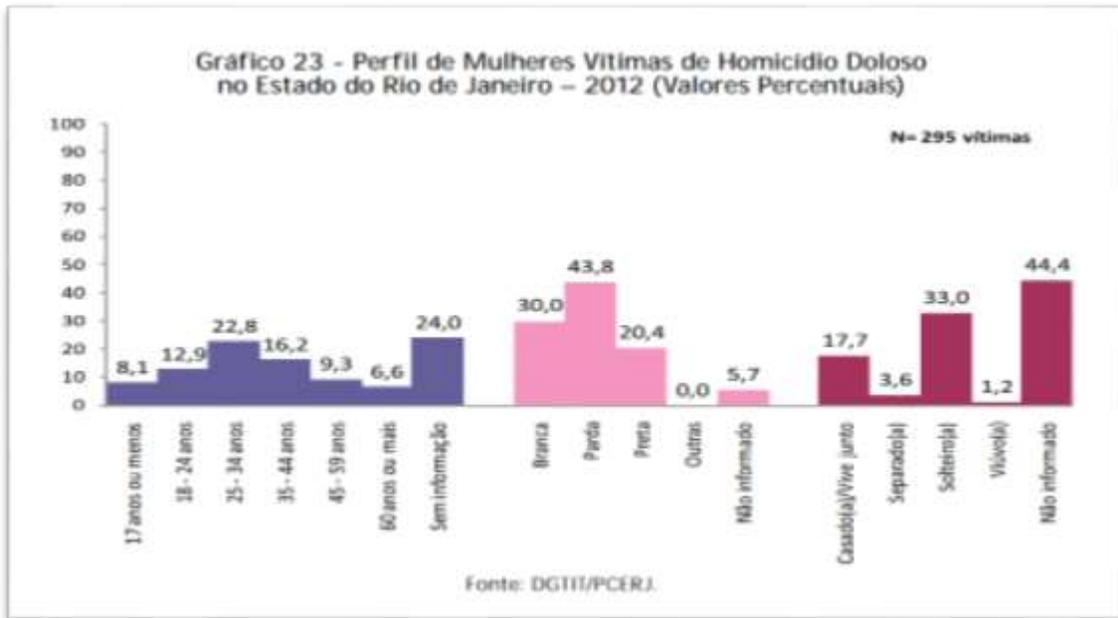


Table 2 - Female Victims Profile



Table 3 - Homicides related to domestic violence

Table 2 shows the number of women murdered in Rio in 2012. Of the 295 women murdered, the majority were women between the ages of 25 and 34 years old (22.8%), *Negro* (64.02%), and single (33%), although 44.4% of them had no relationship status indicated. Table 3 reveals that 17% of these deaths were related to domestic violence, and thus classified under the Law 11.340, known as Lei Maria da Penha. Table 4 (below) shows that, of the 295 women who died in 2012, 26.4% of the deaths were committed by an unknown person (column 6), and 14.7% of the women were killed by an ex-partner (column 1), which we can connect to male dominance in Brazil's patriarchal society. This scenario was the case with my gym teacher, whose boyfriend brutally killed her in 2012 because he did not accept the end of their relationship. Thus, this number might be even higher if investigations could identify 50.2% of the non-identified killers (column 7).

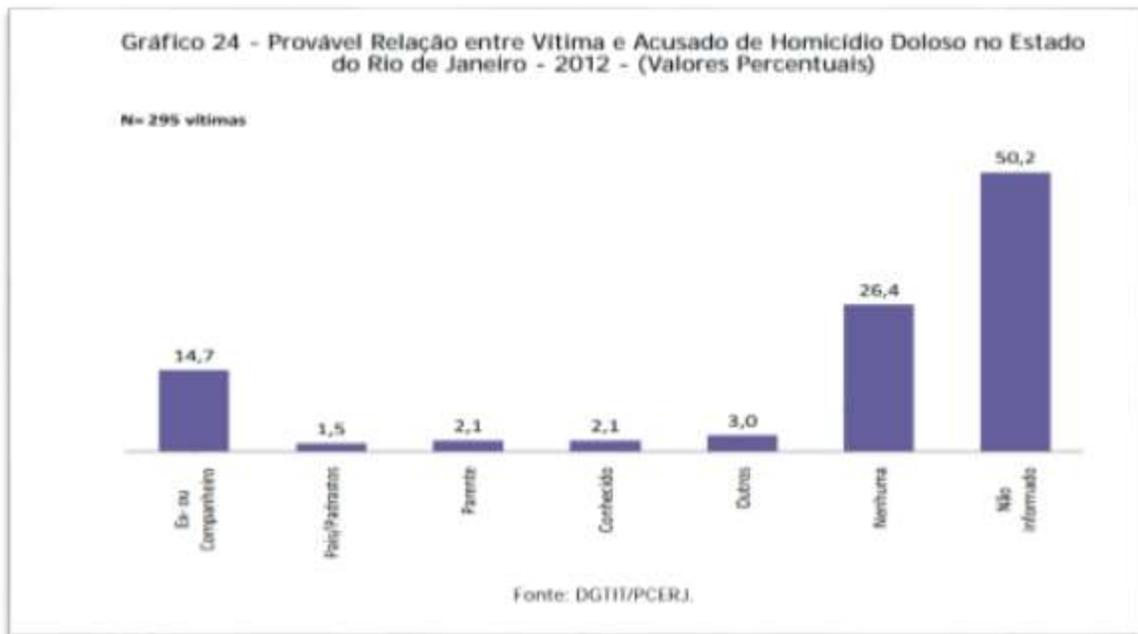


Table 4 - Relationship between Victim and Accused

I made a point to spend time specifically addressing female deaths in this Introduction because in my fieldwork experience, although I was invested in talking with mothers of victims of homicide in general, I was only able to interact with two mothers who were seeking justice for the their daughters' murders: Marilene, the mother of Rosana and Zoraide, the mother of Ludmila. Although disproportionately lower than black male deaths, black female deaths and other forms of violence perpetrated against black women are also part of the structure that targets the black population. In Rio de Janeiro, black women are connected to violence in many different ways. They are blamed by the elites and by the government for "giving birth to delinquents," they are involved in petty crime and forced by men to hide weapons, and their bodies are stereotyped in damaging ways (Amnesty International, 2008; Criola, 2009). However, society still has yet to address their deaths. Only in cases of extreme violent acts do they become evident, such as the one that happened while I was writing this dissertation. On March 16, 2014, during a police operation in a *favela* in Madureira in Rio's suburbs, Claudia Silva Ferreira was accidentally killed. Claudia left her house to buy bread for her kids when the operation started and was shot by a bullet that shot through her heart. Claiming that they were providing assistance, the police officers put her body in the trunk of the police car and left the *favela*. As if this treatment of her body was not enough, the trunk opened, Claudia fell out and was dragged for several streets until the police realized what was happening. She was a thirty-eight year old black woman, who was employed, and a mother of four children (G1, 2014; Folha,

2014). Members of the Black community and the Black women's movement mobilized for justice, but I do not have information about the outcome.

The exposure of the Black population to everyday situations of violence reveals an overlapping dynamic of structural aspects related to socioeconomic causes and cultural-ideological processes arising from negative representations of black people. For this reason, youth homicides represent a national public health issue, and a serious violation of human rights, that is reflected in the silent and overwhelming suffering of thousands of mothers, fathers, siblings, and communities. Each life taken causes an enormous amount of pain and suffering, reaching deeply into the network of relatives and friends of the murdered, but especially into the lives of the mothers, who many times are either single or the main providers for the family. They are those, most often, directly affected by the violence.

When this loss happened in my family, I was a recent college graduate in the social sciences conducting research on violence in *Baixada Fluminense*<sup>2</sup> and working at Criola. The burial of my cousin, the cries, religious songs calling for a new life in heaven, sorrow, pain, hugs of sadness and eternal longing, and fieldwork material that I did not want, all pushed me to pursue denouncing violence. The personal-intellectual-political training allowed me to pay attention to three things, even while going through a moment of deep sadness. The first was an intimacy with death created by the prediction that my cousin's life would end. The general sentiment was that it was his choice to pursue that life in crime.

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<sup>2</sup> Baixada Fluminense is an area in the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro, which encompasses 13 cities.

Although my cousin and many other young men who invest in criminality have agency, it has historical connections. This continuity leads me to the second point: my family members were unable to link this event to a larger racial-political context. Aiming to find an explanation for what happened and why he embarked on this path, family members talked about my uncle's lax parenting and his mother's hard work, but, understandably, no one considered that there was a pattern. Even though it is evident, it is hard to consider that young, poor, under-educated black men are the ones who die in the streets where we lived, in the city, in the state, and in the African Diaspora, and that their mothers are the ones who attempt to save them. My third and final observation was that the urban violence in Rio de Janeiro, although targeting black men, affected black women. The loss encouraged me to pursue my political and theoretical struggle to theorize gendered aspects of anti-black violence through the investigation of how Black women experience the premature deaths of loved ones, and how they organize to resist and deal with the trauma left by this violence.

### **The Organization, the Movement and the Vizinhança – Building a Collaborative Project**

My fieldwork comprised collaborations with the NGO Criola and with the social movement *Rede de Comunidades e Movimentos Contra a Violência* [Network of Communities and Organizations against Violence]. Criola is a Black women's organization in Rio de Janeiro, founded in 1992, that has developed a critical plan of action to address racism, lesbophobia, and sexism as structural problems in Brazilian society. Criola is comprised of a core leadership group of five activists, four staff members, and some thirty

local partners in different areas of the metropolitan area of Rio. The organization's work champions the perspectives and interests of Black women as central to the development of a truly democratic society (ONG CRIOLA, nd). Criola focuses its work on influencing public policy at the local, state, and federal levels, and in different areas such as culture and public security, with a special focus on black women's health. This approach allows Criola to contribute to both designing and monitoring public policies. In addition, Criola reaches Black women through its workshops, courses, micro-enterprises, and publications with the aim of raising awareness and empowering Black women on issues of self-esteem, economic independence, and building strategies to end violence against women (ONG CRIOLA, n.d.).

Criola developed projects on violence against women through a program called *AZIZA! Programa de Direitos Humanos das Mulheres Negras* [AZIZA! The Human Rights Program of Black Women]. Within this program, Criola developed several projects, including the *Iya Agba – Rede de Mulheres Contra a Violência* [Web of Women's Against Violence] in 2006-2007, and the *Em Defesa da Vida* [In Defense of Life] 2007-2008. The project *Em Defesa da Vida* aimed to:

intensify cooperation with community organizations, the Feminist, Black and Black Women's movements, and human rights organizations to analyze public security policy in the State of Rio de Janeiro; develop tools and publications for advocacy in the area of public security; and prepare and negotiate proposals and strategies to monitor public policies.

The activities and results trained women to participate in politics and to pressure the government to allocate resources for actions that could reduce violence against women. *Iyá Agbá*, among other goals, aimed to:

1) understand the social processes of production and reproduction of domestic and urban violence occurring in the communities where six selected African-religious houses were located and their impact on the lives of the houses' black women members; 2) learn strategies for coping with violence produced by the participants of African black women-religious communities; 3) understand the role of religious leaders in providing support and guidance to these women, as well as a political action with the governmental institutions, in order to defend the right to a dignified life without violence for black women (Criola, 2008).

However, in the development of the *Iyá Agbá* project, our partners decided to focus on domestic violence. They feared being recognized in their communities as carrying out work against urban violence and therefore vulnerable to retaliation by local politicians and those drug-selling<sup>3</sup> for carrying out such work.

In 2011 when I went back to Rio to initiate fieldwork, I contacted all of the leadership partners collaborating with Criola to ask if they were addressing urban violence in their meetings. I also inquired if any of the women participating in their projects had experienced the loss of a family member from homicide. Of the 16 activists consulted, three reported addressing the issue in their work. Many focused on issues other than urban violence so the majority of my fieldwork experience was with the *Rede Contra a Violência*.

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<sup>3</sup> In this dissertation, I use the term drug-selling instead of drug-trafficking as a way to problematize the debate. The literature on urban violence as well as governmental projects target the commerce of drugs in the favelas, while veiling the process through which drugs arrive in the favelas.

However, the training I received at Criola has guided my work and placed black women at the center of my analyses of structure.

This project developed around a constant dialogue with Criola and Criola's partners in order to enhance the organizational knowledge about black women's lives. Thus, when I finished my Master's degree in 2010, I presented the work to my co-workers and they provided me with comments and questions to pursue in the analysis of how black women are affected by violence. In our 8-hour discussion, several times they called my attention to the fact that I was only seeing them as victims and not recognizing their agency. When I was back in Austin and had defined my doctoral project, I sent an e-mail to the organization about my topic, and I received the following message from the coordinator Jurema Werneck:<sup>4</sup>

*Oi Luciane, Fico muito contente com as alterações e possibilidades de sua pesquisa. De fato, somente mulheres negras (e somente algumas) se interessam por olhar a todas nós e ver com detalhes como vivemos. Mais do que necessária, portanto, a sua virada! Aguardamos você para maio então. Até lá, Jurema.*

The constant communication with Criola allowed me to evaluate my work and to stay connected while I embarked on theoretical adventures that were sometimes almost fictional and impossible to accomplish. When I started fieldwork in 2011, another staff member, Aparecida Patroclo, also spoke with me about the realization of the project and we discussed Rio's current public security policy over the course of three meetings. I

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<sup>4</sup> "Hi Luciane, I am very happy with the changes and possibilities of your research. In fact, only black women (and only a few) are interested in looking at all of the details of our lives to see how we live. More than necessary, so, you change! We look forward to seeing you in May. See you soon, Jurema"

understand that this collaborative practice was very valuable because it transformed the academic production into a tool to enforce the organization's knowledge and subsidize material for their endeavors.

The other organized group in which I collaborated with during fieldwork was the *Rede de Comunidades e Movimentos Contra a Violência* [The Network of Communities and Organizations against Violence]. The *Rede* is a social movement “independent of the state, corporations, political parties, and churches that includes *favela* dwellers and poor communities in general, survivors and relatives of victims of police violence, popular and human rights militants” (Rede, n.d.). Created in 2004, the *Rede* is inspired by the mobilization of the *favelas* that organized to face state violence, as well as the tireless resistance of mothers and other relatives of victims of police violence. The *Rede's* objectives are to:

- 1) Both encourage and promote the denunciation and prevention of state violence;
- 2) Reduce the number and frequency of violent events, until the all cases of human rights violations and deaths due to police activity are eliminated;
- 3) Require that the state compensate the victims and survivors of abuses committed by state agents;
- 4) Build a network of legal support for communities against police violence;
- 5) Build a network of medical, psychological, and social support for victims and survivors of state violence;
- 6) Build a network to share reports of state violence and rights violations in both national and international communities;
- 7) Along with other sectors of society, fight the causes of economic, social, historical and cultural violence against the communities, the criminalization, and prejudices against the poor and social inequality (Rede, n.d.).

The *Rede* is the most visible group organizing against state brutality in Rio de Janeiro and is responsible for several activities that support families fighting for justice, which are mainly black mothers. The people who form the movement are family members

of victims of violence, students and human rights activists, who collaborate by supporting each other and the mothers in struggle. The movement is divided into four commissions: Infrastructure and Finances, Legal Affairs Committee, Communication and Information Committee and the Committee to Support Victims and Survivors (the families of victims). The Infrastructure and Finances committee raises money to support activities, and to maintain the payment of the office's rent. In the Legal Affairs committee, there are activists who, through the experience of dealing with the police and the judicial system in their own cases of violence, acquired knowledge to help inform other families who became victims of state violence. The Communication Committee consists mainly of students and journalists who volunteer to prepare notes for the website and the email list, informing the population about cases of violence and public acts at the state level and elsewhere in Brazil. Finally, in the Committee to Support Victims and Survivors are people who encourage families of victims of violence to pursue justice, to organize and give visibility to the cases, to create reports, and several other activities. I was engaged in this last committee, although the activities were not very frequent. An analysis of establishing rapport and acquiring trust is spread throughout the dissertation while I narrate the activities in which I participated.

During my preliminary research in 2010, I had a conversation with Marilene Lima de Souza, who collaborated with the *Rede* and was part of a group known as *Mães de Acari* [Mothers of Acari]. As a way to produce material that also would be helpful to the mothers in struggle, I asked her which themes and what kind of research would be beneficial to them. Most of the answers were to “study up” (Nader, 1972), and reveal state strategies

and ideologies in targeting Black communities and Black youth. The questions that she asked were:

*Why are family members of the victims so invisible to society and authorities? Why do they not see us in society? Why can the family of the victim not access justice or get respect? Why do the police kill?? These are fundamental research questions. Why is the state so repressive in the communities? Why are the poor blacks the target? Why are [the black youth the ones] targeted? Why our youth? (Marilene. Personal Interview, 2010)*

Unfortunately, Marilene died in 2012 while I was conducting fieldwork without receiving the answers to her most important questions: “Who killed my daughter? What did they do with her body?”

The final collaboration that helped develop this project was with the *vizinhança* [neighborhood] around Graveyard Street. The street is located in a working class neighborhood; it provides access to a *favela*, and it houses a cemetery. Because of this the neighbors used to joke that they would live forever on Graveyard Street, whether in their houses or in their graves. Nobody from the street had studied abroad until me. Therefore, my visits home never went unnoticed. In the first month after my arrival, I had many conversations with family members and neighbors about my experience of living in the United States. The mothers of my deceased neighbors received me well and my interactions with them are discussed in Chapter 3. However, in this chapter, I narrate an interesting conversation I had with some neighbors.

The conversation occurred on my first Saturday back, in May 2011. I went to the sidewalk and saw two of my old pals hanging out on the corner and I went over to them. Similar to Zora Neale Hurston’s experience researching in her hometown of Eatonville

(1990), I was still the same “Lu” or “Lulu” to my neighbors. We talked about the cultural differences between the U.S. and Brazil. They asked me to help them imagine what it feels like to be in temperatures below 0° C [32° F], and asked if young Black American men really wear their pants below their butts or if this was something only shown in the movies. Suddenly, one of my neighbors started to sing Rose Royce’s *Wishing on a Star*<sup>5</sup> in a karaoke bar. One of my colleagues then asked me to evaluate her English, because she is considered “the singer” on the street. “You know, Lulu, we only know “the book is on the table. We hear her singing and we doubt [that her English is correct], but we cannot really make jokes, because we cannot be sure. You gotta help us!” There I was, contributing to the neighbors’ gossip by letting them know that she was not saying one single word in English.

Another neighbor arrived. “Lulu, you are back!” he said, as we shook hands. One friend continued to joke about the karaoke singer, while the other, I noticed quietly trying to advise the one who had just arrived that his nose was dirty. Henrique<sup>6</sup> “*não estava puro*” [was not pure], as we say when people are under the influence of drugs. The white powder on his nose indicated his recent use of cocaine. After some tries at rubbing his nose with his open hands, he finally understood my colleague’s gestures and turned his back to wipe away the traces of the drug. While he was doing that, one asked me:

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<sup>5</sup> This song became famous in Brazil in the 1990s because it was the music theme to Daniela Perez’s character in the soap opera *Corpo e Alma* [Body and Soul] when she was brutally murdered by another actor and his wife.

<sup>6</sup> Fictitious name

“But, tell us, Lulu. What are you still studying? You’ve been studying practically since you were born. Don’t you tire of it already?” [We all laughed].  
“I am studying anthropology, and I came back to...”  
“Anthro what?” the other cut me off.  
“Anthropology. I study society,” I tried to summarize.  
“And this will give you money, Lulu? ‘Cause after all these years...” [More laughs]  
“I hope so,” I replied.  
“What does an anthropologist do?”  
“Well, we can do many things, but I am studying violence, and how it affects Black women’s lives. I am studying mothers who had their children killed,” I explained.  
“Ihhhh Lulu, there is no shortage of material here. You can study this one’s mother in a few months! We are calling him *Nariz Nervoso* [The Nervous Nose] now,” he joked. [We all laughed again].

In *Laughter Out of Place*, Donna Goldstein (2003) documents and analyzes what is it to make fun of sad and violent histories in impoverished neighborhoods in Rio. According to her, the so-called Black humor, the act of laughing about sad things, is “an emotional aesthetic [that] emerges out of the difficult circumstances of everyday life. It is a living example of the interconnectedness between comedy, on the one hand, and suffering and tragedy, on the other” (p. 37). The fact that I have been “studying since I was born” is questionably sad, but the possibility of losing one more friend to violence or drug addiction is tragic for sure. The laughs about Henrique's drug dependency turned into advice from the group. “You need to slow down, dude. Do you think this is funny? You know where it will lead you.” Showing his claim to the patriarchy as having power over women, he changed his demeanor and started to talk about his ex-wife, by saying that he is *cheirando* [the act of consuming cocaine] to forget her. “I will kill her if she don't come back to me. I will kill her. I'll kill her,” he continued to repeat while going to the middle of the street. His aunt saw the scene and called his mother, who came to the corner to pick him up. “See, Lulu, you already have material for your work,” stated one of my friends without anyone

laughing, and oddly validated me as a vicinity ethnographer. Gladly, I learned that in May 2014 Henrique went to rehabilitation, “found God,” and is starting a new life.

Although the three sites informed my research, their only connection is me. The *Rede* does not believe in the *NGOization* of struggle, Criola’s activity during the period was already defined and the lack of investment that the organization was facing prevented any other initiatives. The mothers from Graveyard Street do not participate in politics in society, but the three groups were fighting for justice and my interaction with the three created my identity in the field as an activist *filhinha* [little daughter] researcher.

### **Theory Confronts Reality – The Activist Filhinha Researcher**

I began my fieldwork in May 2011. Feeling empowered, I understood myself as: an organic intellectual, one who speaks from within the group I am researching (Gramsci, 1971); someone whose identity informed their positionality as a researcher (Madson, 2005); a Black feminist anthropologist whose “direction, content, analysis, praxis and materiality of scholarship were never secondary,” and always intrinsically political (McClaurin, 2001); an activist anthropologist who, by working “together with the people in question” (Hale, 2002), would be able to work alongside Black women to develop strategies for resisting state violence; someone with “ethnographic authority” (Clifford, 1988) and capable of understanding the grammar of suffering in Black women’s narratives (Wilderson, 2010); a researcher who challenged canonical ways to conduct research by choosing neither to focus on one specific geographical site nor to eroticize people; and finally as a proud member of Criola, conducting work that was “more than necessary.”

However, the life of a sensitive poor black young anthropologist member of an organization is not easy. Different from other anthropologists who leave their cities and embark on the adventures of fieldwork abroad, I had to deal with several activities that hindered me from starting the project. I arrived in Rio just a week before the Black Diaspora and Community Engagement Summer Abroad Program<sup>7</sup> started. As the on-site coordinator representing Criola, I was immersed in planning meetings, classes, and visits to several organizations in Rio for six weeks. As a strategy, I selected a student from the program to be my research assistant and she went with me to meetings and activities, while learning about Rio's *favelas*. I also took the students to help the *Rede* to collect testimonies about police brutality in Complexo do Alemão, which had just been occupied by the *Força de Pacificação* [the Peacekeeping Force]. The students loved the initiative, but the lack of sensibility of other researchers in the group harmed the activist aspect of the visit, which made the movement distrust me. In addition, my mother was blind following her cataract surgeries and she had scheduled the surgeries so I could take care of her. She did the surgery in one eye, and "rested in bed" for a month. She did the other eye, and rested for another long month. This was already July. Then, my best friend threw her husband out of their house when she was nine months pregnant with my godson. She asked me to spend the nights with her, fearing that she would give birth. I managed to go back and forth between her and my mother, taking good care of my beloved mother and the beloved mom-to-be.

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<sup>7</sup> The program is a partnership between the department of African and African Diaspora Studies and Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American at the University of Texas at Austin and the Ngo Criola. For more information see <http://world.utexas.edu/abroad/programs/brazil-aads>

Feeling like I was not doing enough, I resumed my activities with Criola. The organization was invited by a group of Public Advocates for Justice to coordinate a cluster to discuss black people's access to the justice system. I was responsible for facilitating the gathering of the members of Black women's movements and Blacks lawyers to discuss the difficulties in accessing the system. I liked the project, because the conversations were great and I saw as direct connection with my research. However, part of my task as a coordinator was to attend meetings in the apartment of a public defender in Copacabana, far from home, from 8pm to midnight.

I was in the field for almost four months and did not think that I was doing research, which created anxiety. "I must be doing something wrong. I do not remember Zora complaining about her fieldwork experience." It was then I decided to reread Irma McClaurin's book *Black Feminist Anthropology* (2001), and found myself in Cheryl Rodriguez's (2001) chapter *A Homegirl Goes Home: Black Feminism and the Lure of Native Anthropology*. She states, "Native Black feminist anthropology involves negotiating the challenges of our lives as Black women who are also feminists and researchers. It involves reinventing ourselves not just as anthropologists but also as those who are capable of building bridges across contradictory realities" (p. 21). It was then that I realized that my experience was already part of the fieldwork and it helped me to understand both the black women's and my sisterhood in managing the adversities in our lives. I was not only the researcher, but also a *filha* [daughter], *comadre* [the mother of my godson], *irmã* [sister], *tia* [aunt], and these roles all felt very good. In addition to negotiating the research with family activities, I had to define my positionality while collaborating with the mothers

in struggle. I am not a mother. I did not have a child killed, but my family experience of death helped to build trust and partnership through a shared experience of sorrow.

However, although theoretically empowered to enter fieldwork, theory is not sufficient when confronted with reality. At the beginning of my research journey, which focused on reaching out to the mothers of my deceased neighbors, I shook inside every time I tried to talk with one of the women, afraid to bring more suffering to their lives by asking them to recall the death of their loved ones. I was a researcher who needed to eat a lot of chocolate to recover from a story, and who several times returned home crying and feeling hopeless about changing this racist society; I knew the stories through the perspective of the cousin, the friend, the neighbor, and they were already difficult to process. Engaging with the perspectives of the mothers helped me to understand the structures of power they face, which encompasses the struggle of being a single mother, the neighbors' gossip and the blaming they received for failing to educate their children, and direct state oppression through patriarchy, heterosexism, and racism. The state's power to decide who must live and who must die (Mbembe, 2003) and the young men's affinity for criminal activities, worked as a scourge on their lives, which made some of them, including my aunt, opt for silence and privately endure the struggle to persist despite the pain. In other words, terror and the words of others contributed to the women's trauma and paralyzed some of them, which had a similar effect on me.

I initiated the fieldwork by establishing my positionality as the activist who worked "for" and "with" Black women and who conducted research that could contribute to their struggle (Rocha, 2010). However, it was through the interaction with the *mães* (mothers)

that my standpoint was better defined. Some of them started to call me *filhinha* (the little daughter), someone with whom they could walk with in the streets while holding arms, and for whom they could cook delicious cakes. For others, I was a partner in the struggle, someone they could call to go to UPP<sup>8</sup> headquarters to ask for permission to organize a party, whom they could count on to attend their judicial hearings and marches, or to write a report about police brutality in a *favela*. I was also the editor and assistant who could edit grammatical errors in notes to the press, emails to public defenders, roundtable speeches or even, in the case of one mother, edit her autobiography.

However, the *filhinha* role also had problems. On a Sunday afternoon, Zoraide called me and asked if I was going home. “What do you mean, Zoraide? I’m at home today,” I replied. “No, Lud... I mean... sorry. (softening the voice) Can you call me *mãezinha* [mum]?” she sadly asked. “Sure, *mãezinha*, but you know...” “I know, I just wanted to hear it,” she interrupted and hung up the phone. Zoraide was very alone, and perhaps she was trying to replace Ludmila’s loss with my presence in her life. I knew that distress would occur and it was already stated in my IRB documentation. However, it is one thing to predict this and another to deal with the situation when it happens.

Zoraide’s call made me look for professional help. From my relationship with Criola, I knew the work of Dr. Marcos Guimarães, psychologist and coordinator of the

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<sup>8</sup> UPPs – Pacifying Police Unit (Unidade de Polícia Pacificadora) – officially this is a law enforcement and social services program that aims to reclaim territories in *favelas* controlled by gangs of drug dealers. In practice, it translates in coercion, police brutality, restriction of rights, and corruption, just to list a few. This policy will be discussed in Chapter 2.

*Instituto de Psicossomática Psicanalítica Ori-Ápore*. In September 2012, I sent him an email with the subject “Scheduling a conversation about black women and post-traumatic stress disorder.” My understanding of psychology at the time was four fold. First, I had a crude sense of the victimized populations’ psychological consequences through the work of scholars Gláucio Soares, Dayse Miranda, and Dorian Borges (2006). They showed that those who suffered from the violent deaths of loved ones continues to experience physical and mental pain more than three years after the fact (2006, p. 75), and that traumatic experiences with bodily and mental symptoms are distinctive in men and women, with women more likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Second, I was aware of Veena Das’s (2000) discussion that “violence is not an interruption of ordinary life but something that is implicated in the ordinary” (p. 7). Third, I learned from Frantz Fanon (1967) that a constant and considerable stream of mental symptoms are the direct results of oppression; and fourth, I learned from Jurema Werneck’s conversations in *Criola* that racism is a mental illness and generates vulnerability. Therefore, I understood that the suffering caused by the violence in the lives of Black women who had children killed was written on their bodies and could be seen as texts of a continuous and visible oppression. However, I did not know to what extent my conversations with these mothers would contribute to their suffering. I wanted to understand the consequences of motherline breakdowns from a psychological perspective, and how should I to deal with the phenomena that I was observing in my experience with Zoraide and other things that I have heard and witnessed with Deize, Marcia, and other mothers from Graveyard Street.

I went to see Dr. Guimarães and asked for help, “Am I harming these mothers? What should I do?” Dr. Guimarães said that PTSD was not his theoretical framework, but asked me to talk more about what I was dealing with in the field. His analysis helped me to not feel guilty. According to him and his Winnicottian line of analysis,<sup>9</sup> the killing interrupted a line of continuity between mother and child. To help me understand Zoraide’s actions, Dr. Guimarães provided me with an explanation. He said,

When a baby is hungry, he/she goes in the direction of something, the mother offers something, which is the breast, which s/he does not know that it is called a “breast” but knows that it is something satisfying and reassuring. That moment of impulse, s/he begins to have a conscience, but after the satisfaction of eating, s/he drifts into a state of no consciousness. The mother is her/his auxiliary ego. The mother gets it because she lives a natural regressive process. S/he lives in a state of primary maternal preoccupation. S/he regresses to the state of baby where she can understand what the baby needs even without the baby talking. That is what gives the experiences of continuity. When the environment fails to provide the necessary conditions for the mother, as in the case of a murder, it activates a creative space. The inability to understand her place in the world makes her engage in a network that makes her continue. She is using you, but it is understandable. (Personal Interview)<sup>10</sup>

All of these activities, allowed me to see myself as a witness of Black mothers resistance and suffering. According to the pedagogy of their struggle, the main responsibility of a witness is to testify. This dissertation serves as my testimony. It’s a testimony of their endurance, resistance, power, love, and outrage.

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<sup>9</sup> Dr. Marcos Antonio Guimarães’s (2006) theoretical and clinical research is based on psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott’s thoughts. Guimarães demonstrates that the exposure of individual of black ancestry to an environment like our sociocultural society causes excessive effort to maintain and feed the subjective field termed by Winnicott as “potential space”.

<sup>10</sup> Any mistake in interpretation of Winnicott’s concepts is my responsibility.

## Towards an Outraged Anthropology

“I thought Rosana would give me grandchildren.” “We will show that there are people who don’t accept what is happening. These killings need to stop.” “I do not accept it. I do not accept. I do not accept it! I did not want compensation; I want my son here.” “Why did this happen to my family?” “I took care of her like a princess; this was not supposed to happen.” “Why did those worms killed my son?” “He was at home sleeping. How come?” These are the phrases of interrogation and dissatisfaction of mothers whose children were killed and whose stories are in this dissertation. They express indignation and a profound hurt for having their motherlines interrupted. Several authors define motherline as the passing of knowledge about ancestry through the maternal function of cultural bearing, which empowers both the mother and the children as they get to know each other and their ancestral memory (O’Reilly, 2004; Lowinsky, 1992). According to the mothers who participated in my research, ideal motherhood is denoted by the enjoyment of maternity beginning with pregnancy, having the emotional and material conditions to raise their children, seeing their children working and building their own families, and have their children take care of them when they become old and until they die. Anything different from this idealized plan is a disturbance, but they consider the murder of child at a young age an *ultraje* [outrage]. As Marcia Jacinto said, “there is no name for that. A child who loses a mother is an orphan; a woman whose husband dies is a widow, and the mother who lost a child? There is no name for such a thing.” In that sense, the killing of a child – which can be as abrupt as a stray bullet, or slow like a life involved in criminality – disrupts the possibility of passing values and the exchange of care, and mothering itself.

In conducting this research, I learned to pay attention to the mothers' expression of feelings and on my own feelings while interacting with their narratives of sorrow and resistance. It was necessary to be aware of what they transmitted in their speech, body language, and silence. A feeling that was recurrent in their expressions and that affected me was outrage. The Oxford Paperback Thesaurus (Waite, 2012) defines outrage as:

- 1) Indignation, fury, anger, rage, disapproval, wrath, resentment
- 2) Scandal, offence, insult, injustice, disgrace
- 3) Atrocity, act of violence/wickedness, crime, wrong, barbarism, inhumane act
- 4) Enrage, infuriate, incense, anger, scandalize, offend, give offence to, affront, shock, horrify, disgust, appall

The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2010) defines the same word as:

- 1) Extreme anger: a strong feeling of unhappiness because of something bad, hurtful, or morally wrong
- 2) Something that hurts people or is morally wrong
- 3) An act of violence or brutality
- 4) An act that violates accepted standards of behavior or taste

And the Brazilian Dictionary Michaelis (UOL, 2014) defines *ultraje* as:

- 1) *Ação ou efeito de ultrajar; insulto, afronta, infamação*. [Action or effect of outrage; insult, slander]
- 2) *Vilipêndio, desacato* [Vilification, contempt]
- 3) *Violação, agravo* [violation, grievance]

To the mothers, it was an emotion related to the anger they felt caused by the injustice due to their interrupted mothering and society's indifference to what was happening to their families. They were outraged at the maintenance of a socio-economic logic that privileges a given social hierarchy. "They are killing each other. Everybody sees that, but nothing is done," claimed Nete. In this sense, outrage can be understood as an expression of

indignation triggered by observation of injustice and violence. Thus, outrage compels a person to think of alternatives to what she/he feels as being unjust and unfair.

The archetype of the outraged mother appears in Harriet Jacobs's book *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl: Written by Herself* (2000) and is analyzed in Joanne Braxton's *Black Women Writing Autobiography* (1989). Braxton affirms, "Black mothers are outraged because of the intimacy of their oppression" (p. 19). She continues,

The archetypal outraged mother travels alone through the darkness to impart as sense of identity and 'belongingness' to her child. She sacrifices and improvises to create the vehicles necessary for the survival of flesh and spirit. Implied in all of her actions and fueling her heroic ones in abuse of their people and her person (1989, p. 21).

This dissertation shows several expressions of outrage. It appears not only through the mothers' narratives, but also through how their outrage affected me and propelled me to write in outrage. I wrote in shock, motivated by anger, and seeking justice. This is the type of anthropology that I want to advocate for. A research "*movido por un gran sentimiento de amor*," [moved by great feeling of love] as Che Guevara would say. In order to argue for an Outraged Anthropology, I dialogued with scholars invested in activist research/scholarship<sup>11</sup> and with scholarship in Anthropology of Emotion. I build a relationship between these works enlightened by the black feminist use of anger (Lorde, 1984) and love (hooks, 2001). I argue that the incorporation of emotion in methodology,

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<sup>11</sup> The works of Edmund Gordon (1997a, 1997b, 2007), Joy James and Edmund Gordon (2008), Charles Hale (2001 and 2008), Leith Mullins (2013) and Vargas (2008).

analysis, and writing humanizes research while creating a new source of insight and political possibilities.

Scholar Mauro Koury (1999) contends, “The anthropology of emotion assumes that natural emotional experiences, felt and experienced by a specific social actor, are relational products between individuals and culture and society” (p. 239). According to scholars that engage with the Anthropology of Emotion, it is impossible to know what other people are feeling, and that we only can get to it through what she/he expresses verbally (Rosaldo, 1980; Lutz and White, 1986; Abu-Lughod, 1986; Triana, 2012). This perspectives stems from these authors’ investment in emotion as expressed through language. For example, in the introduction of the foundational work on the Anthropology of Emotion *Language and the Politics of Emotion*, scholars Lila Abu-Lughod and Catherine A. Lutz (1990) argue that ‘discourse’ is a key term for this type of anthropology and “without which, we argue, emotion cannot properly be understood” (p. 1). Brazilian anthropologist Maria Claudia Coelho (2010) applies Abu-Lughod and Lutz’s reasoning to study violence narratives in Rio de Janeiro’s middle class couples who had their houses robbed in order to understand the gendered aspects in discourses “focusing on characterization of the assailants and the feelings they raised in respondents” (p. 265). She concludes the article by saying that emotions have a “potential to serve as a means of access to the study of canonical and noble themes on the social science agenda, such as urban violence” (p. 282). Despite the fact that she creates a way to implement the Anthropology of Emotions in Brazil, her analysis does not consider how race and class interact in the formation of said discourses. Because of this, it is important to consider Toni Morrison’s (2010) analysis of the “unspeakable things

unspoken.” Morrison suggests that, “‘race’ is still a virtually unspeakable thing” (p. 26). Thus, in order to make race visible in the Anthropology of Emotion, it is necessary to consider that racism is a mental illness and produces vulnerabilities (Werneck, 2011; Fanon, 1967). This means that we are not always able to express our feelings through language. The continued suffering of Blacks are naturalized in society, and this naturalization contributes to the invisibility of the issues affecting us.

In addition, the Anthropology of Emotion, when carried out by an anthropologist identified and aligned with an organized group in struggle, can unveil how structures operate and provide new analyses. Scholar Cristian Camilo Triana (2012) argues that, “We know the feeling of another person not only when expressed, but when compared with our own perception and judgment learned through our life and social, cultural and historical experience” (p. 103). This means that black activist anthropologists carrying out fieldwork at home (Rodriguez, 2001) are in a privileged position to understand processes of racism and the ways in which it is masked in society and felt by those who suffer from it. By doing that, we can attend to Anthropologist Leith Mullings’ (2012) call:

Those of us who research race, racism and inequality must continue to name racism without sugarcoating it; to analyze the ways in which racism is maintained and produced inside and outside of our discipline without overtly targeting its victims; and to use the tools of anthropology to identify the underlying social relationships and informal workings of racist projects. Most important, we need to interrogate the new hidden forms of structural racism and deconstruct, in the best sense of the word, the ways in which racism expresses itself in the age of “post-racial color blindness.” In this way, we do our best to honor the memory of those, such as Trayvon Martin, who have paid the ultimate price for racism (para 8).

Therefore, applying emotion to already validated and qualified methodologies and politics of research can enhance African Diaspora Studies.

In *Anthropology and Liberation*, Edmund T. Gordon (2007b) states,

Anthropologists interested in decolonizing our discipline and creating an “anthropology of liberation” must step from the level of intellectualization to that of praxis. This step, however, is fraught with difficulties. It can only be accomplished if undertaken as part of larger popular projects in which the creation of counter hegemonic worldviews and practices, and the construction of institutions for their propagation and dissemination, are primary objects (p. 150).

Gordon recognizes the colonization of our discipline, provides a critique of traditional anthropology, and advocates an anthropology that serves the cause of human liberation. He argues that “the [theme of research] choice should stem from the proposition that anthropology of liberation must contribute to a people’s effort to understand the nature of their own oppression and to conquer it” (p. 155). In addition, Gordon argues for the recognition of counter-hegemonic potential. In the case of Creoles he studied in Nicaragua, counter-hegemonic discourses and practices were visible in political worldviews and religion (p. 164). In my experience working with the mothers in *luta* [struggle], I recognize counter-hegemonic discourses in the narration of their losses, the outrage felt by the missing body at home, and by their simple presence in inherent oppressive spaces such as the judicial system. It is necessary to be aware of sensitive moments to understand their display of sorrow as a way to denounce oppression and terror in their lives. They utilize emotions to position themselves as a distinctive political group in opposition to hegemonic discourses.

An analysis of emotions also helped me to understand how oppression operates in their lives. Their narratives of fear, anguish, and hope unveil their interaction with oppressive institutions and hegemonic discourses. The collective work of defining the

approach to African Diaspora Studies published through the *Austin School Manifesto* (Gordon, 2007) understands that “Black and/or Africana Studies is concerned with Black collectivity, Black positioning in relation to power and social hierarchy, and Black agency regardless of national or other boundaries imposed upon us” (2007, p. 92). I argue that black feelings can also be incorporated as a tool to understand Black insertion and agency in society. For example, some mothers report feeling anxiety in the presence of police officers, while others feel strong disgust when they hear talk about drugs. Others express their fury when the media characterizes *favela* residents as potential criminals. Their feelings are generated through the interactions with the agents of oppression, and expose the cause of their misfortune as black people in society. To make it clear, I present the figure below.



Illustration 1 - Cartoon Emotions and Anti-Black Violence

The figure created by cartoonist Amarildo shows a black person walking on a dark street carrying a package. In the first image, she/he visualizes a police car and thinks, “My God! The police.” In the second image, the police car passes by and she/he thinks, “Phew! Thank God!” Finally, in the last figure she/he realizes, “It is hard to have to pretend to be innocent... being innocent!” What does this situation tell us about race, class, gender, and oppression? Several black young men go through the same situation daily in the streets of the peripheries of Rio because of the implicit and institutionalized “anthropophagi and racism” (Paixão, 2005) that characterize these individuals as “*elementos suspeitos*” [suspicious elements] (Ramos and Masumeci, 2005).

On the contrary, the black presence in the streets of Copacabana creates another set of feelings and attitudes in other populations. For example, in 2009 when the African Diaspora Summer Abroad program arranged housing for UT students with families in Copacabana, the idea of five black and brown bodies in elite apartments walking distance from the beach scared the “mothers.” On my third day in the apartment, my “mother” put a bell behind the door that alerted her to my entrance, so she could run to the door to check if I was alone or with the whole gang to rob her. Thus, I sustain that anthropologists need to be aware of expressions of feelings in the population she/he is studying as well as her/his own feelings while conducting the work. Scholar Roseberry (1994) affirms that, “The dominated know they are dominated, they know by whom and how, far from consenting to that domination, they initiate all sorts of subtle ways of living with, talking about, resisting, undermining, and confronting the unequal and power-laden worlds in which they live” (p. 357). In a world where the excessive importance of documentation and statistical

data are valorized, oral discourses and knowledge based on feelings are not. This means that intellectuals committed to a group in struggle need to pay attention to people's emotions in oppressive systems. This method can create data and theory within this group, which already possesses knowledge.

In *Activist Scholarship: Limits and Possibilities in Times of Black Genocide*, João Vargas (2008) says, “knowledge and the methods of social inquiry already present in grassroots organizations inflect our academic perspectives, enhancing their depth and uncovering previously silent assumptions about ‘subjects’ and ‘objects’ of ‘scientific inquiry.’” (p. 164). In my fieldwork, “emotions” and “black women’s claims to their positionality as mothers” were the principal methods of resistance against genocide. I suggest that the two tools should be incorporated in scholarly work as a way to both challenge academic canons and provide us with the possibility of a transformation of politics.

In the summer of 2013, when I told Professor Joy James about my interest in approaching the Anthropology of Emotions to understand black women’s experiences of violence, she asked me to draw a graph with all of the elements of their interactions with the state. I do not remember the exact position of the spheres and arrows that I drew to represent black women, the state, media, capitalism, sexism, classism, racism and how I am related to all of this, but I remember James’s question about how I would signify the feelings of the state, and suggested that the state also has feelings. I left our meeting thinking about a series of questions: If the state is a heteropatriarchal racist abstraction (See Mullings, 1997; Joy, 2013 and 1999; Gordon, 1997) through which means would it express

its feelings? Would hate toward the black population be the most evident feeling, considering that we live in a state of anti-black genocide (Vargas, 2010, Nascimento 1978 and 1981)? Would it be possible for the state to mask its feelings so that it cannot be recognizable? And most importantly, what would be the political and analytical benefits (if any) to investing in such analyses? I argue that one can understand the feelings of the state and hegemonic feeling toward the black population through state actions as expression of discourses. I highlight several examples throughout the dissertation following scholar Brent Sasley's (2011) suggestion in the article *Theorizing States' Emotions* that one can pursue the study of the state and its emotions through the impact of actions on individuals and group relationships (p. 453). The epistemology of state antagonism created by Black mothers' in resistance (Chapter 4) says that the state apparatus and "society" are on the opposite sides of the population of the *favela*.<sup>12</sup> The armed branch of the state--the police--protects the first, whereas the second is the target of violence; and the state expresses different emotions towards each population.

Regarding methodological rigor, examining emotions does not imply irrationality or a lack of objectivity, but an "untapped source of insight that can complement more traditional methods of anthropological research" (Davies and Spencer, 2010). Scholar James Davies argues that "when treated with the same intellectual vigor as our empirical work demands, [emotions] can more assist than impede our understanding of the lifeworlds in which we set ourselves down" (2010, p. 1). According to Davies, emotions should count

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<sup>12</sup> In Chapter 4, the mothers analyze the *favela* in opposition to society in general.

as “data to be translated through careful reflection into anthropological insight” (p. 2). Charles Hale (2008) claims that the triad of positivism, objectivity and rigor are used respectively as “an apology for Western imperial reason,” “a smoke screen for alignment with the powerful,” “as a fetishization of data in the absence of critical scrutiny of underlying social categories and precepts” (p. 7-8). Black Feminist Theory contributes to this decolonizing claim by applying feelings, experiences, understanding and accumulated knowledge as topics of analysis. An example of decolonizing strategy is the program *Multiversidade Criola*. The idea is to put black women’s political production at the center of analysis and to give visibility to their work. The “multi” perspective of the project is integral to the proposal, since it confronts the “unique” and “totalitarian” knowledge that comes from academics. The project combines academic work with the knowledge that comes from community organizers, *yalorixas* (Candomblé female priestesses), artisans, and common workers. In this sense, it is possible to use theory in a way that constructs new collaborations and articulations, thus making it possible to face racism and sexism and to achieve social change.

The feminist version of objectivity, which “means quite simply situated knowledge” (Haraway, 1988, p. 581), suggests that we should not forget from where we came or who we are in order to develop research. Standpoint feminist theory “unmasked the doctrine of objectivity because they threatened our ‘embodied’ accounts of the truth” (Haraway, 1988, p. 578). Black feminist theories alerts society to the different forms of discrimination faced by black women and it also informs their feelings. Thus, interpretation schemes that rely on intersectional paradigms should be used in academic research and

analytics as a way to understand the structures that produce such feelings (hooks, 2000; Collins, 2000; Combahee River, 1986; Crenshaw, 1991). This is because all of the experiences of black women in the African Diaspora serve as evidence of the real situation that this social group faces. Emotions are a valuable tool for understanding the webs of oppression intersecting them.

As “traditional anthropology” has focused on contributing to dominant groups, it is important that anthropologists who come from social movements, marginalized groups, or who have a political commitment to social struggles, create their space within academia. Additionally, not only do they need to bring their voices, experiences, thoughts and feelings from the margins to the center, but they also need to construct theories of social change based on such epistemologies. Thus, as Hale (2008) sustains, one effective way to battle against academic oppression is to “reclaim the terms by giving new meanings” (p. 11). According to Joy James and Edmund Gordon (2008), in order create these meanings, the transformation of “academic skills and positions into vehicles of passion for transformative social change and human liberation” is necessary (p. 367). Engaging with emotions, the authors use the feelings of hope, love, and desire as motivational tools to provide counter-hegemonic possibilities to pursue decolonized research in the academic arena. Developing an outraged research is a challenge not only while doing the fieldwork, but also when writing, and being inside the academy in general. As Hale (2007) suggests,

for people who feel directly and personally connected to broader experiences of oppression and to struggles for empowerment, claims of objectivity are more apt to sound like self-serving maneuvers to preserve hierarchy and privilege; and the idea of putting scholarship to the service of their own communities’ empowerment and

well-being is more apt to sound like a sensible, if not an inevitable, way to practice their profession (p. 3).

Based on the discussion above, I advocate for an Outraged Anthropology, an anthropology that recognizes emotions as an expression of a person or group of people's position in an unjust structure of power; an anthropology that recognizes the mechanisms in which the person/group deals with emotion as a narrative of resistance and source of collective struggle. For example, in *The Uses of Anger: Women Redefining Difference*, Black Feminist writer Audre Lorde (1984) argues:

[Her] anger is a response to racist attitudes and to the actions and presumptions that arise out of those attitudes. If your dealings with other women reflect those attitudes, then my anger and your attendant fears are spotlights that can be used for growth in the same way I have used learning to express anger for my growth. But for corrective surgery, no guilt. Guilt and defensiveness are bricks in a wall against which we all flounder; they serve none of our futures (p. 124).

Thus, activist anthropologists working with oppressed groups should be aware of outrage as a category of resistance that should be used to understand groups' "intentionality, analysis and transformative practice" (Gordon, 2007a).

However, although I advocate for an Outraged Anthropology in the service of black liberation, I am not suggesting getting lost in emotion. As seen in the experience of the mothers, emotion motivates careful practices rather than act on impulsivity. As Assata Shakur (1989) stated, "Revolutionary struggle is scientific rather than emotional. I'm not saying that we shouldn't feel anything, but decisions can't be based on love or on anger. They have to be based on the objective conditions and on what is the rational, unemotional thing to do" (p. 243). In addition, in writing ethnography, anthropologists should embrace such outrage as a source of strength to seek scientific methods and intellectual

argumentation to produce material that might create justice for those who were partners in the research. I hope I have accomplished this task.

In my fieldwork, besides paying attention to expressions of feelings of oppressed and oppressor and analyzing their discourses, I engaged with methods that drew on critical and Black feminist anthropologies. I carried out participant observation/observant participation, semi-structured interviews, oral history, found newspaper clippings, and used photography as documentation, which I used in this work as an approach to photo-ethnography. According to scholar Celeste Henery (2010), “these photographs help carry the writing along providing a visual of their moods, emotions and experiences in group dynamics as well as to convey moments in the process of self-making” (p. 65). Through the use of life stories and interviews, I intended to bring out and highlight their memories of racial and gender identity formation, and their experiences with racism, sexism, and urban violence. Analyzing the interviews and life histories along with a contextualization of the larger social and economic systems gave me the possibility of providing meaningful analysis (Saito 1998, p. 198). Participant observation/Observant Participation (Vargas, 2008) enabled me to understand the strategies and methodologies developed by the women in order to live with the continuum of violence, as well as to actively learn from the work. This ethnography lacks statistical data in the chapters because one mother’s statement that she did not raise her son to become data was vivid in my mind. Thus, due to emotional respect and commitment, I did not engage with numbers. However, I believe that qualitative material is enough to introduce and reflect on the problem. As stated before, I do not provide an analysis of either Criola or the *Rede*. Instead, I analyze in detail the

strategies created for the mothers seeking justice for their cases individually, through their personal investigation, and collectively, through their demonstrations. I assisted the mothers in their struggle and paid visits to the mothers who opted to resist in the private arena. However, my fieldwork notes are far from meeting traditional anthropologists' methodology. In several moments, the activity was so heavy that I did not have the energy to "reflect and write about the day when back home" as James Spradley suggests (1980). Instead, I wrote bullet points about important events, drew figures, and took a picture of the red pants that I was wearing in an activity to not forget a phrase of a mother who said, "The Brazilian flag lacks the red of the bloodshed of our children." I applied auto-ethnography (McClaurin, 2001) as a way to keep a record of my own personal difficulties during fieldwork. I believe that the background I share with most Black women as a poor, young, Black women raised in the periphery of Rio de Janeiro who lost a family member to murder, as well my association with Criola, was important for enabling wider community trust in me as a researcher. However, due to the fact that I am not a mother and did not have a child killed, I am not an organic intellectual, one who speaks from within the group I am researching (Gramsci, 1971). My identity informs my positionality as researcher/*companheira/vizinha/filhinha*. In addition, as Criola's members pointed out several times in the eight years I interacted with them, I have privileges that need to be considered, such as always having had my own bedroom at home, having attended a public university, having parents who live together, having had yogurt Chambinho and powdered Ninho milk in my diet as a child (both of which are overpriced items not often consumed

by those in the lower class), never having been abused by an older uncle, being heterosexual etc. All these privileges shape my identity and also my consciousness.

### **Chapters Design - Black Mothering as African Diaspora**

As stated in the beginning of this Introduction, this dissertation argues for a notion of Black mothering as the re-creation of black sociability in the African Diaspora as genocide attempts to eliminate black existence. Therefore, I argue for an approach to the African Diaspora as creative, nurturing, resistance, and recuperative acts against genocidal practices that also constitutes black mothering. By genocidal practices, this dissertation focuses mainly on anti-black violence, specifically male-on-male and state sponsored violence, although understanding that genocide also manifests through intermarriage and the imposition of a hegemonic Eurocentric culture (Nascimento, 1978), femicide, i.e., its manifestation through domestic violence (Romio, 2009; Carrey, 2014), compulsory control of black fecundity (Werneck, n.d.; Roberts, 1997), maternal mortality (Santos 2008), the symbolic grotesqueness of blackness (Soares, 2012), and many others. The choice of focusing on male-on-male and state violence is because I understand them as being the ultimate alternative to putting forward genocidal ideologies when others fail, leaving extermination as the only possible solution (Silva, 2008). Thus, understanding the killing of the black population as the most visible expression of genocide in the African Diaspora, I want to confront them with their opposite pole, which is the given social and biological significance of motherhood, i.e., to generate and nurture life.

There are three main views on motherhood. In the first one, patriarchal social construction defines motherhood as the place of femininity, love, protection, and happiness (Badinter, 1981). This line considers maternal anomalies as the pathologies, cultural practices, and socio-political acts respectively as, for example, postpartum depression, indigenous infanticide of malformed children, and abortion. Feminist critiques challenge the previous notion of motherhood by affirming a more secular understanding of it. This line of reasoning argues that to diminish the role of a woman merely as mother is to reproduce a model that is centered in the body and on its reproductive capacity (Arnup, 1995). Thus, this view sees motherhood as disempowering and the locus of oppression because the patriarchal notion defines “full women” as only those who are mothers. However, for black women, although not only limited to this, motherhood means empowerment and resistance (hooks, 1984; Smith, 2013). In my research, I purposely focused on black women (single or married, homosexual or heterosexual) who had chosen to be a mother, or decided not to interrupt an unexpected pregnancy, and had the experience of having a child killed. The goals were: 1) to expose the political possibilities and venues that motherhood gives to a woman, and; 2) understand the meanings of motherhood in anti-black genocide in its extreme form, the deep Diaspora, i.e., the emotional profundity of a mother’s feelings associated with the death of her beloved child caused by violence in the context of genocide. I argue that black women claim their differential positionality as mothers and use the grief caused by anti-black violence to make them a distinct political group in an antagonist position with the state. In addition, I argue that black women’s assumption of themselves as mothers in the current anti-black terror in Rio de Janeiro is

shaped by a radical tradition of black women that has roots in cultural patterns and ideologies that viewed women as having power and value in society.

This ethnography is divided into five chapters that are represented in the graph below.

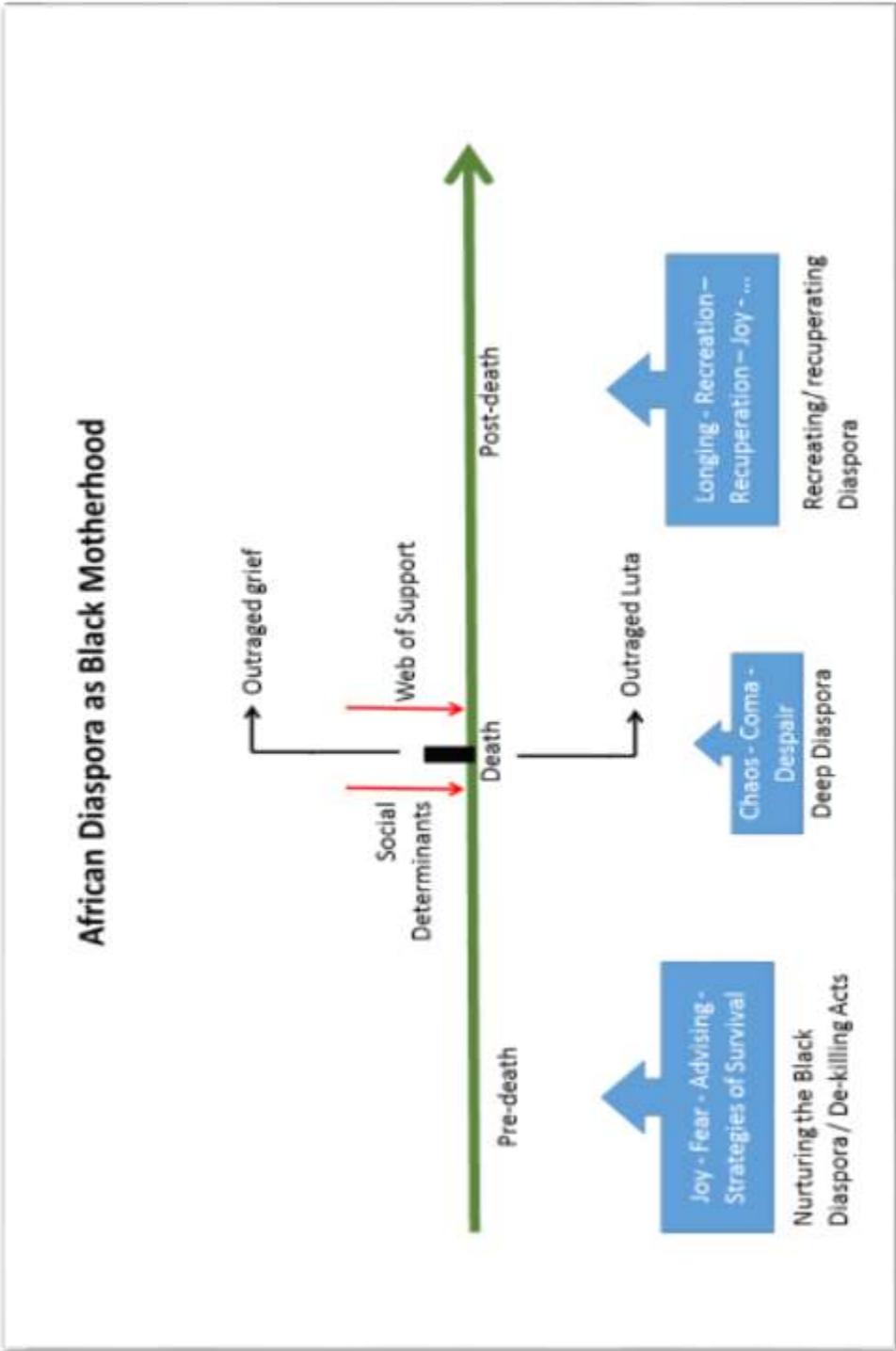


Table 5- African Diaspora as Black Motherhood

The courage and strength exhibited by many mothers whose children have been murdered is remarkable. Their experiences show endurance and resistance to continue their lives after a moment that many of them consider their own deaths. In the image above, the green arrow represents the interrupted motherline of women who had a child killed. The black mark in the arrow is movable, since death can occur in any moment of their motherline. Chapter 1 discusses this motherline in the Brazilian and Afro-Diasporic context. The chapter provides the theoretical foundation to my argument that Black mothering is the re-creation of Black collectivity in the African Diaspora. I engage with Brazilian cultural anthropological literature in the first half of the twentieth century in contraposition to the meaning of motherhood in African civilizations. The challenges for Black mothering in an anti-black genocidal society encompass not only their own fight against poverty, and race and gender discrimination, which are the social determinants of their experience of violence, but they also entail the consequences of violent acts perpetrated or facilitated by the state upon their families. By facing these processes, black women reconstitute themselves, the kids, and the Diaspora through mothering, specifically, through an outraged mothering.

Chapter 2 addresses the social determinants of their mothering, which are represented by the red arrow to the left. The chapter theorizes women's experiences of violence in the context of the current public security policy in Rio de Janeiro, the UPPs. I show that the implementation of this policy implies both physical and symbolic violence that affects black women's lives and the state's strategy utilizes the consumption of Black suffering through the media as acts of ensuring terror as a way to sell violent peace.

As a result of my research I have identified two ideal types of mothers' reactions to the violence inflicted on their children. Chapter 3 addressed the first type of reaction, which I call *Outraged Grief*. In the first model, these mothers engage in a life of trauma where their memories of the deaths of their loved ones generates shame and blame. The chapter examines the intimacy of death among seven Black women who are residents and ex-residents of Graveyard Street, located in the periphery of Rio de Janeiro and shows how they continued with their lives dealing with the aftermath of a death. By contrast, Chapter 4 introduces the second model, which is the *Outraged Luta*. For these mothers, mourning is a possibility only after they achieve some kind of justice for their loss. Different from the women in the previous chapter, these mothers had their motherline interrupted through direct state action, which propels them to pursue clarification and justice. The chapter is a demonstration of mothers who became activists and used their positionality as mothers as a strategic position to raise their voices against the state. Chapter 5 addressed black mothers' collective work through public demonstrations. I engage with the Black feminist aesthetic, Samba, and Jazz Aesthetics in order to read Black mothers' performances as an expression of their aesthetics, aiming to exchange strength with other families in sorrow, as well as to make their demands visible in society. I conclude the ethnography by providing an understanding of the application of black mothering to politics as an alternative to anti-black genocide.

## CHAPTER 1 - OUTRAGED MOTHERING: APPROACHING BLACK MOTHERHOOD IN THE AFRICAN DIASPORA

De um lado, uma negra escrava  
Os olhos no filho crava,  
Que tem no colo a embalar...  
E à meia voz lá responde  
Ao canto, e o filhinho esconde,  
Talvez pra não o escutar!

...

O escravo calou a fala,  
Porque na úmida sala  
O fogo estava a apagar;  
E a escrava acabou seu canto,  
Pra não acordar com o pranto  
O seu filhinho a sonhar!

Castro Alves. *A Canção do Africano*. (1863)<sup>13</sup>

Foi de mãe todo o meu tesouro  
veio dela todo o meu ganho  
mulher sapiência, yabá,  
do fogo tirava água  
do pranto criava consolo.  
Foi de mãe esse meio riso  
dado para esconder  
alegria inteira  
e essa fé desconfiada,  
pois, quando se anda descalço  
cada dedo olha a estrada.

Conceição Evaristo. *De Mãe*. (2002)<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Poem – The African Song: *On one side, a female black slave / eyes affixed on her child / Who she has in her lap / quietly, a voice responds / from the corner, and she hides the child / Maybe for not listening! / ... / The male slave stopped talking, / Because in a damp room / The fire was put out; / and the female slave finished singing / avoiding waking with weeping / Her little boy dreaming!* (My translation)

<sup>14</sup> Poem – From Mom: *From my mom came all my treasure / from her came all my gain / wisdom woman, Yaba / from fire she drew water / from weeping she created consolation / From my mom came this half laughing / given to hide / the whole joy / and this suspicious faith / because when you walk barefoot / each finger looks the road.* (My translation)

The epigraphs above are an excerpt from poems written by two important Brazilian writers. The first, *A Canção do Africano* [The African Song], was written by the white abolitionist Castro Alves, the son of a farmer and well-known for his anti-slavery poems and his exaltation of Africa. The second, *De Mãe* [From Mom], is from contemporary writer Conceição Evaristo, a black woman who was born in a *favela* in Minas Gerais, a mother, and graduate of a Brazilian literature program in Rio de Janeiro. Despite the 139 year difference in the time these poems were written, both talk about black mothering as care and strength. Alves, who writes 25 years before the official end of slavery in Brazil, pictures a black family taking care of a child so he can dream about a better future. In addition to the tenderness of his writing, the characterization of black people as protective and family oriented in Brazilian literature is rare. The standard intellectual literature is built on perverse social imagery based in myth and conventions that black families are the result of patriarchal culture. The changes that black people helped set in motion created the possibility for black women to write about their own realities and provide their own meanings to motherhood, which, only in recent times, do we witness a grow in the scholarship depicting the humanity and valorization of black families. This is the case of writer Conceição Evaristo, who is a dream come true 114 years after the official end of captivity. She credits her mother for the ability to live from her writing. That said, she notes that we need to continue to be vigilant, since we still “walk barefoot,” similarly to the boy in Castro Alves’s poem, and one day, we may “awake weeping.” I argue that Black

mothering is our possibility to “dream,” to have “joy,” and “laugh.” Black mothering opens our “road.”

This chapter provides the theoretical foundation for my argument that Black mothering is the re-creation of Black collectivity in the African Diaspora. We live in an anti-black society and all the time we are in danger of death. The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, I engage with the Brazilian cultural anthropological literature of the first half of the twentieth century. This literature, if read through the lens of an anthropological curiosity (and with a strong gut stomach), provides interpretations of the formation of the Brazilian nation and shows the cultural, physical, and political importance of black motherhood in ensuring proper living conditions for both blacks and non-blacks. It is evident that, due to the enslaved and “non-fully human condition” (Wilderson, 2010), the political value of black women as mothers was not properly valorized. This point motivates the second section in which I look at pre-colonial societies to understand the power given to mothers in African civilizations. Thus, I engage with the term *Iya mi*, which means “my mother!” as a way to approach black women’s radical actions in the African Diaspora as a manifestation of maternal politics. I do not intend to provide a complete theoretical argument in this chapter, but to situate the reader in the social imagery of motherhood in Brazil and how black women challenge this logic. The conjunction of chapters in this dissertation shows that black women reconstitute themselves, the kids, and the Diaspora through mothering, specifically, through an outraged mothering.

## **Brazil – The *Patria Mãe Gentil***

This section reviews the scholarship on race in Brazil and traces the development of what might be termed as Brazilian Racial Formation Theory. I argue that the production of pathological discourses about Blacks in Brazil produced in the 1920s and the consequent problems that the Black population allegedly brought to Brazilian society, which became known as the “Negro problem” (Rodrigues, 1894), have informed how black motherhood is perceived and nurture debates on state violence in Brazil today. However, black women’s scholarship presents a counter-narrative to this previous logic and makes clear that the *Patria Mãe Gentil* [gentle mother homeland], as the Brazilian anthem says, distinctively defines mother and her children based on class and race.

### **BLACK MOTHERHOOD IN (WHITE MALE) BRAZILIAN RACIAL FORMATION**

Similar to what St. Clair Drake (1978) pointed out about the anthropological research conducted in the United States in the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries, Anthropology in Brazil also has its roots in biological determinism and the “ideology of white racism, the dogma that black people are inherently inferior in intellect and in types of temperament and personality to white people” (p. 2). Nina Rodrigues, well-known as the first Brazilian anthropologist, dedicated his scholarship to studying the races that constituted the Brazilian post-slavery society: white, black, and indigenous. This new society had inherited the characteristics of these three major races, outlining their permanence, conflicts, and the place to be occupied by each of them in the social structure. More specifically, his scholarship was meant to prove white superiority against the alleged black degeneration and aptitude for crime.

As an adept scholar of evolution in the line of Arthur de Gobineau and as follower of Italian doctor Cesare Lombroso's criminal anthropology, Nina Rodrigues was responsible for coining the classification of Pathological Anthropology in Brazil and introducing criminal anthropology to the country (Ramos, 1979). He sustained these anthropological lines with his determinist studies, in which blacks were seen as natural criminals and blacks' inferiority was "a phenomenon of perfect natural order, the product of the uneven march of phylogenetic development of humanity in its various divisions and sections" (1979, p. 5). In his view, Africans were at an earlier stage in humanity's intellectual and moral development and attempts to civilize the Black population would never be successful. For Nina Rodrigues, race was not a social phenomenon as Omi and Winant's (1986) racial formation theory proposes, but a biological phenomenon inherently hierarchical and that was defended by European racial theories of his time. Rodrigues argues:

Whatever the social conditions we put the Negro in, he is condemned by its own morphology and physiology to never be able to match the white. (...) Just a stop in civilization of the Anglo American would allow time for the Negroes, in its very slow and non-spontaneous evolution, catch up and match up us [white people] (Rodrigues 1932, p. 268)

According to Rodrigues (1932), the interbreeding between the Black and white populations had damaging consequences for the nation, because "...with African slavery, we received and incorporated in our ethnic formation big doses of Negro blood. What matters to Brazil is to determine how much inferiority will still stem from them" (p. 264). For Rodrigues, interbreeding or "becoming black" meant, not only racial degeneracy coming from miscegenation, but also the psycho-cultural decadence of the white race. This

was his main lament about Black contact with whites. Because of this, Rodrigues (1935) alerted the white population, in their difficult mission, to not allow the masses of blacks and *mestiços* to interfere in the destiny of the country. He believed that, “the Aryan civilization [was] represented in Brazil by a small minority of whites who became the burden of defending it (...) from anti-social acts of the inferior races” (Rodrigues 1938, p. 220). Thus, as scholar Jurema Werneck (n.d.) points out, “it is this perspective that opens space for theories and thoughts that allow organize society and design the new nation, to ensure the elimination of undesirable (Blacks) from the Brazilian society, as an essential requirement for modernization” (3).

Although Rodrigues was against interbreeding, the Brazilian elite created a racial plan inspired by his ideas in order to help the country develop. One of the strategies implemented was miscegenation, primarily between Black people and European people, especially Italians, who received financial incentives to migrate to Brazil. The understanding was that interbreeding could promote the whitening of the population (Rodrigues, 1935). This is shown in the painting reproduced below (illustration 2).

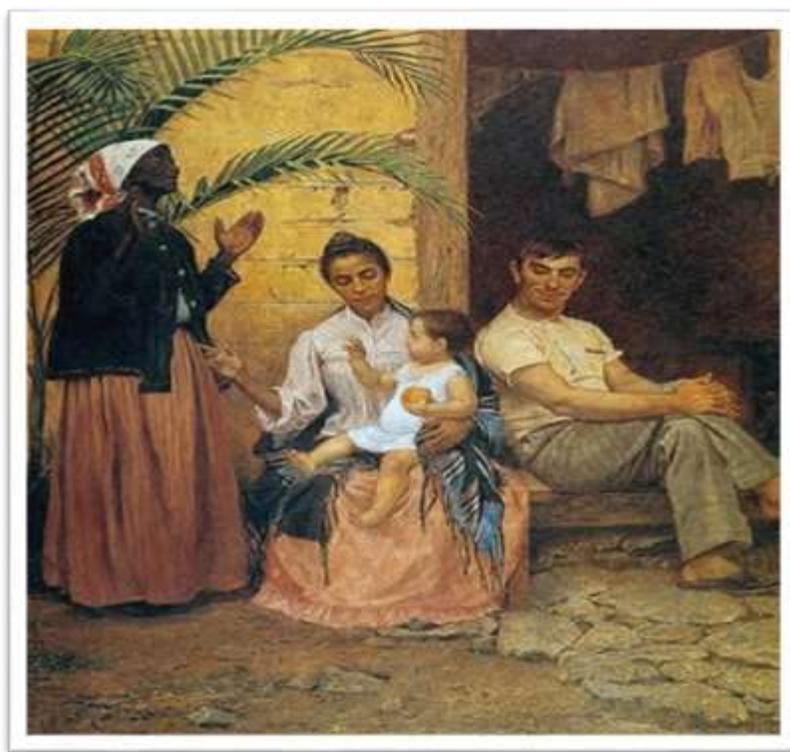


Illustration 2 – “The Redemption of Ham” by Modesto Brocos (1895)

The title is a reference to the biblical story of Noah's curse on his son, Ham, and all of his descendants, as reported in the book of Genesis. After mocking his father for his nakedness and drunkenness, Ham was condemned to be “the last of the slaves of his brothers” (Genesis, 9:25). As reported by Alfredo Bosi (1996), the popular belief that the descendants of Ham would be the dark-skinned peoples of some regions of Africa served as an argument to validate the African slave trade to Brazil. The painting gives an idea of the Brazilian elite’s ideal plan for the Black population. In the scene, we see a Black woman with her hands to the sky thanking the fact that her grandson was born white, a result of the relationship between a white man with a mixed race woman, herself a result

of her mother's sexual violation, so common between women enslaved and their masters. According to this reasoning, the Black matriarch could finally have her "womb free of sin;" the blackness of her womb is redeemed through the birth of her white grandchildren. Nina was against all kinds of race mixing, but he believed that the whitening of the population was necessary for the country's ethnological construction. Thus, he advocated for the formation of a white ethnic group in the country through European immigration and their reproduction.

In the environment of the recent abolition of slavery, Nina Rodrigues' ideas created the moral justification for the structure of social control agencies in the interests hitherto constituted a precaution against possible actions of "uncivilized" and "inferior" races. For example, his adepts republished his other book in 1938, *As raças humanas e a responsabilidade penal no Brasil* [The Human Races and the Penal Responsibility in Brazil] (1894), only two years before the Brazilian Penal Code's reformulation. In this book, Rodrigues defends the idea that due to "anomalies in their psychical organization" Blacks and *mestiços* should be considered as "sad representatives of a sick variety of the species" inclined to commit all kinds of crimes (p. 216).

In 1950, a conference about the alleged "problem of Black criminality" was addressed in the Black newspaper *Quilombo* (2003). In the column directed by Abdias Nascimento, the newspaper covered a talk provided by Chief Judge Nelson Hungria, in the Centro de Estudos de Medicina Legal [Study Center for Forensic Medicine]. The column explains,

Relying on the leading authorities on anthropology, sociology, forensic medicine and psychiatry, the conference attacked the myth of Black racial inferiority, claiming that the alleged inferiority is just a fantasy of sociologists. The situation of people of color and their attitude towards life and social reality means an adverse finding, driven to despair, which resulted in a high coefficient of Black crime, who make up the highest percentage [of people] in all prisons. (...) The abolition, as it was carried out, has created the problem of 'what to do with the colored man?' And what has made the Republic today? Only this: Nothing! By abandoning the helpless, free slaves more than ever, [whites] gave them less freedom by denying them the means to be free (2003, p. 85).

I argue that, despite the creation of counter arguments, the hegemonic character of Rodrigues's discourses of Black degeneration, atavism, and eugenic solutions, legitimized the idea of genocide in Brazil. After this hegemonization, according to scholar Vera Malaguti (2003), the naturalization of deaths and endorsement of genocidal ideology through criminology, also linked to medicine, was possible. Thus, I suggest that since the hegemonic discourse of delinquency focused on the (Black) individual seen as an inherent criminal, the alleged offender was the cause of his/her own delinquency. Thus, the only treatment possible would be their elimination. It is redundant to state that it is possible to find vestiges of this criminalization today. Blackness informs the *modus operandi* of the police in its relationship with the Black population, a strategy that targets mainly young Black men—originally the sons of Black mothers.

Arthur Ramos, despite being Nina Rodrigues's main disciple, abandoned his professor's approach to determinist anthropology and embraced cultural anthropology as his framework. Ramos believed that Blacks had made undeniable cultural contributions to Brazil, but because of their incomplete acculturation, remained individuals in a lower stage of mental and cultural development. He postulates in the process of acculturation the "singularity of racial relations in Brazil" (1942, p. 30). By acculturation he considers

Herskovits's proposition, which "comprises those phenomena that result when groups of individuals from different cultures come to continuous and first-hand contact, with consequent changes in patterns originating in culture of one or both groups" (Ramos 1942, p. 32). However, as Mariza Corrêa (1998) correctly states, apart from the theoretical differences between the two authors, there was a basic rationale (racial in Rodrigues, psycho-cultural [unconscious] in Ramos) that had the common goal of restricting the freedom of individuals, particularly Blacks. Correa says:

Ironically, Nina Rodrigues's racism, explicitly condemned by his disciples, seemed to be more revealing of the social conflicts they deny in the name of racial and social harmony, than the notions of 'syncretism' or 'acculturation' used by them to name this harmony to replace the notion of race with culture (1998, p. 34).

A turning point in Brazilian literature on race happened four decades after the official end of slavery through the works of Gilberto Freire [1975(1933)], Sergio Buarque de Hollanda (1936), and Caio Prado Jr (1942).<sup>15</sup> The three theorists, are considered to be the obligatory triad to study in order to understand contemporary Brazilian civilization and culture, because, as professor Renato Ribeiro Pompeu (n.d.) notes,

*Gilberto Freire's Casa Grande e Senzala* [Big House and Slave Quarters], was the first work to openly advocate for miscegenation as a positive factor in the formation of the Brazilian people—until then the prevailing 'scientific' theories attributed the national delay to the 'racial inferiority' of Indians, Blacks and *mestiços*. Sergio Buarque de Holanda's *Raizes do Brasil* [Roots of Brazil] attempted to offer an institutional explanation of delay in the country, which [according to him happened] because of Portuguese patronage and its sequels, such as clientelism.

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<sup>15</sup> It is important to mention that the Brazilian academy insists on making invisible the intellectual production of Manoel Querino (born in 1851- died in 1923), considered as the first Black Brazilian historian whose work is essential to the formation of black identity in Brazil. It is a common practice in the white colonized Brazilian academy to deliberately exclude from the curriculum important themes and authors that could contribute to a positive black identity and liberation.

Caio Prado Jr's *A formação do Brasil Contemporâneo* [Formation of Contemporary Brazil] indicated the 'sense of colonialism', i.e. the fact that the Brazilian economy has been based, from colony, on large monoculture farms and exportation, as the factor of the Brazilian delay, which would still be in effect in the contemporary era. (para 3)

Although, they did not completely change the notion of Blacks as inferior, they started to recognize the contribution that Africans had brought to the country. Freire was unique in challenging the idea of Blacks as being an inferior race, crediting their social condition to the degradation that slavery created.

In *Casa-Grande & Senzala* [big house and slave quarters] (1975), Freire makes racism evident and credits eugenic discourses for Brazil's alienation from Blacks, whose culture in his view was high and complex. According to Freire, we could not see the "pure influence of Blacks (which is almost impossible to isolate) and only saw Blacks in the form of a slave" (1975, p. 314). He quotes Brazilian abolitionist Joaquim Nabuco to say, "The bad element of the population was not the Black race, but this breed reduced to captivity." He contrasts this quote to the ones that became hegemonic such as ones from Nina Rodrigues and Oliveira Vianna, who condemned that "Blacks are anthropologically inferior, often near the anthropoid and very little worthy of the name of man" (Vianna 2005, p. 314). Contrary to this view, Freire states, "Blacks were often times forced to undress his Malé's gown to wear a thong on the filthy slave voyages. (...) Slavery uprooted the Black from their social environment and family throwing them among strangers and often hostile conditions" (1975, p. 315). In the same line, he states that Black women are blamed for being libidinous, but that they were "often delivered as virgins, still a child of 10 or 13 years old, to white boys in the cities already rotten with syphilis. In Brazil, the

belief that a virgin could clean a syphilitic dominated” (p. 317). The same thing can be said about the institution of Black mothering, it was possible in Brazil to only see Black enslaved women forced to mother the master’s children and whose information about her mothering of her own children was not properly addressed in the literature.

Freire utilizes the architecture of plantations to comprehend the socio-cultural formation of Brazil and the interaction between blacks and whites. The different houses acted as a metaphor of Brazilian miscegenation. Influenced by Franz Boas’s cultural relativism, Freire was not interested in biological differences between the races that constituted Brazilian society, which in his view, “does not explain human inferiority or superiority, when transposing the terms of heredity family for race” (1975, p. 304). Instead, he was interested in cultural anthropology and African social history, which helped him to indicate that, “Brazil has benefited from a better element of African colonization than other countries in America, such as the United States” (p. 304). However, he relied on physical anthropology to make his point about Black non-inferiority, stating “even the defenders of Aryanism like Nina Rodrigues and Oliveira Vianna say that Brazil was not hit by Black inferiority because Brazil already received Black mongrels, so [they were] ‘fake Black’ and therefore superior” (p. 305).

In the two chapters about *The Negro Slave in the Brazilian Sex Life and Family*, Freire (1975) provides details about Blacks and whites’ interactions in the patriarchal society. For Freire, it was not possible to trace one single Brazilian’s ancestry without encountering a drop of Negro blood or a birthmark associated with Blackness. He states that it is possible to see the Black influence not only in biological terms, but also “in music,

walking, talking, singing lullabies, in all sincere expressions of life bring almost every brand of Black influence” (p. 283). In particular, Freire highlights the importance of the *ama-de-leite* and the *babá* [mammy and nanny], “[t]he slave woman who cradled us, who gave us food to suck, who gave us food mashed in her hand to eat, the old Black woman who told us the first stories of animals and hauntings” (p. 283). Freire addresses the cultural importance of Black women to the survival of the patriarchal society. As it will be possible to see below, Black women nurtured, educated, influenced behaviors and transmitted Blackness through mothering.

Freire spends considerable time talking about the relationship between the Black woman made *babá* [nanny] and the *nhonho* [master’s son], but their relationship with their own children, who were seen as a commodity to the master and a sadistic toy to the *nhonho*, is only addressed as a way to alert white women to the danger of Black mothering. From his narratives of such interaction, it is possible to gather the different ways that society understood and utilized Black mothering. First, the Black cultural transmission through mothering is evident. Freire talks about how the *ama-de-leite* [mammy] modified Portuguese traditions brought by the settlers. He also addressed the modification of cradlesongs, such as one where the “cuca” --the crocodile-like figure used to scare children who did not want sleep--, was changed by the “old Black man over the ceiling.” In my understanding, it was a way for Black women to practice their agency and transfer their fear and terror to the *nhonhos* through their stories. Thus, the terror imposed upon the Black population was not occurring in just one direction; it also affected the master’s house through Black women’s mothering. Freire also addresses cultural transmission through

language. According to Freire, Portuguese words were softened through the mouths of the mummies, and care was shown through the renaming of their masters. For example, the words *doi* became *dodoi* [hurts], *dormir* became *mimi* [to sleep], and the names Antonia became Totonha, Tereza became Tete, and Jose became Zé (p. 331). Secondly, Black mothering was a medical prescription. According to Freire, since tradition forced the *Portuguesas* [Portuguese settler women] to marry very young—between 14 to 16 years old—similar to Black girls’ age when they were first raped, white women were not formed as women yet and had poor health due to the tropical heat. In addition, the Portuguese saw breastfeeding as anti-hygienic. Thus, doctors used to prescribe that the *Portuguesas* find “a Black woman whose breasts are properly developed, neither stiff nor soft, nor too pointy beaks or shrunken, accommodated to the boy's lips” to breastfeed their children (p. 361). Finally, Black mothering was seen as an evil. About this, Freire states,

The *Farmer's Manual or Domestic Treatise on the Diseases of Negroes* says, “As soon as Black women in the slave quarters gave birth to a child, usually kneaded the child’s head in order to give the head a more aesthetic look. Against practices of this nature ... the ladies should keep a watch, not only preventing the rudeness of Blacks from going into the big houses, so that they continue to proliferate in the slave quarters.” After all, Black women who just gave birth increased the master’s capital. The mortality in the slave quarters just mattered to them because it meant the decline of the capital of the lords (1975, p. 362).

However, when the “production” of slaves was not necessary, Black babies could be killed as a way to free the master from the burden of feeding them until working age. This resonates with scholar Jurema Werneck’s analysis of Black women’s controlled reproduction. She states,

At this time, women were foreclosed or forced to procreate according to economic assumptions. Seen as an undesirable product, the son of a Black slave woman, when

born, often was “discarded” by the Masters. (...) At the other end, the controlled breeding could confer a longer period, important financial return in the context of the end of trafficking in slave markets. This means that enslaved Black women could be encouraged to procreate as a way of providing more slave labor (n.d., p. 1).

It is possible to see this reasoning until today. Currently, the Brazilian elite blames the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* [Workers Party] for creating the program *Bolsa Familia*, which provides financial help to low-income families. The elite believe that the program is an incentive to poor families, masking the racial aspect, to procreate and thus inflate Brazilian city populations and increase crimes.

The contemporary Brazilian Black Movement during Freire’s time accepted and often celebrated his approach to race. His contributions were often addressed in Black newspapers such as *Quilombo* (2003), directed by Black activist, artist, and scholar Abdias Nascimento. For example, in the first issue of *Quilombo*, published on December 9, 1948, Freire signed a column titled “*Democracia Racial*” [Racial Democracy], in which he published the article *A Atitude Brasileira* [The Brazilian Attitude]. In this important article, Freire says,

It is not an exaggeration to say that in Brazil there has been a defining ethnic democracy against which did not allow Aryanisms ..., although there were sometimes bloody *melanismos*, that occasionally, has manifested itself among us. There are certainly color prejudices among Brazilians, but they are far from being systematized, organized hatred, regimented, white against Black or Jewish or Aryan against indigenous against Europe that are found in other countries similar to our ethnic and social background (p. 26).

Once again, Freire differentiated Brazil from other countries such as Germany and the United States in terms of how racism operated. He recognized the existence of racism, but believed that it was not as bad as in other places due to the Portuguese openness to mixing

with other races. The miscegenation that occurred in Brazil, Freire believed, created one single mixed race, the Brazilian. He continues,

Between us, individuals of evident African origin do not feel ‘African’ or ‘Black’, but Brazilian, as the purest descendants of Indians (...). And all [Israelites, Blacks, whites, Indians] know the celebrated words of Jose do Patrocinio in his eloquent speech: ‘We, the *raça latina* [the Latin race]’. It was to the *raça latina* that the remarkable Black Brazilian felt belonging to. The *raça latina* and not African (2003, p. 26).

This was during a time that the Black Movement was seeking integration into Brazilian society after the end of the Estado Novo and the formation of the Brazilian Constitution of 1946.<sup>16</sup> Thus, it is easy to understand why Freire’s ideas were important. For example, Abdias Nascimento, in his introduction to the facsimile republication of *Quilombo* in 2003, states that, “the appeal of democracy constituted the most powerful weapon of social demands and political struggle at that time. And the leaders of the Black movement brandished for it equal Agada Ogun [material from the candomble religion cult]” (p. 7-8). For this reason, Freire states towards the end of his article in *Quilombo*,

We must be vigilant, Brazilians from all sources, blood or color, against any attempt today to separate in Brazil ‘white’ from ‘African’; or ‘European’ from ‘red,’ ‘brown’ or ‘yellow’. [To be aware of ideas that claim that] the descendants of African should behave as a neo-African in the face of enemies, and of European descent as a neo-European civilized before barbarians. (...) The behavior of the Brazilians should be the Brazilians, though each can and even must retain their culture or ‘race’s’ maternal values that may be useful to all: the *mestizo*, plural and complex culture of Brazil. Including African values (2003, p. 26).

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<sup>16</sup> The *Estado Novo* [New State] was the dictatorial period between 1937–45 in Brazil during the rule of President Getúlio Vargas, initiated by a new constitution issued in November 1937.

Therefore, following Freire's logic, mothering in Brazil would have been equalized, since all families, all women would be generating Brazilians, their role being to mother the newborn Brazilians and valorize their own culture. However, his statement in 1948 seems to forget his account on Black mothering in 1933. According to his narratives, some aspects of Black mothering should be avoided, such as the traditional way of carrying the child tied on the back or on the side. Seen by the mothers as a way to protect or be connected to their children, this practice was seen as sadist, and "a way to deform the children's legs, curved so that when the feet are touched, form an elongated ellipse" (1975, p. 359). Although with seemingly good intentions, Freire's theories also paved the way for other scholars who would later reintroduce the concept of racial democracy, which is also present in analyses of violence.

In the 1950s, the UNESCO Project carried out in Brazil introduced a new era in the development of racial formation theory in the country. The objective of this project was to produce materials to export the Brazilian model of racial democracy to the world, which was judged, at the time, as being uniquely successful in comparison to other countries. However, the studies did not produce a portrait of Brazilian racial democracy; rather they revealed the existence of profound racial discrimination and inequality in this country. The works of Roger Bastide (1972), Florestan Fernandes (1988), Oracy Nogueira (1985 and 1998), and Costa Pinto (1952), among others, unveil the different ways in which racial categories were determined by social, economic, and political forces.

According to scholar Marcus Chor Maio (1999), the UNESCO project not only generated a broad and diverse picture of race relations in Brazil, but also contributed to the

emergence of new perspectives about Brazilian society in the context of an accelerated process of capitalist modernization. In addition, “it came to create the analysis of social and intellectual paths of the researchers, international networks of scientists, theoretical and methodological content of which informed the research and made certain disciplines state of the art” (Maio, 1999, p. 141). In other words, the cycle of investigations offered a unique opportunity not only for the development of social sciences in Brazil, but also for the documentation and publicizing of racism. Below, I provide quotes from different authors that integrated the UNESCO project:

The position of those who entirely deny prejudice is in the position of those who make an ideal pattern of relationships, inspired by the desire that one could erase the problem, or will attempt to help society to forget (Azevedo, 1996, p. 154-5).

Even though racial prejudice is higher than class, the effects of both converge in the oppression of the majority of the population of color. Thus, the inequity in race relations will be eliminated only to the extent that the social structure in general changes (Nogueira, 1985, p. 26).

What appears to be a social ascent on the cultural horizon of the Black and mulatto often is no more than the mere incorporation into the class system. The true social ascent, i.e., the vertical upward mobility within the social system, has not yet been organized for them as a historical process and a collective reality (Fernandes 1988, p. 67).

Although the UNESCO project already has demystified Brazil’s status as a racial democracy, contemporary scholars, mostly associated with the white elite, insist on generating the idea that this country provides equal opportunities to all people while disregarding the existence of race and the existence of racial conflicts. For many years, the study of race in Brazil has mostly reinforced white supremacy and perpetuated the racial democracy myth (Maggie & Resende, 2001; Maggie & Fry, 2007). The works question the

idea of race by affirming that instead of race identity, Brazil operates under racial descriptive classifications, working as adjectives rather than as a noun. According to Maggie and Resende (2001), Brazilians make use of different classifications depending on the context and position in society. The studies also intend to work as a manifesto against Affirmative Action in Brazil, a project thought to be dangerous to “Brazilian positive miscegenation” (Maggie and Fry, 2007, p. 2). The scholars, whose works contributes to the perpetuation of the democracy myth, argue, “Brazil can become a divided country between Blacks and whites, changing our recognized racial pride” (Maggie and Fry, 2007, p. 216). The scholars also say that “ethnic differences cause the most horrendous conflicts and wars around the world” and attribute “U.S. scholars and their aligned activists to the introduction of this debate in Brazil” (Maggie and Fry, 2007, p. 10). They also question public policies based on Affirmative Action, not only because they “do not believe in the existence of race” in Brazil, but also, I argue, because of the increase of Blacks attending universities, which would mean a change in cultural production regarding the themes and approaches to race. However, racial democracy discourse is only meant to benefit the elites, who used to be blind to seeing that Blacks are the majority being killed, that Black women are the majority affected by maternal death due to the lack of proper health care, that Black women are the ones who suffer the most from domestic violence and rape. In a racially democratic society, suffering and happiness should also be equalized.

Florestan Fernandes (1978) provides insights into Black motherhood in Brazil. In *A Integração do Negro na Sociedade de Classes* [The Integration of the Negro in Class

Society], Fernandes addresses the difficulties that the Black population had in adjusting to urban expansion and its consequences. According to Fernandes,

Black women reported greater ease of adjustment to free labor. On one side, [because of] the slave regime of domestic services, particularly in urban areas, [which] did not involve the same degradation of an agent that worked hard in the plantation. They had the largest permanent contact with whites and facilitated the old-style paternalistic relations. Therefore, several conditions favored the stability of the 'Black woman' as a domestic servant. On the other hand, competition with the 'foreigner' in this area of urban services has not taken immediately such dramatic proportions (1978, p. 65).

The work in the cities required Black women to mobilize strategies to ensure their mothering, if they wanted to actually be mothers since they worked as servants in the houses of those "who needed a maid, a cook, and laundress of color" (p. 74). In my family, I hear narratives about how my mixed race laundress grandmother organized with my Black bricklayer grandfather to provide the means to support their seven children. My mother used to tell stories about her oldest sister and her following my grandmother to the train with big bundles of clothes from the madams of Copacabana on their heads, while the other sister stayed at the house babysitting the other kids.

According to Fernandes (1978), the mobilizing strategies also existed where the *mucamas* lived in the employers' houses and were allowed to have one or two children with them. However, he states that "they show interest, friendship and charity; however, what he had in view was the 'exploitation of the Black,' how they could, even under the artifice of 'treating them as children' and give them free provisions of services" (p. 75). As was also true of patronage, Black kids often received sponsorship to pursue a formal education. Florestan states that many times "employed Black mothers clashed with their

bosses claiming that they treat their children ‘like people’ and was shocked by the employers’ blatant disregard in dealing with their children and their children’s non-Black friends” (p. 75).

It is clear in Fernandes’s work how Black women sustained Black men who seemed to be lost in their capitalist workforce position as free men. Fernandes states, “they suffered a lot because they were renegades themselves. Poorly clothed, illiterate, without protection, were living here and there for *expedientes* [casual work]” (1978, p. 77). Fernandes continues, “Casual work and sporadic gain led men to such a state of dependence and misery, that women have become the leading provider in their ‘struggle for life’” (p. 79). This pattern is very visible in Black families in Rio’s peripheries and *favelas*, Black women are the majority of the main heads of households (IPEA 2010). Although Fernandes credits the state for the non-integration of Black families in the post-slavery period (p. 89), he addresses the psychosocial and socio-cultural factors that negatively influenced the social problems that the Black population faced, such as laziness, alcoholism, prostitution, suicide, and not understanding the family institution (p. 155-200). Fernandes says that due to these problems, Black children constituted a problem to society, since “there was no one who took care of them” (p. 176). He says that the children used to stay with relatives and neighbors while their mothers worked in a system of domestic and vicinity solidarity [shared motherhood with neighbors]. However, he considered these relationships as being fragile and that the children were not being oriented to succeed in life. In *Claudia, Uma flor-Mulher*, Activist Lucia Xavier (2000) looks at her own history of living in an orphanage, far from her mother as a strategy that “solitary black mothers had to do since

they left the arms of mother Africa” (p. 121). However, it is clear that Fernandes was analyzing through an ethnocentric lens that did not recognize collective mothering as a valuable one. Black women used to share responsibility in the care of their children while helping each other financially. Thus, Fernandes’s analyzes it through his positionality of a wealthy educated white man, who targeted the consequences instead of the causes of such behaviors.

One of the last important analyses from Florestan Fernandes’s work was his report on protective state institutions and the police’s treatment of youth from different races. He writes,

There was a certain zeal in the prosecution of provincial dating of white teens (...) However, it did not seem to happen with the 'youth of color' (...) the police officers themselves openly tolerated these occurrences, because they 'waited their time to take advantage of misdirection of youth'. Therefore, today there remains the belief among blacks that the police and the juvenile court followed a dubious policy and the 'color' interfered in implementing the standards supervisory or repression. (...) The other repressive mechanism functioned in many ways, backwards: pernicious assessment inherited from the slave society persisted. Man or woman of 'color', who spent the night on the street caused 'mistrust', risked 'being collected by the pound', and even 'locked up in clink'. The general suspicion was that the man was 'troublemaker' or 'thief' and women 'bitch' (1978, p. 177-178)

As it is possible to see in Fernandes’s account, there is a transference of the behavior towards the Black and white women that is the heritage of the racist patriarchal colonial society, where the whites were the ones who should be protected, while Blacks were seen through the degenerative lens that Nina Rodrigues created. In addition, when applied to repression, the lens had a similar effect. Black men were, and still are, seen as a potential danger to security and Black women as a danger to morality.

A final point that emerges from Fernandes's socio-anthropological work is his account of Black people participating in repressive forces. The literature about Black police officers' behavior toward Blacks is still lacking, but it is possible to hear in the communities' reports that they are more than or as violent as the others. However, I believe that this is a matter of the institution of the Military Police, which has been racist since its creation. In fact, the creation of the royal guard in 1809 marks the institutionalization of the continued presence of the state in Black people's lives. This force was created to protect the Portuguese royal court against the masses of Black slaves who occupied the city at the time (Batista, 2003; PMERJ, n.d.). According to historian Thomas Holloway (1993), "An important reason for establishing the police was to supplement the coercive discipline slave owners traditionally supplied, given the difficulties of maintaining vigilance over slaves in an increasingly complex and impersonal urban environment" (p. 282). The state, through the police, worked to maintain the economic interests of the elite, since enslaved Blacks were goods possessed by the elite. Brutal methods of punishment were applied to sustain these interests. Holloway states, "In Rio de Janeiro, physical injury continued to be part of an arsenal of techniques used to keep the behavior of the population within bounds and to instill fear" (p. 282). This violence ranged from forced marching with a heavy pack to beating suspects on the street until their skin began to peel (Holloway 1993, p. 67). In modern Rio de Janeiro, the legacy of the royal guard continues to affect the descendants of those enslaved Africans. Renewed terror techniques, from the targeting and shooting of Black bodies from helicopters to torturing suspects by covering their heads, continue as addressed in the next chapters. This is why Deize Carvalho, a mother whose *luta* [struggle]

foregrounded in Chapters 4 and 5, use to address police officers in general, and the Black ones in particular, as sons of the *favela*, and that their mothers suffer and fear for their lives in the same way she fears for the lives of her children.

#### **BLACK WOMEN'S THOUGHT AND MOTHERHOOD**

In addition to poetry such as Conceição Evaristo, Black women intellectuals hardly ever talk about motherhood explicitly. Rather, they address the necessary living conditions (Carneiro, 2001), reproductive rights (Berquó, 1999); labor exploitation (Bento, 1999); less access to rights and social justice (Articulação, 2001); the endurance of a valuable public image (Sant'Anna, 2001); and daily struggles against the Brazilian state's racism and sexism (Bairros, 2002) that function as a platform for other forms of oppression. The combination of these factors has placed Afro-Brazilian women in a position of political isolation and deprived them of their citizenship rights and access to social justice, which will be visible in the *luta* of Black mothers in the struggles addressed in this dissertation.

In this section, I focus on the writing of two Black women whose work addresses Black mothering in particular ways. The first one is Maria Nascimento, a Black woman who wrote a column in the Black newspaper *Quilombo* (2003) in the 1940s, to give advice to Black women and to invite them to fight against racism. In her writing, she does not talk from the positionality of a mother, but from a place of friendship and her experience as a social worker. Second, I engage with Maria Carolina de Jesus, who lived in a São Paulo *favela* with her three children and wrote her stories in diaries in the 1950s. They were later published and became best sellers, although they went practically unnoticed in Brazil.

In 1948, Maria Nascimento inaugurated the newspaper column entitled *Fala a Mulher* [The woman talks] in the first issue of *Quilombo* (2003). In her introductory article, *Crianças Racistas* [Racist Children] she addressed the perpetuation of racism through failed parenting. She says that:

She will tell an illustrative fact about the complexity of the problems that weighs on the shoulders of Black women. The task that touches them as an element of harmonization, [a fact] revealing of the most subtle discrepancies between Blacks and whites that are piling up, can become grounds for disgrace, hatred and wars (2003, p. 26).

Nascimento recognizes that Black women were given the responsibility of building harmony in society, and understands it as a burden. Nascimento's intention is to provoke debate, and she invites other women to share in writing their thoughts. She continues in her article by talking about the case of a Black maid who used to take her daughter to daycare every day. One day her employee's son asked to go with her. When asked if he liked the place, he said that he did not because there were too many white and Black children in the same room. Nascimento then provokes the readers,

Now other details: this racist-child is the son of a Jew with a *Baiana* [woman from Bahia, a mostly Black city in northeast of Brazil]. Like him, there are thousands of white children. We Black women, we should teach that skin color does not make anyone better or worse, which my friend did, since unfortunately there are some mestiças disguised as Aryan, such as this 'white from Bahia' or this Jew, perhaps who escaped from the Nazis, who do not stop children from having these stupid prejudices (p. 26).

Her reasoning supports my argument that the mothering of Black women ensured our living existence and made the African Diaspora. In this passage, Nascimento provides the sense that, in order to avoid racist acts, it is important to recognize Black heritage and make it

clear in our mothering, which the *Baiana* did not do. Thus, she urges Black women to teach both their children and the society the dangers of racism.

Maria Nascimento readdresses the lives of children in the second issue, published on May 9, 1949. She begins the article *Infância Agonizante* [agonizing childhood], with the words, “Dear readers and friends, I am here again to talk about our children” (2003, p. 34). I understand her use of the pronoun “our” as way to make herself part of what she was talking about, to make herself a mother of the community, and make evident the fact that Black mothering is essentially collective. She addresses the living conditions of Black children not only in the *favelas* and *cortiços*, but also in the basements of rich homes, a reference to the children who lived with their mothers who were housemaids. She states,

In any city in the country, the spectacle is always the same: malnutrition, dirt, misery, and disease. Vegetating there, children without childhood, without joy, without even the sweet consolation of Christmas. For these childhoods, even that rosy date of Christendom means a nightmare (2003, p. 34).

Different from the authors from the previous section, who blamed Black mothering for the unfortunate living conditions, Nascimento addresses structural conditions such as their parents’ necessity to work, and the children as a necessity who need to help their parents in order to enhance the family income: “ah the torture of branches of tree and cans of water on the head!” (2003, p. 34). She introduces this condition as a way to address infant mortality. She provides several statistics and explains, “What does it mean? It means that for each white child who dies, more than two children of color died!” (p. 34). She then calls the mothers to act and addresses their antagonistic position to the state:

To all of us, Black women, completely change this gloomy picture. How? By hoping that the government comes to our aid? Waiting for the commiseration of

charities? No. We must attend childcare clinics, get beds in maternity wards, learn how to prepare proper food and drink, and to maintain a hygienic environment, even with what little money we can afford. [To] Not be discouraged when a clinic, for example, denies entry. We must seek the director of the establishment, insist to use all means possible and remove the difficulties, even if they still are motivated by discrimination, as I know is often the case. What is at stake is the health of the little boy, and he deserves our every sacrifice. The preconception, prenatal and postnatal treatments are of decisive importance. If we want vigorous, intelligent, healthy children, we must seek the aid of science, civilization. Do you not think we should be diligent in making progress, to abandon ideas and habits of the past? (2003, p. 34)

In June 1949, Nascimento wrote the article *Morro e Favela* [hill and slum], in which she addresses the increasingly popular cultural aspect of the *favela*—*samba*. In the article, she highlights the strength in the daily life of the *favelados* and says that the lyrics reflect them. Some of her examples reveal the daily activities of women in the slums such as “carrying cans of water on the head, the water splashing on the floor [washing], and *porejando* [sweating] Black faces to the rhythm of drumbeats [played by] boys watched by their mothers” (2003, p. 37).

In July 1949, Nascimento addressed in her column the *Congresso Nacional de Mulheres e a Regulamentação do Trabalho Doméstico* [National Congress of Women and the Regulation of Domestic Work]. Her opening paragraph states,

The resolutions voted last May by the women of Brazil who have gathered in the national congress deserve attention. All of items they covered are of basic importance for the existence, happiness and progress of Black women, and consequently for the Brazilian people of which black women is a dedicated and sacrificed mother. (49)

Many years before the Combahee River Collective Statement (1995), Nascimento had already said that Black women’s liberation signifies the liberation from discrimination of all Black people. For her, the regulation of domestic work, which represents Black

women's second liberation from slavery, signified the liberation of all Brazilians. In the article, it is clear that motherhood was an issue to her, specifically when she addresses the importance of regularizing the profession. According to her, the legalization would give Black women, who were the majority of the domestic workers, the possibility of childcare in state facilities. She ironically refers to Rio's elite by saying that the "innocents from Leblon," the neighborhood where even today the majority of Rio's elite live, would say that there are already too many day care centers in the city. She reminds them that, "The existing daycare does not meet even one-third of the children in need. When they are children of color—poor little children of God that many racists claim to be children of the devil—the situation escalates much more" (2003, p. 49). She calls attention to the fact that Black women are changing attitudes and empowering themselves to face the situation, and says,

During slavery and even now in the republic, the Black woman existed as passive breastfeeding 'sinhozinhos' [settler's sons] and children of 'seu doto' [bachelors/educated people]. Subdued, diminished, taking refuge in her natural gentleness, without weapons to fight and resist the vilest assaults on her honor and dignity. Fortunately, that time is passing. Maid, public worker, shopkeeper, manufacturer, doctors, lawyer [anthropologist] or lady of the house, the Black woman is learning to walk tall, imposing her personality" (2003, 49).

To contribute to Black women's empowerment, in February 1950, Nascimento calls their attention to "our civic duty" (p. 77). She uses the visit of Indian Pandit Nehru, who was the sister of Indian Prime Minister Vijaya Pandit, to the United States to let Black women know about the importance of participating in politics in order to seek changes in their lives. She states, "If we, Black women of Brazil are even prepared to enjoy the

benefits of civilization and culture, if we are to truly attain a standard of living compatible with the dignity of our condition as human beings, we need no more tardiness in doing politics” (p. 77).

Carolina de Jesus (1960) is another Black women writer who contributes to understanding the meaning of Black motherhood in Brazil. Her daily life narrated in her diary *Quarto de Despejo* [The Trash Room] unveils the strategies, feelings, and fears of a Black mother in poverty in the 1950s. The diary depicted the harsh life of the *favelas*, but it also addressed her pride in her Blackness, her wishes for her children and for a better society. Below, I provide quotes from de Jesus categorized in themes that relate to her mothering experience.

### Desires

Anniversary of my daughter Vera Eunice. I intended to buy a pair of shoes for her. But the cost of foodstuff prevents us from achieving our desires. Currently we are slaves of the cost of living. I found a pair of shoes in the trash, washed, and patched her wedge (p. 13).

### Work

I thought of the busy life I lead. I collect paper, do laundry for two young men, and stand in the street all day. And I’m always missing. Vera has no shoes. And she does not like walking barefoot. In about two years, I intend to buy a meat grinder. And a sewing machine (p. 14).

### Advice

I went home; I made lunch for the two boys. Rice, beans and meat. And I am going out to pick up paper. I left the kids. I told them to play in the yard and not go outside because of the lousy neighbors annoy my children (p. 14).

### Dignity

My kids are not supported with the bread of the church. I face any kind of work to keep them (p. 17).

Since I cannot give my children a decent home to live, I try to give them a decent meal (p. 23).

### Single mothering

I wondered... I must be tolerant with my kids. They have no one in the world except me. How poignant is womanhood alone without a man in the home (p. 24).

Vera's father is rich; he could help me a bit. He asked me not to disclose his name in the diary, not to divulge. He could recognize my silence. And if I were one of these scandalous Black women and go to his shop and make a scandal? 'Give money to your daughter!' (p. 169)

### Independence

Mr. Manuel appeared saying he wants to marry me. But I will not because I'm in menopause. Besides, there is no man that likes a woman that cannot go without reading. And who likes to write. And that lies down with pencil and paper under the pillow. Which is why I prefer living alone (p. 50).

### Hunger, Children and Politics

The lieutenant became interested in the education of my children. He told me that the *favela* is an environment prone [to delinquency]; people have more opportunities of becoming an offender than becoming useful to the country and the homeland. I thought: 'If he knows this, why doesn't he make a report and send it to the politicians? Mr. Quadros [politician who became Brazilian president in 1961], Mr. Kubistchek [politician who became Brazilian President in 1956] and Dr. Adhemar de Barros [Governor of São Paulo from 1963-1966]? Aside from talking to me? I'm poor trash. I cannot even solve my difficulties ... Brazil must be directed by a person who has starved. Hunger is also a teacher. Who starves learns to think about the future, and about the children (p. 31).

When I'm hungry, I want to kill Quadros, wanna hang Adhemar and burn Juscelino [Kubistchek]. Difficulties cut the people's affection for the politicians (p. 34).

How horrible it is to see a child eating who asks: "Do you have more?" This word "no more" remains dangling inside a mother's brain looking at the pan and it has no more (p. 39).

### Violence and Racism

I was paying the cobbler and talking to a Black man who was reading a newspaper. He was disgusted by a civilian guard who beat a Black man and tied him to a tree. The Civil Guard is white. And there are some whites that turn Blacks into

scapegoats. Who knows if civil guards ignore that slavery has been abolished and we are still under the regime of the whip? (p. 106).

### Proud of Blackness

I wrote plays and presented [them] to the circus's directors. They answered me: 'It is worth you being Black.' Forgetting them, I love my Black skin, and my stiff hair. I even think Black hair is more educated than white hair. Because Black's hair stays where you put it. It is obedient. And white's hair, it just takes a movement on the head and its out of place. It is undisciplined. If there is reincarnation, I always want to return Black (p. 65).

Carolina de Jesus's writing is rich in information about a Black-woman-single-mother-living-in-a-favela-who-fought-to-raise-her-three-children her writing unveils the structural difficulties that shapes Black women's attitudes, feelings, desires, and analysis about her living conditions and possibilities for a better future. De Jesus's working conditions as a collector in the streets did not provide her with the conditions to give basic necessities to her children, such as food and shoes. Her dignity helps her to keep working, but it does not prevent her from evaluating her condition and realizing that it is not only unjust for her to work all day long without being well compensated, but also that those with the power to better her condition do not do the work properly. That is why she states that a politician must experience hunger. This idea is very revealing about recent Brazilian politics. Former president Luiz Ignacio da Silva, whose history speaks of his childhood hunger in northeast Brazil, created the *Fome Zero Program*, during his first presidency. The program, which continued in Dilma Rouseff's presidency, is "a strategy to ensure the right to adequate food for people with limited access to it," and has four pillars: access to food, strengthening of family agriculture, income generation and coordination, mobilization and social control. The most popular politics of this program is the *Bolsa*

*Familia*, which directly transfers income to the poor population (Presidencia do Brasil, n d). The program has been acclaimed by the poor and condemned by the wealthy, who were not taught by the “teacher [that is] hunger” (Jesus 1960, p. 31). Furthermore, it is possible to say that hunger shaped de Jesus’s mothering. She had to leave her children alone to go work many times, which could have been different if the father was a provider and shared the parental duties with her. However, her freedom was worth more than the simple fact of having a man inside the house. She was already too empowered to have to succumb to patriarchal demands and have to stop writing.

The two writers provide a good picture of what constituted motherhood sixty years after the official end of slavery. Unfortunately, it was too early to experience substantial changes in their living conditions and in the lives of their children. I argue that from the perspective of Black women, mothering is the strength to transform the world to a habitable place where their children can have a dignified life, free of racism and with the minimum living conditions such as food, housing, and joy. In order for that to happen, they need to valorize their Blackness, the cultural and political importance of their heritage and themselves as Black women.

### **Diaspora - Looking for Mothering in the Mama Africa**

This section applies *Sankofa* and goes back to the African continent seeking to understand the meaning of motherhood before the experience of slavery, which modified Black women’s experience of mothering, and the meaning of motherhood in traditional African societies. I am not seeking to identify African survivals in Brazil, but to have the

minimum basis for understanding black motherhood as a “process of becoming, rather than being” (Hall, 1996; Santos, 1983; Vargas, 2006). After having a sense of our black mothering institution, I apply the meaning as a lens to understand the struggle of Black women in the *favelas* who empower themselves through their position as mothers that stands in the face of police brutality.

#### **OF IYALODE, ABIYAMO AND IYA MI – BLACK MOTHERS IN OUTRAGE**

Several scholars have engaged with the concept of othermothering and community mothers as a way to trace the roots of the traditional African worldview on mothering (Alves, 2012; Collins, 1993, 1994; Edwards, 2000; James, 1993; O’Reilly, 2004; Wells, 1998). The common argument is that othermothering has its roots in slavery and the consequent dismantlement of Black families. Thus, othermothering consists of the shared responsibility of nurturing and childcare, and, has fundamental “importance to the survival of the Black community” (James 1993, p. 45). According to this reasoning, othermothering was a cultural way that Black women found to ensure the survival of their children. Scholar Stanlie James (1993) suggests that this cultural strategy often leads women to become community mothers by addressing the community’s needs through social activism (p. 45). Although othermothering is a valuable category to understand the role these mothers exert in the communities, I want to allude to their tradition against violence since in traditional ancestors societies Black motherhood has always been a source of power.

The Asante Adinkra symbol *Sankofa* is usually associated with the proverb “[i]t is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten” (Nascimento, 2009). It reminds

us about the importance of knowing our history and acknowledging the struggle of our ancestors in order to enlighten our living today. To identify a Black woman's radical tradition in this chapter, I apply *Sankofa* as a way to testify to our struggle by acknowledging our importance in maintaining and nurturing the African Diaspora. I shadow scholar Jurema Werneck's (2007) initiative to go back to our past and learn from the women's political participation in African precolonial societies through the figure of the Iyalode. In the Yoruba power line political system, the Iyalodes are the most popularly known female power line where a female authority commands the respect of a group of warriors and is the major representative of women in the traditional council where the voice of women is heard (Sofola, 1998, p. 58-59). There were African women leaders and representatives in urban communities, emblematic women who took political action, spoke for their community, and inserted themselves into spaces of power seeking liberation from oppression (Werneck, 2007).

The term *Ialodê* also refers to the Yoruba deity Oxum, the female orisha of sensuality, willpower, and the ability to achieve change. The myth of Oxum unveils early Black women's struggles against institutionalized power. It points to the Black women's experience of poverty and suffering, despite their efforts, and shows a tradition of resistance through disobedience and a struggle for rights. As present in Werneck's article *Of Ialodês and Feminists* (2007), the myth says:

This is the story of a hardworking and determined woman named Oxum who, **despite her many efforts**, did not get to improve her life. As **she noticed** that nothing she did was good enough to **overcome her difficulties**, she decided to **seek help among the wise people in her community**. As always happens in such cases, she cast the cowries to **ask the orishas for guidance** and to find a way to solve her

problems. The answer came with the need to prepare and deliver an offering in the house of Orixalá, the king. The delivery should be accompanied by requests, **said out loud**, concerning everything Oxum needed so that she could move on with her life. And so it was done. Once the handsome offerings were ready, Oxum took them to the king's palace. When she got there, instead of asking, Oxum started to **curse the king**. She **accused him** of being unfair and opulent, while she, a hardworking and dedicated woman, could not have anything. Her curses thrown against Orixalá caused a stir and slowly **people gathered around** the king's house to see what was going on. Inside, hearing the crowd's murmurs, Orixalá summoned his advisors and asked for information. They told him that there was a woman who vigorously cursed the king, accusing him of all sorts of inequalities and injustices. Orixalá asked his advisors what to do and they recommended he give the woman a gift. And so it was quickly done. Receiving the gifts, **Oxum thanked them and continued her curses**, insisting on the injustice of a situation where the king accumulated wealth while she, **a fighter**, had very little. New gifts were given to her. More curses she threw at the palace, **in front of the whole town** that excitedly observed the accusations against the king whose sovereignty was being questioned. Inside the palace, the advisors continued to recommend that gifts be sent to Oxum. Finally, the king sent for her and, already inside the palace, ordered that she be given everything she wished. Thus, Oxum became the owner of all the gold and all the wealth (p. 104).<sup>17</sup>

Werneck affirms that the violent foundation of the African Diaspora in the Americas through the slave trade also transported cultural traces that helped in the rooting of African people; one of them was the figure of the *Ialodê* (2007, p. 102). Werneck traces the *Ialodês*'s travel and highlights their cultural and political importance in recognizing the inherited tradition of Black female leadership exercising political action. She notes:

In the case of Brazil, they [the *Ialodês*] can be seen in any Black community where women, taking leadership or collective roles of responsibility, develop actions in which a future is affirmed to all those subordinated to them. This takes place within the struggles to improve people's material conditions and in the development of behaviors and activities that seek to reclaim the pertinence and contemporary

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<sup>17</sup> The bold words are my addition. I want to call the reader's attention to the characteristics of Oxum's *luta [struggle]*, which, as will be seen throughout this dissertation, is very similar to the features of the mothers in resistance. It is not wrong to go back and read the bold words again after reading chapter 5. *Sankofa!*

relevance of an immaterial perspective (p. 104).

Today, the heritage of the *Ialodês* in Brazil can be found in the peripheries and *favelas* where many Black women fight against police brutality trying to ensure basic living conditions for their families as well as, for the community in general. As showed earlier in this chapter, these conditions encompass the lack of jobs, leisure, proper childcare, access to health, but above all, the extreme violence that their families face daily.

With the purpose of linking the figure of the *Ialodês* to the Black mothers' resistance in Brazil, I analyze the ways they represent and talk about themselves. The *Mães de Maio*, a social movement formed by mothers of victims of violence committed by the state in São Paulo, created the cartoon below in partnership with cartoonist and political activist Latuff (Illustration 3). It shows a figure of a Black woman, whose body is made by burnt-orange houses representing the *favelas*' brick houses. On the opposing side, the cartoon shows the representation of a white police officer wielding a gun with his finger on the trigger. The woman is represented as stronger and taller than the man is, and her facial expression shows flaring nostrils, eyebrows pulled down and together indicating anger. In contrast, the officer's facial expression is covered by a ninja mask, but suggests both surprise and fear through his open, wide eyes. The *Mães de Maio* posted this picture on their Facebook profile page in November, the Brazilian Black Awareness Month. The caption says, "THE FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITIES CLAIM: 'STOP THE KILLING.' #all against the genocide!! #Justice and peace in the peripheries of Sao Paulo and throughout Brazil." As indicated by the all-caps words, the Black woman figure

represents both the *favela* and the families. She holds and lifts the armed wing of the state and shows her power in protecting the Black population against genocide represented by the police officer (Mães de Maio, 2012).



Illustration 3 - Parem de Matar

Several mothers united through the *Rede*, shared this post on their own Facebook profiles and alluded to themselves in their struggle against police brutality, their main concern and focus of complaint. As an example, Deize Carvalho, whose story of activism and engagement with the *Rede* will appear in the following chapters, shared the post and said, “They will not silence my voice.” Deize makes use of the image to state that she is a fighter; she has claims and will not let threats silence her. As shown later on in the dissertation, the mothers’ organizing around both social movements—*Rede* and *Mães de*

*Maio*—imply that women must use their maternal roles as a driving force for their political actions. According to them, “mothers’ claims have power.”

Continuing with the Sankofa, I engage with Oyeronke Oyewumi’s (2003) analysis of the *Abiyamo* and Oyeronke Olajubu’s (2003) examination of the *Iya mi*. *Abiyamo* means mother in the Yoruba language, whereas *Iya mi* means the invocation “my mother!” as a cult to the ancestors’ mothers. According to Oyewumi, a mother “is not only the birth giver—motherhood being present at creation—she is also the life giver, making motherhood a lifelong vocation” (2003, p. 1). Through this reasoning, the bond created through birth, where two entities are born—mother and daughter/son—lasts forever and because of this Black motherhood is a position of power over the child and in society. Oyewumi says that mothers make use of their power every time she treats to curse the child to make them do something she wants, which is seen in the Yoruba tradition as the only curse without an antidote, thus feared. The author sustains that the role a mother plays in the child’s safety is expressed by the Yoruba saying “*omo k’oni ohun o ye, iya ni ko gba,*” which means “a child survives and thrives only at the mother’s will” (2003, p. 1). When in danger, distress, or pain, a child cries aloud for her mother by saying “*ori’ya mi o, e gba mi o*” (my mother’s ori, please save me).

Olujubu (2003) shows that Oxum is the great mother of the *Iya mi* society of powerful women. She is the one who people evoke when in danger or fear. She narrates the rescue of Iyanda Olayiwola-Olosun, who was an Oxum devotee. Olujubu recounts,

When his kidnappers took him to the forest to kill him, Osum appeared wearing a red dress, accompanied by many of her servants, to save him. [...] At the appearance of Osum, the kidnappers were rendered immobile. Osun instructed the kidnapped boy to walk in front of her but not to turn around. After only some minutes, the young man found himself near the palace in Osogbo. Osun touched him on the shoulders and left him with the words, “greet people at home.” The young man was thereafter reconciled with his worried family, who had appealed to Osun for his safety (p. 81).

As shown in the history above, the great ancestor mother Oxun is a whole model for resistance, courage and acts based on the power of motherhood. However, ethnographic data made me be careful in discussing Black women’s tradition against violence through notions associated with African ancestral societies. Many mothers whose experiences are analyzed in this dissertation are Christian and due to intolerance of Afro-Brazilian religions, they tend to neglect any association with African religious figures, such as the figure of Oxum. However, it is possible to perceive many traits in their practices that make evident cultural patterns in Black motherhood when trying to protect their children. For example, in an interview in 2010, Marilene, whose story is narrated in Chapter 4, told me, “Many times I found myself imagining how [Rosana] died. Did she call out for me? Did she ask for my help? Unfortunately, I was not there to defend her. This is agony for me.” Her will to protect and save her daughter, as well as her questioning if Rosana asked for her help is very similar to “*ori ’ya mi o, e gba mi o*” (my mother’s ori, please save me).

The activist women who participated in my research, especially the ones associated with the *Rede*, show a tremendous willingness to fight for justice in the cases that caused the death of their children. The bond created through birth and the view of motherhood as a lifelong event is evident in their practices. If they are no longer able to protect their

children, then their determination became to solve the case in order to help their sons and daughters rest in peace, so they can grieve. They are Abiyamo Ialodês whose *Iya mi* guides their activism. Similar to Oxum, their resistance encompasses the development of consciousness and constant evaluation of their situation. They study and prepare for their action, which is sustained by their outrage, courage, and stubbornness. However, as Marilene stated in an interview with me in 2010, “A person does not become a militant out of the blue. This is something that wakes up inside of you. Not all people who passed through this situation woke up.”

It is not my aim to romanticize and contribute to dangerous stereotypes of the idealized strong Black woman or mother, however, one cannot deny the countless acts of heroism carried out by women engaging in mothering traditions, such as Oxum and many others, such as Assata Shakur, Ella Baker, Ida B. Wells, and Luiza Mahin. According to Angela Davis (1983), “The source of their strength was not some mystical power attached to motherhood, but rather their concrete experiences of slavery” (p. 29), or as I add, any other context of oppression. These women, when they take action based on their outraged maternal grief, come to form a distinct political identity. These emotions are the driving force of their identification as a collective, and the principal source of power of their resistance to oppression.

Newspaper articles from three different countries that I visited between 2011 and 2012 called my attention because each displayed the similar *lutas* of black mothers who had sons killed. In the cities of Durham, North Carolina in the United States, Rio de Janeiro

in Brazil, and London England, black mothers used the media to give visibility to their *luta* and to call for justice. On March 20, 2011, Brenda James was a guest column writer for The Durham News. In her article entitled *When someone hurts, just listen*, James addresses the taboo of talking about a violent death to a mother who faced the violent death of a child. According to her, the most insensitive thing someone can do is to say that her child is now in a better place. She says, “In the hearts of those who love them there is no better place than right there, living and being productive citizens” (2011, para 2). Her son was killed at the age of 25 when visiting his girlfriend in the “wrong neighborhood” (para 8). Mrs. James evaluates that some lives are not seen as valuable, especially the ones that embody blackness. She affirms, “What hurting people ask for is justice, the same for everyone” (para 7). Brenda James closes the article advising people that the better thing that they can do for a hurting family is to listen, since “listening is so useful to people in pain” (para 10).

Deize Carvalho had her *luta* addressed in Rio de Janeiro’s newspaper Jornal O Dia on October 9, 2011. In the article *Ação de combate à tortura* (Galvão, 2011), Mrs. Carvalho addresses her suffering and strength to pursue justice and says, “It is necessary to have great courage” (para 7). She claims that other mothers denounce aggression inside juvenile correction facilities, where her son was brutally beaten to death. The article shows a picture of her wearing a black top tank that allows us to see the name of her son tattooed on her back. A picture of her son swimming is showed on the side. The same visual structure appears in the London newspaper Daily Mail in an article from April 23, 2012, where Doreen Lawrence “inspects flowers and messages left at the memorial plaque where her son Stephen, inset, was killed” (para 2). A picture of her son is shown on the side. Mrs.

Lawrence pursued a 19 year *luta* seeking justice for the murder of her son by a gang of white youth in an unprovoked knife attack. In the article *Nineteen years on a mother's pilgrimage* (McDermott, 2012), Mrs. Lawrence uses her suffering as a tool in her prominent campaign against racism. She has received partial justice for her loss, however it “remains a continuing source of pain that three other men arrested alongside the pair during the original investigation are still walking free” (para 7).

Different from Oxum, these mothers are not able to take the gold and the wealth from the groups in power. However, they scratch the surface of the state's armor with their *luta*, and we can learn from them. I suggest that the political action of Black women from the *favelas* has its roots in notions of motherhood and maternal politics present in the African Diaspora.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have shown how racist notions towards African people in Brazil created by early anthropologists in the 1890s through the 1940s has shaped the social imagery about Black Brazilians until today. Although utilized as a prescription and seeing as an alternative to the biological mother, Black women were seen as impure and degenerate to Brazilian society because of their capacity to generate Blackness through birth and mothering. They were seen as responsible for transmitting cultural practices and behaviors. Throughout Brazilian history, the logic of extermination of the Black population through eugenic practices masked in government ineffectiveness has made it so that we became the majority involved in criminality. Furthermore, this social imagery of Black

motherhood makes it such that many mothers are seen in society in particular ways – negligent, violent. Racist discourses associated with the notion of Black women’s immorality and inherent decadence have paved the way for them to be called *mãe de bandido* [mother of bandit]. Organized groups of Black people such as in the Teatro Experimental do Negro [Black Experimental Theater] have taken on these racist representations and associations. Black activists Abdias Nascimento and Maria Nascimento published the *Quilombo* along with many other activities and organizations such as Criola, continues to try and change society, identifying Black women as having significant value in Brazilian society.

Black women in *luta* also see this necessity, and in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, black women’s discourses provide a counter-narrative to the societal attitudes towards them. In her poetry, mother in *luta* Deize Carvalho says, “God in His sovereignty gave the woman the possibility of giving birth to a child. The man with his tyranny and cowardice, because he uses the emblem of the State [which] should [be used to] safeguard and protect, erases [from] the life of a mother all the beauty of the ‘salt of life’ in a cruel act.” Similar to the mother in this poem, many others have children who are victims of homicide. In the next chapters, I will show the ways in which Black mothers, who had their motherline interrupted in Rio de Janeiro, react to recuperate themselves, their pedagogies of resistance, and to demand the end of the anti-Black genocide.

## CHAPTER 2 – VIOLENT PEACE: THE “TRADED SYSTEM” AND GENDERED ASPECTS OF BLACK LAND OCCUPATION

É inaceitável que o estado extermine nossos filhos. É inaceitável que o estado criminalize a pobreza. É inaceitável que o estado não invista em políticas sociais. É inaceitável o estado ter uma política só para matar.<sup>18</sup>

(Debora Silva, Movimento Mães de Maio)

As notícias cotidianas vão fazendo a crônica da microfísica do poder e dos interstícios do medo: tiroteios no morro das Laranjeiras, africanos portando armas já assustavam “os proprietários” naquele tempo.<sup>19</sup>

(Vera Malaguti Batista. O medo na Cidade do Rio de Janeiro. 2003)

Brazil hosted the World Cup in 2014 and will host the Olympic Games in 2016. As the city prepared for the mega events, it was possible to see a legacy of blood, fear, and exclusion that is a part of many kinds of Human Rights violations.<sup>20</sup> Mega-event planning,

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<sup>18</sup> Translation - It is unacceptable that the state exterminates our children. It is unacceptable for the state to criminalize poverty. It is unacceptable that the state does not invest in social policies. It is unacceptable that the state has a policy just to kill.

<sup>19</sup> Translation - The daily news will chronicle the microphysics of power and the interstices of fear: shootings on the hill of Laranjeiras, Africans carrying weapons who were already frightened "owners" at that time.

<sup>20</sup> The chapter will focus on public safety, but the report *Mega Eventos e Violação dos Direitos Humanos no Rio de Janeiro [Mega Events and Human Rights Violations in Rio de Janeiro]* documents cases of human rights violations in housing, urban mobility, labor, public safety, and participation committed by the Brazilian government in its preparation for the upcoming sports mega-events (Comite Popular da Copa Rio, nd).

particularly in Rio de Janeiro, has been used as an excuse to advance an exclusionary social-racial agenda. In this chapter, informed by the perspective of Black women living in areas of UPPs (*Unidades de Polícias Pacificadoras* or Pacification Police Units), I analyze the implementation of this policy in Rio de Janeiro and the gendered aspects of land occupation--socially and symbolically.<sup>21</sup> How do violent social experiences affect the everyday lives of Black women? How are patriarchal structures maintained in these territories in relation to the Black female body? What kinds of practices are created in the communities as a consequence of daily encounters with the state? In this chapter, I address these questions and show the impact of the current public security policy and its material and symbolic outcomes in Black women's lives.

On April 3, 2012, I went to an Easter celebration at the *Educandário Santo Expedito*, in Bangu, in northern Rio. The unit is part of the DEGASE – *Departamento Geral de Ações Socioeducativas* [General Department of Socio and Educational Actions]. The DEGASE is an institution linked to the Department of Education and responsible for the implementation of social and educational measures applied by the judiciary to youth in conflict with the law. I was invited by Maria do Carmo Moreira de Lima, Kaka, a Black women cleric of the Brazilian Methodist Church who has worked for DEGASE since its inception in 1994. The event aimed to promote family and community interaction, one of the missions of DEGASE.

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<sup>21</sup> UPPs are the model applied by the state of Rio de Janeiro as its main public security policy. More explanation bellow

The van driver advised, “Santo Expedito.” It was our stop. “We just need to go ahead on this street,” Kaka let me know. In front of us, six other women walked in the same direction. We walked and soon there appeared alongside us a very high wall with barbed wire on the top. Waiting at the door, about 20 women were waiting outside. No one spoke, no one looked, no one got close to one another, as if each individual was preparing her soul for the violating experience that routinely awaited them. Every time they go visit their friends and family members, they need to take off all of their clothes, touch their genitals and squat and rise repeatedly to prove the absence of any illegal object in their bodies, such as drugs or weapons.<sup>22</sup> The tall blue gate opened and the women started to enter. A security guard asked them to go to a corner. “Good morning, pastor!” “Good morning! This is Luciane; she is doing work with me.” We were good to go. The women stayed in a line waiting for their moment. Shame on all of us. Some for having to be violated, others for having the privilege to avoid it.

We headed to the school inside of the unit, Gildo Candido School, where I met the director, some professors, and a Rasta social scientist who tries to engage the youth with racial and social content through reggae. They were doing the latest preparations and I helped them cut the paper for the event’s agenda to distribute to the almost 200 male teenage inmates. The event had two turns. In the morning, the celebration was for family members of teens who were part of areas commanded by the gang *Comando Vermelho*

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<sup>22</sup> In June 2014, the Brazilian Senate approved a law that forbade intimate searches in all Brazilian prisons and socio-educational schools (Gabriela Guerreiro, 2014).

(CV). The mothers were welcomed to sit in the chairs arranged in a circle in the sport court, where an altar was prepared. About 20 minutes later, the almost 150 adolescents started to enter one by one with their hands behind their backs. Tense looking agents of discipline stand in one of the corners close to the door. The majority of them were Black, both the agents and the teens. Some of them opened their arms to hug their mothers, others enjoyed the moment close to the family of their friends. However, the majority had no one to participate in the proposed interaction and stayed sitting close to the court wall chatting and waiting for the moment that the professors served the food. The teens created two circles: the inside circle was teens with family, the outside one was without. According to Kaka, the latter are the least likely to resocialize. “Are you okay, my son?” asks the mother sitting in front of me. “I am, mom” “Are you telling me the truth?” reinforced the women looking at the arms and legs of her boy.

The celebration continued. We had a one-hour break and the same thing happened again, now for teens from the areas of the *Terceiro Comando Puro* (TCP) and *Amigo dos Amigos* (ADA). The difference was that we did the celebration in a garden area, since the number of teens in the afternoon shift was only about fifteen. “Aunt, do you wanna know what I will do when I leave? I will go back to drug trafficking. I have no future. That is fine. Everybody dies in this life. *Fé em Deus* [Faith in God]!” said an intimidating teen after I let him know that I could not go outside to buy a battery for his radio. Another teen saw me documenting the event for Kaka and asked me to take a picture of him with his

mother. “She is my queen,” he said after giving her a kiss.<sup>23</sup> I asked Kaka about the disparity in the number of teens in each turn and she alerted me, “didn’t you pay attention? They only install UPPs in the *Comando Vermelho*.”<sup>24</sup>

Julio Ludemir, a specialist about the *Comando Vermelho* explains,

Although CV has suffered heavy casualties such as Rocinha [which was taken by the gang ADA several years before the installation of a UPP] it still dominated the Ladeira dos Tabajaras, Santa Marta, Cantagalo, Complexo do Alemão, favela de Santa Tereza. The CV had the domain of the major slums of Rio de Janeiro, which coincided with the slums that were pacified (O Estado, o Comando Vermelho e a crise das UPPs, n.d., para 6).

And Debora Silva, the activist mother who was part of the movement Mães de Maio goes deeper:

The prison system is bankrupt, [it] is a bandit maker, and is not [meant] to recover anyone. Now ... he leaves the system with the death penalty imposed. They [the ones in the system] kill and the rotten media screams, "He has been in the system." The poor do not live in the suburbs because they want to. They do not become a criminal because they want to. It is because the system does not give them the opportunity to live with dignity (Speech in Deize’s event).

My participation in the Easter celebration in Santo Expedito drew my attention to the faceless deals masked in the actions of state institutions and people that profit from the poverty and the criminalization of Black bodies and territories. The visit also had me notice how the criminalization of the youth, especially young Black men, is transferable to their

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<sup>23</sup> Kaka does not know the whereabouts of the first boy, but she maintains contact with the one who asked me to take his picture, who is free and working. She showed me that he posted the picture taken that afternoon with his mother under the caption, “I Love You Too Much. You never left me. My true love. When I needed it, I found the strength to fight for you and you supported me to the end. I love you.”

mothers as they continue to mother them inside the institutions. The media portrays them as “*Mães de Bandido*,” a category that either criminalizes them as negligent or romanticizes them as heroic women. In both cases, they are seen as the only ones responsible for the success or failure of their children. They do not consider how Black youth’s disillusionment is created by the shadowed actions of the system.

In this chapter, I theorize the women’s experiences of violence in the context of the installation of the UPPs. This chapter is divided into five sections: In the first section, I present the original plan for a change to the Brazilian public security policy entitled PRONASCI and what it has become in Rio de Janeiro due to the preparation to host mega-events. In the second section, I show how symbolic violence toward the female Black body unveils the sexist aspects of Black land occupation. In the third section, I analyze the media’s consumption of Black suffering in the context of the violent peace in the traded-system, i.e., the state and the media act to ensure terror with terror as a way to sell peace. In the fourth section, I show how funk, a type of rhythmic music, originated in the *favelas* as a counter-narrative to cultural hegemony, has been dispossessed from the *favelas* and transformed into a commodity from which the elites profit. The last section focuses on Black motherhood *de-killing* acts, the acts of courage of mothers whose sons are already condemned to death by the traded-system. I suggest that patriarchy and racism operate in the formation of the discourses that allows for the management of Black suffering in Rio. This manipulation permits actions that affect the lives of Black people in impoverished communities, ultimately affecting Black women’s lives and their experiences of motherhood.

## Deals for “Peace”

In order to be competitive to host the sports mega-events, the city of Rio de Janeiro had to identify and propose solutions for any challenges to the events’ success. Public security, social mobility, and the size and infrastructure of airports were characterized as problems and, consequently, urban reforms such as the revitalization of the port region, the construction of roads and the clearance of *favelas* were feverishly pursued through an unprecedented partnership between the municipal, state, and federal governments (Rolnik, 2011). Nevertheless, the installation of UPPs in Rio’s *favelas* was advanced as the solution to violence in the city and a priority to demonstrate Rio’s preparedness to host the events.

The Mega-events’ preparation accelerated, while altering the implementation of the national public security policy, PRONASCI--*Programa Nacional de Segurança Pública com Cidadania* [National Program for Public Security and Citizenship] (Brasil 2007). Launched in 2007 during the first year of Lula’s second presidency, the PRONASCI had great participation from members of the civil society in its formulation through roundtables and workshops held throughout different Brazilian states. I was an adviser on the National Youth Council between 2006-07 representing Criola and I remember being invited along with other advisers to a meeting in the Presidential Palace with the then Federal Deputy, Antonio Biscaia, whose committee was preparing the PRONASCI proposal. The goal was to solve the problem of violence before it happened with a series of policies for prevention rather than only repression. However, since the PRONASCI was created, its purpose was gradually ignored and distorted. The original proposal was to reduce the number of homicides in the country. The project acknowledged that Brazil is among the countries with

the highest numbers of homicides in the world and, perhaps for the first time in state history, that Black youth were the main victims. However, this goal was practically ignored by the state governments.

In the proposal, the PRONASCI combines security policies with social action, emphasizes prevention and seeks to eliminate the causes that lead to violence, without giving up strategies for social order and public safety. Not surprisingly, in addition to the public safety professionals, PRONASCI also has as target audience of youth ages 15 to 29 on the verge of crime, who are or have been in conflict with the law, prisoners or former convicts, and further reservists, likely to join gangs as a function of teaching weapon handling or learned during their military service. Among the main points of PRONASCI, the ones that stand out are the valuation of public safety professionals, the restructuring the prison system, combating police corruption, and the involvement of the community in violence prevention. The program consists of 94 actions involving the federal government, states, municipalities, and community. Some highlights are:

- The *Bolsa-Formação* [Training Scholarship]—in this project, public safety professionals receive financial stimuli to study and work in the communities.
- The *Formação Policial* [Police Training]—aims to provide scientific training to police officers in partnership with 66 Brazilian universities. Examples of the courses are DNA forensics, ballistic testing, and investigations and developing non-lethal technologies;
- *Mulheres da Paz* [Women of Peace]—trains female community leaders in topics such as ethics, human rights and citizenship, to bring young people to engage in the activities of the PRONASCI.
- *Protejo* [Protect]—in this project, the youth would receive a scholarship to work as multipliers of the philosophy transmitted to them by the *Mulheres da Paz* in order to reach other young men and women and their families.

- *Sistema Prisional* [Prison System]—in this initiative, young people between 18- and 24 years old would have differentiated prison units aiming to separate them by age and crime. The goal is to prevent those who have committed minor offenses from being contaminated by the influence of organized crime. This project also aims to restructure the prison system by having correctional officers meet certain standards.
- *Plano Nacional de Habitação para Profissionais de Segurança Pública* [National Housing Plan for Public Safety Professionals]—would make available popular housing units to security professionals with low-income. And finally, the *Ministérios e Secretarias Parceiras* [Ministries and Departments Partner] project, which encourages partnerships with ministries and departments to ensure upgrading works to recover urban spaces and the improvement of infrastructure in communities (BRASIL, 2007).

I believe that, if properly implemented, the PRONASCI would be a good start for bringing positive results to the racial-social problem of violence in Rio. However, since it depends on the appropriate action of local and state level governments, in states such as Rio, for example, it became a wage supplement for police officers and the policy lost sight of its goals. In the book *Segurança e Cidadania – Memórias do Pronasci*, Secretary Beltrame admits that his team chose the areas of PRONASCI that could meet their goals of valorizing police officers, thus “opting for the training scholarship, housing investment and investment in tactical training and equipment” (Ferreira and Britto 2010, p. 266). None of these actions aimed to reduce homicides against Black youth, the group most susceptible to lethal violence (INESC, 2012). Indeed, data on violence points to the reduction of homicide rates, but an increase in disappearing bodies and resisting arrests. Between 2012 and 2013, more than 6 thousand people disappeared in Rio de Janeiro (Carpes, 2013).

According to the provisional measures and laws instituted to the PRONASCI, the first step of this public safety program is the police occupation of urban areas with high

rates of violence. The occupation and “pacification”<sup>25</sup> of these areas and the implementation of social services constitutes what the program calls “Territories of Peace,” renamed in Rio de Janeiro as Pacification Police Units (UPP). According to the UPP website, the project followed the model of the public security implemented in Medellín, Colômbia. In the article *Pacifying Rio: What's Behind Latin America's most Talked About Security Operation*, Flavie Halais (2013) points to “Brazil's ambitions to become a major economic and military player on the Latin American and international stages, notably in the war on drugs” (para 15). The author argues that it is a strategy put forward by Brazil’s government, as the country has been “lobbying for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council for years, and sought to prove its reliability by running the military wing of the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti.” (para 16). In fact, the government affirms that the Brazilian army officers participated in operations in Port-au-Prince as a way to perfect its counterinsurgency and slum-securitization techniques. In October 2011, the Argentinian government sent Anthropologist Sabina Frederic to visit the “pacified” Cidade de Deus. The Brazilian government invited her because “Argentina might be interested in implementing a similar program in Buenos Aires slums” (Garlow, 2011). This articulation and sharing of strategies of military institutions indicate that far from being a “Rio thing,” the militarization of impoverished areas is an international trend in “democratic” countries, which leads Halais to ask “how does a democratic country on the path to economic prosperity come to view warfare as the preferable solution to dealing with a matter of

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25 I use the words “pacification” and “conquest” in quotation marks to stress my criticism of the normalized use of militaristic language when the state refers to Black neighborhoods.

national policing?” A more succinct answer is that these are racist states that deploy the use of genocide to favor dominant interests (Vargas, 2010; Nascimento, 1978).

Theorizing the US context, Vargas (2005) describes genocide as a multidimensional phenomenon that,

is expressed in deadly physical violence, institutionalized discrimination by and in the police, courts, and legislatures; physical terror, economic and political marginalization, and militarization. These various facets highlight that, at the core of the Black genocidal process in the U.S., resides a set of dominant values and representations that dehumanizes Blacks, excludes them from the realm of the good society, and justifies their continued disrespect and death (269–70).

According to Vargas, in the Brazilian context “the Black genocidal process” also encompasses “a high infant mortality, premature death, medical treatment deficiency, the lack of competitive education and economic opportunities, and chronic depression” (Vargas, 2010a, p. 50). Sonia Santos (2008) contributes to this argument by adding maternal mortality and the forced sterilization of Black women as components of the phenomenon of Black genocide. She suggests that “the failure of state policies to secure the existence of these women can be taken as an intentional action against them and their communities, which constitutes a form of genocide” (2008, p. 38). Vargas and Santos’s arguments suggest that both the direct discriminatory actions of the state and its failure to provide for the needs of the Black population produce prejudice and contribute to genocide.

Based on that reasoning, the network RAIAR (Red Antiracista, nd), while preparing a comparative study between six countries in South America, hypothesized the end of an expansion of Black and Indigenous collective rights after the election of left wing presidents or minority presidents such as Lula Silva and Dilma Rouseff in Brazil, Barack

Obama in the US, and Evo Morales in Bolivia. Thus, according to the hypothesis, the end of expansion would be the “rise of a successor project to neoliberal multiculturalism, in which strategic redistribution of the rents from economic dynamism is allowing states to achieve effective hegemony with little concern for rights grounded in cultural difference.” (n.p)

In Rio, the (non)regulation of the UPPs suggests that the state was not compelled to justify its acts. The decree number 41.650 establishing the UPPs has just 18 lines. Signed by Governor Sergio Cabral in January 21, 2009, it “considers that the military police of Rio de Janeiro needs a specialized and technical troop prepared and adapted to execute action concerning the pacification and maintenance of public order in impoverished communities,” thus, creating the UPPs to execute actions in such areas (DO, 2009). It gives responsibilities to the Public Security Secretary to establish the requirements and the allocations of police officers in the communities. Lacking definitions, the law does not provide any meaning regarding the concept of “pacification” or “public order.” On January 6, 2011, Sergio Cabral published the decree number 42.787, which provides information about the implementation, structure, performance, and operation of the UPPs. On March 3, 2011, the Secretary of Public Security Beltrame published resolution number 443, which consolidated the creation of UPPs in 12 areas already occupied by a conjunction of military forces--SWAT-like units--involving the police and the army.<sup>26</sup> According to the decree,

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<sup>26</sup> The areas were Santa Marta, Batan, Babilonia e Chapeu Mangueira, Pavão Pavãozinho e Cantagalo, Tabajaras e Cabritos, Borel, Formiga, Andaraí, Salgueiro, Providencia, Turano e Macacos. Another four UPPs

the areas potentially covered by UPP “are understood by those poor communities with low institutional organization and high degree of informality in the installation of blatantly opportunistic armed criminal groups affront the democratic rule of law” (D.O., 2011). The objectives established are: 1) to consolidate state control over communities under strong influence of armed crime; and 2) to return peace and tranquility necessary for the exercise of full citizenship that guarantees both social and economic development for the local population. According to the Secretary of Public Security of Rio de Janeiro, the UPPs aim to rescue areas of the city controlled by gangs by expelling them, and by doing that, to bring peace and security to the people (Beltrame, 2009).

There is a historical precedent of Brazilian elites regaining control of the *favelas* located in the privileged areas of the city. State repossessions of land have been carried out in areas where Black and indigenous people reside in Brazil. Already active in 38 *favelas*, the installation of UPPs started with a concentration in four areas of the city--near the richest areas and hotels in south Rio, in Jacarepaguá, near Maracanã Stadium, and in the port area in downtown Rio. In the case of the Black population, the continuous dismantling of quilombos<sup>27</sup> since the seventeenth century, the removal of cortiços (tenement houses) in the eighteenth century, and the ongoing displacement of favelas are the most notorious

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would be installed in 2011, currently there are 38, and the public Security Secretary aims to reach 40 by the end of 2014 (UPP – Historico).

<sup>27</sup> *Quilombos* were settlements of escaped slaves during colonization. The *Quilombo dos Palmares*, is the most famous and discussed in scholar Cedric Robinson’s book *Black Marxism* (2000). Nowadays, these settlements’ descendants, called *quilombolas*, are still struggling for their lands to be recognized by the government.

events in the struggle for land. By the late nineteenth century, millions of ex-slaves had been released from formal slavery into an unwelcoming, openly racist society that provided preto (Black) and pardo (brown/mixed) Brazilians with very few opportunities for employment, education, healthcare, and housing. Housing was--and still is--a pivotal issue, and many went on to live in cortiços in and around the city center, which were then demolished by local authorities for various discriminatory reasons. Subsequently, the thousands of cortiço dwellers who were left homeless took advantage of the leftover debris and constructed makeshift shacks on hills in and around the city center. These displaced cortiço inhabitants, most of whom were ex-slaves, were among the first generation of favela dwellers, or favelados, along with slaves who were veteran soldiers of the Canudos war (Campos, 2005).

It is possible to trace the consequences of these events to the present day. The study *Retrato das Desigualdades de Gênero e Raça* [Portrait of Race and Gender Inequalities] by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (Pinheiro et al., 2008) shows that between 1993 and 2007, the percentage of Brazilian households located in *favelas* or similar conditions increased from 3.2% to 3.6%. While this percentage may seem relatively low, the total *favela* population represents a universe of 2 million households, or at least 8 million people. If we analyze the households' race and gender in the *favelas*, we find that 39.4% of these households are headed by Black men, 26.8% by Black women, 21% by white men and 12.8% by white women. According to the study, this distribution shows the predominance of the Black population living in *favelas*. Examining data from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), scholar João Costa Vargas shows that in the

municipality Rio de Janeiro, “although Blacks and browns comprise 46% of its total population, in Rio’s ten poorer neighborhoods, 63% of their inhabitants classified themselves as either Black or brown” (Vargas, nd). According to Vargas, this demonstrates a correlation between race, social class (or income), and territory. Therefore, the UPPs contribute to the already historical criminalization of poverty within public policies that support the militarization and the state of exception, defined by Giorgio Agamben (2005) as a suspension of rights, law, and constitutional order. The police operations create an antagonism between the state and racialized bodies, which leads to the population living in such areas at the center of a struggle for daily state sovereignty, abuse, and terror as the ongoing public security is implemented.

Black activists such as Rumba Gabriel, a resident of Jacarezinho, and Deley, a resident of Acari, have called the military occupation that led to the installation of a UPP as “*invasão do quilombo*” [quilombo invasion]. According to Mariano Beltrame, the general UPP strategy is to widely announce and publicize the date and time of the police incursion into the *favela*. For example, on June 15, the newspaper *O Globo* published the article “*Mangueira será ocupada pelo Bope no domingo*” [Mangueira will be occupied by BOPE on Sunday]. The article’s sub-heading reads, “*Polegar, chefe do trafico, ja teria deixado o morro*” [Polegar, chief of trafficking, has already left the hill] (Goulard, 2011). On June 26, 2011, days before the occupation of Mangueira, *O Globo* published, “*Contando os dias para a UPP – Moradores, comerciantes e ate bandidos já se preparam para pacificação de favelas*” [Counting the days to UPP--Residents, merchants and even gangsters are preparing for the pacification of the *favelas*] (Schmidt and Merola 2011). The

second step is to take control of the entrances of the neighborhood so that every person who wants to leave or enter the area is searched (Chiaverini, 2011).

The strategy to occupy the *favelas* is similar in all of the neighborhoods. The incursion starts from the bottom to the top of the hills of the *favelas*, with the police searching the houses for drugs, arms, and large amounts of money. The latter is summarily considered to be associated with drug trafficking. The occupation of a *favela* is considered complete when BOPE officers<sup>28</sup> plant the Rio de Janeiro and Brazilian flags at the highest point of the *favela*, or on a symbolic place in the “occupied” land, such as at the house of a gang leader. In the days following the occupation, the police, along with other state institutions, start the process of “pacification,” which in theory would be the implementation of public services and the development of sociocultural activities.

Cleonice Dias, a community organizer in the “pacified” Cidade de Deus neighborhood, rationalizes:

We, who are from the *favela*, know that the UPP is connected to public approval and their claims that the state needs to take control of the communities. They say the city is secure because, we, the poor and Blacks, are controlled and thus all of the investments for the mega-events can come. We want to believe that this program will become a public security policy and that all people will be really secure, because people from the *favelas* are not secure yet (“Do Olho do Furacão,” 2011, p. 37).

Two of the most repressive police operations carried out in the *favelas*--and perhaps why they are so outstanding in the eyes of the media--were the installation of the UPPs in

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28 BOPE, *Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais* - Special Police Operation Battalion, is a specialized squad within the military police known for its Black uniforms and “shoot to kill” practices in *favelas*. The officers from BOPE refer to themselves as *caveiras* (skulls). (PMERJ, n.d.)

the Vila Cruzeiro and Complexo do Alemão neighborhoods in 2010. These joint police-military operations--complete with tanks, helicopters, and 2,600 police officers--were broadcast live on television and there were numerous reports of abuses by state security agents, including torture, the looting of homes and businesses of residents, and summary executions (Chiaverini, 2011; Rede Globo, 2010).

In August 2012, I met Sheila Andrade at Entrada da Grota, one of the access points to Complexo do Alemão.<sup>29</sup> Sheila is a Black woman, born and raised in *favela do Alemão* who was trained to be a *Mulher da Paz* [Woman of Peace] in the context of the PRONASCI and could give me privileged information. She works as a talk show host on a community radio station and is a mother of six children. In 2007, when Rio de Janeiro hosted the Pan-American Games and before the installation of the UPPs, members of the army and the military police occupied selected areas of Rio, targeting the *favelas*. Sheila's daughter was wounded by a stray bullet fired during a police operation. During that year alone, the police killed 1,330 people--80 percent of whom were Black (Cano & Ribeiro, 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2009). Sheila recalls:

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<sup>29</sup> Complexo do Alemão comprises sixteen *favelas* in the northern zone of Rio de Janeiro. As stated in the introduction of this dissertation, I did not conduct fieldwork in a specific area or neighborhood in Rio. Rather, my goal was to interact with the mothers in struggle through their participation in the *Rede Contra a Violência*. Regarding the Complexo do Alemão, I visited the *favela* four times. The first time was in 2011, when I took a group of about 17 University of Texas students to help two activist of the *Rede* to record complaints throughout the *favela*. By that time, the military forces had occupied the favela for more than 8 months. The second time was to visit a friend who is a resident of Alemão. On that occasion, I had the opportunity to take the newly opened cable car, which connects the 13 communities that forms the Complexo do Alemão. The other two times were to interview Sheila and Andreia, both working as *Women of Peace*.

I'd leave home to go to work and tell my kids to go to the bedroom, to the corner of the bedroom, in case a shooting happens, because I knew nothing would happen to them there. On that day, I left for work and a truck was blocking the exit of the *favela*. I never should have gone to work that day. I messed-up all my clothes with mud because I had to crawl under the truck. Everyone was saying, "There will be a war! There will be a war!" Then I found out that around nine in the morning the shooting began, then stopped and started again. In that break, my kids went to the backyard. The war is so common here in the community that sometimes we have a shooting, everybody disappears, then it is suddenly all calm again, and people will be taking care of their business. On that day, people did not know the severity of what was happening. So, when it stopped, my kids thought it was the end. They were playing in the backyard when the shooting restarted. They ran to their grandmother's house, but my mother-in-law's *barraco* [wooden shack] cannot stop a [high-power] rifle bullet. [The *barraco*] was all shot, and one of the bullets went through my daughter's leg. We live with fear. Did you see the rifles? A gunfight can happen at any time here (Andrade, 2012).

Black mothers continue to live in fear in the *favelas*. Sheila explains that her concern about an imminent shooting is based on the continued military police occupation of the area. In her words, "Before, the rifles were from the bandits. Now they are from the police. Both scare us." On the day we met, many people were coming and going at Entrada da Grota. I recall an elderly woman selling fruit on a workbench; noisy motorcycles speeding up the hill; a man in a van announcing a departure to downtown; two children in soccer shoes smiling as they arrived to the playing field; a young woman observing the neighborhood from her balcony; seventeen police officers carrying rifles standing on the sidewalk, and three others running in formation, pistols in hand. Just another afternoon in the "pacified" Alemão.

About the day the UPP was installed in Alemão, she remembered:

Saturday night [the night before the police operation in Complexo de Alemão] was the worst night in the *favela*. There were no places to buy food

nearby. Everything was closed for three days. We had nothing to eat at home. At night, the worst horror of my life happened: my brother arrived and asked us to leave the house because we lived in a location that would be caught in the crossfire in the neighborhood. I cried. I grabbed my clothes, a few things, and left to another city with my mother, children, husband, brothers, everyone. [Sheila returned to the *favela* but decided to leave to protect her son who remained. When he returned] the *favela* was very weird because the BOPE [police especial battalion] was here and they were recruiting informants. Not all cops are here for the safety of people, you know? We lived an awful month here in Complexo--with lots of terror.

She continued;

We'd be inside the house and suddenly a police officer or soldier of the army would enter without respect for our rights. They have to search, but there is a procedure for this. Once the police invaded my home, I was behind the door and it hurt me. I said, "Look, I was here preparing an assignment for my class and you hurt me." "Do you prefer a bandit here?" he asked. "No, I'm just saying," I replied. "It doesn't appear to be! The *morro* [hill, *favela*] is the way it is because of you, bitch, who covers up criminals." He cannot say that to me. He doesn't know me. I work and live here. How can I deal with that every day?" (Andrade, 2012)

Sheila's narrative illustrates a controversial strategy in the installation of UPPs--the search. Vociferously criticized by human rights organizations, this tactic demonstrates the state's disrespect for the rules of law by suppressing Article V of the Brazilian Constitution.<sup>30</sup> The search implies that any resident who tried to prevent the entry of police would be treated as a suspect. Duarte's search practices would have been explicitly challenged if they were applied in rich areas of Rio. The ease with which the search is conducted in the *favelas* reflects a historical construct that guides the actions of the public

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30 Item XI of Article V of the Brazilian Constitution of 1988 says, "the home of the individual is inviolable place, no one may enter without consent of the resident, except in case of caught committing an offense or disaster, or to provide relief, or during the day, by court order." (SENADO FEDERAL, n.d.).

security apparatus of the state of Rio de Janeiro and labels the *favelas* as enemy territory and its dwellers as potential criminals. In this context of conquest, far from being protected, women are subject to illegal body searches by male agents, who use abusive and discriminatory language and intimidate them, thus violating other Brazilian laws that say that searches can only be done by an agent of the same sex. Violations based on sexist and patriarchal actions linked to the racist state of exception in the favelas are both physical and symbolic. These violations are addressed in the following subsection of this chapter.

As a way to resist to such violations, residents and NGOs of Complexo da Maré created a booklet containing policing protocol proposing adjustments to the police conduct, defining responsibilities and greater popular participation in community decisions (Observatorio de Favelas, 2014). According to Mario Simon, director of the NGO, “No one disputes that the UPP is a breakthrough because they interrupt the classic problem that is the police seeing the territory as an enemy, and the people who live there as an enemy population.” (n.p.) For Simon, it is necessary to abandon the view that the *favela* is a territory dominated by barbarism and that needs to be colonized. He argues,

One example is the practice of getting and planting the flag of Brazil, BOPE, or Military Police [when the military force considers that they had successfully occupied the *favela*]. This has a terrible symbolic importance, the booklet points to the need to change this practice, since it is a gesture that reinforces to the resident the idea that she/he lives in a place that is outside of the city, of civilization. (n.p)

There are six proposed changes: 1) Identification of police and soldiers in any action; 2) Presentation of individual warrants for entry into private homes; 3) Interventions should prioritize actions of intelligence and arms control to dismantle criminal networks; 4) Agents must not discriminate by race or generation and consider the Statute of Children

and Adolescents (ECA); 5) Mediation of conflicts should be done through a community ombudsman, and; 6) to evaluate actions frequently, with the presence of the Command of the Armed Forces, police, residents, and local organizations meetings. Perhaps, the adoption of these measures would break the logic of war instilled in the *favelas* that sees men as enemies and women as part of the conquest.

Turning to technology, the residents have given visibility to their problems and provided alternative information to the population. Several blogs and Facebook pages illustrate how residents record videos with a cell phone camera, their main tool of social control against police abuse, and post them. For example, Complexo do Alemão has a Facebook profile page maintained by an anonymous person. People used to post a short note tagging the Alemão profile every time someone heard a shooting or any strange activity in the *favela*. Instantly each one of the 12,463 people who are connected to the profile received the news, including Human Rights activists, alternative media, and most importantly, the general population. In addition, community based news agencies upload constant reports about problems in the communities onto their YouTube channels (AND Produções, 2013). People record the bad actions of police officers such as a case where an officer was clearly drugged and threatening people who were at a party; this video was shared on Facebook. And yet, well-known activists in the community, such as Deize Carvalho, use their own pages as an open site to make criticisms of the system. However, these activities receive critiques from police officers, who also comment on these posts and show their discontent about the lack of video recordings on drug trafficking.

In addition, human rights activists have denounced the brutality and everyday terror experienced by the population. While working with the *Rede Contra a Violência*, I participated in trips to different *favelas* to collect testimonies about human rights violation and other types of violence. In Pavão Pavãozinho, I heard testimonies of torture, the arbitrary ending of birthday parties, the use of a gas bomb warning and how it contributed to the death of a child who had bronchitis, forged resisting arrests,<sup>31</sup> police officers provoking fights in a bar, the shooting of residents that confront police actions, and torture inside the UPP. In Santa Marta, the main issue is the real estate speculation, the prohibition of housing reforms and attempts to remove homes from the top of hill alleging that the area is at risk. I participated as a photographer assisting the civil engineer Mauricio Campos, a volunteer advisor to Rio-based social movements who had been invited by Santa Marta residents to conduct a technical assessment and produce a second report about the necessity of removal. The Foundation Geo-Rio produced a report stating that 150 houses at the top of Santa Marta needed to be removed. In the engineer's counter report, he clearly shows that they just need upgraded, and that construction done by the municipality indicated the possibility of living there. However, residents reported the visits of engineers working for a famous executive who wanted to construct a restaurant there, which explains the controversial report supporting the removal. In Complexo do Alemão, residents' fear and distrust convey the feelings of living under severe surveillance. As one woman said, "here

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<sup>31</sup> The Brazilian Code of Criminal Procedure authorizes the use of force by the police authority in self-defense or upon third parties in cases of resisting arrest and in cases of attempted escape, as long as the police officer writes a report narrating what happened. Chapter 4 describes resisting arrest in greater detail.

we live under the law known as ‘I have not seen, not heard, I do not know.’ Everybody is still here [drug dealers] and everybody is watching us [the police and the dealers].”

The formation of militias in Rio is another problem, that the UPPs have not been able to stop. On the contrary, sociologist Jose Claudio Souza Alves affirms that the UPPs facilitate the work of the militias (UNISINUS, 2013). In an attempt to avoid this, Beltrame mandated the hiring of newly graduated police officers to work in the UPP, as a remaining standard of the PRONASCI, aiming to avoid perpetuating old practices. However, new police offers are not sufficient of an intervention to guarantee that the police will behave accordingly. A set of newspaper headings exemplifies this problem. The newspaper *O Globo* on September 14, 2011 said, “Chief of the UPPs receives bribe at home.” October 9, 2011 stated, “The crimes that unite battalions--Police officers of São Gonçalo and Niteroi act in homicides and extortions.” *O Dia* on June 2012 wrote, “Police officers working in the UPP Mangueira are arrested for corruption.” *O Dia* on October 12, 2012 reported, “Police officers of the UPP is arrested for participating in a militia in Zona Oeste.” *O Dia* on December 23, 2013 again reported, “Police officers working in UPP São Carlos are accused of robbing a woman”. The *CPI das Milicias* [Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry to investigate the militias] released a report that proves the existence of militias operating in 170 areas of Rio de Janeiro. The report calls for the indictment of 226 people suspected of involvement with paramilitary groups. Among the 226 are indicted Congressman Natalino Guimarães, elected councilor Carminha Jerominho and former military police officer known as Ricardo Batman, who is considered one of the most dangerous criminals of the gang (Palmares 2008). He conveyed his power when he

“escaped” the penitentiary *Bangu 8* on October 2008 by walking out of the front door (O Globo, 2011) and no police officer or agent noticed...

If that is not enough, government representatives also work to meet (family) corporations’ private interests. The state has billion dollar contracts with companies who are made without or with non-transparent bidding. They are only discovered through investigations or on the occurrence of a tragedy, similar to the one involving the former governor, Sergio Cabral. On June 2011, a helicopter crash that killed seven people revealed a grand scheme of favoritism. The then governor, Sergio Cabral, was going to spend the weekend at the beach house of the owner of the construction company with whom the state had more than one billion *reais* (roughly USD 450 millions) in contracts. In addition, to go from Rio to Bahia, where the party would be held, Cabral flew in Eike Batista’s jet, the entrepreneur who invested R\$750 thousand (roughly USD 375,000) to Sergio Cabral’s governor’s campaign, and “donated” R\$40 billion (roughly USD 20 billions) to the UPP project (Jornal do Brasil 2013). Thus, due to the friendship, the contract would be illegal because of its conflict of interest.

In summary, violence and terror toward the Black body in the *favelas* is a precondition for social peace in Rio de Janeiro. Wealthy segments of society root their strategy in the built fear and on the demonization of the *favelas* and their inhabitants to justify extremely repressive methods and politics. The presumption that young Black men are always the main agents of violence and crime and natural suspects results in actions that provoke the immediate victimization of those Black youth. With the help of the media,

the idea that favelados are violent, dangerous, and a social threat to Rio's society was implanted in popular imagination throughout the years. Therefore, the application of terror to the Black *favelada* population has become the basis for the media spectacle of the UPPs.

Patricia asserts,

The life of this entire community is at risk. We are all suspicious. And they [the government] create the image that everything is wonderful and that residents are denouncing everything. [This is a] lie! Everybody is scared! They say the residents are denouncing. Who [are they denouncing]? We all, and especially the women, are in the middle of all of this, and fearing both sides.

In this sense, the geographic location of the UPPs--in Black neighborhoods--and the practices of the police in these areas indicate the current public security policy's real purposes: policing community life, military management of poor places, profit, and the containment of Black bodies. Unfortunately, the "state of exception" theorized by philosopher Giorgio Agamben (2005) is a permanent event in the lives of *favelados*. All of this ultimately reinforces Black women's oppression, as Andreia Lima, a cook who lives in Complexo do Alemão, explains:

We, as women, are suffocated. Girls are seduced by police uniforms, but they are not able to date who they want. The older [women] are not very organized. We are isolated and talk very little about our reality with each other due to this situation of distrust established in the favelas. This is not to say that everything they do is wrong, but what they do wrong outweighs all of the good actions. We're being watched, nobody knows what will happen when the games are over. Our comrades were either be killed or arrested, the children suffer repression... it is difficult, very difficult (Lima, 2012).

## **A Favelada e o Caveira – Symbolic Violation and the Consumption of the Black Female Body**

Racialized sexual violence has served as a tool of domination in warfare (Sharlach, 2010; Pufong and Swain, 2008), and it is no different in the context of the war on drugs. It is common to hear horrendous tales from women living in *favelas* dominated by drug trafficking of multiple cases of rape, punishments for cheating on a partner (e.g. beating, shaving heads, cutting breasts or faces), forced relationships with drug dealers, or even being killed for dating men of rival gangs. Asked if any women in her family felt oppressed because of their gender, Andreia Lima, from Complexo do Alemão said,

My sister. They ‘asked for her head on a tray’ [condemned to death] because she was very sassy. So was I, actually. I was very bold at that time [as a teenager] as well. I was dating a thug guy, but another one who I had grown up with, got involved with the drug trafficking and thought I had an obligation to go out with him. Since I was very cheeky, I fought with him, and he forbade me to stay in the *favela*. I told him he would have to kill me, but I would not go. I stayed. I was scared, but I stayed. And my sister... she had no respect for the orders. She went into a *favela*, entered another. She even went to a *favela* that she was not allowed to enter because it was different gang. She would go anyway. Eventually, they [the drug traffickers] ‘asked for her head on a tray.’ She had to leave the hill. My daughter also... at the time of the Alemão occupation, a soldier flirted with her and she laughed. The guy saw... ihhh. It was deep shit... (2012)

Andreia started the narrative talking about her sister, but she instantly linked to her own history with gender oppression through her and her sister’s agency in facing the sexist structure imposed in the *favela*. She narrates two generations of women going through the same situation: the elders in the context of the drug dealers’ dominance and the younger in the context of the dispute between two armed groups, the military officers and the drug dealers. What place is given to the Black female body in the context of Rio’s conquest?

How does society perceive the Black female body in this context? What actions indicate Black women's agency?

On March 2012, I was on the bus and was caught in a routine traffic jam on Avenida Brasil, a large road that connects many neighborhoods and cities in Rio. I was in a window seat, and to my side was an unknown young man talking to another man sitting in the seat in front him. I was almost sleeping and suddenly I heard the guy beside me say, "*Caralho!! Maior Gostosa. Esses caras devem pegar mulher pra caramba, né, não?*" [Fuck! She is hot. These guys might pick up women a lot, huh, huh?"] I opened my eyes while he was saying it, but when I realized that he was talking about a billboard, the bus was already passing. I could see a Black woman wearing a bra, but could not see the details. They were talking about the Duloren lingerie campaign "*Pacifying was easy, I want to see domination*" (Bonduki, 2012), which depicts a Black woman and a white soldier in the context of the *Favela da Rocinha's* "pacifying" process. The advertisement allows us to see how quotidian violence and terror in the *favelas* relates to the structural violence against the Black female body.



Illustration 4 - Image of the Duloren Campaign

Through big highway billboards and placards on buses in Rio, Duloren's advertisement shows a young Black woman in underwear centered in the forefront of a landscape of a *favela*. She has one hand on her hip while the other hand is holding a Black hat, in which the skull printed on it indicates that it belongs to the white BOPE police officer lying on the ground on the right side of the image. Her face does not illustrate sadness, weakness or rage. On the contrary, with a defiant look, she seems to be proud and empowered. The white officer is fully dressed despite the fact that his shirt is opened. The unconscious man has his mouth open and one hand over his penis, which seems to indicate exhaustion after a sexual encounter.

A person who looks naively at the image may have the sense that the woman has agency and the power to dominate, and that the officer was sexually assaulted. However, it is my argument that the fact that both the Black *favelada* and the white *caveira* are scaled bigger than the *favela* in the background indicates a theatrical and humorous quality to the piece. In addition, the open space, which is unimaginable in the context of overpopulated neighborhoods like this one, seems to create a stage aglow in sunlight--a hotspot for institutionalized racial rape. There is no *dark*, no *end* and no *street*.<sup>32</sup>

An interesting fact is that the ad used a Black woman who was actually a resident of *Favela da Rocinha*. Ana Paula, a 29 year-old professional beautician, participated in her first ad campaign, which makes her a virgin in the field. However, there is no mention of the man in the several newspaper articles available about the campaign. His whiteness speaks for itself (Bonduki, 2012; G1, 2012; Gerk, 2012). In modern Rio de Janeiro, where the massacre of the Black body in the favelas is a precondition for social peace, renewed and more advanced terror techniques include not only the shooting of young Black men from helicopters during a live television broadcast, as seen during the police occupation of the Complexo do Alemão in 2010, but also Black female subjugation through the exposition of our bodies.

By launching the campaign, which Duloren says was “intended to enhance the value of women and the Secretary of Public Security’s initiative in the “pacification” of

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32 This last sentence refers to Danielle McGuire’s book, *At the Dark End of the Street*, which analyses the role rape and sexual violence played (play) in African Americans’ daily lives.

these poor communities, subjected to all sorts of crime installed there” (G1, 2012), it did the opposite of its “naïve” intentions. The unsuccessfulness of reversing the roles of the bodies, due to the inability of the white body to endure the grammar of our suffering (Wilderson, 2010), discloses a structure that has worked for centuries: racial rape as a tool of social control and Blackness as exploitable. The exposure of Ana Paula’s image on several billboards throughout the streets of Rio symbolically rapes all Black women, while we all witness each other’s rape.

The ad shows what scholar Saydia Hartman (1997) calls “the spectacle nature of Black suffering, and conversely, the dissimulation of suffering through spectacle” (22). The combination of the Black female body, the *favela*, and the sentence “*Pacifying was easy, I want to see domination*” in an antagonistic relationship with the white body indicates a continuum of Black suffering that calls for the spectacle. The spectacle, in turn, has the function of dispossessing agency from the Black female body. Different from Andreia’s agency narratives where sassiness and fear interrelates to construct their resistance, Ana Paula’s deviance and power is an illusion created to simulate violation. In other words, the performance of agency implied by the ad renews the subjection of the Black female body through the spectacle of Black suffering.

As scholar Danielle McGuire (2010) states, “a Black woman’s body was never hers alone” (p. 156). Rape and other kinds of violence have always been attracted to Black women’s bodies. Furthermore, if “Black men magnetize bullets, Black women magnetize

rape” (James, 2013).<sup>33</sup> In the *favelas*, the trauma of the Black female experience is continuously (re)produced through structural and gratuitous violence, as Blackness is seen as not deserving protection. Therefore, Black women’s bodies become violable, and I felt violated through the symbolic, but equally hurtful, guys’ conversation on the bus in the traffic jam in March 2012.

### **“The positive results of pacification” – The consumption of pain in Baixada Fluminense**

On September 11, 2012, the *Jornal Nacional* (2012), through a series of news reports on the Rede Globo channel, covered the story about the burial of six young Black male residents of Nilópolis, a city of Baixada Fluminense in Rio de Janeiro. According to the investigation, the teens left the neighborhood Cabral in Nilópolis on September 8 to participate in a kite festival and then bathe in a waterfall, when drug dealers hiding in the forest kidnapped, tortured, and killed them. Their disfigured bodies were found on the morning of September 10 on the banks of a highway. Unfortunately, they were not the only ones to die that weekend. Further investigation found out that another four men were also killed, a teen who went to the forest to hunt birds, a man who got lost in the neighborhood after giving a ride to his girlfriend, a man who went for a walk in the forest, and another one who was unidentified. However, the death of the six teens who lived on the same street

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33 This quote is from Professor Joy James, building on scholar Frank Wilderson’s work (2010) in a Black Marxist class in the Spring of 2013 at the University of Texas at Austin.

and died together was largely consumed by the media through the pornography of dead corpuses and utter maternal suffering.

On September 12, 2012, *Jornal Nacional*, covered the story, *Corpos dos jovens mortos na chacina da Baixada Fluminense são enterrados no Rio* [Bodies of young people killed in the massacre are buried the Baixada Fluminense in Rio]. In the studio, the anchor of *Jornal Nacional* hints that emotional material that would follow. “The bodies of six teenagers killed in a massacre in the Baixada Fluminense were buried in a collective burial today. The ceremony brought together hundreds of family members and friends outraged with the crime.” The story cut to interviews and photos that created a gendered narrative, while creating the profile of the victims. It started with the male family members describing the characteristics of their loved ones. “He was the right-hand of his grandma. He helped her a lot” Another man said, “He was a student, he knew how to fix computers.” Another said, “My son worked with me from Monday to Monday.”

These narratives show a male rationality and control of suffering that meets Anthropologist Catherine Lutz (1990) reasoning that men are seen as the locus of rationality and control, defined as desirable and a source of stability and represented as cold and devoid of compassion. She argues that, by contrast, uncontrolled emotions are attributed to females, represented both as a source of danger and vulnerability, precisely because of this association with the lack of control. This is exactly what happened when the edition introduced the women’s take on the massacre. The first woman who appears says while crying, “They were the joy of the street. The life of the street.” Another woman

could not complete her narration about how the teens were respectful because of how hard she was crying. The news turned to show images of the burial and for a few seconds we only hear murmurs of pain. In the journalist's first appearance, he affirms, "the cry for justice and ending impunity was stronger than the fear of violence." The journalist's final words are, "this brutality was not common in the region, and neighboring youth are scared but do not cease to cry out against the violence that took the lives of the six youths and forever mark the lives of those who remain." The news ends with a teen desperately crying about the death of his brother, and the image pictures him from the bottom to the top.



Illustration 5 - Jornal Nacional News Coverage

Considering the attention it gave to the case, the news story would be considered a decent one, although it lacks the information that violent deaths are recurrent in Baixada Fluminense and that in the 1980s it was considered one of the most violent places in the

world (UOL 2012).<sup>34</sup> However, a picture published in the special edition of UOL online captured the spectacle.



Illustration 6 - Capturing Suffering

In the snapshot above, family members stand on the right, the young boy and the man who consoled him are in the middle close to the grave, and six or seven photographers and camera operators are squeezing themselves in front of the teen to capture the best image

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<sup>34</sup> Chapter 4 contains the struggle of a group of mothers of victims of other massacres that occurred in the area.

of the mourning. In this album, the UOL online newspaper exhibited 37 images, that alternate between women crying, open graves, and wreaths of flowers, in opposition to pictures of army tanks used to invade the community, the Secretary of Public Security Beltrame giving an interview about the case, and police officers displaying rifles (see illustration 7).

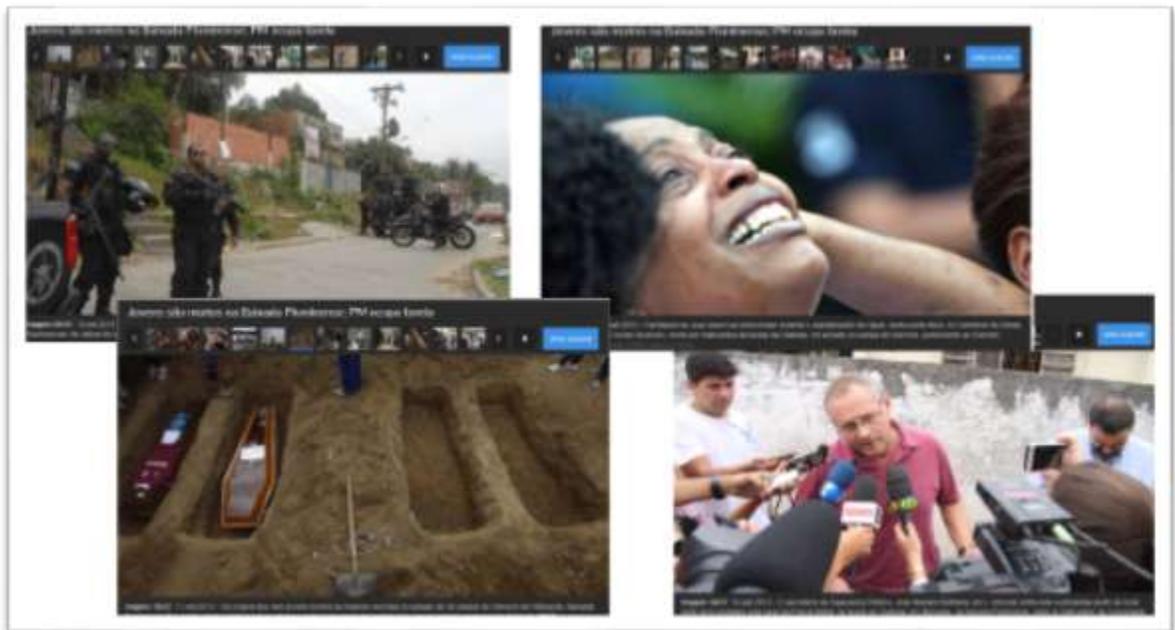


Illustration 7 - "Actions and Reactions"

The combination of pictures, which were reproduced largely on Internet blogs and other online newspapers from slightly different angles, creates a relationship of action and reaction. The action is the drug dealers killing the boys, and the immediate reaction, the army and police's occupation of favela da Chatuba, the site of the next UPP installation. In front of an audience after the deaths, Beltrame affirmed that what was happening in Baixada was the "positive results of pacification." According to Beltrame, the successful

public security policy implanted in Rio's favelas purged drug trafficking, which migrated to other areas of the state (Estadão, 2013). However, this discourse, although true, masked two other non-actions that allowed for the killing of young boys that devastated six families. They are also indicative of the historical abandonment of public security policies in Baixada Fluminense and the actions of militia in the region.

Scholar Luis Claudio Souza Alves, a specialist in violence in Baixada Fluminense, points to the necessity to show that what happens in Rio is not a war on terror, but a dispute over the hegemonic control of power. He says,

To find that the various criminal operations that come swooping over the metropolitan area in recent days is part of a war between good, represented by the public security forces, and evil, personified by traffickers, is to ignore that even the fiction of *Tropa de Elite 2* [Brazilian film about violence in Rio] can support this version. The process of reconfiguration of the geopolitics of crime in Rio de Janeiro has been occurring over the past 5 years [when the installation of UPPs were initiated]. On one side, Militias allied to one of the gangs, on the other, a gang that now reacts to the loss of hegemony” (Carta Capital, 2012).

Jose Claudio Alves supports the argument that to justify massacres with the war on drugs is to create a smoke screen that replaces terror with more terror. Furthermore, he sustains that in reality, the ‘unclear’ public security policy is the coexistence between the militia, criminal gangs, and areas of UPP, which operates the selling of drugs now with the approval of the state. The six boys killed in Mesquita had nothing to do with the conflict, but, similar to a chess move, their killing was a necessary move of a player in the search for domination. However, nobody knows who will win the game and profit by “selling cable TV, transportation, land distribution, bottled gas, voting and... ‘security,’” which are the main activities of the militias (Carta Capital, 2012). However, the poor and Black

population of the peripheries and *favelas* still are crying about their dead. Black mothers are still in their endless struggle to avoid deaths, to de-kill, i.e., bring their loved ones back to life, which is the focus of the next section.

### **Black motherhood De-killing acts**

When PRONASCI's idealizers created the project "Mulheres da Paz," they asserted that it aimed for the,

empowerment of women active in the community to be constituted as social mediators in order to strengthen the political and socio-cultural practices developed by and for women, ... to build and strengthen networks to prevent domestic violence and coping with the violence that make up the local reality ... and to prevent youth violence, youth involvement with drugs, and gender violence (2007).

In reality, they were acknowledging and institutionalizing poor women's practices of preservative mothering, i.e., tentative to ensuring the physical existence of their sons and the sons of the community in a racial-social-economic reality that deceive the youth to the fetish of power. I use the concept of fetish of power to describe the alienated devotion to an imaginary authority and command of necropolitics by investing in criminal activity, which accelerates young Black men's encounter with a violent death. When investing in such activity, young Black men do not fear being killed. They engage in the moment, *carpe diem*, and since "everybody dies one day," why not tomorrow, today, or on the next corner? In response to their sons' sense of death as imminent, some mothers invest in an endless effort, attempting to *de-kill* their sons. I suggest the concept of *de-kill* are the acts of courage performed by mothers whose son is already condemned to death by the traded society as a way to ensure that their mothering continues. The facets of *de-killing* acts include the

operationalization of hegemonic ideas of respectability, masculinity and blackness, and black mothers' complaint of the danger of crime and violence upon and among the black population as a way of ensuring that their maternity continue.

The concept of *de-killing* is an adaptation of scholar Grete Vera-Rosas (2014) concept of *de-linking*. In analyzing portrayals of mothers of 'anchor-children' in the United States, the author aimed to investigate "how portrayals of the maternal body of color and representations of the body policy work in tandem to allegorize and reconfigure notions of belonging, good citizenship, and responsible motherhood" (2014, p. 1). The 'anchor baby' is seen as the emblem of the ability of first generation immigrants' envisioned access to citizenship rights and "American privilege" (2014, p. 1). Thus, mothers engage in de-linking acts, such as the breaking of unjust laws and the refusal to appear before the immigration authorities, as a way "to dream of alternative futures of freedom from race, class, sex, and citizenship boundaries, while establishing a continuation between the past and present policing of racialized maternity" (2014, p. 15).

Similarly, in Rio de Janeiro, there exists a socio-racial prejudice that portrays Black mothers as "*mãe de bandido*" [mother of bandits]. As I have analyzed in *Black mothers' experiences of violence in Rio de Janeiro* (Rocha, 2012), the "*mãe de bandido*" is blamed for the violence that members of their families commit. These accusations can come from people who live outside the *favelas*, from a police officer, from the neighbors, or even from another family member. If their children become involved in criminal activities, Black women are frequently accused of failing to properly raise and educate them. The media has a special role in perpetrating this image, as it was clear in my discussion about an article

published in *O Globo* (O Globo, 2010) entitled “*Mãe de traficante diz que pediu para filho se entregar*” [Dealer’s mother says she asked her son to surrender]. The article refers to an incident that occurred in August 2010 in the elite Rio de Janeiro neighborhood of São Conrado. Around 8 am, ten men suspected of being connected to drug trafficking were passing through São Conrado on their way to Rocinha, the largest *favela* in Latin America, when the police intercepted them. The police opened fire on the group, and some of them ran into a famous luxury hotel. The suspects’ negotiation with the police lasted for over an hour. Some of the men were killed, and the majority were arrested. While the negotiations were under way, a reporter interviewed the mother of one of the men. She said, “I did not raise my son to do that. I asked him to surrender, [but] he did not want to.” Despite its title, the article only has three lines about the mother’s attempt to *de-kill* her son. The rest of the page contained reports from the hostages and witnesses to the negotiation. This disparity sparked anger in several readers, who unloaded their indignation on the mother. Some of the replies provided in the comments section of the news were:

“The trafficker’s mother said her son was not raised to do it. She needed to go to jail for negligence. Had she kept her legs closed, she would not be having this sadness. And I would not be feeling so angry.”

“She needs to thank God. The best for us would be to see her crying for him at his funeral.”

“We have to kill this plague . . . It is not good to arrest them. When they leave prison, they will rob and kill and practice every kind of crime again . . . We have to kill these pests, these human excrements.”

“The most practical would be to sterilize these mice, so these worms that harass our life would not be born.”

Furthermore, her attempt at *de-killing* her son is not valorized and is used as a way to put forward racist, eugenicist, and dehumanizing comments. Black women’s invisible

experiences of urban violence in Rio unveil several fights Black women need to face, which are hidden in the conventional analysis of violence. To conclude this chapter, I engage with a story that exemplifies the ways in which Black women try to *de-kill* both their children and themselves by problematizing the category *bandido* [bandit]. By doing so, they nullify their own categorization as “*mãe de bandido*,” *de-kill* both themselves and their children, and produce a possibility for a re-creation.

On November 27, 2011, the occupation realized in Complexo do Alemão introduced Dona Nilza dos Santos to Brazil, a cook and mother of 9 children. Her mothering was left of anonymous because of her successful attempt to *de-kill* Diego dos Santos, most known by his drug-dealer name, Mister M. According to the police investigation, he was one of the main security guards of the chief of the gang that controlled Complexo do Alemão and he had been accused of associating with drug trafficking (Paino et al, 2010). On that day, the military police and the army troopers were preparing to invade Alemão. Dona Nilza saw the heavy weapons carried by the officers, heard the call from the general commander of police asking the drug-dealers to surrender, and decided that this was her last chance to *de-kill* her son. On the same day, Diego went to the police station accompanied by his mother. Still at the police station, Dona Nilza gave an interview to journalists and said, “I have never accepted having a child involved with this. Then I took that opportunity, I talked to him and he accepted.” Since then, her *de-killing* act has been under the eyes of the Brazilian media. In what follows, I focus on her discourses in two interviews, one that she gave on the Ana Maria Braga morning show a day after her son’s

imprisonment and the other to the Rede Record news show after the nine months he spent in prison and was released and started to re-create his life.

On November 28, TV presenter Ana Maria Braga (Mais Você, 2010) had breakfast on her morning show with a police officer and a Brazilian singer. There is a variety of fruit, bread, a box of mango juice and a beautiful landscape in her studio that shows the forest in southern Rio's botanical gardens. She remembers Diego's surrender the day before, and as way to contextualize what would come next, she reminds her guests and her audience at home that, "everybody has a mother, the singer, the officer, and also drug-dealers." I understood that the reason Braga gave this context was because Dona Nilza's act had created a contradiction in Rio's social imaginary about the "*mãe de bandido*" category. Braga then showed the video with Dona Nilza's interview, thanked her for accepting to participate in the show that morning, and alerted her audience to the fact that Complexo do Alemão was without electricity and the call may drop since Dona Nilza could not charge her cellphone.<sup>35</sup> This creates a contradiction with the wealthy and luxurious setting of the television show. With a happy face and moving her hands, Braga asked Dona Nilza how she was feeling that day, but before allowing Dona Nilza to answer her question, Braga said that she and other people were imagining how she must have felt having a son be arrested. Braga was reproducing general society's feeling of relief, especially the elite, at having one more bandit behind bars and an alleged peace for Rio, but she herself forgot

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<sup>35</sup> Andreia Lima also confirmed the status of Alemão that day in her interview. She said that they were without energy and water for three days while the police were occupying *favela*.

that he had a mother. Dona Nilza replies, “I am sad. I am sad, but Diego is alive. Diego is arrested, but alive. I believe that he will be free one day. He is already in a new life.” The mother’s discourse is a mixture of sadness and hope, but there is no possibility of happiness yet. Both in the interview in the police station, and with Braga, Nilza emphasizes that she is the mother of Diego, not Mister M. She repeats his real name in almost every sentence, making him a subject, which I interpreted as an act of *de-killing*.

The second way that Dona Nilza *de-kills* Diego is through quoting him in her narrative. When talking about how her attempt to take Diego to the police station was successful, she said, “I called him and he asked me, ‘to go where?’ I said I was going home, and he said, ‘at home no because the police will arrest and kill me, I’ll keep running, it will be the same thing, they’re gonna kill me anyway.’” By narrating the story with quotes, Dona Nilza gives him voice and shows his feelings, thus *de-killing* him. Her strategy to ensure that Diego would be kept alive also involved understanding the police structure to circumvent their practice. She narrates that she saw a car from the police’s sixth battalion and an officer that she knew from a social project in the community. She did not tell him about her plan to search the *favela* looking for Diego. On the contrary, after she crossed the *favela* with him, she approached the police officer with a witness and told him “look, lock up my son because I want him alive. I want you to give him an opportunity. Diego gave him his arms, the police officer handcuffed him and we went to the police station.” Dona Nilza knew that no police officer would believe that the famous Mister M. would surrender, and because of it, the police would say that he would be trying to escape and kill him. Her act of giving him to the officer with testimony was her third *de-killing* act. Nine

months later, in an interview with Rede Record, the reporter asks if she was afraid of him going back to a life of crime. Very secure and calm, she replied, “No, he will not go. I am sure that he will not go. He is Diego Raimundo da Silva Santos and he will not go back. He is already in a new life. This is a new life.” She believes him, her fourth *de-killing* act. Diego graduated as a filmmaker at an NGO, and nowadays he is a photographic model, and plays football in the Botafogo FA club (Fontes, 2013).<sup>36</sup> Dona Nilza is still a cook, but now a smile appears on her face.

### **Funk Party in Cantagalo - “Antes de ir pra baile eu fico parado na esquina”**

Funk is the sound of the *favelas*. Born in the 1990s, funk emerged as an expression of poor urban cultures in opposition to the so-called “erudite culture”. Funk has had many waves in Rio’s youth culture. It began as “funk *embromation*” of U.S songs, meaning we say when we create one a lyric in Portuguese without knowing the original lyrics in English (Dos Santos, nd). In the so-called funk melody, the youth created a version in Portuguese to popular U.S. Miami Bass music while the DJ remixed the rhythms. Some created very romantic lyrics others more silly ones. Then funk grew into what later became known as *funk protesto* [protest funk]. Often contesting the installed social order, funk advocated for the rights to live in peace in the *favelas*, such as the *Rap da Felicidade* [Rap of happiness],

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<sup>36</sup> He is still under investigation for the crime of illegal possession of weapons. The coordinator of this NGO is recognized by having obscure relationships with selling drugs and the government, working as mediator in conflictive situations. Recently, the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) indicated him to be the coordinator of youth programs if he wins the upcoming elections. As I have stated before, everything is profitable in this traded-system, and the de-killing of Diego may have been a great spectacle.

"*Eu só quero é ser feliz, andar tranquilamente na favela em que eu nasci*" [I just want to be happy, walk quietly in the *favela* where I was born]. It is important to highlight that funk such as the samba, was associated with criminality due to its association with Blackness and the *favelas* (Santos, nd). Thus, *funk protesto* was a cry from the youth in the *favelas* about their situation of poverty and oppression. Two other songs were a part of this wave: *Rap do Trabalhador*, which talked about MC Magalhães's working conditions as a candy seller who had his products seized by the police; and *Rap do Silva*, which spoke about the precariousness of life in the *favelas* by talking about the death of Silva, a homeowner. The song also calls for the decriminalization of funk and claims, "*O funk não é um modismo, é uma necessidade, é pra calar os gemidos que existem nessa cidade*" [Funk is not fad, it is a necessity. It is to shut down the moans that exist in this city]."

Funk then showed a clear connection to the drug gangs in Rio. Sometimes these gangs would contract MCs to write songs exalting the criminal faction. MCs used to have a "soft version" to play at shows such as the DJ Malboro radio show every day at 6pm on the Big Mix, and another version that was played in the *favelas*. This was the most repressive time for funk and the owners of sound crews such as Furacão 2000 put forth a great effort to try to decriminalize funk. In fact, city alderwoman Veronica Costa, at the time married to Romulo Costa, Furacão 2000's owner, was elected campaigning under the name *Mãe Loira, A mãe do funk* [blond mother, the mother of funk]. Radio and TV channels hosted funk shows and several other TV shows with white presenters and hosts had MCs as guests.

Funk has changed many times including into *Funk Resposta*, produced by female MCs who created answers to sexist lyrics by claiming control of their bodies and sexuality in their songs. Always with a double connotation, the lyrics would say something very simple such as “*to ficando atoladinha*” [to get stuck] (by Tati Quebra o Barraco), but the dance would show the real meaning, which was to enjoy having sex. In *Eva e Adão* [Eve and Adan], another song from Tati Quebra Barraco, she talks about male virility by narrating a time when a man promised to take her to “paradise” [orgasm] but face-to-face with the “apple” [her vagina], his “snake” [penis] did not appear. She then tells the guy to go away and to meet “EveAdão”, the juxtaposition of the names Eva and Adão, which creates the sound of “viadão” [gay]. This fascinating wordplay shows not only the creativity and the potential of the youth residents in the *favelas*, but also that these female funk singers, Black or non-Black, clearly challenge the patriarchy, and although they at first did not respect sexual orientation, this started to change over time with the rise of gay performers.

In the middle of these waves, the release of the song *Som de Preto*, by MCs Amilcka and Chocolate marked a crucial change in the acceptance of funk from the larger society. The chorus says, “*É som de preto/ De favelado/ Mas quando toca/ ninguém fica parado*” [(Funk) is a Black song from the *favela*, but when playing, no one stands]. That is true. Old, young, men, women, Black, white, no one stands still when hearing the *tchun tcha tcha tugtugundá* of funk, which plays in every single club in Rio. However, the resolution 013 regulates culture in the *favelas* and forbid funk in *favelas* with UPPs. Resolution 013 signed in 2007 by Secretary of Public Security Beltrame, “prohibits conducting cultural

events and sports without the prior permission of the authorities responsible for policing certain areas” (Rio on Watch, n.d.). The resolution regulates the decree 39,355 of May 24, 2006 that security agencies should coordinate the events. Thus, this resolution violates the freedom of expression, access to culture, the right to assemble and free association, among others rights guaranteed by law. Several organizations are fighting to repeal the resolution, since it prevents hundreds of professionals in the *favelas* who make a living from producing samba, and pagode to turn a profit (Pimentel, 2013). By contrast, as the popularity of funk grew in Rio, college students organized funk parties at famous clubs in affluent areas of the city such as Vivo Rio in Zona Sul, Circo Voador in Downtown Rio, and Barra Music in Zona Oeste. At some of the parties, the tickets began at R\$96 (roughly USD \$35), which the poor youth cannot afford. Thus, funk is becoming whiter (see the screenshot below in comparison to figure 1 and 2 further in this section).

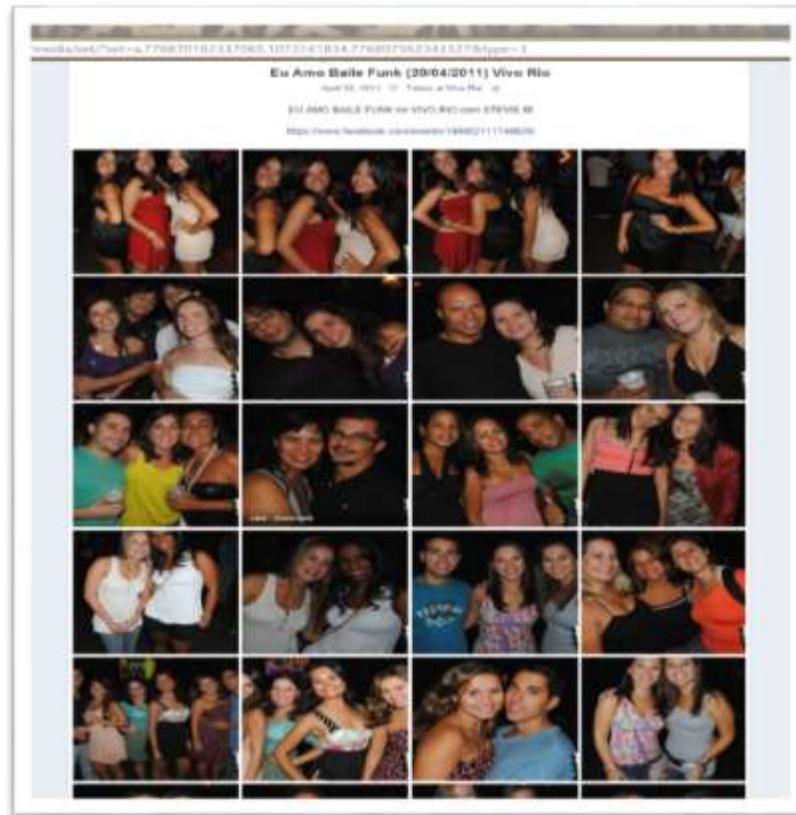


Illustration 8 - Party I love Baile Funk - Club Vivo Rio

In September 2012, several candidates on the city council were fighting for votes from the *favelas*. At the same time, Deize, a resident of Cantagalo and whose life story is told in Chapter 4, had the excellent idea of organizing a *baile funk* in the *favela*. A candidate, who was a lawyer and had given her advice in the past, asked her to introduce him to the community. She agreed to help him by affixing posters in the neighborhood if he agreed to lend his name for a petition for the *baile* to the UPP headquarters. He agreed and she submitted the request. The process involved submitting the request to the UPP headquarters and then waiting for an answer. The samba school of the *favela* had done this

many times before and had never received authorization for a party. According to the organizer, the police officers always had an excuse to forbid it. “It needs to have more than one bathroom; it needs to have a large emergency exit; it needs a permit from city hall; it needs acoustic sound. Where did you see a samba school in a *favela* that has acoustic sound?” questioned the disbelieving organizer, who continued, “last week, I was prepared with everything. I had spread the word in the *favela*, bought beer, which was already on ice, when they came here and told us that the *baile* was suspended. They gave no reason. Just like that.”

Deize put forward the plan and submitted the request. She said in the letter that it was to introduce the candidate to the youth since the elections were coming up. A week later, she received an email asking her to go to the office to give more information about the activity. Since I was collaborating with her through the *Rede Contra a Violência*, she asked for me to accompany her because she wanted to have someone “from human rights” with her. I could see how unwelcoming the environment is of the UPP Cantagalo headquarters. In the entrance, six police officers, three on each side, created a hallway for our entry. Intimidating, frowning, rifles across their chests, fingers on the triggers. Inside, a banner which said “*polícia cidadã*” [citizen police] was affixed on the blue and white walls. Deize asked to see the commander. We waited for about 10 minutes and he came out with a paper in hand.

Commander - “Is this lady Deize?”

Deize – I’m here. And this is Luciane, a human rights activist.

C – Pleased to meet you, Luciane.

L – Nice to meet you.

C – Deize, what exactly is this activity?

D – Well, there is a candidate, who is also a lawyer, who wants to meet the youth of Galo, and we think that the *baile* is the best way to gather them.

C – I see. The *morro* [hill] is in peace, the problem is the noise. We need to respect the code of silence.

D – I know, but the DJ will obey all of the requirements. They will not play loud.

C – I see. The problem is that I will start to receive calls.

L – Which calls?

C – Calls from the buildings nearby, down there [referring to the rich residences in Copacabana].

D – What do they say?

C – They complain about the noise. When the music starts and I begin to receive calls.

L – How many calls do you usually receive?

C – Two, three ... it depends. We already had to stop several birthday parties.

D – But this is not fair. There would be hundreds enjoying the party, and you cannot allow it because of five calls?

C – Superior orders, ma'am, I gotta meet them.

L – Ok, but the calls did not happen yet. What is the impediment?

D – The space is prepared; the youth don't have an activity. My son and my daughter want to go to another community to have fun, because they cannot pay for the clubs in Copacabana. But we can do something here.

C – I will see what I can do. *O morro ta calmo*. [The hill is in peace].

On September 29<sup>th</sup> in the morning, the UPP commander gave authorization to Deize to promote the *baile* that night from 10pm to 2am. I arrived at Cantagalo at 8:30 pm and met Deize in front of the court where the event would happen. She was talking with some young men, who informed us that police officers had gone there to film the area. Deize and I went to the corner of the street where a couple was selling hot dogs. We ate and stayed there for about an hour telling the young people who passed that the *baile* would happen. “*Vai mesmo, tia! Nem acredito! Vou fazer meu cabelo!*” [The baile will happen for real, Aunt! I can't believe! I'll do my hair!], said a young woman to Deize. At 10 pm the DJ started playing, but on the dance floor there was only Deize, two other activists from the Rede, and I. Until midnight, it was the “*Baile funk da Rede*,” and we had fun dancing and drinking *caipirinhas*. Around 12:15 am the youth began to appear. 5, 20, 300 young women

and men dancing, singing, having fun (see picture 1 and 2 below). Deize went outside to “*ver o movimento*” [see how things were going], and I stayed inside with her sister trying to learn the “*dança do quadrado*.”<sup>37</sup> Suddenly, Deize’s daughter came inside and told me that her mother was requesting my presence outside with urgency. When I arrived there, Deize was in between two police officers and five or six young men. “I called you here because that police officer over there sprayed pepper spray for no reason. If it happens again you need to write a report.” We stayed there in silence for a few minutes, and I noticed that the officers did not have their names on their uniforms, which is a requirement. After 10 minutes, one officer invited the other to “*dar um role*” [go for a walk], and both of them left smiling. One of the young men told us,

Youth 1 – “They sprayed without reason, aunt. Only the people who live here know what we go through with these guys. They want to find an excuse to stop the *baile*.”

Youth 2 - “We were not even obstructing the entryway.”

Youth 3 – “It’s normal to stay at the door before entering the *baile*, we have no leisure here. It’s nice to see the *movimento* [people coming and going] We like to stay here a bit. *Faz parte!*”

Luciane – “Sure! *Parado na esquina*” [standing in the corner]

Youth 1 – “You know what I am saying! Ahahaha. She is on!”

We all laughed. I was referring to the funk song *Parado na Esquina* that narrates the practice of flirting outside the *baile*. The guys stand in the corner of the place, such as they were, to see the girls “*passar impinando*” [to walk sexy].

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<sup>37</sup> A dance move where the person moves their hips making a square in the space to the beat of the music.

I did not have the chance to learn the *quadrado dance*, since Deize and I stayed outside for a significant part of the night to manage any other situation that could occur. Around 1 am, the candidate arrived and we went inside for his three-minute talk. The people were having so much fun that had he talked any longer he would have been expelled from the *baile*. Deize introduced him by saying, “The *baile* was only possible through the candidate. You all know my work in the community and you know that I am serious.” The candidate just thanked the people for being there and said that as someone from Copacabana, who also frequented the *baile* when he was young, that he wanted the youth to have fun. In his speech, he tried to establish a relationship with the youth through funk music, attempting to convey that he too was a part. However, when he tried to follow the choreography after he finished the speech, he showed that he was far from knowing the Black sound.



Figure 1 - Baile do Galo



Figure 2 - Baile do Galo 2

Around 1:30 am the candidate left and Deize and I went back outside. I asked her if she would vote for him and she said, “*Eu não! Bobão! Só é bonito!*” [Hell no! He is a fool! He is only handsome!] She continued, “See, the happiness of the young eases the pain of losing my son. Makes my militancy make sense. Knowing that I can do something for the community. This is the best thing for me. [If not for this] my daughter would go to another dance tonight. I get scared. Here she knows the climate.” We went inside and outside two other times and the climate was calm, but the calm began to worry us. It was 1:55 am and no other police officer appeared after the pepper spray incident. Deize then started to wonder if the police were planning to do something at the end of the *baile*. According to her, they would not do anything on the main street of the *favela*, but instead in the alleys as the youth dispersed on their way either to home or another small bar inside the *favela*. “I am worried because I am responsible for them, I will end the *baile*.” We went inside and asked the DJ to let them know that he would play two or three more songs and the *baile* would stop. Hence, he did. It was around 2:20 am when the youth started to leave the *baile*, and immediately a group of 15 police officers carrying rifles appeared. Perhaps they were there to ensure the youth security on their way home, but Deize preferred to ask the commander to have a conversation with her. She said, “Look, I am responsible for the *baile*. Everything was fine until now, and I hope it continues. They are happy and advised that they need to go home.” The commander thanked her for the organization and affirmed that the peace would continue. Deize and I went to her house and we did not hear about any incidents.

## Conclusion

In short, in Rio's *favelas* and peripheries, terror and violence are a precondition for social peace. Before the installation of the UPPs, the population lived in fear due to the drug-selling in the communities, not restrictedly because of them, but because of the imminent confrontation with the police, which criminalized the entire community. The UPPs were first implemented by the government as a policy of pacification in the communities and regaining territory, but in reality, they are part of a project to upgrade practices of repression and control of populations and their daily lives. Examples of these practices are torture, physical and symbolic women's oppression--especially Black women--and the killing of innocent people. There are many cases of *favela* residents who had no involvement in drug-selling who have been killed by police officers in the *favelas* after the "pacification." Historical racism and the lack of public policies to improve the lives of the Black population mean that the majority of the people involved with violence are young Black men. They are on the front lines of selling drugs, incarcerations, and in the lower divisions of the military police and army, in other words, those who have been killing and those dying. This situation creates a condition for the continuous killing of Black bodies that creates a condition of genocide. This circumstance occurs not only through counting the number of deaths and through the analysis of who is dying, but also by paying attention to practices and discourses that are genocidal, such as eugenic discourses from the general population and state government representatives, and the violation of the female Black body in the context of war. In addition, the focus on actions in areas of the city due to economic and political interest, instead of implementing a real

public security policy, enhances the disputes for territories and conflicts in other areas of the state. All this ultimately affects mothering, specifically Black mothering, since black women's sons and daughters are the ones who are stereotyped as criminals and more likely to become bandits. In order to ensure their motherlines, Black mothers engage in acts of *de-killing*, exemplified in this section by the case in the news. However, I elaborate on the mothers' *de-killing* in the consequent chapters as I analyze Black mothers' preservative love, pedagogies of resistance and performative acts against racialized violence.

### CHAPTER 3 – INTIMATE DEATH: PRESERVATIVE MOTHERING AND OUTRAGED GRIEF ON GRAVEYARD STREET

Don't care how much death is in the land, I got to make  
preparations for my baby to live.

(Wright, 1986, p. 143)

My dear only surviving son,  
I went to Mount Vernon August 7<sup>th</sup>, to visit the grave site of  
my heart your keepers murdered in cold disregard for life.  
His grave was supposed to be behind your grandfather's and  
grandmother's. But I couldn't find it. There was no marker.  
Just mowed grass. The story of our past. I sent the keeper a  
blank check for a headstone – and two extra sites – blood in  
my eye!!!

(Blood in My Eye, 1971 p. VII)

In June 2010, a visit to my aunt Joana Dark<sup>38</sup> became an extremely significant ethnographic experience of a mother's struggle to deal with loss caused by violent death. I had just arrived in Rio from Austin, and I visited my aunt, the woman closest to me in such a state of sorrow. I entered her house and she received me with a big smile, but her eyes showed deep pain; a sadness expressed through her crestfallen look. Since the death of my cousin in 2007, she hardly ever makes eye contact, and barely participates in festivities. I saw pictures of my cousin on the wall, and at the base of the statue of the Virgin Mary in the living room. I let my aunt know that her experience as a mother and doing everything

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<sup>38</sup> All the names in this chapter were changed to hide subjects' identities. I also avoided providing any specific characteristics or events that could facilitate one to search for their identity. However, people from Graveyard Street might be able to recognize the stories, as well as themselves.

she could to take her son away from a life of crime motivated me to learn about other experiences. Sitting on her blue sofa, she said, “Oh, Lu. Only I know what I’ve been through. Only I know what I’m going through. I did everything I could, but I must not have done enough. Perhaps...” Her eyes filled with tears, and I became speechless standing in her living room. The sorrow was visible on her body. However, I did not know the extent to which she blamed herself for “not doing enough.” Tears fell from her eyes.

Because I lived close to her, I witnessed her de-killing acts, her journey to remove from her son’s mind the attraction—the fetish—of power, the alienated devotion to an imaginary authority and command of necropolitics by investing in criminal activity. At least in the part I saw and to which I contributed, I knew she had done much. We remained silent for a moment and she found a way to end the weird moment. While drying her tears she stood up and said abruptly, “Unfortunately... The tree is giving *pitanga* [cherry]. Did you see?” My aunt changed the subject, and led her body out of her house. It seemed like both her body and mind could not handle another second of remembering the pain she went through or the pain that she goes through. We left to see the tree full of *pitangas*, and I not only could see an expression of pain, but also her strength in dealing with her suffering. Tears began to fill my eyes.

It is difficult to estimate the physical, social, emotional, and political devastation in Black women’s lives caused by the everyday encounters with genocidal practices in Rio’s poor neighborhoods. In these areas, the banality of violent deaths shows the most evident aspect of an afro-diasporic life: the premature and evitable death of young Black men. The

male deaths are categorized as either dead or missing. Their bloody bodies become a spectacle on TV and in papers on newsstands. Their corpses are visible in the streets as a reminder that death could be at the door of each Black family. Nevertheless, this social phenomenon engenders rigid and complex outcomes in the everyday lives of Black women, as they exert their alleged biological, social, and cultural roles to protect their family members, and their communities in general. Recognizing that experiences with violence and genocide are intersectional, it is vital to understand how Black women's interaction with the patriarchal state has shaped Black mothering as well as the emotions associated with *motherwork*. As a result of these interlocking relationships, Black mothers' experiences with genocide are often unspeakable.

Through a mix of oral history and my own memory as a former resident, this chapter examines the intimacy of death of seven Black women who are residents and ex-residents of Graveyard Street, located in the periphery of Rio de Janeiro. The chapter's primary focus is to explore the practices, explanations and feelings related to Black mothering as a tool and target of anti-Black genocide by engaging with the concept of "preservative mothering" (O'Reilly, 2004). I do this through the application of the structure of feelings (Wilderson, 2010; Williams, 1977), enhanced by a Black feminist perspective. I argue that the often unspoken sorrow and the constant struggle in face of the *expectance of deep diaspora*--death in its physical and symbolic forms--is showed through a structure of feelings that is expressed through scared joy, nurturing warning, worried reality, and sad acceptance.

## **Black Mothering Structure of Feelings**

Similar to the heroine Mariah Upshur in Sara Wright's novel *This Child's Gonna Live* (see epigraph above), Black mothers fight on daily basis for the physical survival of their children and those of their communities. In Rio de Janeiro, their fight starts with accessing the basic need for proper prenatal health care (Santos 2008) and continues in their struggle to keep children alive and safe from police brutality or participating in selling drugs.

In *Toni Morrison and Motherhood*, scholar Andrea O'Reilly (2004) analyzes several of Morrison's novels and builds upon the work of Black feminist scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins and Sara Ruddick to call Black women's task "protective mothering," i.e., "to keep children alive in a racist world hostile to their well-being" (p. 117). According to O'Reilly, "these mothers, in seeking to claim power as mothers, disturb the cultural view that all mothers, and in particular oppressed mothers, are and should be powerless" (p. 119). As seen in the ethnographic account in this chapter, Black mothers from Graveyard Street exercise their protective mothering and show strength in challenging normative discourses that describe them as incompetent and negligent mothers. However, they cannot escape the patriarchal gaze; society still blames Black women and makes them responsible when they fail to fulfill the protective mothering role or to safeguard their children.

In *Red, White & Black*, scholar Frank Wilderson (2007) builds on Black feminist scholar Hortence Spillers' work to analyze the 1979 film *Bush Mama*. *Bush Mama* is the story of Dorothy, a Black woman trying to raise her daughter in constant confrontation with the system while her partner is in jail. Wilderson states, "...the Black woman cannot

‘claim her child.’ Black children do not belong to Black mothers (or fathers), just as Black men and women don’t belong to, and thus cannot claim, each other: flesh is always already claimed by direct relations of force” (p. 139). Wilderson’s statement addresses his analysis that Black mothers’ place in capitalist and patriarchal societies, is as commodities. This view is the same as the one expressed by former Rio’s governor Sergio Cabral, who stated in an interview that mothers from the *favelas* were a *fabrica de marginais* [bandit factory] (Veja, 2007). Following this logic, Black people are alienated from any possibility of agency and feelings, especially love. However, the narratives of Black women from Graveyard Street contradict these statements. Phrases such as “we raise our children for the world, not for ourselves,” like my mother use to say, should not be understood as a disposition of care and belonging, but as a way to express that they prepare their children to face the adversities of the world and they, as Black mothers, know that they will have many. Accordingly, as it will be possible to see below in this chapter, when another mother, Dora says, “that bullet killed me not him,” she is showing that her motherly love was so intense that his death was a death to herself, not only as a mother. Furthermore, through the perspective of the mothers from the Graveyard Street, Wilderson’s reasoning is refuted.

Toward the end of *Bush Mamma*, Dorothy arrives home and sees a police officer on top of her daughter, raping her. While he rapes her, she repeatedly stabs him to death with an umbrella. According to Wilderson, when Dorothy kills the man, the “violence cleanses her” (2010, p. 126). However, different from the movie, there is no possibility for—or the will of—non-fictional Black mothers from Graveyard Street. Many of them arrive at this stage too weak to seek cleansing, and rely on the passage of time as a way to ease

their suffering, but it does not allow them to be free of such sadness. As scholar O'Reilly (2004) states, “[m]aternal failure of nurturance signified an individual women’s inability to mother [...] and this ‘failure’ is caused by a disconnection or disruption of the motherline” (p. 139).

All the Black mothers whose histories I narrate in this chapter had their sons killed at an early age due to their sons’ involvement with criminal activity--mainly thievery and selling drugs/addiction. According to these women, this motherline could have many possible variants, but they all ended with the children burying their mother’s deceased and old bodies. Everything different from this outcome goes against their aim and desire. When they do not achieve this goal, Black mothers need to reconfigure themselves in society, but this reconfiguration comes before a stage of complete consciousness about what happened, a reconfiguration of grief. I call this model of “motherline rupture” outraged grief. Although the *de-killing* acts to remove from their children the fetish of power that accelerates their deaths, they had their motherline interrupted by their children’s deaths. In addition, the mothers need to go back to work and assume new responsibilities if their son/daughter left children behind, while in sorrow and without the opportunity to mourn or identify the meaning of the deaths in their lives.

In my reading of Raymond Williams (1977), he would call these experiences *practical consciousness*, i.e., “what is actually being lived [...]. It is a kind of feeling and thinking which is indeed social and material, but each in an embryonic phase before it can become fully articulate and defined exchange” (p. 131). Williams conceptualizes the “hypothetical method of structure of feelings,” or the “structure of experiences” as a “social

experience still in process, often indeed not yet recognized as social but taken to be private, idiosyncratic, and even isolating, but which in analysis has its emergent, connecting, and dominant characteristics, indeed its specific hierarchies” (p. 132). I apply this structure of feelings to analyze Black mothers’ thinking and attitudes as they experience the death of their children.

Wilderson (2010) also addresses the structure of feelings when he analyzes white and Black radicalism’s uses of violence. He argues that white radicalism’s structures of feelings reproduces white supremacy, while Black radicalism’s structure of feelings makes evident an emotional and political protocol where violence is needed in order to have satisfaction against the irreconcilable structure of civil society and Black people’s ontological relationship with it. He goes on to say,

One might perform an “anthropology of sentiment” on the Black and White “ontological” meditations, political discourse, or agitate politically base on how often the Black feels like a man, feels like a women, feels like a gendered subject, feels like a worker, or feels like a postcolonial, and those feelings are important, but they are not essential at the level of ontology. They cannot address the gratuitous violence which structures what is essential to Blackness and suffering, and they are imaginatively constrained in their will: they cannot imagine the kind of violence the Black must harness to break that structure. There is nothing in those Black sentiments powerful enough to alter the structure of the Black’s seven-hundred-year-long relation to the world, the relation between one accumulated and fungible thing and a diverse plethora of exploited and alienates Human beings (p. 142).

Considering his reasoning, I argue that Black mothers’ narratives of violence show a structure of feelings that address our ontological experience in the sense that their bodies are deeply related to violence in its different ways--Black, poor, female, (single) mother, childless mother. Embodying emotions, Abu-Lughod and Lutz maintain, “involves

theoretically situating them in the social body such that one can examine how emotional discourses are formed by and in the shapes of the ecologies and political economies in which they arise” (1990, p. 13). I identify four characteristics in their unfulfilled preservative mothering: Scared Joy, Nurtured Warning, Anxious Eminency, and a Sufferance Acceptance.

Scared Joy relates to the first moments of Black motherhood. The mothers recall being very happy and hopeful with the new life in their arms, but wondering if will be able to keep them away from the dangers of the world.

Nurtured Warning recounts all the advice and imaginative conjectures to prepare their children to face the world. A major site of Black women’s struggles is in the private sphere (home) when protecting their offspring. Insistent advising and counseling becomes the main expression of motherhood when their sons and daughters reach adolescence. Through the stories that several Black women shared with me, I identified three recurrent threads of advice that these mothers give to their children, which serve as rules for Black youth to follow in order to avoid problems on the streets. They are: 1) to fear both the police and drug dealers; 2) to carry proper identification; and 3) to be properly dressed. The first rule indicates that stereotypes, such as the presumption that Black youth are always the main agents of violence and crime, results in actions that provoke the immediate elimination of Black youth. Because of this, Dona De advises, “They need to fear both the police and the drug trafficking. One recruits them to enjoy criminality, and the other, if the guy is Black, will shoot first, and then they will ask who he was.” The second rule explains the necessity for Black youth to carry proper identification with them at all times. Maria

clarifies, “A student ID or documents from work, those are not necessarily a safe pass, as they were in the past, but nowadays it can be at least, *at least*, a way to find my son [if he’s hurt or arrested]. Every time my son leaves the house I ask if he is taking an ID with him” [original emphasis]. The stress and the repetition of ‘at least’ in Maria’s words reinforce not only the precarious and dangerous situation Black youth face in Rio de Janeiro, but also the fear Black mothers feel as parents of potential victims of murder and kidnapping. Finally, the third rule indicates that, if Blackness informs the *modus operandi* of the police in its interactions with the Black population, Black youth can avoid ill treatment from the police by valorizing Blackness through “dressing properly.” Dona Hilda explains this rule:

[The youth] need to avoid calling the attention of the police by [instead] dressing in accordance with the ‘normal,’ ‘the acceptable.’ Unfortunately our children cannot simply wear what they want. Avoid hats or t-shirts and oversized pants! Being Black with this outfit is like asking to be stopped.

Anxious Eminency names the period of time when they desperately try to take children out of criminality or other dangerous processes that may lead them to death. Black mothers know that a fatality can happen at any moment and, although fighting, they try to prepare themselves for the news. Finally, Sufferance Acceptance relates to the endurance of pain and distress after the death of their loved ones, where shame and blame wrestle with their strength to regain a routine in their lives.

## Ethnography de vizinha on Graveyard Street

I will never forget the nights of joy and fun in the early 1990s when I was a teenager on Graveyard Street. I remember anxiously having dinner with my parents then heading to the sidewalk in front of our yard to sit on wooden benches. Resembling a ritual, every night around 8pm during the summer, our neighbors and I went out to take in the evening breeze and wait for the sleepy feeling to come. At least this was our parents' expectation. As adolescents, we could not wait until everyone was outside so we could play, transforming the public street into our private playground, a collective extension of our houses. My most vivid images are of us playing *pique-bandeira* [capture the flag] and *5-cortes*.<sup>39</sup> The fun in these collective games increased proportionally to the number of people involved, and sometimes there were twenty teens playing. For about two hours, while our parents relaxed, we could only hear our own laughter, fussing, and sometimes our mothers yelling, "Get out of the street, the bus is coming!" Our evening routine was play, play, play; a bus comes from the right. Play, play, play; a bus comes from the left.

Every morning and evening, several residents followed the pendulum movement of the buses that interrupted our fun while they traveled to and from work. Graveyard Street is located in a mostly working class neighborhood in an industrial city of Rio de Janeiro,

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<sup>39</sup> In *Pique-bandeira*, participants are divided into two teams, and each team shall put a flag in a place considered difficult and far within their field. The objective of the game is to cross the opposing field and capture the flag without being caught. *3-cortes* is street volleyball played in a circle where the players may touch the ball up to two times, and are obligated to hit the ball towards other player on the third time. If the other player escapes or grabs the ball, the one who shot needs to leave the game, which continues until there is a winner.

the City of Sorrow, and the majority of the residents worked either in downtown Rio, taking the bus to the right; or in the center of Sorrow City and in other *feelings cities* in nearby suburbs, taking the bus to the left. They were secretaries, merchants, attendants, and auxiliaries in manufacturing in general, but some neighbors found openings at a local business as a way to make money. Three businesses opened there in the 90s: The haberdashery where my mother used to buy satin ribbons for my hair, the store of the Portuguese where my grandfather was inured to buy French bread for our traditional afternoon meals. It was also the mom-and-pop store, famous for selling delicious peanut candy to the children and ice-cold beer to the adults. Our parents stayed and allowed us to stay later on the street on Friday nights since we did not have school the next morning. I remember playing and hearing my father calling for me to buy him a beer so he could drink with my godmother and uncle who had just arrived from work, from the right. I hated having to stop the game, but they always asked me if I wanted to drink a soda, so there was a reward.

Typical of Rio de Janeiro's outskirts, neighbors have know each other for a long time and interact on the sidewalk during the nights and neighborhood festivities. Following a Brazilian tradition of keeping the family close and associated with the financial difficulty to buy a house, the children of these first families, when they marry, build their homes, in the backyards of their parents. My mother, for example, has lived there for about 59 years. She grew up, got married, took the bus to the left to work, and to this very day she stays in the evening breeze, sometimes already asleep and worried waiting for my brother and I to come home safely.

Violent deaths started to encroach on Graveyard Street in the mid-90s, but it was just after 2000 that the vicinity saw neighborhood boys, year after year, getting involved with criminal activity. It was during this time that the violent deaths really began to knock at our doors. From 1994 to 2012, seven mothers, including my aunt, had their lives transformed due to the homicide of nine beloved, young, Black males. Since their sons were involved in criminal activities, early death was a real possibility and the majority of the Black mothers did not feel that they could express their sorrow, or the way they chose to express it. The ethnographic account in this chapter interposes with my own memories as a resident of Graveyard Street, where I was both witness and subject to joy, suffering, and love.

If discussed in light of the sociological and historical knowledge of the social dynamics of Brazil in the period, the increase of violent deaths on this specific street follows the larger pattern of youth mortality. In 1998, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and the Ayrton Senna Institute released the first of an annual publication called *Mapa da Violência* [Map of Violence] analyzing data on violence between 1976 and 1996. The first edition focused on Brazilian youth's exposure to violence, and called for the state and society to cope with the problem. It shows that the precariousness of life in the suburbs of large cities, and the lack of access to health services, education, and employment means that young people seek *ética do instante* [instant ethics], i.e., at the loss of future prospects, they take advantage of what's immediately possible--drugs, weapons, and the fetish of power. Rio de Janeiro was ranked first among the 27 Brazilian states regarding homicide rates (1998, p. 47).

According to sociologist Jose Claudio Souza Alves (2003), the number of homicides started to increase in the 90s due to a power struggle in the action of extermination groups, mostly formed by the military police and city guards, fighting to maintain control of power in the area as the *narcotrafico* [drug trafficking] was establishing itself. Although each of the deaths of young residents of Graveyard Street has its own individual history, set of determinants and causes, they can still be inserted into a broader sociological context. The profile of the group with the highest number of murders is always that of young Black men from the peripheries and poor areas. These regularities allow me to infer that, far from being the result of individual decisions or isolated incidents, we are dealing with a social phenomenon that destroys Black lives, families, and communities. This racial, gendered, and social context scares many families, especially mothers.

In May 2011, I came back home to Rio de Janeiro. This time I came home not from the daily back and forth from school and work that worried my mother, but from the equally anxious three years of coursework in the graduate program at UT. Many things on the street had changed since the 90s. The old haberdashery gave way to an electronics repair shop, the shop of the Portuguese to a steak house; and now we have a beauty salon and a karaoke bar. New neighbors moved into the three-story building near our yard, and the front neighbor sold his yard to a bus and truck company that built a garage. The buses continue to go to the left and to the right, and the children no longer play in the street.

Apart from couples who in moments of disagreement went to the sidewalk to “vent out loud” and the drunken brawls of bar goers, the lives of the residents of Graveyard Street are private in so far as what they choose to be private (Da Matta, 1991). For example, it is

possible to see families' demonstrations of love, friends having happy conversation, young girls showing off their new clothes and young boys their fancy shoes. However, if someone does something that is considered improper, it is solved in the private sphere. "*Entra a-gorra!* [Go inside now!]" my father said when I, as a teenager, was the only girl in the middle of my male friends with dirty mouths. Therefore, in this vicinal ethnography, the sidewalk, where behaviors and speeches are monitored and carefully displayed, needs to be understood as an intermediate space between what is public and what is private. The suffering caused by the loss of a family member through murder is exerted into the sphere of the private. What does it mean to a cousin-ethnographer-neighbor navigating in the intimate reclusiveness of one's sorrow, and in the superficial exposure of others?

I call my interaction as a neighbor-ethnographer as *ethnographic vicinity*, i.e., the politics and the necessary negotiation of being a long-time neighbor and an ethnographer. It required a negotiation between the public and private spheres in the social context of the *visitas* [visits], and my common experience helped in establishing rapport. I individually let them know about my research interest and after their agreement to participate, I asked them to choose where and when they wanted to have a conversation. I let them know that we could go anywhere they felt comfortable, or any place that they wanted to visit, such as a beach or a park. All of them chose their houses as the site of interaction. As neighbors, we do not frequent each other's houses, so both parts involved anxiously awaiting the planned visits. They carefully deliberated the better hour of the day, cooked, and carefully chose the place of the conversation. However, perhaps because of the confidence they have placed in me and in my parents, or due to the respect and seriousness that I have showed

to the subject, they all seemed to be without reservation regarding the content of our conversation. In what follows, I narrate my interactions to collect the oral histories of seven mothers, subjects of my esteem, the protagonists of nurturing and recreating the little African Diaspora on Graveyard Street.

### **Seven mothers, nine boys, telling feelings**

#### **MARTHA AND ALDA - "NOW WE ARE HERE IN NOSTALGIA"**

Martha and Alda are two sisters who have in their friendship and solidarity for one another the strength to face the pain of the premature deaths of their children from murder. Marta is a retired 56 year old. She has been in a stable heterosexual relationship for about 10 years with a man who she calls *meu velho* [my old man]. She had three children--two men and a woman-- who gave her five grandchildren. Alda is 53 years old, divorced and dating a man younger than her. She works for city hall, and after the death of her son, she asked to work at an orphanage. She is a mother of three women, deceased Felipe, and also has four grandchildren. Marta and Alda, along with their children, were raised at Graveyard Street #15. The large #15 yard was the site of many afternoons of our childhood play. Felipe was always the fastest runner, while Marcio, Martha's son, was the one who always selected the girls for his team to protect them with his craftiness.

During my trip home to Rio in May 2010, I was invited to a birthday party at #15. Marta likes to dance, and her skinny body helps her to be excellent in the movements of *samba*, *axé*, and *farró* [Brazilian music styles]. Her smile and enthusiastic hugs make us feel warm and cared for. I missed Alda's striking loud laugh at the party. I asked Marta where she was and she said, "She is still too sad to party. The wound is still very open. You

know.” It was just a month after the murder of Alda’s son, and the wound did not allow her to go the party. I told Marta about my research and asked her if she would be willing to talk. She gave me her phone number and asked me to call. When I called four days later, an electronic message said that the number did not exist. Immediately I thought that she gave the wrong number on purpose, and that this project would never succeed. “Who would be willing to talk about this great suffering in their lives?” I thought. I was discouraged to try again.

After almost a month in Rio, I saw her daughter on the bus. “My mom was talking about you the other day. She said you would call her. Did you give up?” I told her about my failed attempt and she asked to see the number, “my mom is crazy, Lu, she gave you a number that has not worked for more than a year. Let me give you the correct number.” I called the same day, and she apologized for her mistake while making fun of herself. “Ahahaha, I’m old, Lu! I have too many things to remember.” I explained again about my preliminary research project and she agreed to participate. To my surprise, she asked me to meet in her sister’s place. “Can it be in Alda’s apartment? She is still too sad and she needs to see people. She would like to see you.” We then scheduled the *visita* for an afternoon the following week.

Alda does not live on Graveyard Street anymore. The *visita* was in her apartment in another part of the city. I arrived at her place and the two sisters were watching a re-run of the soap opera *Sinha Moça* on TV Globo. It was an election year and the noise from the innumerable sound trucks passing on the street filled her living room and disrupted her attention on the soap’s love story of two young white abolitionists in their campaign to

abolish slavery in Brazil. “Close this door, Martinha. I can’t hear anything,” said Alda while turning up the volume. In front of the sofa where we were sitting, a 3-foot tall stand held the TV, glasses, books and in a special spot, two pictures of Marcio: one of him smiling with open arms, and one that was a memento from his memorial. We watched two or three segments of the soap opera, and Cida, Alda’s neighbor, arrived complaining about the number of people on the streets working for the election campaigns. Cida went to the bathroom and Marta whispered in my ear, “She has helped us a lot these months. We need to work, you know. We cannot live here alone.” She let me know that Cida spends the afternoons in Alda’s company and tries to make her leave the house. The soap opera ended with the slaveholder’s loud yell when he took off the mask of an abolitionist on his farm and discovers that he has shot his own daughter. “So sad, isn’t it?” Alda voiced. “What?” I asked. “He shot his own daughter.” In which Marta joked, “Poor guys were the slaves who were all excited to run away.” “I don’t like wickedness, even on TV. I don’t like it,” Alda stated and asked her sister to offer me water. After a conversation about the weather, it was time to initiate our conversation.

It was my first *visita* and I was unsure about how to deal with the recorder and the IRB form. These bureaucratic and normative procedures would scare and intimidate them. I thanked them for their trust, welcoming me on that afternoon, and let them know that I was there as a neighbor studying violence. This was my way of bonding with them, but also showing that I was not there to gossip about their lives as other neighbors might do. Alda and Marta moved their heads up and down showing their agreement with my

statement, while Cida lifted her eyebrows as if doubting, but agreed. I then asked for recording permission and the vicinal conversation began.

Dressed in an old red dress and without her dentures, Alda was very different from the well-presented woman in tight jeans that we were used to seeing. She had a stroke months before the death of her son and, of course, the suffering did not help her recovery. She was very fragile since her son's death, and was still trying to understand why it had happened. She whispered, "Marcio had a formal job. He was sleeping and left the house only to meet death. He had just left and rapidly came the news: 'Marcio is dead.' To me this was a cruel thing. How can you die like this? He had just left home. How can he be dead?" His encounter with death was fast; however, Alda's struggle to avoid this meeting recounts a longer trajectory and the marks of this journey are written on her body.

Both of her sons got involved in criminal activity when they were teenagers. Alda reports that the changes in her life started on the day she suspected her sons' involvement.

My life has changed a lot. They left the house and I did not trust. I was concerned and could not sleep well. Thus, for a long time I was like a crazy person. I listened to fireworks, I did not care.<sup>40</sup> It could be any time, day or night; I entered the *favela* searching for them. The guys asked me to leave and said that my son was doing security for the *dono* [the head of the drug dealers]. How could such a thing be? My son was thin, 17 years old, whereas the *dono* was strong, a tall man. How could he be doing security, for God's sake? (Personal interview Alda, 2010)

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<sup>40</sup> Usually in *favela* invasions by the police or gangs, young men who sell drugs shoot fireworks to let their cronies know that the police are entering the *favela*. The person who carries out this function is called the *olheiro* [lookout].

She talked with the *dono*, who asked Paulo to leave because he did not want his mother interfering with the business. She surmises that, because they were raised on Graveyard Street and she had many friends in the *favela* nearby, they were not fearful. “I was the former *dono*’s co-mother. They knew that these people would not do anything bad to them,” explained Alda.

In the same period of their involvement, Felipe, Marta’s son, started his adventures with selling drugs as well. Marta remembers that he became involved and died in less than 3 months. “Three months that looked like three years,” she states. She acknowledged his activity for the first time when she was working and a police car stopped with him inside. The police got him with three small bags of weed, and she needed to go to the police station to sign a warning and release him. Her sister took him to her house to wait until Marta got off work, but he escaped to the *favela* again before she had the chance to get there. Marta says that they played this game for some time until the police got him again, “I went to work and he went there, I arrived and went after him, and the same thing happened for days.” He was 17 years old and passed through three different youth facilities, escaping from the last one along with his partner in crime. While she was there on visitors’ day, waiting for the agent to call his number, he was already in the *favela*. “I called my sister to let her know that I could not see him, and she desperately ordered me to leave because someone had already seen him in the *favela*, and the police could hold me there to cause him to surrender.” Marta left and went after him, she asked several parents to hide him in their houses, but he was obsessed with the “adventure.” She took him to his paternal grandmother’s house in another city and there he stayed for a while, but his father became

sad after visiting him and seeing him crying and brought him back. When Felipe turned 18 years old, he left home to work selling drugs, and ended up being killed in an ambush by debtors' of the *boca* [point-of-sale for drug users] where he worked. She remembers,

I fought hard for my son. He had no example of this kind of life. I do not understand why he got into this. I was anguished when he disappeared. I was told about his death, but I could not find the body. I looked for him everywhere. Wherever there was a cemetery or morgue, I went. I opened drawer by drawer looking for my son. They disappeared with his body, you know. There is always the hope that one day he will arrive. You do not see the body, right! There is hope.

Felipe's disappearance made the family very afraid. Alda saw that things would not end well and moved to a city with her sons in an attempt to make them pursue another life. According to Alda, after some time they calmed down and life was good again, although friends who went to visit said that they were searching for the same life and doing drugs. They lived in the other city for four years before she decided to return in order to live closer to her family. Their sons were working and suddenly they experienced another death in the family. Alda expresses,

I am a spiritualist. I was eating ice cream and a woman passed by me. Suddenly she turned around and asked who the boy who died in my family was. 'It is my nephew,' I said. She said that he was behind me with his hand on my shoulder, and warned me that I would have a loss. Since my mother was sick, I thought it would be her. 'No, it's not your mother, but your son. A storm will come, but after going to see the bonanza [prosperity],' she said. I asked if I could do anything to stop it, but she said no. I went to church every single day after that. On a Tuesday, I arrived from physical therapy and Marcio was lying on the bed, off from work. I put my hand on his head and said, 'My son, Jesus loves you.' Then he looked at me and said, 'I love Jesus too, mother, and you,' [she cries]. I asked if he would have lunch with me and he said no. Soon I saw him putting a shirt on and said he was going to his father's house. I asked for what and he said he would take R\$20 to his father to go to work the next day because his partner had used his bus card. A few hours later came the news. How come? His colleague tried to find out what happened and rumors said that Marcio was *marrento* [cocky]. They said that they had a discussion with a guy, who shot him. After a while, I heard he was also killed. Now I'm here

nostalgic, right. Only God. Only He can cherish us, to conform. If not Him..." (Personal interview with Alda, 2010)

Marta wonders if Felipe would be alive had she stayed married to his father. She was married and right after the divorce, Felipe got involved with criminal activities. She wonders, "It affects the child. He was very attached to his father. Maybe he felt it. I don't know. I know that when he was arrested, I was the one going there. Gil was there just once, and the boy always asked for him." However, she recognizes her effort, and exposes a trend in parenting in a violent patriarchal society--the mother is always responsible for the bad things that happen in the family. She affirms that she heard people from her own family, "people who were witness to her failed marriage," saying that she should have stayed with her husband and saved the family.

Cida also shared her experience of the death of her nephew. She told us about the advice she gave to Davi, asking him to stop hanging out with "bad people." "He said that I was not his mother and that he would not listen to me, but I had him as my child. I saw him grow up, did lots of things for him." I asked them about the women's role in the strategies and in the avoidance of death, and why even in cases where the parents live together, it is the mother who goes to the frontline. Alda answered, "The mother has more love for the children. The mother carries the babies for nine months. She has a purpose. Fathers might like them, but in the hour of danger it is only the mother. The mother also has the power of showing love. The father hides it, does not show affection, emotion." Marta continued, "Toni, for example. When Felipe was arrested, he said, 'I will not go there. You go.' I was the one who visited him and said things on behalf of his father. Sometimes I even invented some nice words to say and pretended that they were his

words.” Alda continued, “Moms don’t keep nothing. They have no need to hide. If they are angry, they talk; if happy, they hug. If the child is in danger, she doesn’t want to know what can happen, she goes to save him.”

The sisters also observe that people deny these mothers’ the opportunity to suffer because they are mothers of young males involved in crime. According to sisters, they have heard from many people to give up trying because these young men’s deaths were taken for granted, and without the possibility to change. Therefore, they are criticized for going through moments of depression or anger over the death of their children. “Was he involved? Yes, okay! But because of this I am not suppose to suffer? I look at the neighborhood, they blame [me]. I know. I hear comments that I shouldn’t have left my husband,” says Marta. “Whether he was involved or not, he was my son. I fought for him. What family wants to have your child involved?” noted Alda.

At the end of our conversation, Alda fried *coxinha de galinha* and we sat at the table to eat. Marta looked at her sister and said, “Yeah, my sister. We thought lightning would not strike the same place twice, but it struck.” To which Alda replied, “Yeah, my sister. It is like a plague, they don’t think, they don’t care. They only think in the moment, to have fun. They don’t think about the mothers, about the family. Now we are here in nostalgia.”

#### **OLINDA - “NOW I’M STUCK WITH THIS CHILD”**

I had known Ari since he was a child. He has always been shorter than the other boys, and they used to make fun of him. The similarity with my cousin made me began to

call him *Priminho* [little cousin]. Very shy, he barely talked. Instead, he always delivered his long laugh that was similar to Woody Woodpecker's. *Priminho* was beaten to death in the head in 2000. I found out about death a day after his burial after asking his brother why they all arrived from the left of Graveyard Street with blurry-red eyes.

On August 2012, I inquired with one of his twin brothers if I could visit their mother, Dona Olinda. He talked to her and she asked me to go to her house on Father's Day (the second Sunday of August in Brazil). He said the other brother would come pick me up, since she had moved to another neighborhood. However, he forgot to let his brother know about his task. It was my cousin's birthday and we organized a game of bingo to celebrate both the birthday and Father's Day. I waited, while partying, not knowing her address and she waited for me not knowing my telephone number. When my alleged ride got home, late at night, Dona Olinda asked him to call me because she was afraid that something had happened to me on my way there. It was when I told him about his unknown task. She then asked me to go on the following Tuesday. When I got there, I received a big surprise. A twelve-year-old boy opened the gate and asked me, "Did you meet my father?" He had the same eyes, the same mouth. His words made me very emotional and I had to suppress my feelings to avoid scaring the boy. "Yes, I did. He was my *Priminho*," I replied. The boy was Pedro, who was only two years old when his father was killed. Pedro's mother was also killed some months later, and Dona Olinda gained custody.

Dona Olinda's experience shows how the death of a son affects an entire family emotionally and economically, but it also shows an incredible web of support necessary to deal with the suffering. Dona Olinda left her husband because of his alcoholism and

aggression. *Priminho* and the other three boys from the same father were kids and Olinda, with no other choice, asked their grandmother to take care of them so she could work. She lived with her other three children from previous relationships and used to see the young boys on the weekends. She complained, “the boys were not very attached to me.” Although always struggling to feed and educate their children, Olinda said that her real struggle began when *Priminho* was seventeen years old and was caught stealing and arrested for the first time.

He stayed in a youth facility for some months and she opened a car wash when he was released. However, although she offered him a possibility of income, he continued to be involved in robbery, which took him to prison for the second time. At that juncture, he was over eighteen and was placed in a prison. She remembers, “After that, my daughter, it was only me going to every single police station and prison. He was transferred to several prisons and I was always following him.” Her daughter, who also housed him for a while, arrived during our conversation, added, “Only we know what we went through. We needed to be naked to get inside the prison. It is horrible. I don’t know how they just don’t change their mind and give up this life after staying one day inside a prison.” Dona Olinda remembers that to leave the prison and let him there was the worst part. She declares, “I walked through that long hall wondering if he would be there when I came back the next week. At home, when I was eating I wondered if he had consumed any food that day. When I went to bed, I wondered if he was sleeping on the cold floor.”

Olinda talks about Ari with both sorrow and anger. When she talks about him, she lowers and raises her voice in her speech, “He could be here today. He was so young, handsome... I was thinking he was there and her sister thinking he was here.

*Priminho* was buried at the cemetery on Graveyard Street as soon as his brothers transferred his body from a morgue in Rio. There was no funeral and they did not allow Olinda to see the disfigured bitten body. She alleges that this was when she got sick in both body and mind. “All the problems I have... I have heart, high blood pressure, and sleeping problems. All started after his death. I couldn’t even look at the body, I was devastated. In addition I got the *garoto* [boy], you know.”

The *garoto*, as she often refers to Pedro, became both the main problem and a great remembrance of her son. Pedro was spending the weekend with his other grandmother when his father died. Since she was already in the process of obtaining his custody, the juvenile court granted her the final care and delegated civil police officers to rescue the boy. In order to take care of Pedro and due to the health issues that she developed, she needed to stop working. She states,

Now I depend on them [her sons]. I have no income. My daughter and my sons help me, but it is hard. She helps me with my medication and they help me with the rest, especially with the boy. I need four medications to live. I had always worked, for me it is very difficult to depend on people. I always had my money.

**DORA – “I MISCARRIED MANY CHILDREN, BUT THIS WAS THE FIRST CHILD I LOST.”**

Dora is a mother of three children and three grandchildren. She moved away from Graveyard Street ten months before the death of her son and nephew in 2010, which

happened just three days apart. José and Ivo *botaram o terror em* [terrorized] the City of Sorrow, as Dora's brother summarizes the criminal activity that made them leave the yard where three generations of their family lived. Nia, her daughter, is the only one who stayed in the neighborhood, affirming that she is not obligated to change her life completely because of her brother's *vacilações* [mistakes].<sup>41</sup>

I contacted Dora through Nia's. If asked about her mother, she used to affirm not knowing her whereabouts, but she gave me Dora's phone number after I explained the purpose. I sent Dora a message asking if I could call, but she never replied. Instead, she called me three days later from a private number. She was talkative and asked me about people from the street. She said that I was the first person from the area that she had talked to in a year. It was the end of July 2012, and she invited me to spend the next extended holiday at her house, so I could stay longer to make up for the long time on the road. By the end of August, I contacted her again to ask if I could visit her on Brazil's Independence Day holiday. She welcomed the idea by saying that I could also participate in her grandson's birthday party, and asked me to invite my cousin Bia on the trip, since she knew her.

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<sup>41</sup> *Vacilação* is a term originally from Rio's *favelas* that indicates acts against the proper conduct in these neighborhoods. Rapper MV Bill has a song called *Como Sobreviver na Favela* [how to survive in the *favela*], where he explains three major attitudes of *favela* residents, people involved in the local criminality and the playboys—what the white people who live outside the *favela* but frequent the area to buy drugs are called—and how they should behave. The three rules are: One cannot be a traitor; cannot steal anything inside the *favela*, and cannot be a snitch. According to the lyrics, any behavior that goes against these rules would result in correction—a shot in the hand or beating—or termination—death.

On September 7, Bia and I started our journey to Dora's new place. She was scared to go because rumors said that Dora fled from Graveyard Street after the family had received threats. Her fear increased during our travel because Dora did not give us the address, but confusing instructions to get there by bus. We needed to call her several times during our almost 7-hour trip changing buses in different cities. When we arrived at the road close to her house, Nete, Dora's sister, was at a bar and laughed aloud at our exhausted faces. "You could have taken one single bus to get here in 3 hours!" she teased. She was among several people and I did not ask why they decided to have us take the longest way, but I understood during my visit.

Nete brought us to her house, where we met Dora, her youngest son and her two grandsons. Immediately I noticed that the house clashed with the others on the street. The façade was gloomy and had bars on the gate, door, windows and fanlights, creating some difficulty for an outsider to penetrate; whereas the other houses had many windows, without bars and with low fences. Another thing that caught my attention was the red paint and the Comando Vermelho's acronym CV written with white chalk on different parts of the house. Despite all of the security of her house, I felt very insecure inside and kept thinking about the possibility of a gang *metralhar* [shooting] everybody there, or a police invasion looking for robbers, as I saw this happen at her house on Graveyard Street at least twice. Dora showed us to our bedroom and we stayed there for a while changing clothes. Nete knocked on the door and gave us a key. "You ladies, lock the door when you go to sleep, and tomorrow morning you give me your backpacks that I'll keep them in my closet." It was clear to me that we were in a space of fear.

Nete and Dora were tipsy that Friday afternoon when we arrived. They were drinking beer while decorating the house for the birthday party. We helped her inflate balloons and cook the side dishes for the barbecue, while the children played in the street. When everything was done, Dora sat on the sidewalk with her cup of beer and invited all of us to join her. The sun was setting, the breeze was starting to bother us, and they kept laughing at our chills. Dora suddenly said, “*Como é? Eu quero falar! Não vai começar?*” [“How is it? I want to talk! Is it going to start?”]. I did not want to inconvenience anyone, so I planned to enjoy the party and only talk about her experience the day after. “No rush is necessary. We can talk about it tomorrow if you want,” I said. In which she replied, “I want to talk so I can be happy at the party.” She said that the kids’ birthdays were difficult because she remembers José’s happiness when they were born, and because of his absence at the celebrations. What I had forgotten in that *visita* is that I am in service, and not in control of when and what they want to share. I was there to listen. Getting drunk was her way to both prepare to talk and go through the day.

“*Eu amo meu filho!*” [“I love my son”] This was how she began to speak of her experience. Dora let me know that her first partner, the father of José and Nia, was a drug dealer. She said that she decided to get involved with him to have more freedom from her parents and enjoy life, but she did not imagine that her decision would lead to this end. José was a car mechanic and worked in car shop close to downtown City of Sorrow for many years. The shop was in front of the bus station where we would take the bus to the right to get off at Graveyard Street. José used to give a big smile when he saw a neighbor. Dora was in disbelief the first time she knew of his secondary activity, and when she

decided to take action, it was too late. He was commanding a gang that robbed stores and factories and soon became associated with the *donos* of another *favela* in the city, and then she decided to cover for his crimes.

She believes she has always been foolish and festive, and that she did not change her lifestyle after having kids. She states that although being “crazy,” she was a good mother to the kids that she decided to have. Dora told me that she always advised her children to seek the right path, but that she never demanded anything because she did not want to reproduce the repressiveness of her mother, and have them lie to her the same way she did. Because of this agreement with her children, she did not believe it when she was informed about José’s first crime, a robbery at a store in the neighborhood. She described it saying,

Leleo told me that he used my car to rob. My husband told me that he was different. I cursed both of them. Deep inside I knew that it was true, but I do not accept anyone talking about my son. I wanted to believe in him. A mother’s heart is never wrong, but I never wanted to believe. *He was my love*. To this day, I do not believe he is dead, even though I saw him inside the casket. That guy who shot him, did not shot him. *He shot me*. José is crying over me and I am crying over him. The man who killed him killed me as well. *I am dead*, but I have to get up because of his two sons [crying].

José was killed and three days later his cousin was killed. José’s girlfriend was murdered just a day after the cousin. A rival gang brutally tortured and shot her son in the back. His cousin tried to avenge the murder, invaded a party where the group was celebrating José’s death, and was also killed. Nobody in the family knows the circumstance of his girlfriend’s death, but Dora was informed that her corpse was found in her house

with knife wounds. The pain of losing two family members and having to raise two orphan kids is tremendous to Dora. She affirms,

I think this pain will never end. It will only go away *when I really die*. I hope that day comes fast. I do not care to leave his children here. *I just want to go*. [crying] I want to go [yelling]. Today I know why my mother left the bathroom crying and screaming, “Where are you going?” When my older brother left and never returned [her brother was also murdered]. I know what the pain of losing a child is. I am a woman, I removed eight children out of my womb, but only one was taken from me. This pain is very bad. I hid so many wrong people in my house, but I could not do anything to avoid the death of my son. *It was what I had to go through*. I miscarried many children, but this was the first child I lost.

*He was my love. He shot me. I am dead. I just want to go. It was what I had to go through*. These five sentences significantly unveil Dora’s Deep Diaspora experience. Dora buried the two family members and earned the responsibility to raise her two grandsons. We talked for about thirty minutes and Dora asked me to wait. She increased the volume of the music and started to dance and sing in the living room. Her brother, Ivo’s father, who arrived during our conversation, then said:

She likes this music. She is destroyed, but it masks her suffering. We all are. It is very hard to be here isolated from everyone who we know. We have to live this life of fear. Have you seen anything like this? A *Negão* [Black man] as I am, having to flee because of irresponsibility. They terrorized that city and many people cannot even hear their names. They killed so many people, sons of some of my friends. How can I go back there?

Dora came back to the sidewalk and said she wanted to say something else, “I will meet him. That man who killed my son, I’ll meet him. This will be the end of us. I’ll ask him: ‘why did you kill my son? Who are you to have the right to kill my *menino* [boy]’? Record this: ‘Flavinho, you will pay me!’ He will pay me. He is already paying me.”



Figure 3 - Birthday cake between barred windows (07/07/2012)

The party began. Children playing everywhere. Cadinho on the barbecue grill. “Come *linguiça*.” Bia serving the food. Lucas the drinks. A balloon explodes. “Luciane, now [take] a picture with my brother.” Toys on the floor. “Smile for the camera.” Cake. Coca-cola. Cake. “*Eu quero gelatina*.” [I want jello]. We all had fun and Dora had a blast, but the following day she was another person. Sober, the talkative woman became a silent and serious Dora. We spent the morning in an open area in the city and we heard no more than five sentences from her. All of them answering the children’s questions. “*Vó, me da salgadinho?*” asked the birthday boy for some food leftovers. Dora went home to take the food and Nete vented,

*Eu sabia que isso iria acontecer.* [I knew it would happen] I warned them, but they said that nothing would happen. Dora had to pray, [to] believe in God. At his burial, I told her that the same iron that brought him to the world (he was born with forceps) killed him (a revolver). It is the rule of our life. Those who make the others cry,

cries. How many mothers must have cried because of his acts? Are you will going to tell me that he has never taken the lives of others? I cannot affirm that, but I heard that the militia made Ivo kill José. Can you imagine that? These boys are equal *baratas tontas* [dizzy cockroaches] killing each other. This will never end.

**CARLA – “SEARCHING FOR PIECES IN TRASH CANS”**

The last time I saw Carla was in 2008 at Central do Brazil in line to buy a ticket from the subway. I had not seen her for years and I was glad to see her looking healthy and well. She was very different from the woman I used to see in the 90s when she would give weekly accounts of maltreatment and beatings from her husband while doing our nails. Many people on Graveyard Street tried to help her, but having a child every year, Carla was captive in a sick marriage. We would hear her screams at night and the following day she would call her husband ‘my love.’ The seemingly volunteered public demonstrations of affection discouraged people to act on her behalf. She became isolated and the target of gossip. She stayed in this situation for years, until the day that she took all of the five children and disappeared. From time to time news about Carla reached Graveyard Street, “She is doing well. She is working in a salon in Copacabana,” “she is addicted to bingo,” “she is living in the streets,” “she is dating someone.” All these rumors whetted the curiosity of the neighborhood until the day we heard the sad news about Patrick’s death, and later that year, the death of Rato, Carla’s eldest son.

Regret, shame and sadness surround these cases and their after effects. In my search for Carla, I first asked her ex-husband about her whereabouts because he was raising their youngest children after the deaths. Crossly, he told me that she was lost in the world, “*não sei, sumiu!*” [I don’t know, disappeared]. Second, I asked his niece who took the children

to live with him. She said that Carla was living in a *cracolândia*<sup>42</sup>, was anguished, and asked me to help get her out of there. We tried to meet on three different occasions, but she had to cancel. We finally met two days after I arrived from the weekend with Dora. Soon after, I learned that it was too much for me to handle two horrible stories in less than a week about people I knew.

According to Daniela, Carla witnessed Patrick's death. The police shot him several times while he working in a *boca*. She said that Patrick was caught red-handed robbing a bus and was convicted to stay for some months in a youth detention facility. In order to secure his safety inside, he had to join a gang, which requested his services as a *olheiro* [lookout] after he served his sentence. Disagreeing with the situation, Carla told her son that she would only leave there with him in tow. However, the only way he left the place was dead after a police incursion in the *favela*. Daniela continued by saying that at Patrick's burial, her uncle Luis was devastated and asked for Carla's forgiveness [for having not tried to de-kill Patrick], but Carla could not look at him. Sadly, their oldest son was hooked on crack and on his way to destruction. Desperate, Carla surrendered to addiction and joined her son in the *cracolândia*. Rato was killed by drug-dealers some months later, his body was quartered and the pieces scattered in trash bags in the *favela*. Daniela finished sharing by saying that, when under the influence of crack, Carla wanders and opens trash bags in her continual search for her son.

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<sup>42</sup> *Cracolândia* is a place for selling and consuming crack.

My fieldwork notes for that day read:

I am feeling terrible after talking with Daniela. The image of Carla searching in trash bags cannot leave my mind. I went back home and looked for pictures from childhood where these boys appear. I was in need of seeing them alive, as if I could bring them back safe not only in my memory, but also in reality. I found a picture of Rato with my brother and five other cousins at a birthday party. It was even worse to see the picture. They were so close to each other. They were behind the cake, just like José's son was four days ago. I remembered Nete's words about the continuity, "This will never end." What differentiates Rato from my brother? Both of them were looking at the camera. I took that picture, but there are others. (Fieldwork note - Blue notebook, 9/11/2012)<sup>43</sup>



Figure 4 – What is the difference?

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<sup>43</sup> I was making reference to other pictures where the young men from Graveyard Street appear. Some of them are reproduced in this chapter.

### **An Ethnographic Nightmare**

I panicked in the days following my conversation with Daniela. I slept until eleven in the morning. I could not leave the house. I could not look at my fieldwork material. I could not talk on the phone. I was shaking and having heart palpitations. Around 4:40pm, I decided to take a nap, and planned when I woke up to go to the grocery store to buy coarse salt for a *banho de descarrego*, an energizing shower used by followers of Afro-Brazilian religions, and Afro-Catholics, like myself. The tradition says that coarse salt is a good body purifier and recycler of energy. Since I was introduced to two heavy stories about two mothers and their four boys, I felt that I absorbed some of the sadness and energy present in their physical and mental environments. In my dream, I went to the grocery store. It was a small place, very dark, dirt floor, nothing like a store. I saw three Black women dressed in long dresses sitting in a corner making sachets. They were from three different generations. I told them that I was looking for coarse salt and they said that I was in need of lavender to cure me. The youngest woman then gave me one of the sachets filled with lavender and shaped like a rose. She told me she had a message for one of my friends and left, going up to the second floor through a spiral staircase. I followed her and the stair took me to the middle of a dark wide room, but she was not there. Instead, I saw the shadow of dozens of children whose mothers I had talked and interacted with during my fieldwork research. They all started to move towards me, closing the circle. I then said, “Do you think I fear you? I do not fear you. Especially now, 6 o’clock, time of Yemanja.” I was not scared, and my arms were open as if I was inviting them to come closer. Suddenly, my mother knocked on my bedroom door and I woke up. I looked at the time, and it was exactly 6 o’clock.

This dream has so many elements, but I felt that I did not have the necessary tools to analyze it. I got scared and confused. I narrated it to some of my friends and to a *Yalorixa* [priestess] friend of mine. Each one of them gave a different interpretation of my dream. “They are thanking you for what you are doing,” “you need to be initiated into *Candomblé*,” [Afro-Brazilian religion] “it is because you are not practicing any religion,” “you must pray every time you interview somebody,” “you should stop conducting this research, you are dealing with so many bad energies.” I rely on spiritual-theory to make sense of this dream, perhaps what it is about. In *Raising the Dead*, Sharon Holland (2000) states that her book is a “figurative enterprise, as well as an intellectual ... endeavor [whose] task was both to hear the dead speak in fiction and to discover in culture and its intellectual property opportunities for not only uncovering silences but also forming inarticulate places into conversational territories” (p. 4). That afternoon, my dream was a portal that put me in conversation with a mysterious world. First, the three Black women reminded me of the web of support so necessary to take care of Black women’s physical and spiritual lives. They were ready to help me to be well by providing me the necessary antidote to my emotional illness. Second, the spiral stairs that the youngest woman used to go to the upper level reminded me of the turns in life that many mothers have to face, but also that there is a way for them to reconnect with their children. Third, the image of the men in a circle around me affirms that I am part of the same history of suffering, and that the Black people are seeing through an illusionary reality that brutalizes and disturbs our own imagery of ourselves. Finally, it was a huge reminder of the connection that I have with my mother and the power of Black motherhood. She told me that she was watching

TV and remembered that I said I would take a shower at six and decided to wake me up. I was sleeping, but my *Ya mi* [my mother] was there to take care of me.

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Daniela was anguished because Carla did not have relatives to take care of her, and her daughter and youngest son kept asking for Daniela's help. Carla was adopted and the family turned away from her when she insisted on staying married to Luis. Daniela asked me to look for a drug rehabilitation clinic because Carla had agreed to go. I committed to finding a free clinic, while Daniela attempted to convince her brother to transport Carla from the *favela* to the clinic.

I recalled that Marcia Jacinto, a mother from the Web against Violence, mentioned a clinic run by an evangelical church, and I asked her for the information. Church-run clinics are the most common available sources of help in Rio since the state lacks rehab clinics despite the increasing number of *cracolândias*. Unfortunately, the one that Marcia mentioned was full. I continued my search for about a month without success, all the while scared to receive bad news about Carla. On Friday October 19<sup>th</sup> I was on the bus and two rehab inmates boarded and distributed flyer advertisements asking for contributions to support a clinic in the periphery of Rio. I called the clinic as soon as I got home and a staff member told me that they accepted new patients every other Sunday. The clinic's only requirement was that a person escort the patient through the gate carrying two changes of clothes and toiletries. The clinic seemed very suspicious to me, but I gave Daniela the

information. She let me know that Carla disappeared again. No one knew her whereabouts, whether she was dead or alive. November. December. January passed and I left the field.

On August 2013, Daniela contacted me through a Facebook message: “Good Evening, Lu. How are you, my dear? I have news! Carla was hospitalized today! I hope she stays.”

#### **NIA – “WITH MY OWN SUFFERING”**

In the 90s, it was common for a traveling circus stay in the neighborhood for about two months. The spectacle happened on the weekends and during the weekdays the clowns and tamers without their make-up attracted the curiosity of many people, including Helio. One day, when the ticket booths were no longer in operation, the traveling people took down the tent in order to go to another place where they would be a novelty again. Helio, without his parents’ permission, took some clothes and was prepared to leave with the circus, but Nia, his mother, prevented his departure. Sadly, some months later, Helio got involved with a robbery, fell into a trap and was killed. He was the first young male murdered from our group of friends. It was the first isolated case on Graveyard Street in six years, and the mothers of my family used his death as an example to warn the boys to stay away from any kind of criminality, and the girls to not date such guys.

Nia still lives on Graveyard Street. In July 2012 I was passing through her gate coming from the right and she was standing there. I let her know about the *visitas* and she said, “é, *minha filha* [yeah, my daughter], we live in silence about this enormous suffering

and sometimes it seems like we will explode, but I prefer to stay like this. With my own suffering. This is who I am now.”

**JOANA DARK – “WITH THOSE BONES IN MY LAP”**

Spaghetti with ground beef, Super Mario Bros. video game, the difference between m and n. These things will always make me remember my deceased cousin. It took the whole afternoon, but it was rewarding to see his eyes shining when I told him that m was the first letter of our grandpa’s name, who had two legs and a penis, whereas n was the first letter of his aunt’s name, who had just two legs. “Ahaha! I got it!” he exclaimed. Above all, I suffer at family reunions when he is not there to take the “all the cousins” picture with us.



Figure 5 – Birthday Cake

As is tradition in our family, the birthday person stands behind the cake to take the pictures. She/he then takes one with her/his parents, siblings, grandparent, uncles and aunts, and finally with cousins. The picture above is from my seventh birthday in an “all the cousins” moment. Cosme appears sucking his blue pacifier, an object that he seems to have exchanged for video games and then for a gun. In September 2011, his daughter turned ten years old, and as usual, it was time for the pictures. In the absence of her father, her stepfather was invited to join the picture. Aunt Joana was by my side in our circle around the cake. “Dim the lights! Let’s sing Happy Birthday,” the birthday girl’s mother said. We did not move. I don’t remember singing. The presence of that man standing behind the cake equals Cosme’s absence. “This was hard do see,” I commented to Aunt Joana. “I know. This is what I have witnessed for the past three years [since her mother got married]. Life goes on,” she said with teary eyes. After the party, while we were walking back to our yard, she vented,

When we had family parties and someone invited him, my heart would become tight. I was afraid someone would get him at the party and hurt an innocent person, one of you. Just imagine... I would go crazy. I knew that my son was lost. I could not accept another death. I’d rather he did not come. It was not because I did not like my son. I was just scared.

Conversations similar to the above happened on several occasions when I was living in Rio, but in December 2012, a week before I left Brazil, we had an official *visita*. We scheduled the talk twice, but she cancelled both of them. I understood that it was not something she wanted to do. It would not help her and I was okay with that. Unexpectedly,

she called and asked me to get my materials and go to her place. I took the recorder, the blue notebook, and headed over.

I asked her why she decided to talk after such a long time. She said, “I don’t know. I’m not used to speaking about my suffering. I work in healthcare and I’ve seeing many psychologists going crazy after hearing sad stories. They listen to everything very seriously and when the person goes away, they collapse. My experience is terrible, but you are leaving...” I should have asked the meaning of the “but you are leaving,” but I did not. Was it because she did not want to miss the opportunity to talk? Or was it because she wanted to contribute to her niece getting her degree?

I started our conversation by reminding her about our chat in 2010, where she blamed herself for not doing enough to save her son. I asked her why she feels guilty:

[Talking very slowly and crestfallen] I feel bad about it. I do not feel accomplished in my life. I failed as a mother. I think that I am guilty of not having given more assistance to my son. I feel very guilty. I focused on working hard. I thought that by giving the best, such a thing would not happened. I thought that if I worked and gave him the things he needed, he would not do this shit. Cosme started working at the age of sixteen, following the same vocation as his father, a blacksmith. He came back home full of grease from his first day of work, I felt like the happiest woman in the world. I cared, I watched over [him]. I was very embarrassed the first time I was suspicious of him. He arrived here with a bike and I made him take it to the guy who he said gave it to him. It was true, and it was a shame, but I think I acted correctly. To this day, I do not know why my son got involved with such things. He started going to *bailes funk*. I did not let him go, but his aunt, who was nearly his age, took him. She said he was a boy and had to leave the house. I think it was how it all started. If I would have said no and kept my word, if I had had more firmness and gone against my sister and husband, my son might still be here.

When asked to share the meaning of being a mother, she exposes a structure that positions her role in the family as the guardian, the protector, and the savior. In less than two minutes, she links joy, preservative love and care for the family and shows the centrality that it has in this structure. She says,

When I found out I was pregnant it was the most wonderful thing in life. It is everything. It is the realization of any woman. Receiving the hug of a child is wonderful. I felt accomplished. A blessing from God. If only that time would come back... but now I would have had three [children] instead of two. I miss him so much. There was a time I thought of offering my life for his life, but then I realized it would not work, because he wanted that life, no one was imposing [anything]. I would die, and what would happen to your uncle and cousin [her daughter]?

The tension between researcher and niece was present in the beginning of our conversation, but after she shared her longing for him, I also told her how much I miss him and the things that make me remember him. This sharing moment brought us closer and our conversation took a turn. If before I was asking questions and raising themes for her to talk about similar to a traditional interview, from that point on, she took control and guided our interaction. I remembered the time when we took the same bus to the right every morning going to work sitting side-by-side and sharing our fear of loss.

Once, a man came here looking for him. My heart raced and I lied telling him that Cosme was not here. I felt something very bad. Several times the person came and I lied saying that my son was not here. He was a corrupt cop and my son started working with him. I am almost sure that it was he who killed my son.

When your aunt died<sup>44</sup>, Cosme could not come here in the area [because of the threats he had received]. He called me and I met him to go to the cemetery. I was a shield for him. Where he wanted to go if he needed me to protect him, I would go.

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<sup>44</sup> Tia Iza died in a terrible car accident at 62 years old. I miss you, Tia.

He saw his aunt in the coffin and said, “Hey, aunt, better it had been me.” When he was leaving, he waved at me, I felt my heart heavy and I asked him if he would give me a hug. That was the last hug my son gave me. He left the car, hugged me and said, “I love you, Mom.” I could never hug my son again.

I went to various places to prevent my son’s death. I rented a house far from here, took him to family members’ houses. I left the house anytime he called needing something. None of this worked. If God spoke “You go and he stays,” I would not think about it. I have lived through what I had to live, he did not. He was starting his life. I wanted my son here. The worst time for me is my birthday. I try to cheer myself up because of Daniele [her daughter], but I think... I am here turning fifty and my son is no longer here.

Your uncle also suffered great pain; he helped with everything, and cried a lot in the corners by himself. I think I was stronger than he was. He felt a stomachache every time the phone rang late at night. He could not even get up. I had to act. When we got some news, I was always on the front line. When he got involved with the police, he went to the *favela* where I was born and raised to snitch on people. I was working; Daniele called and asked me to come home immediately because he was *aprontando* [doing stupid things]. That was a stab in my heart. When I arrived, I just changed my shoes and ran to where he was. When I got there, I saw dozens of uniformed police heavily armed with rifles, shotguns; I do not know the names of the guns. I know that my son was wearing nothing, no vest, helmet, no nothing. I cursed him, hit him in the face, and the police put a gun in my face. Then he shouted: “No, please, she’s my mother, she is my mother.” I cried a lot. He said I was an embarrassment to him. In the *favela* where I was born, what he was doing was shameful. The police did not kill me or arrest me for contempt of authority because of him. When I came down the hill, residents applauded me for my courage. I did not understand at the time, but then a neighbor came to tell me that traffickers would expel all my family from there if I had not done that.

I have a sister who loved him so much that she could not see his errors. Today she does not talk to me because she thinks I did not feel his death. I felt it, of course, but I did not accept the things that he did. Only because I did not scream, I did not despair. I knew this would happen. I was already preparing myself for his death, and for a terrible death [due to the threats that Aunt Joana herself received]. A bandit said to me once that he would cut me into pieces and throw them on a highway. I could not say anything to you guys because you would get scared, and could not say anything to him because he would have it out with the person and this could quicken his death. Once the police came here, went through the whole house

and found nothing, because I did not allow anything bad here. I omitted many of these things to protect him and you guys. If this is not love, what is? You cannot imagine the humiliation when you pick up your child and go begging relatives to allow him to be there, change the relatives' routine because your child is doing the wrong things.

A rumor spread that members of the rival organization had said that he could not be buried at our family gravesite because he had been a "snitch," and if we tried to bury him there, they would dig up the corpse and make the body disappear. Afraid of this possibility, his parents decided to bury my cousin in another cemetery. Aunt Joana recalls,

I was working when someone called and said that my son had had an accident. When I arrived, I found my son dead. All those things about digging him up were rumors, but when you are suffering with a heavy heart and having to worry about the people who would go to the burial...I preferred to do it in another cemetery. After three years, we needed to take the bones from the grave, which rented. Hence, we decided to bring the bones to the family tomb here [on Graveyard Street]. We paid all the fees to exhume the body, and I thought that the cemetery would make the transfer, but to my surprise, they would give me a box with all the bones of my son. I saw everything, they brought out the bones from the floor, put them in a box, and gave it to me. That hurt more than when I saw my son dead. I took that child in my hands, I took care, raised, loved, only to hold so many bones... It was the worst thing in the world. That image is what I have now. It looks like I'm locked in the pain now. I have suffered so much... No mother raises a child to be a thug.

Like many other mothers, she developed an illness related to the experience with violence. Her hair fell out in several parts and she lost a lot of weight because of depression. She also developed psoriasis and when very stressed, her heels bleed. Since the episode with the police, she has tachycardia and takes medication to control her heartbeat. In a study of the bodily and mental harm suffered by secondary victims of violence, scholars Glaucio Soares, Dayse Miranda, and Dorian Borges (2006) show that those who have

suffered the violent death of a loved one continue to experience physical and mental pain three years after the fact (p. 75). According to the authors, in cases of homicide, since the death was perpetrated by “someone with anger and with the intention to kill, the understanding and the comprehension of the death is very difficult, especially to parents” (p. 96). They also affirm that traumatic experiences with bodily and mental symptoms are distinct in men and women, with women being more likely to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Despite all of the distress, a new life can help in the rebuilding of their lives. I asked her, “Do you see any space for joy in your life, aunt? Is there anything positive that comes out of this experience?”

Afraid of losing, I love more. I did not used to show my love, I was cold. Now I open my heart and I recognize the value that each person has in my life. He left me with a good lesson, to love above all. I just do not love myself. I live because I am alive. I do not feel anything for myself. I have no desire to dress up, to have fun. I sing only when my grandson asks me to sing. I started working even more, because I know I’ll get tired, lie down and sleep. I talk to God and Our Lady to ask for strength, and now I have a being that God sent to take me out the depressive state. I started dedicating myself to him, to live for him. He brought me to life. A gift that God gave me, which is my grandson. He not only changed my life, but my husband and my daughter’s lives. God came down and brought an angel to cheer us up. We were at rock bottom.

By the end of our conversation, we hugged each other; she gave me a kiss and walked to the living room and I turned off the recorder. For many months, I thought she decided to give me an interview just to contribute to the research. This was something that she did not really want to do. Perhaps it was. Nevertheless, in September 2013, I went to

Rio for just five days and she said that she needed to give me an update: “Last month I bought lipstick.”

## **Conclusion – Intimacy of death in the maintenance of the African diaspora**

The stories of Martha, Alda, Olinda, Dora, Carla, Nia and Joana Dark are full of suffering, sadness and despair, but they show us their power to fight against the deadly structure that dismantles their families. As several authors argue, the African Diaspora experience is intrinsically related to Black death. Many authors argue that anti-Black racism and genocide are the main characteristics of the African Diaspora (Vargas 2010; Nascimento, 1978; Hamilton 1995). These mothers’ experiences support these claims. However, the women’s lives also contribute to other analyses of the African Diaspora as our experience of resistance (Du Bois, 2001; Gilroy, 1993; Gordon, 2007; Lorde, 1984). I argue that Black mothers are mainly responsible for the maintenance of our lives in a violent anti-Black afro-diasporic life. We may be “not meant to survive” (Lorde, 1984), but Black mothers create the strategies for survival.

If the anti-Black genocide main feature is the Black death, Black motherhood tries to avoid them through *de-killing* and ensure the maintenance of the African Diaspora through the re-creation of Black sociability in the face of destruction. The Diaspora is Black women nurturing, creating, resisting through recuperative acts, which constitute Black mothering. This chapter showed the minutiae of this struggle of survival through mothering. Black mothers from Graveyard Street do not have the power to fight against the structure, but they show an enormous resistance in the micropolitics of everyday life.

Their experiences illustrate that genocidal ideologies generate the individualization of suffering through the creation of shame around their alleged failure as mothers. This shame is evident in their self-blame and sense that they should have done something differently to avoid the deaths. Their strategies to ensure the possibility of motherhood unveil a range of feelings and internal struggles that, although strong, do not paralyze them. These women's lives show that if genocide is a continuum, the African Diaspora continuously persists, even in sorrow.

## CHAPTER 4 – BLACK MOTHER’S PEDAGOGIES OF RESISTANCE

We need to testify our struggle.  
(Ama Ata Aidoo, *African Woman Today*, 1992, p. 48)

I have tried to learn my anger’s usefulness to me, as well as its limitations ... what you hear in my voice is fury, not suffering. Anger, not moral authority. There is a difference.

(Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, 1984, p. 131-32)

On December 5, 2012, I went to the film screening of the documentary *Luto como Mãe*.<sup>45</sup> The screening was organized to honor Marilene de Souza de Lima, who had passed away two months following surgery to remove a brain tumor. Marilene<sup>46</sup> was the last active woman from the well-known group *Mães de Acari* [Mothers of Acari], after Edimeia Eusébio, another member, was murdered in 1993 and Vera Lucia Flores died in 2008 from diabetes. Their children--Rosana Santos, Cristiane Leite, and Luiz Henrique Eusebio--along with eight others, spent the weekend on a farm in the periphery of Rio de Janeiro and mysteriously disappeared at the hands of a death squad formed by police officers. The three mothers were the pioneers of the effort to charge the state for crimes committed by the

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<sup>45</sup> The documentary producer--the film school *Cinema Nosso*--translated the documentary title as the *Right to Mourn*. However, this translation loses the double meaning of the original title. *Luto* can be the subject *mourning*, but also the verb *lutar* [to struggle, to fight] in the present.

<sup>46</sup> All the names in this chapter are real as requested by the activist mothers.

police in the peripheries and *favelas* of Rio, which they called A *LUTA*<sup>47</sup> [the struggle]. The case became known as *Caso Acari* [Acari Event] and had national and international repercussions (Nobre, 1994).

The film screening brought together, for the first time after Marilene's funeral, activists women who had children and family members murdered by the state of Rio de Janeiro. The climate was of sorrow and fortification. It was of sorrow because Marilene died without resolving the assassination of her daughter despite her INCESSANT STRUGGLE against the racist and class-based judicial system. It was of fortification because her 22 years of STRENGTH inspires not only Black mothers who had children killed, but also people who fight in defense of life and against the social, economic, cultural, and historical conditions that criminalize poor/Black communities. Their living conditions, vulnerability to state action, and lack of knowledge about the judicial system did not prevent them from pursuing their *luta* or giving support to other families who were victimized. At the event, the mothers hugged each other, laughed, cried, and gave strength to one another through a mix of emotions that is so characteristic of their interaction.

Towards the beginning of *Luto como Mãe*, there is a scene where Marilene arrives at Vera's house letting her know that it was her turn to record her testimony for the film.

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<sup>47</sup> While contributing to the Black mother's *luta*, one of the first lessons I learned from them was to capitalize the words MURDER, ASSASSINATION, KILL, BEATING, MISSING, TORTURED (and all its variations) in notes to the press and other materials about their cases as a strategy to announce OR underscore their outrage in response to the brutal actions of the state. In this chapter, I too capitalize words that highlight the characteristics of these Black mothers' STRUGGLES.

Vera is sitting in a chair on the porch. Marilene puts the recorder close to her and sits on the balcony guardrail. What follows is their account of their *luta*; an excerpt is reproduced below.

Vera – “Unfortunately I became known as a mother of Acari. On July 26, 1990, my daughter left home for a weekend. It was a Thursday. On Monday, I realized through the newspapers that she had gone missing as well as the group who was with her. I found out more about it through Marilene, who went to the agency where my daughter was a model, got my address and came here.

Marilene – “Our daughters and the rest of the group were victims of bad police officers, whose intent was extortion.”<sup>48</sup>

V – “The house the group was in was raided by six cops, asking for jewelry and money. The owner of the house, the only survivor, was the one who told us this.”

“We searched and we found the van used to take the youth out of there. Marilene and I went to see it and I saw blood on the van’s door. It was taken to the police station and surprisingly the van went missing from there. The chief of police told us that the van had been sold, but we didn’t know to whom. Before that, Marilene had demanded an examination of the blood found on the door. It was a struggle to get the examination done, and the results were inconclusive. It says that it was not possible to identify if it was human or animal blood.”

M – “If someone had told me this story, I wouldn’t believe it. But I lived this, every day I feel this in my flesh. I cannot find words to express what this represents in my life, how my life has changed since my daughter disappeared. When I was young, I had so many dreams, but my strongest one was to have children, to become a mother. I always said that a sin I would never commit was an abortion. I was young and I had to confront my mother, who thought I should have an abortion. I did not. Then, she thought I should give the baby away, and I did not. I had no experience at all, but I raised her, I worked, I struggled. I created all kinds of expectations and then someone came and took this away from me.”

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<sup>48</sup> According to Marilene, one of the young men in the group was a bank robber and had recently committed a crime. The police officers who went to the farm knew about the crime and were invested in taking the jewelry for themselves.

V – “The justice says ‘no body, no crime,’ but I have a birth certificate. Somebody was born from inside of me. I don’t have a death certificate because they didn’t give me the chance.”<sup>49</sup>

M - “After that, I had two choices: I would stay at home crying all day or stand up and fight back, like I did. I returned to Vera’s house three months later, and we began monitoring the work of the police. I conducted searches at the scene [the farm where the youth went], and at cemeteries. I closely followed the detective’s work. I wanted an answer, a solution. My only fear was the time it would take, which I was sure would be against us.”<sup>50</sup>

V - “We started by contacting the authorities, who didn’t pay attention to us since all eleven that disappeared were from a *favela*. Today I know how the system works and that they were not interested in looking for them.”

M – “I think that when someone disappears forcibly, when someone is killed and his/her body is missing, the family of the disappeared is condemned to a burden. I don’t know if I deserved this burden. They finished me up.”

Edimeia [in an interview to Globo Channel] – “I’ll not leave here [*Favela de Acari*] because I don’t have any other place to live. If they [the police] want to kill me, they will.”<sup>51</sup>

M – “The case [Edimeia’s murder] was denounced, the suspect was indicted, but the trial was a joke. No one was arrested. Edimeia is dead. Why?”

These three women received the name of *Mães de Acari*, not because of the fragility and docility that patriarchal ideology alleges to be the characteristics of MOTHERING (Collins 2004). On the contrary, they received and claimed this name due to their COURAGE, ANGER, OUTRAGE, and STRENGTH to seek justice of the missing corpses

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<sup>49</sup> Unlike other executions committed by death squads, in this, the bodies were not found. Thus, one cannot prove that there were deaths. Because of this, the system cannot file suit against the suspects, and the mothers could never have a death certificate for their children.

<sup>50</sup> Even through the 22 years of struggle, Case Acari has never gone through a prosecution process because the investigation has never found proof of the crime.

<sup>51</sup> According to Marilene, in 1993, Edimeia, who was the main investigator of the group, went in a penitentiary trying to find information about the kidnapping. When she left, someone called her name. She looked back, received shots and died. [personal interview July 2010]

of their daughters. In order to pursue their *luta*, they became detectives, photographers, experts in the criminal justice system, and faced its slowdowns when trying to make the system work in their favor. Unfortunately, their case is not an isolated one. On the contrary, the path embarked on by *Mães de Acari* serves as a guideline and model of perseverance to other mothers who also experienced the state's actions in their lives. Their pedagogies of resistance, i.e., the shared ways in which Black mothers pursue their *luta*, and teach one another and society through their experiences of sorrow, is in CONTINUOUS CHANGE. Each mother has her one interaction with the state and elaborates on the tested methods to pursue the *luta*. They learn through practice, while struggling with the system and adapting to its actions, which are also guided by emotions.

Activist ethnographic work provided me the opportunity to collaborate with Black mothers dealing on a daily basis with the outcomes of state violence that take place in Rio de Janeiro. It also enabled me to learn from their *luta* and protagonism in the fight against police brutality in their communities. Different from the women in the previous chapter, these mothers had their motherline interrupted through direct state action, which propels them to PURSUE CLARIFICATION and JUSTICE. In this endeavor, they need to find witnesses and/or people who can help them assemble the puzzle of a criminal cover-up left by the perpetrators. I call this model of mothers' reaction to violence as *Outraged Luta*. It is a demonstration of mothers who became activists and used their POSITIONALITY AS MOTHERS as a strategic position to RAISE THEIR VOICES against the state. Through my interaction with them, I witnessed their struggle, and following their logic, my work was and continues to be to testify.

This chapter aims to investigate Black women protagonists from their positions as mothers of victims of violence. I investigate the *luta* of mothers who transformed their individual sorrow into a POLITICAL STRATEGY to denounce police/state brutality and address racial tensions. Their fight with the state allows them to understand its function from a privileged position. Their analysis of the state unveils what can be called “the Black mothers’ epistemology of the state.” I argue that the suffering caused by the terror and the ways in which they pursue their *lutas* reveals their antagonist position to the state, making them a distinct political group.

### **“... But the state killed my daughter”**

State actions toward Black communities have been the subject of anthropological and sociological research for decades (Valadares, 2005; Zaluar and Alvito 2004; Soares 2008). However, a topic that remained lacking for many years was women’s perspectives on the matter. Because Brazil is still a male-dominated society, all of the voices about the problems in the communities were from the perspective of male leaderships, male state representatives, and male researchers. Thus, the perspective of Black mothers was invisible from the analysis and only recently appeared in the anthropological and political realms. In 2006, Criola saw the possibility of narrowing this gap by creating an opportunity to have the *Mães de Acari*, representing the mothers in struggle dialogue with the academy during a week called *Semana Em Defesa da Vida* [Week in Defense of Life]. During this week, social movements and NGOs working on Human Rights issues in Rio prepare a series of activities around issues such as the interruption of life by violent means, bringing forth

initiatives to protect life. As a way to contribute to the event, Criola organized a roundtable with Vera Flores, from *Mães de Acari*, talking about Black women's lives in the communities, and sociologist Ignacio Cano sharing his perspective on state action in Rio's *favelas*. Unfortunately, due to an organizational mistake and the predictable traffic jam that happened in Rio on that Monday morning, just two people showed up to the event. As the ashamed organizer and mediator, I decided to cancel the panelists' talks. We talked informally about Rio's situation and agreed to be in touch to create another meeting. That was the last time I saw Vera, and I remember this event in 2008 with regret when I received an email announcing her death.

Later in 2010, while conducting fieldwork research, I contacted the *Mães de Acari* again. I went to the *Rede contra a Violência* headquarters in order to make myself available for collaboration and to talk about my research hypothesis with mothers in struggle. There I met Patricia Oliveira, who is the sister of the only survivor of the massacre in downtown Rio that became known as the *Chacina da Candelaria* [Candelaria Massacre]. Patricia let me know about three mothers who, at the time, were in constant contact with the *Rede*. "They used to be afraid a lot, but those three will talk for sure. They have never shut their mouths since the deaths," she said. Among the three mothers was the *Mãe de Acari* Marilene de Souza, so I decided to call her because I thought I could connect easiest with her. I called Marilene, presented myself, stated my intent, and told her about the *Semana Em Defesa da Vida* in 2006. She remembered the failed event, agreed to have a conversation, and invited me to go to her house the following week.

I arrived at her place and called her name, but nobody answered. I called another two times when a woman appeared between the curtains in the window, but did not answer. Confused, I called Marilene's phone number and let her know that I was in front of her place. Her house was in the back and she came around front to get me. Inside her home, she let me know that her neighbors never answer people calling because they never know if the person has good intentions. Even after 20 years of struggle and the visibility of the case at the national level, Marilene still needed to be careful. As she said, "In the beginning, we lived with fear. Every time I needed to control my fears. We were living in a delicate situation. People threatened and materialized their threats. This stays with me until now" (Marilene, July 2010). We talked for more than two hours about the *luta* of the *Mães de Acari*, the outcomes of their lives and her view on current public security policy.

Luciane – Do you see improvements in public security policy in your 20 years of struggle?

Marilene – No. The violence is in our day-to-day. The police continue to kill first and then later ask who the person was. When a child dies, or something that shocks the population happens, they say that it was the bandits. The police never assume their error. I have worked in several *favelas* and I saw the most horrible atrocities committed by the police. Beltrame [the Public Security Secretary] gives a very dry speech and they [police officers and state representatives] are all corporatists - they preserve the rights of the police, and the defense of the victims is very difficult. They will always give the first version about what occurred...

L – Indeed...

M - ... and the media supports them. They are in favor of this violence. The news says, 'allegedly a criminal.' This 'allegedly' already instills in the mind of the population that they were bandits and deserved to die.

L – Essentially if it was a Black person. Right?

M - The violence nowadays reaches all the classes, but us, Blacks, the poor are the main ones affected. We are their objective, the target. Beltrame once said that a gunshot in

a *favela* is different from a shot in the *Zona Sul*. Do you remember that? It is that kind of representative that we don't need.

L – For sure!

M – I fought so hard to raise Rosana, but the state killed my daughter.

In our conversation about her 20 years of struggle with the judicial system, Marilene provided a very vivid picture of the state's function and a framework in which different actors and scenarios were represented – police, media, men, women, mothers, state, *o Sistema* [the judicial system], the *morro* [favela] and *sociedade* [the rest of civil society]. Similar to Marilene, other courageous mothers invested in actions aiming to find a resolution to the murder of their sons and daughters. They recreate their lives in the struggle and an analysis of the conjunction of experiences allows us to understand their epistemology of the state.

In order to theorize about Black women's experiences of violence, it is important to analyze the role of the state in relation to Black women's lives. Black activist Jurema Werneck (2001) shows that Black women's health is affected by the racism and sexism inherent in the structure of the Brazilian state. Werneck analyzes how Black women are physically, mentally, and emotionally vulnerable: a condition created by the structural violence affecting poor and Afro-Brazilian communities. The author points out that, “Brazilian health [and I include security] policies have continuously reproduced these kinds of discrimination that shape Black women's lives,” which is one facet of the *necro* and genocidal state. In that sense, a critique of the state as the main perpetrator is fundamental. Scholar Joy James's (1999) provocative book *Shadowboxing* invites us to

never stop punching against this unseen opponent, the state, through whatever strategy we use. She differentiates three types of Black women's strategies of resistance: liberal feminists, the ones who respond to oppression by modifying the system; radical feminists, the ones who challenge capitalism and institutions as the source of oppression; and revolutionary feminists, the ones who engage in political acts that directly defy the system (1999, pp. 1-14). James pushes us to become "progressive, anti-capitalist women" who challenge "state practices and institutions" and "exploitation tied to corporate capitalism and racial imperialism" (1999, p. 12). As ideal types (Weber, 2009), James' three types of strategies of resistance appear amalgamated in the experience of Black mothers in *luta* against the state.

From the perspective of the women who had children killed by Rio de Janeiro's police, the state is a very rigid and angry entity in which the main function is to harm the poor and Black population living in the *favelas*. They have a clear notion that the state works to protect Rio's elite, and tend to its demands. In this context, they understand that the life of those who live in poor communities is worthless in the state's eyes, and they position themselves antagonistically to the state because they feel that any harm committed against the community is committed against themselves; especially a deadly act against their children, which they consider to be representative of their own deaths. In what follows, I engage with Black mothers' pedagogies of resistance through the *luta* of Deize

Carvalho, Marcia Jacinto, and Zoraide Vidal.<sup>52</sup> I also gather information to create a graphic representation of Black mothers' epistemology of their antagonism with the state.

#### DEIZE CARVALHO – TESTIFYING FOR ANDREU

“Question from the defense,” allowed the judge.  
“How many times was your son an inmate?” asked the attorney  
“Three times. The last time he was a suspect,” answered Deize.  
“Three times, right? [Smiling] I don't have any more questions, your honor. Thank you.”

The dialogue above happened on the afternoon of February 8, 2012, in the first judicial hearing in the case of Andreu Carvalho's murder, Deize's oldest son. This was the first time that I participated in a judicial hearing, and I was astonished at how easily the defense lawyer tried to use the frequency that Andreu had been arrested to disqualify Deize's TESTIMONY on the brutal murder. In the lawyer's logic, which reflects a widespread reasoning in Brazilian society, the involvement in criminal activity at any point in one's life legitimates the use of lethal force by the state.<sup>53</sup> Thus, in the case of Andreu,

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<sup>52</sup> The sequence in which these stories appear in this chapter are not related to a timeline of death; rather, it shows the sequence of my witnessing of their struggle.

<sup>53</sup> For example, while I write this dissertation, one more poor young Black man was killed by the military police in the “pacified” *Cantagalo*, also known as PPG – *Pavão Pavãozinho Cantagalo*. The victim was Douglas Silva, a.k.a DG, who was a dancer on the TV show *Esquentando* on Globo. Even though DG did not live in *Cantagalo*, he did community work teaching *passinhos* (Brazilian funk routines) to children and youth from the *favela*. As a way to associate him with the drug trafficking and thus legitimate his death, a conservative journalist responsible for a blog at Revista VEJA, searched his Facebook profile page and found a post where DG regrets the death of a drug trafficker by saying “PPG TA DE LUTO, E OS AMIGOS CHEIO DE ODIÓ NA VEIA, MAS TARDE O BICO VAI FAZER BARULHO... #SAUDADES ETERNAS CACHORRAO!” [PPG is mourning, and friends are with ‘hate in their veins.’ Later the *bico* will make noise... #Cachorrao will be forever missed!]. The reporter argues that DG “must have been a victim but he was not a saint.” His argument contributes to the police version of the crime, which says that Douglas was a guest at a barbecue organized by drug traffickers and that he tried to escape by jumping from one roof to another, fell and died.

the defense tried to use the fact that he had been arrested three times for thievery to indicate his “guilty position” and accordingly, the legitimacy of his brutal death inside a juvenile correction institution. However, equally impressive in this hearing was the assertiveness in which Deize addressed all of the questions about the case. Since his death in 2008, Deize has been fighting to CONTEST the version of his death given by the state institution and to charge the six detention agents who tortured and brutally hit the seventeen-year-old on his first night in the custody of the state. Nevertheless, before I go into the analysis of Deize’s interactions with the state, I this brave woman.

Deize is a Black woman whose nickname reveals her attachment to the *favela* where she was born. She is known as *De do Galo*, a reference to *Cantagalo*, a *favela* in the *Copacabana* neighborhood in southern Rio, which her family founded. In her words,

The story of my life began in 1907, when my grandmother Maria Alexandre along with my grandfather Modesto, their family and a group of people from Minas Gerais, all former slaves, came to Rio de Janeiro in search of a place to live happily away from the suffering caused by slavery. They came to Rio with some clothes and a few animals such as roosters, chickens and pigs for their feeding. The roosters insisted on singing every morning, waking people up with their singing. For this reason, the community became known as *Cantagalo*.<sup>54</sup> In 1971, my mother was pregnant with me and she went to an event in the sport court. Suddenly a shootout started between police and some people who were implanting drug trafficking within the community, so my mother began to feel ill. I was born two months before expected. I was expelled from my mother’s womb already due to the fear of violence [Personal interview. July 2012].

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However, his mother, Dona Maria de Fatima, accuses the police of shooting him and inventing this version. The investigation is still ongoing (Moura, 2014).

<sup>54</sup> *Cantagalo* is the juxtaposition of the verb ‘*cantar*’ and a subject ‘*galo*’ in Portuguese. *Cantar* means to sing, and *galo* means rooster.

Poverty, racism and violence have always been present in Deize's life and experience of motherhood. She remembers the lessons acquired from her grandmother, Dona Maria do Bingo, who taught her children and grandchildren to be proud of their origin and race, and to never steal anything, even in extreme poverty. Therefore, when lacking food at home, they went searching for open packets of food and leftovers in the trashcans in front of the local supermarket. She says that the looks of contempt and disgust that people had for them are still vivid in her memory, but she believed that her grandmother's actions were honest, the only possibility, and the best for them. She states that life in the *favela* was difficult, but it was the only place she felt wanted, and every time she navigated within "society,"--which is how she refers to the areas of the city outside the *favela*-- She would be confronted with sneers.

Asked about her worst experience with racism, she told me about a time when she was working at the post office as a cleaner. She had just passed a damp cloth on the floor and a white man spat on the spot, right in front of her. She asked him if he did not see the trashcan in the corner and he replied saying, "I am not asking you anything, *criola!* It is your job to clean the floor, thus clean it and shut up." She said that she called the police, but they did not come; and the manager would not be her witness. Instead, he anticipated her vacation, and when she came back she was fired. She also alluded to racism with Andreu's father's family who was white, from "society" and did not want to meet her. To separate Deize and Andreu's father as well as to remove him from the atmosphere of drugs and drug trafficking, the family sent him to live in the United States, which, according to Deize, would become the main reason why Andreu invested in criminality years later. The

last time that she remembers being the victim of racism was the first time that her son was caught stealing and he was taken to the police station to receive advice. She remembers that when she arrived at the police station, the officer told her that “Andreu was lucky because he did not realized he was from the *favela* and thought he was a playboy [the name for a young man who lives in the wealthy neighborhoods in southern Rio]. He said that if he had realized it before, he would have *apagado* [killed] him in the street” [personal interview. July 2012]. Andreu had light skin and straight hair, but Deize’s Blackness and origin indicated to the police officer the way he “should” have treated the boy. “This situation told me that children of Black and poor families are treated differently by the police,” Deize concludes.

Children are a blessing

Deize considers “a child [to be] a blessing, and because of them [she] faced all of the difficulties life gave [her]” [Personal interview. July 2012]. She had four children from three different relationships. Unable to work and separated from her first husband after he got involved in drug trafficking, she followed the path of Dona Maria to feed her first son. From her second relationship, she had her only daughter, but the police killed the girl’s father when she was little. During the third relationship, she gave birth to two more boys, but she keeps them far away from their father when he became addicted to drugs. As a poor single Black mother of four, Deize says that all she asked of them was to be of good character, and felt distress when Andreu began to steal things. She said that she could

understand the feeling of her grandmother, who she affirms died due to the disappointment she felt when one of her sons became involved in crime.

When Andreu was about eight years old, his father sent him photos of his prosperous life in the United States, and the boy became obsessed with the “American Dream.” Andreu began to create unrealistic stories about his life with his father, which caught his teacher’s attention. The teacher invited Deize to school to ask her about his relationship with his father, since Andreu was telling beautiful stories but through tears. The boy was referred for therapy, but Deize could not find a specialist in the public health system in Rio. She then decided to ask the Brazilian consulate to contact his father in the U.S., but she could not pay for the requested certified letter. According to Deize, Andreu at the age of 10 and influenced by his environment, saw that theft was the easiest way to meet his goal of traveling to the U.S. and become a part of his father’s successful life. Deize says that she worked hard to provide a good life for her children, but “learned that food, clothes and shoes could not smother or delete a dream. A dream led that sweet, kind and friendly boy to destruction.”

Deize was introduced to the Brazilian correctional/penal system during the almost two years of Andreu’s young life that he was locked up. In 2005, during his first incarceration, Deize suffered when she saw her son beaten and humiliated in an institution that should have *ressocializar* [rehabilitated] the boy. She decided to try to change the institution because she believed they could help her to change Andreu. Furthermore, she talked to the directors to address the issue that the security guards used to spit in the

prisoners' food and throw water on it. This practice was a game of torture where, if one of the boys did not eat the dirty food, all of them were beaten. The following week, when Deize went to visit Andreu, she saw "an agent slapping him in the face that left the mark of his five fingers" as a retaliation for her act. Crying, he asked her to not say anything; otherwise he would be severely beaten. Deize reflected on her experience,

A mother does not birth a child to be a criminal or to be beaten by somebody. I compare myself to a chicken with her chicks. If she feels they are in danger, she goes [to them]. I could not take care of my son in that place because I was not close to him, and when I was close, I could not go over the man who slapped him [July 2012].

In 2006, during his second arrest, Andreu's case was on the news. Allegedly, while being arrested he had mocked the police officer. The media used his 'debauchery' to relaunch the debate about the minor age for criminal responsibility, which in Brazil is eighteen years old.<sup>55</sup> Pretentiously, the cover of O Extra newspaper stated the day after his arrest, "The certainty of impunity: Minor boy is arrested and mocks, 'I stay six months in the amusement park, and then I leave.'" The subheading read, "He is sixteen years old, 6.23ft, and has a German pistol. He just does not fear the law." In the text, the reporter

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<sup>55</sup> The Federal Constitution of 1988 establishes the condition of exemption from punishment of children. Since **law** cannot be applied to them, it was necessary to create specific legislation to regularize children's offenses. The specific law is the Law No. 8.069/9 – Statute of Children and Adolescents – ECA (Presidencia da Republica, 1990), which provides various rights to people between the ages of 0 and 18 year old, including providing for the investigation of offenses, their procedure, the measures and the establishment of a regional organization tutelary in each municipality. The ECA includes among its articles the application of protective measures for the case and offenses committed by minors, and implementation of educational measures for offenses committed by minors. What has been asked a lot is whether the measures contained in the Statute of Children and Adolescents are effective and if they achieve the outcomes for which they were created.

Gustavo Goulart connects Andreu's arrogance to the fact that he was sixteen and protected by the Brazilian Statute of Children and Adolescents. A side story about another case completed the scenario. The title said, "Memory of Violence: Socialite was murdered by minor boy" (Carvalho, 2014). The conjuncture of the stories forced the reader to conclude that Andreu not only was dangerous, but also, since it linked his case to a murder, indicated that he would become a killer. Deize did not negate the possibility of this outcome, which is why she counted on the possibility of state intervention to change him. Her early trust in the state informs how she constructs her epistemology. As clarified later in this chapter, Black mothers' trust and distrust toward the state are part of a losing versus winning battle that instruct OR guide her struggle.

### **2008 – The Outraged Year**

The first day of 2008 marked a change in Deize's struggle. If before she worked to keep her son alive, her struggle turned to INVESTIGATING BY HERSELF the circumstance of his death. "When the phone rang saying he was imprisoned, I got on my knees knees and thanked God. I said, 'My God, thank you for my son's arrest. Now this anguish will pass. I will get to see my son again'" (Carvalho, 2014). However, what she did not know was that because of the news coverage the last time he was caught, Andreu received a threat from the state agents who condemned him to death if he came back to the same institution. Later in the afternoon, she was asked to go to the police station with his documentation, which she felt inappropriate since he was already in the juvenile triage facility Padre Severino. Moreover, it was not the practice to bring the youth back to the

police station. When she got there, she saw doctors and different actions among the police officers. She suspected that something worse than his arrest had happened and asked if they had killed her son. “Unfortunately that’s what happened,” the doctor told her. Deize went crazy and tried to commit suicide by drawing a police officer’s weapon. “At that time I just wanted to die. I remember this pain like it was yesterday. The pain was so deep that I could not even talk. I wanted to see anything but my son dead. My blood pressure increased; they gave me some medicine and I got groggy. Thereafter I did not see anything else.”

#### Partida<sup>56</sup>

Quando você partiu  
Minha vida se desmoronou  
Meu coração se despedaçou  
Quando você partiu  
Vinha vida não teve mais sentido algum  
Você partiu tão de repente  
Que me disse um adeus  
Que não foi dito por suas palavras  
Mas demonstrado pelo seu desprezo  
Do jeito que você partiu  
Espero que você volte para mim  
Dizendo três palavras somente:  
Eu te amo.  
Quero que saiba de uma coisa, que sempre estarei de braços abertos  
Na esperança de que algum dia você volte para mim  
Em cada estrela vem a luz de seus olhos

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<sup>56</sup> *Departure*, a poem written by Deize Carvalho to Andreu Carvalho.

When you left / My life fell apart / My heart shattered / When you left / My life had no more sense / You left so suddenly / You told me ‘bye’ / That was not said by your words / But shown by your disdain / The same way you left / I hope you come back to me / Saying only three words: / I love you. / I want you to know something: I’ll always be there with open arms / Hoping that someday you’ll come back to me / In each star, I see the light of your eyes / In the heat of the sun, I feel the sweetness of your lips / In the lapping of the waves, I hear your voice uttering my name / In every place I go, where one day we were together, I find shadows, shadows, [and only shadows] of a past in which we were happy / At the time of your departure, I could not say / I thank you for being my son

No calor do sol sentirei a doçura de seus lábios  
No marulhar das ondas do mar ouvirei sua voz pronunciando o meu nome.  
Em cada lugar em que eu passar, onde um dia estivemos juntos, eu encontrarei  
sombras, sombras e apenas sombras de um passado em que fomos felizes  
No momento de nossa partida eu não pude dizer  
Obrigado por eu ter sido meu filho

Similar to the mothers whose stories were seen in the previous chapter, mothers who transform their lives in *luta*, also report going through moments of death, chaos, and coma themselves. However, *deep Diaspora* is used as a fuel to stimulate their determination to investigate the case. When the down moments happen, they use the sadness and other emotions to propel them to REACT stronger, IN HATE and OUTRAGE. In Deize's case, she relied on the POETRY in her first moment of *deep Diaspora* and disillusion. *Partida* [Departure], which she told me was written in front of the Pedra do Arpoador in Leblon Beach, was her "method to EXPRESS HER FEELINGS and alleviate her agony." In this poetry, Deize first analyzes her life after the passing of her son. She recalls the moment of chaos as expressed in her shattered heart and messy life caused by the abrupt death of Andreu. It is important to notice that, similar to the mothers on Graveyard Street, Deize, in some moments, also projected the death of her son and tried to avoid it from happening. However, her anguish diminished when she received the call about his arrest. Deize created the expectation that she would see him again and have one more chance to change the young man. She also refers in the poem to something that many mothers told me about – the non-spoken goodbye. Between Deize and Andreu, this adieu was through eye contact and this moment remains in her memory. As Deize told me in a conversation in November 2012, she did not see truth in his eyes when Andreu said he would find a job, and did not trust that he would change his attitudes. However, despite all

of the suffering Andreu caused her, no suffering is worse than not having him alive at all. Through her words in *Partida*, we can understand that her wish to him to come back from death reflects the same wish she felt every time he left home. Her open arms symbolize the forgiving love that kept her trying to save him from trouble so he could come back to where he belonged: to her. However, now she shares the selfishness of her mother love with Mother Nature as a sad remembrance of a past where she could enjoy happiness with her 6.25 ft. son.

His body spoke. The dead spoke (Holland 2000). The official history, the one narrated by the security agents, was that Andreu tried to escape by climbing a very tall wall and fell, hitting his head. However, the bruises on his body did not match up with the story Deize had received from the authorities, who also tried to hide the crime evidence by not allowing family members to dress the corpse for the burial. Nevertheless, it was three days after the funeral that a call boosted her investigation. She told me that an employee of the juvenile institution, who was also tired of the atrocities that happened there, advised her to ask for the clothes that he was wearing that day, since they would be a starting point to CHALLENGE THEIR VERSION of the crime. The employee knew that the security guards had burned the clothes and since they were not allowed to do that, she would DEMAND AN INVESTIGATION to find out why.

One month later, when she felt a little stronger, she went to the prison. As expected, they could not provide his clothes, and since she was already in the neighborhood, she decided to go to the *bombeiros* headquarter (equivalent to a hospital emergency room) and to the nearby hospital. At the *bombeiros* she ASKED about a call from the juvenile

institution on the night of December 31<sup>st</sup> or in the first hours of January 1<sup>st</sup>, which should be their procedure. They did not report any call from there. At the hospital, she REQUESTED THE ENTRY REPORT on the physical situation of her son. A month later, she received the report stating that Andreu entered the medical facility unconscious, with big bruises around the eyes, which indicated brain hemorrhaging and several excoriations over his body. With that evidence in hand, she pursued the long path to his EXHUMATION in order to have another autopsy.

Several authors provide a critique about the pornography of Black suffering and the exposure of the dead Black body (Hartman, 1997; Cerqueira, 2013). However, it was fundamental to Deize's resistance that Andreu's cadaver tell the story of his murder. The process to exhume his body was difficult and is proof of the irregularity and lack of commitment by government agencies in investigations of crimes perpetrated by the state. A judicial decision from March 2009 determined that Andreu's body should be exhumed and a new autopsy report should be produced by the IML [Legal Medical Institute]. However, the institute did not fulfill the decision, which was reaffirmed on November 2009 by another judicial ruling. It was only in 2011, after Deize had conducted a PUBLIC ACT in front of the institute with flyers, posters, banners and the inexorable presence of mothers and families of other young people missing and murdered in similar circumstances, that the IML fulfilled the judicial ruling (Rede, 2013).

In contrast from the performances shown in the U.S. TV show *Bones*, where Forensic Anthropologists and other specialists work together to find out not only the cause of the death and the possible characteristics of the killer written on the bones of the victim,

Rio de Janeiro's doctors could not even answer basic questions that the prosecutor had requested. The weight of bureaucracy and the commitment of doctors to meet the state's interest were meant to contribute to the impunity. However, Deize used her WEB OF SUPPORT to have several people in the cemetery at the time of the exhumation to TAKE PICTURES and to RECORD ALL OF THE CONVERSATIONS the doctors and cadaver experts would have. The photos of Andreu's broken skull, the disconnected jaw, and his rib bones all broken, served as proof of the brutality he suffered and the violent practice of the agents as Deize continued her search for justice. The photos were annexed to the police investigation documents, and on May 2011, the prosecutor denounced the six disciplinary agents for murder and asked for their exoneration (Rede, 2013).

The first judicial hearing happened on February 8, 2012. As a strategy to CALL ATTENTION and GIVE VISIBILITY to the case, Deize organized an ACT in front of the court, an imposing building in downtown Rio. She once again MOBILIZED her web of support to provide the necessary materials for the event's success. One organization provided a car equipped with a microphone and sound system; others invited students and activists through email lists and different websites on the Internet. The *Rede Contra a Violência* prepared the pamphlets for distribution, and as a part of my collaboration with them and making use of my skills as an anthropologist, I was responsible for writing a short REPORT of the major events to be released in the following days. I arrived at the meeting point around 10 am and helped to highlight the words on the placards, which became an EXHIBITION. As seen in the pictures 6-10 below, both the PLACARDS and the PAMPHLETS played an important role in calling attention to the general population. We

placed the placards in the middle of the sidewalk on a busy avenue in downtown Rio where the court is located. Figure 6 shows a placard with one of Deize's major phrases, "The worst form of cowardice is to demonstrate power in the weakness of another." She used to say this to highlight the cowardice of the six agents who brutally kicked, punched, and beat Andreu. The placard used the illustration of cartoonist Latuff, who created a VISUAL IMAGE of what a witness told Deize about the case (in detail in Figure 7). A young man who was arrested the same night as Andreu and was a *beaten observer* sent her a letter narrating the facts. She conveys his account,

According to him, when they arrived at the Centro de Triagem, one of the agents asked them to take a shower, in which Andreu refused claiming that he was ill. This guy went to take the shower and when he came back, he saw my son and this agent fighting. He then pushed the agent, who called the others to help him. They received whacks, kicks, were beaten with a bag full of coconuts. This guy received a whack on the head and fainted on the floor for some minutes, but did not get up after recovering consciousness in order to save his life. He said that it was horrible to hear Andreu's screams asking them to stop. They then put my son inside of a trashcan and asked him to repeat, "I am trash. I am trash." Since he was already groggy and did not say it, they put detergent soap in his mouth and continued to hit him until his death. After that, they gave a mop and a bucket of water to two other inmates to clean the body of Andreu and the room, because he was bloodied and stinking because of the trashcan [Deize, 2012].



Figure 6 - Cowardice



Figure 7 – Charge Latuff Caso Andreu



Figure 8 - Justice for Andreu

The other placards show Deize's claim of citizenship, her view about the justice system, and her denouncement of her interrupted motherhood. Picture 11 above shows a banner with the Brazilian flag at the top and Rio's flag at the bottom, and four pictures of Andreu overlap the flags. Asked about its meaning, Deize states,

My son was a human being. He did not arrive in a parachute from space. They said that the [penal] system would re-socialize him. I don't agree with this word, re-socialize. My son was not an animal. Since he was in my womb, he was already being socialized with my care and my thoughts about him. He was born and became a citizen. When the doctor in the birth room said, 'It is a boy,' he became a citizen. He had a birth certificate just to confirm that the world won one more citizen. This society created my son. He is a product of it [2012].

Her arguments show her understanding that she was not the only person responsible for Andreu. Rather, she states that he is a product of Brazilian society and the adversities it brings to the lives of poor Black people from the communities. Her words show the

relationship between mother and child even before birth, but the protection that comes from her womb stopped the moment he was born, making him vulnerable to the incomplete citizenship implemented in Brazil; this took from her the possibility of being a mother (figures 9 and 10). Furthermore, in the moment that Andreu left her womb and became a citizen, her motherhood was confirmed, as well as the action of the state to try to end her motherline.



Figure 9 - Placards Andreu



Figure 10 - Placards Andreu 2

The image narrating Andreu's death is also reproduced in the pamphlet, which tries to get the viewers to read an account of Deize's *luta* and invites people to participate in the public act. For about an hour, we distributed pamphlets and gave details about the case to some people who showed a little bit of interest compared to the ones who just took it from our hands and threw it on the ground or in the nearest trashcan. Other people simply changed course in order to avoid receiving the piece of paper. A young man stopped, positioned himself in front of the placards and told me, "This is exactly what happens there. I've been an inmate and got beaten several times. I'm out of the system for just a month. I came here to sign the paper. I have to come every month." While he was telling me his story, a police car parked very close to the placards and asked our names and the proposal of the act (figure 11). Different from the U.S., the Brazilian Constitution secures the right

of public speech and it is not necessary to let the authorities know before the act. The young man then said, “*vou la, tia, vou la* [I’m going], I don’t have problems with the law anymore, but we never know what they can do.” The police officer then made a phone call and reported what was going on. The vehicle stayed there until we went inside, but it did not intimidate Deize from continuing with her speech.



Figure 11 - Police arrive at the demonstration

It was an hour before the judicial hearing started. Deize moved to the side of the building where the sound car was parked, took the microphone and discussed using the externalization of her feelings to communicate her search for justice.<sup>57</sup> The demonstration

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<sup>57</sup> Her discourse will be addressed in the next chapter.

in front of the Court House lasted for more than four hours. In addition to the speech, Deize talked with supporters of her case, GAVE INTERVIEWS to alternative media, and RECEIVED ADVICE from her lawyer. Other mothers also gave quick speeches in support of Deize's *luta* and showed that they formed a political group. For example, Debora from *Mães de Maio*, a social movement of by mothers of victims of violence in São Paulo, said, "Deize's *luta* is our *luta*. We do not fear retaliation because they have already taken our greatest good." In another moment that morning, Deize talked about the emotional difficulties of her *luta*. According to her, "the process of fighting for justice for him is as painful as the pain of childbirth, except that today, the contractions will diminish only when this trial is over and I successfully say everything I know." From my analytical vantage, this was her way to rebirth Andreu. Her power and strength in pursuing the *luta* would give her, depending upon her success, the possibility of moving on and constructing a new meaning of motherhood, which was focused on seeking justice that sometimes takes her away from her other three children. As she told me in an interview, "One thing that changed in me is that I became cold with my other children. The death of Andreu is too painful, he was my first child and I loved him so much. I fear demonstrating my love, surrendering to this love again, and suffering with another death. I am protecting myself, you know?" [personal interview, July 2012].

After EATING a quick snack, Deize asked me and other people there if we would stay until the end. For those who could stay, she GAVE A T-SHIRT (see my t-shirt in figure 12). On the front was the same figure as in the placard analyzed in figure 7. On the back was a quote from Deize: "I lost my son, but not the will to fight." By distributing t-

shirts emblazoned with her own words, she not only made her suffering visible, but she instilled herself and her strength in each person who was there, including me. We entered the building heading to the room where the judicial hearing would happen. As a witness, Deize went to a separate room waiting for her time to speak, while we, family members and activists accompanying her, went to the main courtroom. There we all could witness the state's power over her. Dealing with Brazil's judicial system is a contrast to life in the *favelas*. Black women who seek justice for crimes perpetrated against their family members must face off with the state in a giant building downtown, where people talk in specialized, incomprehensible jargon. The mothers receive assistance from lawyers, but the majority of the work to understand the "*advocates*" [how they call the lawyers' specialized language] is being an AUTODIDACT.

In the courtroom there were the six agents, the director of the institution in 2007, the prosecution and Deize's attorneys and those of the defense representing the agents. In the very beginning of the hearing, the defense tried to cancel it. The lawyer for the five agents asked for proof that Deize was Andreu's mother. From where I was sitting, I could not hear her answer, but because he was close to the microphone, I heard him saying, "We know you and know that you are active in the case, but I want to see on paper your relationship with Andreu." Since she had forgotten her documents, the prosecutor's assistant searched for a copy of her ID and Andreu's birth certificate in the documents to prove their relationship. From the audience, some mothers who had been through this same process got nervous. One of them complained, "How could she forget the ID? We cannot give them any chance to play against us!" Another said, "We were here all day long, no

one checked this with her.” This shows that every step is not only the protagonist mother’s responsibility, but it is a SHARED RESPONSIBILITY to take care of the others if they want a result. After solving this problem Deize was asked to sit in the middle of the room facing the judge, while the six agents were told to sit on the right side, facing her. I feared that the problem with the identification and the presence of the killers of her son in the room would destabilize Deize’s assertiveness, but she showed all her power and stared at them intently and unafraid, while they kept their heads down the entire time.

The judge started the hearing by reading the statement prepared by the public defenders. It states that the “agents voluntarily assaulted and took the risk of contributing to the death of Andreu using excessive force.” It also states that the agents “were omitted and did not prevent the most violent aggressions though they were duty bound to do so by being the agents.” Yet, according to the complaint, the report’s statement that Andreu fell while trying to escape was categorized as a lie since several agents told different versions of his death. After the reading, the judge asked the director to leave and started to ask Deize questions. “What did you find out about the death? What did you hear about it?” asked the prosecution’s representative. As soon as Deize started to speak, the defense tried to stop her from saying something to the judge, in which the judge replied, “Doctor, ‘hear about’ is also testimony. She will continue to speak.” Deize repeated the investigation process narrated above, and the judge asked her if she could help the state to find the people that helped her to create that narrative, which the judge referred to as the DYNAMIC OF THE CRIME. During the defense lawyer’s turn to ask questions, he was very ironic and only asked how many times Andreu had been an inmate. As discussed above, the lawyer used

the times that Andreu had passed through the institution to justify that he was not a good person, and thus his death was not a loss. I understood this to be a double condemnation where the victim is made responsible for the violence towards him. Besides this, the lawyer tried to make a point that the agents' bad behavior was due to the lack of training after admitted to the job. For example, when hearing the former director, he asked him if he knew how long one of the agents was working in the system and if he had training. "Three months, low experience, he was on probation... When I entered the system, I had psychological advice, but it is just in practice that you measure your force. There is no training," replied the director. The lawyer's strategy was to blame the institution instead of the individual, and although racism, discrimination, and violence are institutionalized, the agents are also responsible for their acts. At the end of the court proceedings, family members, activists, and friends congratulated Deize. She put her hands on a picture of Andreu and said, "I was strong for you, my son." I observed that she had a picture of Andreu and a red t-shirt on her lap, which she firmly held while she spoke. Perhaps she was strong for and with him.

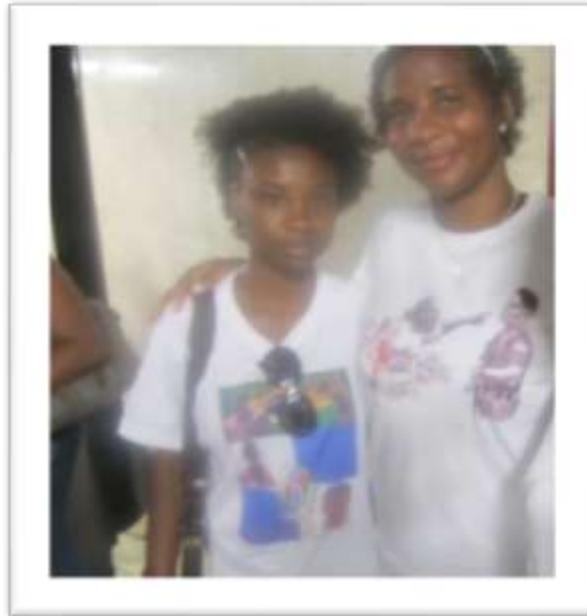


Figure 12 - After the Judicial Hearing

The new hearing was scheduled for September 12, 2012, with the purpose of hearing the youth who witnessed the murder. Since then, what Deize experienced was the perverse maneuvers of the system to delay the case. The judge could not find the ten people who were inmates that night and consequently rescheduled it for February 4, 2013. I was not in Rio at that time, but read in the Rede's report that the hearing was postponed again because they could not find the boys and the new date was September 4, 2013. On that day, with four witnesses localized and present to testify, Deize saw the hearing postponed again after the judge honored the request of the defense lawyer arguing that the hearing should be rescheduled because the previous one was already a 7 hour hearing. This rescheduling made the young men very vulnerable to the agents' retaliation and intimidation, since their names and whereabouts were added to the trial before they gave their testimonies. In

addition, the delay could make it such that by the new date, they would already be released from the correctional system, and thus, more difficult to be contacted. The hearing was postponed to September 19, 2013, again to February 2014, and the rescheduling continues.

### **Autobiography**

“Write what I tell you,” said Deize on an afternoon in August 2012. She closed her eyes, and recited one poem about the day she lost Andreu, one about her wishes for the life of her newborn nephew, and one about her hate for the state. Deize was writing her autobiography and asked me to “construct the book,” as she named my contribution on her acknowledgments page. She had a computer but did not have the text editor program, so she wrote herself emails with the latest version of her material.

One day after a meeting at the *Rede*'s office, we walked together to the Cinelandia metro station. We sat down to wait for our trains, which go in opposite directions, and a man sat beside her. Deize took a deep breath, “*Nossa! Não acredito que isso não é mais difícil* [Wow! I can't believe that it's not difficult anymore].” I did not understand and asked what was difficult, since we were having an easy conversation about eating popcorn. “Shhhhh,” she replied, asking me to be quiet. The man left and she told me, “So many times I would have gotten up and left if a man sat that close to me. Immediately I would think that he was one of my son's murderers. It all started to change when I saw them at the hearing. I think I started to kill my fears there. I am writing my story. Hey, you could help me! You already know everything about my life.” “Sure,” I replied, very excited to

be able to collaborate in such an important step of her life. Deize explored the “politics of storytelling” as a tool for her activism (Perkins, 2000). Many black women have done the same, such as Black Brazilian Benedita da Silva (1997) a politician, and Elza Soares (1969) e Carolina Maria de Jesus (1960) a singer and writer, who have narrated their lives in the *favelas*. As well as African-American Assata Shakur (1987), who published her autobiography as a witness to black liberation movements.

On August 21, 2012, just a day after our conversation, Deize forwarded me an email with the subject heading *Vencendo as Adversidades* [Overcoming the Adversities], her autobiography. I copied the text from the email, pasted it into a Word document and was amazed by the poetic narrative of her suffering and struggle. My goal was to edit the grammar, point to gaps in the story, and to create a structure for the book, including inputting references and subtitles. I read the material and scheduled a meeting on August 30<sup>th</sup> to talk about my suggestions. She invited me to go to her house around lunchtime and spend the afternoon, when she felt more creative and could recite some poems. I arrived and since she did not have gas at home, she invited me to go to her mother’s house, where she would cook. We walked for about 10 minutes up the hills of *Favela do Cantagalo* while she, well-known because of both her activism and her lifetime in the neighborhood, distributed ‘hellos’ to many people. At her mother’s house, two siblings were watching Hebe Camargo’s funeral live on TV.<sup>58</sup> I sat down in a chair to start the editing on my laptop,

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<sup>58</sup> Hebe Camargo was a white Brazilian television host who died on September 29, 2012 from complications due to cancer.

sometimes getting distracted either by her brother and sister's comments about the funeral, or by the smell of the rice, polenta and ground beef that Deize was cooking. After lunch, I showed her how far I edited and the necessary changes in structure that I had identified. She liked my suggestions and she kept sending me stories and poems whenever they came to her. We collaborated from September 2012 to February 2014. The book is 86 pages and was launched as a big event in Cantagalo in July 2014.

#### **MARCIA JACINTO - JUSTICE FOR HANRY**

“... It is a matter of structure. They are all worms!” said Marcia Jacinto referring to the police and the judicial system. It was December 2012, Marcia, Patricia Oliveira and I left the office of *Rede Contra a Violência* and walked fast as we were late to the movie screening of *Luto como Mãe*. As we moved through the dark streets of Lapa, Marcia remembered her contribution to the documentary and told us that her aim was to show how she did the work that the system refused to do. Marcia made her point in her first appearance in the movie. She states,

I was a forensic expert, I was chief of police, and I was everything that justice would not be for me. I did everything that had the right to be done and they did not do. I was a mother. I do not know if I'll ever get to see them behind bars, but maybe if were of a good social class, white, not a Black woman, did not live in the *favela*, [then] they would have had an answer for me. Because with all the hints of their cruelty, they continue working and earning their monthly wages from my taxes (Nascimento, 2010).

In this section, through the encounter of Marcia Jacinto with the state, I explore the micropolitics of police practices in Rio's *favelas* and the state practices toward a mother seeking justice. I focus on the “system discourse” through the arguments of the judge, the

public prosecutor, and the public defense in the trial related to the murder of Henry Siqueira, Marcia's son. I follow anthropologist Laura Nader's (1969) indication that "anthropologists have possibilities to study how power and responsibility are exercised" in society. I argue that the devaluation of Black life is institutionalized through corporatism, corruption, internal hierarchy and power among the military police. Aware about this mechanism, Black mothers seeking justice have to create strategies to publicize their suffering and "work the system."

Marcia is a Black mother of three who lives in Morro do Gamba, a mostly Black area in the north of Rio de Janeiro. After her son's death, she became a great activist for justice, working against violence and the state extermination of the poor. Since 2002, November 21 is a sad day for her. Eleven years ago the same day, a fraudulent police operation killed her son, the sixteen-year-old student Henry Siqueira in the *favela* where they live. The autopsy indicated that he died from one bullet that penetrated his chest, crossed his heart and lung, and exited his back. The autopsy report also stated that the shot was fired from top to bottom and points to the possibility that Henry was kneeling down when he received the deadly shot, execution style. However, the police documented the murder as an *auto de resistência* [resisting arrest], and reported finding a .38 caliber revolver and thirteen small packets of marijuana in his possession--a practice of planting evidence known in the *favelas* as the *kit bandido* [thug kit].

The Brazilian Code of Criminal Procedure authorizes the use of force by the police authority in self-defense or in the case of third parties resisting arrest and attempted escape.

It dictates that the police officer write a report narrating the facts and testified to by two people (Law 3.689, 1941§ 292). However, in practice, the provisions of the Code have been used to prevent the completion of investigations in situations when the excessive and abusive use of force is apparent. In *Luto como Mãe*, Marcia reflects on resisting arrest. She says, “It is a legal classification that the police use to describe a situation when someone ‘resists arrest’ (*lowering her voice and twisting her wrist showing interrogation*) How do they ‘resist’? (*With one eyebrow lifted indicating her criticism*) Shooting at the police. Thus, this ‘confrontation’ clears the police from all responsibility in the event of death.” Since police officers are considered to have “public faith,” reports on resisting arrests are taken as the truth (Soares et al, 2007, p. 13). In the logic of the police, the kit “found” with Hanry would characterize his involvement with criminal activity and thus justify his death.

In fact, the record of resisting arrest in order to mask homicides committed by the military and civilian police in Rio became a normalized practice sustained by the demands for public safety in Rio. When a resisting arrest is reported, families have a complicated mission because they deal with the official version of an alleged crime. It is difficult not just because of the documentation produced, but also because of the subjugation of Black bodies due to racial and gendered norms where controlling images of the “negligent Black mother” and the “criminal young Black man” generate expectations about a person’s nature and behavior based on his or her assumed race, gender, and sexuality (Vargas 2012, p. 8).

### Raising the Mãe Ultrajada

Marcia's experience is a demonstration of how a bullet raises the *Mãe Ultrajada* [the outraged mother]. The afternoon when Hanry was murdered, she had left the house to take her granddaughter to the doctor. When she arrived, she saw vestiges that Hanry had entered, eaten and taken a shower. He used to study during the evening and sometimes she was so tired from work that she would fall asleep before his return. She recalled, "When I woke up and he was not in his bedroom, I immediately knew that something very bad had happened, and from that day on, my life changed forever" [personal interview, 2012]. Her trajectory for justice is stunning and what motivated her to pursue this path was the outrage she felt.

If not for the efforts and courage of Marcia Jacinto this would be one more case of a young Black man's death related to the war on drugs in Rio. Nevertheless, she engaged in a SEARCH FOR PROOF and witnesses that could CONTEST THE POLICE REPORT and as a result an official investigation was opened. Marcia says that she will never forget when she tried to talk to the police chief about her case. He told her, "I don't want to hear a *mãe favelada* [mother from the *favelas*] crying about [her] little criminals." After this experience, Marcia changed the way she engaged with the system. She states, "Now I only go to judicial hearings and meetings WEARING MY SUIT. I entered LAW SCHOOL in order to understand their jargon. They have to respect me" [personal interview, 2012].

The bullet that killed Hanry, devastated her, but it also raised the *outraged mother*. The woman whose loss cannot be compensated for. The person whose demands make evident her antagonistic position with the state. "I wanted my son here," she said. As an

antagonism, the situation has no solution. Hanry was not in his bedroom, he will never come home from school.

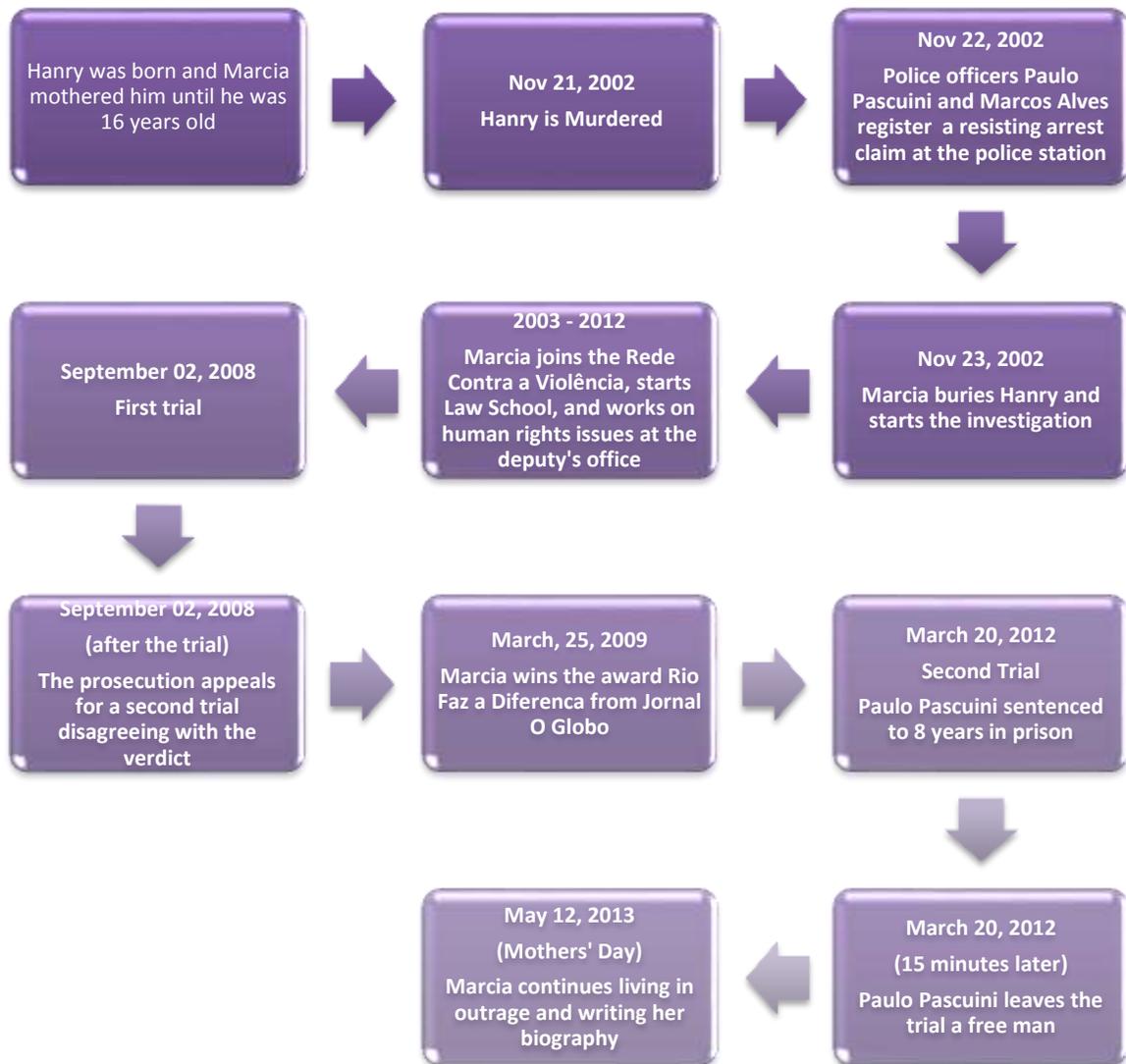


Illustration 9 - Timeline of an outrage

## **The Trial**

On March 20, 2012, the second trial of a police officer involved in Hanry's murder was held in the Court of Justice. The hearing was scheduled to begin at 1 pm, but Marcia invited supporters of her activism to be in front of the building by 10 am to help her organize a PHOTO EXHIBITION. Around fifteen people were there, including Marcia's family members, reporters from the independent media, and volunteers from the Web of Communities and Movements against Violence. The exhibition included photos of her son's early life, the autopsy report, and newspaper articles talking about her struggle for justice (see figures 13 - 18 below).



Figure 13 - Exposition



Figure 14 - Loved Harry

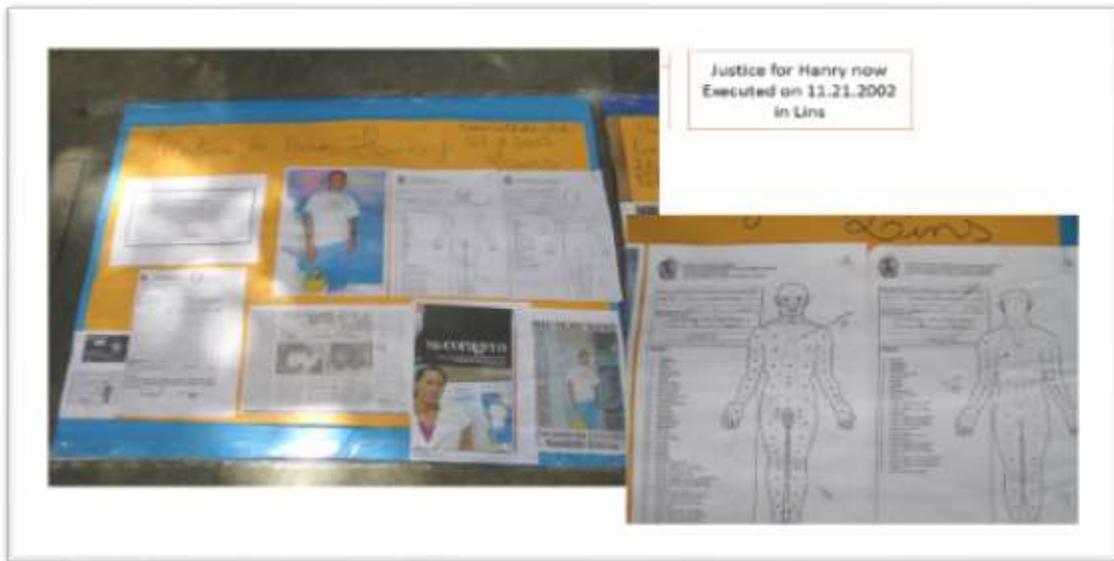


Figure 15 - autopsy

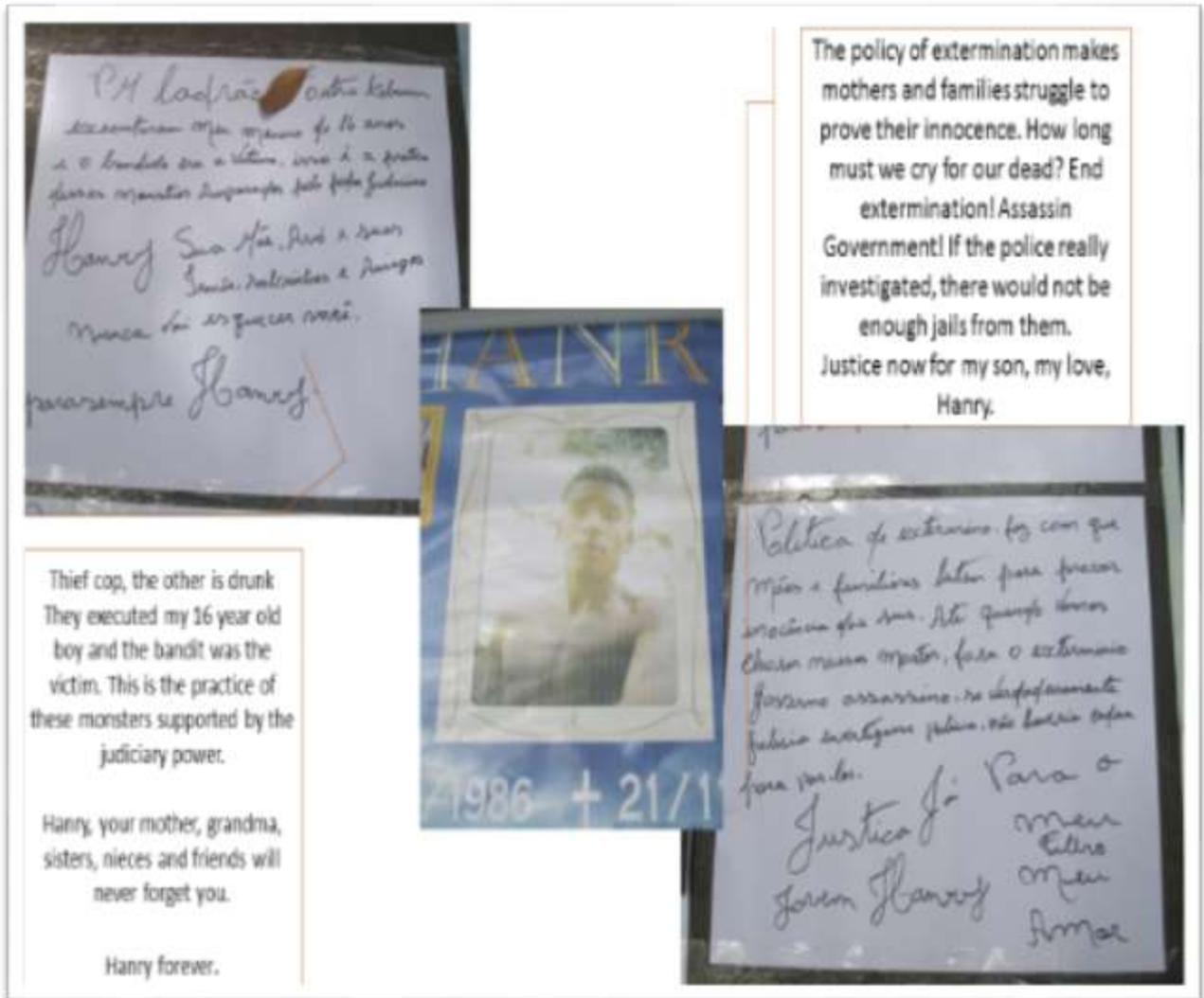


Figure 16 - posters of Harry



Figure 17 - Newspaper Clippings

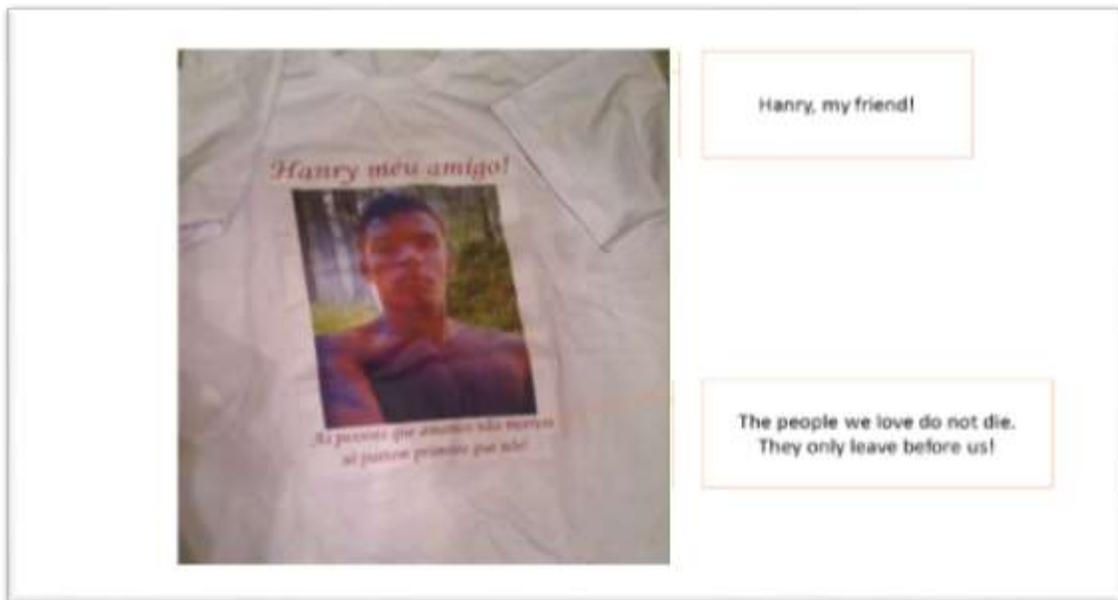


Figure 18 - T-shirt Harry my friend

As seen above, the exhibition focused on Henry's early life, details of his execution, and Marcia's struggle and accomplishments in her *luta*. These three categories in the exhibition show a dynamic that mothers in struggle against the state need to give value to their struggle. First, they need to show the state and society that their children were loved and that they were good mothers. The PICTURES of birthday parties and her mother's marriage, hanging out with siblings and friends, and working in construction aim to show that he was a good person, was cared for and took care of his family. The t-shirts she gave us all showed a picture of Hanry with a forest/heaven in the background, and the phrase "the people we love do not die. They only leave before us!" which appears below the picture. However, the ten people supporting her received a t-shirt stating a different relationship to Hanry. Mine was "Hanry my friend," (Figure 18) Marcia's was 'Hanry my son,' and his sister, stepfather, and cousin also received the material to help the PROPAGATION OF AFFECT AND LONGING. Second, mothers need to reveal the cruel character of the death and TRANSLATE THE BLACK SUFFERING into something relatable to other people. She does that through the reproduction of his injury scheme on the same placard as his school transcript and a picture of him at church. Together these convey his innocence and the cruelty of his death at such a young age. Finally, they need to show recognition of their demands and validation of their struggle. The placard with Marcia's HANDWRITING denouncing the murder committed by state agents and the reproduction of newspaper articles about her *luta* contributes to the authentication of her outrage.

We stayed in front of the courthouse for about two hours before going the trial. Marcia recorded a powerful VIDEO for the NGO ComCausa (2012)<sup>59</sup> that supports families in struggle by creating video reports about the cases. I use her 5-minute speech as a bridge to the analysis that follows. Marcia called attention to several important facts in the micropolitics of police actions and the judicial system dynamics, such as: 1) Summary Executions and the normalization of forging resisting arrest reports; 2) the correct use of this resource and the right/duty of a criminal to be arrested; 3) police corruption and their criminality through their association with drug-selling; 4) their corporatism preventing them to conduct a proper investigation; 5) internal hierarchy, power and fear among police officers; 6) appeals and impunity, and; 7) how all this affects Black life in the *favelas*. All of these show how Marcia had to find ways to practice her *luta* while trying to protect her family, the witnesses in the case, and herself. She also created strategies to show her outrage.

We stayed in front of the building for more than 20 minutes waiting for the trial to begin. Marcia distributed the t-shirts and we entered the building. At 1 pm, the trial began. The judge welcomed the attorneys from the defense and prosecution, and conducted a raffle for the jury from people who had previously volunteered their service to the judicial system. To validate the jury after the raffle, the defense had to confirm each jury member by expressing acceptance. If the defense accepted, the power turned to the prosecution to agree or refuse. Based on the people's profiles previously given to the lawyers, the defense

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<sup>59</sup> Marcia's testimony to ComCausa will also be analyzed in the next chapter.

rejected three young women. The prosecution accepted all of those chosen by the defense. This took about 20 minutes, and finally, three men and four women formed the jury, only one was Black. The judge then invited Paulo Roberto Pascuini, the accused ex-police officer already judged and condemned for the murder, to begin his direct examination. The authority told him that he was allowed to remain silent without prejudicing his trial, but that he could opt to answer the questions. The legal disclaimer said that,

After shooting with a firearm, and discovering that they had hit the victim, the accused acted knowingly and voluntarily, in a communion of actions and plans, and to ensure their impunity for the crime committed, simulating a situation of self-defense claiming to have occurred during a shootout with traffickers to justify their conduct in order to mislead the judge or police investigators about the circumstances of death.

The judge worked to build the man's profile by asking questions about his personal life. "How old are you? Where do you live and with whom? Do you have children? What is your current professional activity? How many years did you work as a police officer? Why did you leave? Do you use drugs? Any other things about your personal life that you would like to say?" The defendant started to repeat his answers to the questions stating that he had three children who depended on him. The judge stopped him and said that he was being repetitious. His following words sharpened Marcia's outraged feelings, and her immediate reaction will be the focus of the analysis in the next chapter. The trial goes on and I analyze it using Marcia's conceptualization of the police and the justice system as "worms" to highlight how they behave towards her.

### ***Worms' code of conduct***

## §1 - Summary Executions

Sociologist Ignacio Cano (1997) argues that the use of police force can be understood as a continuum with two poles. According to Cano, if, on the one hand, the police practice implies the use of guns to protect the officer's own life and the lives of others, then, on the other hand, they also execute people who were already in detention or could have been arrested without the use of excessive force. In the first case, the police officer should be congratulated for his/her act. In the second, arrested for his/her crime (15). In the case of Hanry, Marcia found out that the ten police officers who entered the Morro do Gamba that afternoon were going to collect the *arrego* [bribe] from the drug traffickers, a weekly or monthly amount of money paid by the dealers to sell drugs in the *favela*. Angry for not having received the money, they killed Hanry in retaliation. In the trial of Paulo Pascuini, the prosecutor highlights that:

When they realized that Hanry was not a bandit, they were irresponsible, were criminally irresponsible. It was a homicide. The state does not give a gun to a police officer to do it - shoot first and ask questions later. They have to be condemned for it! And so they know that their act deserves condemnation, that they tried to cover it up--deployed a revolver, deployed marijuana--a crime that he has been convicted of in the preceding trial.

The prosecutor makes evident that even the operation that resulted in Hanry's death should be questioned and seen as evidence of the officers' involvement with criminality because their narration of the crime has contradictions. Marcos says that they entered the *favela* following an anonymous denunciation about criminal activity. Paulo says that he received the order to go there on his radio transmitter, but later he states that could not tell his superior about Hanry's death because he did not have the transmitter. In addition, they used to enter the community through Maria Luiza Street, and on that day, they entered

through the Boca do Mato entrance, a place well known for being the entrance receiving bribes. He also calls attention to the cruel execution by highlighting that Henry received one single shot to the heart:

He had a bullet go through [his] heart! And the defendant wants to convince us that he was taken to be medicalized? Can you imagine how long a person who is shot in the heart needs to die? She/he is killed instantly! It is a matter of seconds, not minutes. This boy was not taken alive from that location. They did not take an injured victim; they took a corpse. This is a thing that every cop knows should not be done unless they have other intentions, destroying a crime scene. This was a theater, the scenario. It is obvious that the body was removed to change the location of the crime.

## §2 - Normalization of Forging Resisting Arrests Reports

The normalization and naturalization of Black people as criminals, especially Black young men, legitimates actions such as the forging of resisting arrest after Henry's death. Nonetheless, according to the prosecutor, Henry was a delinquent, even if he had been killed in the same manner, the consequences would not be the same. He stated,

If Henry was a dealer, and had been criminally executed, that is, if the police find an unarmed drug dealer and shoot him in the heart, it is a crime, even if he is a drug dealer. But we know the reality of criminal justice. If Henry were a dealer, even dying illegally, nothing would have happened. This defendant will be sentenced because the mother of the victim was able to prove that her son was a good person. Not simply claim he was, the mother of Henry claimed and proved that he was a good boy. She makes the chief of police realize the obvious: a boy with this profile was not with a .38 in hand waiting for the police to shoot. This boy was executed.

The certainty that her son was not a delinquent made Marcia not only question the report produced by the police officers, but also prove their fraud. Acknowledging Marcia's *luta* and Henry's innocence, the prosecutor continues:

This more than proves that this guy was not and never was a drug dealer. The plenary is showing that this boy was never a dealer. Just look at this plenary and for those people who come here years after waiting for justice for a friend, a

neighbor, a loved one. I've never seen a murdered drug dealer bring all these people to the plenary. I've never seen this. I'm tired of having cases of police killing drug dealers. Do you know who comes here to see? The family of the police. I could ask the plenary. Who here is a relative of the defendant? There are a lot. And the dealer who the police killed? No one [is here from his family] or at most only his mother. This plenary is showing that the police shot the boy ... the police no, those police officers shot a 16 year old who had never been involved in crime and whose weapon at that time was the key to his house.

Despite all the evidence that Harry was not a drug dealer, the defense lawyer continued to insinuate that he was. When it was Marcia's turn to give her testimony in the trial, the lawyer focused his questions on one fact, which he asked her insistently: "How could you sleep while your son was not at home, even after you heard shots?" Some of her answers were: "I was tired and fell asleep before he came back," "sometimes he stayed longer talking to his friends," "I knew that my son would be at school and come back home shortly." No answers were sufficient for the lawyer to erase the image already formed in his mind and demonstrated by his performance: "It is okay. The mother is always the last one to know about their children's criminal activity," he stated.

Due to Marcia and several other mothers' *luta*, in December 2012 the Council of Human Rights Defense enacted resolution N°8 (Minuta), which suggests that deaths or injuries deriving from police operations and confrontations can no longer be registered as "resisting arrest" or "death followed by resisting arrest." However, it is up to the states to turn the resolution into law. In Rio de Janeiro, the Civil Police ended the recording of resisting arrest, following resolution N°8. Now, the deaths caused by police should be recorded as "bodily injury resulting from police action" or "murder stemming from social intervention" and should follow the law that determines, among other things, the preservation of the site of the incident. However, according to the Brazilian penal code,

every murder should be treated as a homicide. Therefore, the police could not have wrapped the young Black boy Harry in sheets stolen from someone in the neighborhood and taken his corpse away from the crime scene. While it is possible to consider a breakthrough from the new nomenclature, it is still extremely limited and change will only become effective if the practices underlying them shift profoundly.

### §3 - Corporatism

Marcia states that she had to “work the system” and not make the system work, because it did not work for her. One afternoon at her house in Morro do Gamba in September 2012, she told me about how she recorded a video to reconstruct the crime according to the police officers’ plot. She felt the necessity to do that because the police expert [*perito*] has never gone there to evaluate the (im)possibility of the facts. With the help of Patricia and with the training she received in the workshops for the documentary, she recorded the reconstruction of the crime. She says, “I denounced the 11 police officers, and the video was very helpful. We have to do the work, Lu. The District Attorney’s Office will not come to the *favela*. I live here, I have access to the place, the crime scene, so I did the filming to destroy the cop’s alibi. They did things in a way that could benefit them.”

### §4 - Internal hierarchy and power

Pascuini contradicts his version or gives loose information about the event many times. One of the times was when the prosecutor asked him to explain how many people were in the group of police officers at the moment of the shooting. He said at trial that it was only he and his partner who shoot at two men at the top of the hill, but on his day of testimony, after the event, he said that they were nine cops shooting at 5-7 men. Another

contradictions was when he narrated the circumstances in which they found Henry's body and their immediate actions. First, he said that he did not remember Henry's outfit, but that he searched his pockets for drugs and money. Second, he gave no information about his outfit, but carried him to the car because he knew that he had been shot. The prosecutor used these contradictions to point to the fact that he must be lying and that it was proof of the forged resisting act. In addition, according to Marcia's speech, she alludes to the fact that Pascuini was either not the murderer or killer receiving orders or a superior, which would explain his hesitancy in narrating the facts. However, as Marcia argues, it is his job to indicate who the real killer was.

#### §5 – Impunity

The Brazilian penal system permits that, depending on the case—mainly the race, class and status—the defendant can wait for the results of her/his appeals in liberty. In the first trial in 2008, the jury verdict says that Marcos Alves was guilty of homicide and fraud, and Paulo Pascuini was condemned for fraud. The prosecutor, disagreeing with the trial results, appealed for a new trial for Paulo Pascuini. Even with the guilt verdicts, they both had the right to be free until the last appeal is negated.

At the second trial in 2012, after almost seven hours of trial, the jury found Marcos guilty of his crimes and the judge sentenced him to eight years of incarceration. I could hear sighs of relief, including my own gasp when he said the word “condemned.” Some people cried. I looked at Marcia and she was hugging her husband. We all were very emotional from hearing the sentence. For about forty minutes, the judge discussed the case and how the sentence was calculated. To our surprise, he converted Pascuini's penalty to an

alternative punishment. Instead of being incarcerated for eight years, the judge said that he would have to go to the Justice building once a month to confirm his place of residence and professional activity. He was prohibited from leaving Rio de Janeiro without permission of the judge, and had to pay the costs of the trial. A mixture of outrage and disbelief paralyzed all of us. Silence. Shock.

The judge then said he would like to give a final word to the families of Hanry and Pascuini. He said, “There is no glory for either side. The truth is that the best justice is silence, then I suggest that everyone follow his/her ways home keeping silence within yourselves and think about what is right or wrong” (fieldwork notes, 2012). We all walked out of the courtroom with a knot in our throats. When we were leaving the building, we saw Pascuini, his wife and his lawyer walking in front of us. Marcus Pascuini, condemned to the murder of Hanry Siqueira, walked free and left the Court house before Marcia Jacinto, the Black mother condemned to live with her suffering and longing for her son.

§6 – fear

The naturalization of Black lives taken daily through summary executions in Rio de Janeiro’s *favelas* and peripheries generates distrust in the system associated with the impunity that leaves condemned ex-police officers free and preventing people from testifying due to the fear of retaliation. It was very difficult in Marcia’s *luta* to make people from the *favela* say that the police officers did not enter the *favela* through Maria Luisa Street, or that the officers lied when claiming that there was a shootout, which would have contradicted the officers’ version that several bullets were fired at them. As a strategy, Marcia convinced the people to testify only about Hanry’s life and the environment. For

example, while testifying about the last time he saw Hanry and how he was dressed and what he was holding, Hanry's friend's final words were that "by any means he is capable of identifying the police officers, did not see any car, did not hear any shots, but simply only saw Hanry walking in the direction of his house inside the *favela*" (fieldwork notes, 2012). For Marcia's *luta*, this was enough. What she needed at the time was proof that someone saw her son minutes before his death and he was not carrying a gun, but only the key to enter his house. "The rule is deaf, blind, and dumb witnesses" [Marcia Jacinto, Personal Interview, 2012].

Marcia's political experimentation dealing with the judicial system, such as going to law school, organizing a photo exhibit, and the tentativeness of communicating her suffering, scratches the armor, but is still not able to overcome the big wall of the state, because despite all of her *luta*, she did not see her son's murderers arrested. On November 21, 2013, it was 11 years since Hanry's murder. On that day, Marcia vented on her Facebook profile"

Today is a horrible day. November 21 is today, is tomorrow, will be forever. It is the day when my son left home and never came back, the last eye contact, the last see you later, but I did not know it was the end. Today I complete 11 years without Hanry, my loved son, who at the age of sixteen had his life taken by monsters representing the state of Rio. I will love you forever, I will miss you forever. I will continue to fight, I will fight.

**ZORAIDE VIDAL - "LUDMILA WAS MURDERED ONLY BECAUSE SHE WAS A COP"**

"Did my daughter do anything to you? Did she mistreat you?" Zoraide asked Ludmila's killer.

"No," he replied.

"So why did you kill her? Why my daughter?"

"*Porque polícia, a gente mata.*" [because police deserve to die]

Zoraide Vidal is a Black woman, lawyer, mother of two, grandmother of three, and great-grandmother of one. Dona Zeze, who participated in this study and is part of the same therapeutic choral as Zoraide indicated that I should meet her. According to Zeze, Zoraide was very sad and felt quite alone because her family wanted her to forget what happened to Ludmila, her daughter who was a cop and was brutally murdered in Mage, *Baixada Fluminense*. Dona Zeze thought that it would be good for Zoraide to have this “window to talk about her pain.” She gave me a pamphlet about Ludmila’s case and wrote Zoraide’s phone number on the back. I called her days after and Zoraide invited me to go to her office in Tijuca at the end of the business day. She works by providing legal assistance to people in need and represents the OAB (*Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil*--Brazilian Lawyers Order) in the *favela do Borel*. I arrived at her office around 4 pm. I introduced myself to her secretary and she let Zoraide know I had arrived. She was attending to someone behind closed doors, and a man who needed advice about an alimony payment was waiting outside. She left the room and asked me to wait, since she had one more person to meet. I stayed outside reading magazines for about 15 minutes until she finished, then she invited in. She introduced me to the man and other Black women who share the space with her--a group of Black women who prepare *buffet de salgadinhos* [fried and baked snacks].

Zoraide really needed to talk. On the phone, I told her about my research and that I would like to hear her experience as a mother of a victim of violence. Quite professionally, she had organized for me a file of clippings and postcards about her case. We talked for more than two hours and she told me about her early life living in a religious boarding

school; her 25 year extra-marital relationship with Ludmila's father, who funded her education; her struggle to educate her daughter after the death of her partner; her work in the *favela do Borel* and her initial hate of the police; and how her life completely changed after Ludmila decided to become a cop. After two hours of conversation, her secretary entered the room and let her know that she was going home. That was when Zoraide realized that it was Friday night and that she needed to go home as well. She invited me to meet again at her apartment in Copacabana the following Monday around 11 am to continue the conversation.

I met a completely different woman. She was not at home when I arrived. I called her phone number and she let me know that she was going back home, returning from her walk on Copacabana Beach. After 10 minutes, she arrived and invited me to go to a bakery nearby to buy bread and other things for our brunch. On our errand, she introduced me to doorkeepers, manicurists, a newsvendor, and the bakery cashier, all of the people of color that we saw in Copacabana and with whom she connects. "This is Luciane, she is writing about my story. Didn't I tell you that my life would become a book?" She told me that those were the people she liked, and that all of them had already heard about "The Case of Ludmila," which is how she refers to the brutal murder of her daughter and her subsequent *luta*. Finally at her apartment, I met Priscilla, the female dog who Ludmila's love and who Zoraide now takes care of with as much affection as possible. Flowers and a big picture of Ludmila filled the living room (see figure 19).<sup>60</sup> The mother kissed the picture and left

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<sup>60</sup> I took these two pictures as Zoraide's request during my first visit to her apartment. "Do I look good?" she asked. "I don't want to appear *barangada* [messed up] in your book." She asked me to take her picture

another lipstick mark in addition to the several ones already on the glass (figure 19, left).

“This is Ludmila, *Linda* [Beautiful],” she said.

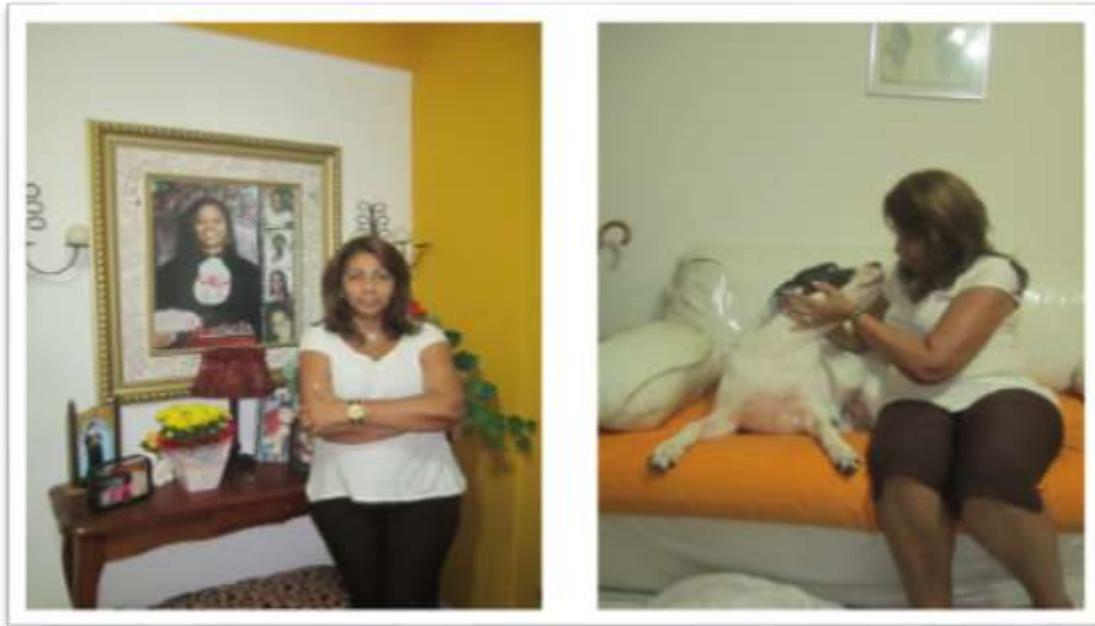


Figure 19 - Zoraide at Home

Ludmila had just graduated as a civil police officer. The Civil Police differ from police who murdered Hanry. They are the investigative police, the ones who receive denunciations when a person goes to the police station to file a complaint. Zoraide told me that since Ludmila was fluent in English, she was invited to serve in the Zona Sul in a tourist police station where they needed bilingual police officers to understand tourists' complaints. However, Ludmila referenced her mother's efforts in the *favela* and asked to

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with Ludmila, and with Priscila, Ludmila's dog. Then she held my arm and walked with me the five blocks to the turnstile of the metro, and stayed there looking at me until I disappeared into the tunnel.

work in the periphery of Rio, where she could “make a difference and help people in interpreting the law,” as she told her mother. According to Zoraide, Ludmila started began working in Nilopolis and then asked to be transferred to another police station after hearing a local politician say that she would be a better investigator “underground.” On August 4, 2006, Ludmila and Zoraide left a course that they were doing together; the former preparing to apply to be the chief of police, the latter, to be a public defender. Ludmila gave a ride to her mother, and before heading to her house, she let her mother know that she was two months pregnant. At 10 pm, she called her mother asking her to find out on the news why there was a severe traffic jam at that time in the night. At 11 pm, her mother called her to give the news, but Ludmila did not pick up the call. Zoraide then called her son-in-law and both of them took turns calling Ludmila’s phone number all night long. In the morning, Zoraide received the information that Ludmila was dead. “Not only dead, but brutally dead,” she stated.

### **“Take it easy”**

Zoraide’s search for Ludmila unveils the functioning of the system. During the night, she called all of the police stations located in the neighborhoods through which Ludmila traversed on her drive home, but no one answered any of her calls. Ironically, she could testify to how terribly police officers treat the population from what Ludmila had shared with her. When she called 190 (the three-digit emergency number) and asked if they had reported any accidents or deaths that night, the cop asked her, “What do you want, ma’am? She must be in a *motelzinho* [cheap hotels on the roads where young people used to go with their partners to have sex]. Take it easy” (O Dia, August 7, 2006). Her search

ended in the morning when she found out through the car's placard that it had been burnt in Mage, and sadly, Ludmila was inside it. The autopsy said that she had an arm and a leg broken, which indicated torture. In addition, she was shot in the head before being burned inside her car. "When the expert was inspecting in her body, a ball dropped. They thought it was a burned book or something from the car. They said that they collected all of the material to be analyzed at the police station, and when they opened the mini ball, they saw the fetus." Ludmila was identified through DNA by comparing the liquid taken from her fetus and Zoraide's blood. Blood connected the deceased cop, the fetus that would never be a baby, and the forever mourning mother/grandmother Zoraide.

The mourning mother told me that the case had visibility in the news for about two weeks (see figure 20 below from her archive), but fell into oblivion soon after. The investigators showed her a pile of unsolved police murders, and told her that she would never get an answer. Zoraide fell into a depression:

I stayed in bed for two months and had all of the possible diseases ending with "itis"-- sinusitis, labyrinthitis, rhinitis, all -itis. I did not eat, could not sleep, I did not shower. I wanted to die. I did not meet anyone; I did not listen to anyone. I wanted to die. I just slept and watched television. I dozed, not sleeping. I thought I'd throw a bomb onto the world. I thought about entering the barracks and killing all of the cops. But everything I planned to do, someone told me that it was useless, that Ludmila would not return [personal interview, 2012].



Figure 20 - Zoraide's Clipping Archive

Her resistance began when she started to attend a THERAPEUTIC GROUP that gathered family members of victims of car accidents. In this group, where the people tried to provide an understanding of the deaths, she realized that she would only try to move on after understanding the motive of the crime, and what her daughter did to be dead. She CONTACTED AN OLD FRIEND who also had a daughter who was a policewoman and killed. She asked her help to PUT THE CASE IN THE MEDIA AGAIN. “She told me to FIND A NICE PICTURE of Ludmila, MAKE A SHIRT, make PAMPHLETS, CARDS and bookmarks” (see figure 21). Her friend was collaborating with a group of mothers of victims of violence committed against police officers, and other crimes committed against

white people who had visibility in the news. According to Zoraide, “if you are not part of a group, if you are not seen, if you do not participate, you are forgotten,” which is very similar to Deize’s and Marcia’s pedagogies of resistance.



Figure 21 - bookmarks Ludmila

The monitoring of the case is something very important in Black mothers’ *luta*.

Zoraide started to pay visits to the police station to monitor the process.

Luciane - Even as a police officer, didn’t they investigate the case?

Zoraide - Nothing! If I did not get out of bed, I would have died and nothing would have been done. I went there and asked, ‘How many unsolved cases do you have? 400? So it will be 399, because Ludmila’s case unraveled.

L – So I imagine that you did the majority of the work...

Z - I had to help a lot and I was lonely. There are no parents of cops fighting for justice. The only *busty* [courageous] one was me. I was not afraid of any retaliation because I was born retaliated. I have never failed to open my mouth and SPEAK THE TRUTH for fear of something. I speak of the police, I help the police, I criticize the police, I did everything, I am free to speak from my position as a mother.

L – What do you consider to have been crucial in your *luta*?

Z – I had no fear. If I died, and met my daughter again I would be happy. But what was decisive was the cop's mobilization and the partnership with a businessman, who donated R\$3000 (roughly USD \$1500) to the *DISQUE DENUNCIA* [a police hotline where people can give information about crime anonymously]. I PREPARED 20,000 PAMPHLETS and the police flew over the slum near where she was killed in a helicopter throwing the flyers. The animal [referring to one of the killers], then, surrendered.

I was very interested in her point about her privileged positionality as a mother allowing her to be a protagonist in the struggle. Although allegedly on the opposite side of Marilene, Vera, Deize and Marcia, Zoraide is also part of the same political group of mothers in struggle. I asked her about her relationship with those mothers, since the deaths and the investigation occurred in the same period and they all gained visibility. “It was a problem,” she answered. It was because the few mothers of police officers and the other mothers with whom she was associated did not want to “join with the mothers of bandits.” According to Zoraide, she lives in conflict with her ideals, because, on the one hand, due to her work in the *favelas* and her consciousness of race, she knows that poor Black children are not born criminals and she understands the struggles that their mothers have faced in educating them without having basic amenities. On the other hand, she developed an aversion to young “criminals” and human rights organizations and social movements such as the *Rede Contra a Violência* after Ludmila's murder. “I heard on the radio: ‘The police

entered the *favela* and killed 5’, I thought ‘beautiful, 5 less.’ ‘The police killed 10,’ ‘terrific, 10 less.’ If I had arms, I would kill them also. Didn’t they kill my daughter? I would also kill them.”

Luciane - You said something earlier that caught my attention and I think a lot has to do with the point that you're talking about now. You said ‘What revolts me is that the three men who killed Ludmila were Black.’ Can you explain that?

Zoraide - Yes, we Black people, need to come together. Any society in the world, any country in the world has a grudge towards Black people. Last night a judge was killed here in Rio. The newspaper said, ‘The first *Black* judge murdered.’ If there was no racism, this addition would not be needed. Therefore, I am very sorry for it being three Blacks who killed Ludmila. We are killing each other.

Discussions about Black on Black violence appeared many times in the mothers’ narratives. Whether it is about the boys killing each other because of the fetish of power through selling drugs, whether about Black cops killing Black youth in the *favelas*, or yet, about Black men affirming that police have to die, it is always the same--we are the ones killing and being killed. As stated in Chapter 2, this is part of the same anti-Black genocidal plan where Blacks are vulnerable and have an intimate relationship with violence, whether committed against them or being coerced to act violently. As an example, Black military police officers are the majority on the front lines, those who conduct the ostensive policing, and furthermore, those more vulnerable to confrontations (Nobre, 2010).

Racial prejudice is always interesting in Zoraide’s *luta*. In Figure 22, the mothers with whom Zoraide collaborated--all white--have the support of the official media and were able to tell their stories in the pages of a famous magazine, well-known for its right political leanings. By contrast, the mothers from the *favelas* were covered mainly in the

alternative media. It is important to point out that although Zoraide's case was reported in the news story, she does not have her picture in it, which shows that although her class status helped her to pursue her *luta*, her race prevented her from having the same visibility as the other mothers from her group.



Figure 22 - Revista Isto É - April 7, 2010

Zoraide said that after the death of Ludmila she started to see life differently. “I knew it was hard being a cop, and then I began to see that being a slaughtered cop was worse.” According to her, Ludmila fought with the system in order to have good working conditions. “Ludmila left me a debt ... you know that the police do not arrest anyone on Fridays? That's because if they arrest someone on Friday, they have to sustain the arrested

over the weekend. The judge, the one who determines where the prisoner must go, does not work on the weekends.” She continues, “When Ludmila died, she left me a debt because she bought food and bread on her credit card. She fed the guys and they killed her.”

Luciane – This is a machine that needs a lot of adjustment, right?

Zoraide - Very much. They go through a horrible process to become a cop, the contest entry is difficult. I don’t understand why after they graduate they do crap... actually, I understand.

Zoraide’s narration about the police officer’s bad working conditions made me curious to hear from other police officers or their family members. In my *capoeira* group, there was a young Black man who was going through the process to become a military police officer and I thought of asking him for an interview. However, his behavior in the *roda* [the circle we make to practice *capoeira*] made me sick of him. Once, when we were playing in the *roda* and I hit him with a *meia-lua*,<sup>61</sup> his police ethos was already so engrained that he told me “go, go, if you do it again I’ll hit you with my pistol.” I had had enough. I was too emotionally fragile to be able to talk for even 20 minutes with that young Black man. I then decided to look for Angela, an old friend who was also a civil police officer. I met her in college; she was one or two cohorts before me in the Social Sciences. She was Black and had a Master’s degree in Sociology, so I knew we could have a decent conversation. I called her and she invited me to go to her apartment when she was not working.

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<sup>61</sup> A *capoeira* movement where we use our hips to generate enough force to bring the foot of the kicking leg across the face of the other player.

### **Macarronada with a Cop**

“*Até que enfim você veio!!* [Finally you came!] I will cook pasta, since you need to gain some weight,” said the investigative civil police officer wearing a beautiful yellow dress. “You look beautiful,” I said. “Thanks! I am honoring Oxum today. Isn’t yellow your favorite color?” I helped her cook, we ate and went to her bedroom to lay down on her bed to digest the ground beef and pasta. She put on a CD with orixas’s songs and the question came: “Tell me. Why did you decide to become a cop?”

Angela – I did not decide. I was jobless and I needed to do something to have stability. I did this public tender as I would do any other. No, I’m lying. I knew it was different. Everybody knows that applying to be a cop is not the same as applying to be an archivist. I did it because when I was young, I attended a coroner’s talk that showed me that we cannot judge an entire institution by the ‘bad apples.’ The majority of the people say that it is horrible to be a police officer, but when I heard that coroner, I saw that I could be in that corporation and not be like everyone else. I’m not innocent. I know that there are vicious [behaviors among police officers]; there is a scheme of corruption that is not rare, but the control that the society has over the police caused it to evolve into issues of illegal practices.

Luciane – Do you think that these practices are decreasing? Why do you say that?

A – The police today have transformed, both in the profile of police officers who work in this institution and the society that has more control in the police practices. It is very different from 15 years ago.

This is something that Zoraide referred to as “the gag.” According to her, the police are gagged by human rights organizations. “Before it was like: someone killed a policeman, a bandit will die too. They were like Westerns. Now they cannot do that anymore.” This proves that the work of organizations such as the *Rede Contra Violência* and others have been successful in some sense, but it also shows that the police are able to adapt and

develop new practices, such as making bodies disappear, since the losses in families continue to occur.

Luciane - How was your training? Do you feel prepared to be a cop?

Angela – Look, it was only for three months, but very intense, all day long. After that, we received a gun and started working. After passing the physical and psychological test, we attended the police academy. There we attended a course with several disciplines. We had physical education, a shooting course, sociology, some talks about human rights, sexuality, religious intolerance, racism... hum, racism we did not have, gender...

It was not a novelty that anti-racism was not part of the training. For example, in 2011 as part of my collaboration with Criola during fieldwork, I coordinated a working group with civil society organizations and Black lawyers to address the problems faced by the Black population when seeking justice and suggested changes to increase our access to the justice system. A group of (white) female public defenders initiated this working group feeling that it was necessary to address race in the movement to popularize access to justice in Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Brazil. They invited Criola to coordinate the working group and I mobilized some sections of the Black movement to speak. Among different problems, we identified that police officers had been the “main agents of the violation of the rights of the Black population, reinforcing racist stereotypes, promoting homicides, personal searches without legal grounds or on grounds of racial humiliation, impeding the right to come and go and not admitting the complaints and grievances of the population” (Forum Justica, 2011).

Angela states that part of her job as a civil police officer was to reconnect the population with the police station through visits to nearby schools, hospitals, and communities to

encourage the population to denunciate crimes, due to the distrust they had for the local police station. However, this was not an institutionalized practice and when the chief of police changed, so did the efforts. The afternoon with Angela was very interesting and I heard provocative things about the everyday life of a police officer. One fact that stood out in relation to this chapter and is a problem for Black mothers' resistance is that many police officers do not report to the police station what happens in the streets. According to Angela, "military police officers tend to work things out themselves, think they are their own justice, kill and vanish with the body, or do not register the crime in order to escape it, or they make a financial trade and do not arrest the criminal." Angela alleges this problem is due to an internal dispute between the Military and the Civil police. According to her, Brazil is the only country in the world that has this distinction, and since both institutions are very hierarchical, they do not want to receive orders and to work in collaboration. The problem is threefold: 1) Military police officers do not want to report their practices to the Civil police. Thus, they resolve the crimes on their own; 2) the Civil police do not want to depend on the military police to act, since they need to wait for the reports to investigate the crimes. Thus, they do rounds on the streets by sporting their rifles to terrorize the population; 3) Both corporations are racists. Thus, cases such as Henry's death occurs, and as a result, cases such as Ludmila's murder happen "only because she was a cop."

### **Conclusion - Black Mothers Epistemologies of the Antagonism**

This chapter draws on the stories of three mothers to engage with the struggle to seek justice through and against the state. Deize Carvalho's son was tortured and murdered

inside a juvenile correction facility in 2008; Marcia Jacinto's son was assassinated by police officers in Morro do Gamba in 2002, and he was characterized as a drug dealer to justify his death as one of resisting arrest, and; Zoraide Vidal's daughter, a cop, was brutally beaten, shot and burned in the periphery of Rio in 2006. I address these stories in light of the *Luta* of three other mothers, Vera Flores, Marilene Lima, and Edimeia Euzebio, the pioneering mother in *luta* known as *Mães de Acari*. Edimeia unfortunately died without seeing a solution to their cases. Deize Carvalho's narrative focuses on the details of her investigation and how she was able to indict the six agents for murder. In Deize's experience, I focus on black mothers' pedagogies of resistance, the shared ways in which Black mothers pursue their *luta*, and teach one another and society through their experiences of sorrow. In Marcia's experience, I focused on how the *mãe ultrajada* [outraged mother] is raised through their interaction with the state. In addition, by adopting an analysis of the state function towards them, I gathered the worm's code of conduct, which is how Marcia refers to the institutionalized terrifying police practices and the purposeful delays of the justice system. Zoraide's narrative shows a structure of hate where we, the Black population, always lose. This section unveils internal disputes among police and, although Zoraide has class privilege, race operates to differentiate her from the other mothers of police officers pursuing a resolution.

Their stories are connected not only through the similar losses in their lives, but also through a notion that seems to say "*A vida dos nossos filhos, o Estado tera que pagar*" [For the lives of our children, the state has to pay], a phrase that I heard from a mother at the *Vigilia da Candelaria*, one of the events that will be considered in the next chapter. A

superficial analysis of this phrase would suggest that she was talking about reparations, compensation, and a pension to redeem the damage caused by violence and to fill the void. However, *vai pagar* [to pay] in Portuguese also means to avenge and to hold accountable. All of the mothers that appeared in this chapter relied on the state, even as the perpetrator of their suffering, to provide resolution to their cases and help them to end a cycle and try to move away from their *luta* to their sorrow. To these mothers, the possibility to mourn their losses and reconstruct their lives is directly proportional to what they can achieve in their *luta*, where the state is the main aggressor. It shows a sadistic dependency on the state that causes frustration, regret, and hate, but is realistic. It is in the field of possibility, on the front line, in the flesh, *na carne*.

While analyzing the representations and reasoning of mothers in *luta* as well as Mães de Maio’s cartoon introduced in chapter 1, this chapter worked as a place to gather information to create a summary of Black mothers’ epistemology of their antagonism with the state. I engage the ways in which the mothers represent themselves in relationship to the community, society, the state, and activists/researchers. In addition, I engage with the Anthropology of Emotions, the epistemology points to the state’s emotions about the population in which these mothers are a part.

According to the mothers, at the point of conjunction of state apparatus and “society” (in Deize’s logic), the ones of a “good social class” (Marcia), and the ones who are “on the side of legality” (Zoraide) are on the opposite side of the population of the *favela*. One side is protected by the armed wing of the state—the police—whereas the other is the target of violence. Sometimes, this structure is personified in the figure of the police,

the governor or the public security secretary as the oppressors, when the mothers address their demands and complaints in public speeches. The “society” has an intimate relationship with the state and the rules they demand for public security, such as the debate around lowering the minimum penal age, and the validation of resisting arrests. However, some Black groups, due to their class condition or association with the state, those who are oppressed and the main target of the state, see this group as antagonistic, which generates deaths such as Ludmila’s murder.

On the opposite side, the mothers who speak for their communities, are the protagonists of the struggle against the state. Internalization of racist, patriarchal, and capitalist ideologies create the sense of powerlessness among many residents of the *favelas*, which make them approach the ideas of those who are not their peers and create internal differences among the population of the *favelas* regarding their view of the state. In addition, Black mothers in struggle highlight that many police officers are from the communities, which make them either hide their identities or terrorize the population through the formation of militias. Therefore, it is necessary that mothers teach, through their experiences, that it is possible to cope with this machine and gather some results.

At the base of these relationships is racism, which is fed by a patriarchal capitalist structure. This result, among other things--like poverty and damaged social representation of the communities, especially towards Black women--becomes evident. Whereas state action toward the communities is based on anger and fear and aims to maintain the status quo, the mothers’ reactions of anger and grief due to the continuous attachment to their motherline . This relationship creates a sadistic connection where the state needs to show

power using the communities, and the communities seek justice to such actions using the state. They use their gender to act and their positionality as mothers as privileged position to raise their voices.

Black mothers who have had children killed and developed outrage are the protagonists in the communities against police violence. To pursue their *luta*, they develop a relationship with social movements and activists to support their actions. They use their anger and grief as a source of power to raise their voices to talk about their cases, and to address the general concerns of the communities. They see that the state delays to solve their cases are principally due to internal structures, but also because of racism and class discrimination, a failed state structure around the rights of the communities, and police officers who can no longer serve the structure. In their epistemology there is room for activists and research collaborators, such as myself, who do not speak for the communities. We must directly collaborate with them.

Their struggles are here, in the present, now. There is no possibility of an imagination, a futurism, a pure theoretical demand. Thus, they work with what they have in hand, which is the machine that is already there--the state. However, in “their operationalization of the machine,” even though they do not accomplish personal success and sometimes die without seeing a resolution to their cases, their *luta* teaches us that another step is possible. The *luta* is individualized, but above all, it is collective, which is shown through their mutual support.

## CHAPTER 5 - "WE DEMAND!" – PERFORMANCE AS PROTEST AGAINST RACIALIZED VIOLENCE

Such enthusiasm arises only from the pressures of complex and interlocking factors. Although these factors may vary from case to case, the common thread underlying such emotive movements is a defense of women's capacity to function effectively as mothers and homemakers.

(Julia Wells, *Maternal Politics*, 1998, p. 260)

The best way to protect yourself from police retaliation is to stay visible and networking.

(*Rede Contra a Violencia's* Instructional Advice)

On September 10, 2012, I met with Patricia Oliveira at the office of the *Rede Contra a Violencia*. I had been asked to write a chapter for the *Rede's* second book appraising the "Comissao de Apoio às Vitimas" [the Victims' Support Commission], with which I was collaborating. Since I had worked with the Rede for less than two years, I scheduled the conversation with Patricia to hear more from her for the chapter. While answering a question about the problems around mobilizing families, she explained:

Patricia - If you count how many demonstrations we did this year... putz!

Luciane - Yeah, just a few.

Patricia - Last year and the year before last, we did not have time to breathe. We were exhausted from so many demonstrations. Unfortunately, there are things that we ended up not doing anymore. For example, we did an activity in front of the house of Sergio Cabral [the former Governor] that was excellent.

L - Tell me a little about this activity.

P – The idea for the activity came up in a conversation between Marilene, Daniela Duque and myself. Someone said, ‘In Argentina people do this.’ Let’s do it! But, how? Let’s schedule a date and time and we’ll do it. What will we do? Let’s make some large dolls stuffed with styrofoam packaging flakes. We will make as many dolls as the number of people he murdered. And how do we do it? Let’s make the pattern of the doll from newspaper. We asked the girl to lay on the floor, we sketched, cut, then we found a seamstress in Vila Cruzeiro. I went to Madureira, bought the flakes, and Mauricio picked me up in his car. Where would we fill the dolls? It had to be at a place nearby. Someone had to figure out where Sergio Cabral lives. Let’s find out. We found out. Then we found a friend who lived nearby and filled them in her garage. The secretariat’s security wanted to stop us, but we said that the road was public and we did the activity.

L – How was it? Did it go as planned?

P – It all worked out. We planned to begin at midnight and finish at 8 am, so when people leave the house for work, they could see the bodies there. We stayed the whole night on the street. We bought pizza and stayed there. It was a very good activity. In the end, we left some dolls there and the military police gathered inside the police van.

L – Wow, that’s symbolic...

P – It was! We have pictures of that, them taking the styrofoam bodies and putting them inside the car.

L – Wow! That is impressive! Did you arrange that with them? [I joked].

P – It seems like it was, right? But it wasn’t. We made the dolls and they collected them, it was very interesting. After that, the car followed us to the bus stop and kept circling around the block until our bus came.

The political act referred to above relocates Black people’s daily encounters with violence in spaces such as the *favelas*, to an area where the same practices become a performance with a different meaning. This shift, as discussed in chapter 2, exemplifies how police practices in Rio de Janeiro’s *favelas* and peripheries are different from the ones performed in the mostly white Zona Sul, where Sergio Cabral lives. The display of practices directed towards the Black body in the Zona Sul became what Saidiya Hartman

calls the “invocation of the shocking and the terrible” (2007, p. 4). The three women organized an exhibition of Black suffering that reproduced the daily displays of Black bodies lying on the ground in order to create a socio-racial-political fact. Patricia’s narration also shows Black women’s activism, planning strategies, organizing skills, and performing abilities in a way that forces the oppressor to perform as its own character caught in the act (Taylor, 1997). In other conversations with Patricia, she had urged the *Rede* to get organized and prepare more demonstrations and performances. She said, “I doubt if we put 300, 400, 500, or even more people, because we have a lot of *favelados*, at Sergio Cabral’s door or at Palacio Guanabara, [and have them] do nothing, just lie down on the floor, I don’t know ... I doubt that he would receive us and do what we tell him to do.” Patricia’s loss of the “combat breathing”<sup>62</sup> unveils a courageous longing that uses anger as a tool. In my collaboration with mothers in struggle, I could participate in events that deployed the same strategies with the aims of being heard, expressing their outrage, and demanding justice. In this chapter, I engage with Black feminist aesthetics and Samba and Jazz aesthetics through the work of scholars Omi Jones, Lisa Moore, and Sharon Bridgforth (2010), Angela Davis (1998), João Vargas (2006), and Jurema Werneck (2007). This scholarship allows me to understand Black mothers’ public appearances and political acts as performances where the use of suffering and sorrow is part of the Black mother’s

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<sup>62</sup> Frantz Fanon’s *Combat Breathing* is quoted in Ntozake Shange (1992): “There is no occupation of territory, on the one hand, and independence of persons on the other. It is the country as a whole, its history, its daily pulsation that are contested, disfigures, in the hope of final destruction. Under this condition, the individual’s breathing is an observed, and occupied breathing. It is a combat breathing.” Shange analyzed the concept as “the living response/ the drive to reconcile the irreconcilable/ the Black & white of what we live in where.”

aesthetic, aiming to create a the concept of *Hollering Place* (Cleage, 1994). They create performances and acts to exchange strength with other families in sorrow, as well as to make their demands visible in society.

### **Of Strange Fruit and A Carne**

My analyses of Billie Holiday performing *Strange Fruit*, Nina Simone's account of the meaning of the lyrics, and Elza Soares performing *A Carne* all prepared me to examine Black mothers' performances in the streets of Rio and São Paulo. These three Black singers and performers synthesize the meaning of a Black feminist jazz aesthetic. Let us first look at the three images.

As Angela Davis says, "While [Billie Holiday] never sang 'Strange Fruit' exactly the same way twice, each time Holiday performed it she implicitly asked her audience to imagine a dreadful lynching scene, and to endorse and identify with the song's anti-lynching sentiments" (1998, p. 184). In a 1959 video clip, Billie Holiday's performance of "Strange Fruit" transmits a mixture of pity and anesthetic sorrow that sometimes reverts to shame. The clip is in black and white. She wears a shiny long sleeved canoe collared dress. Her hair pulled back might be a metaphor for the alleged "ceiling in her brain" (Walker, 1987). Holiday performs white American Abel Meeropol's lyrics with her head slightly tilted to the left, her eyes moving. Her facial expression simultaneously displays disgust, sadness, and pain. The lyrics address lynching in the United States, although the word lying is not used. Holiday's performance helps to create the visual image of lynching by expressing each metaphor through different tones in her voice and facial expressions.

In the video, the camera focuses on Holiday's face the entire time, but towards the end, it zooms out and we can see her body from her head to her knees. The image of Holiday is not complete, neither is the Black pianist behind her. Few applause, she does not move. She does not thank. The sound is muted. The pianist puts his hand on his leg; Holiday, who was holding one of her fingers close to her abdomen, slowly lowers her arms, stopping with her wrists in front of her hips as if she is embodying the movement of a man dying, hanging from a strange tree. Shame. And death.

When she talked about her rendition of the song *Strange Fruit* in documentary *Protest Anthology* (2008), Nina Simone wore a brown coat, a gray scarf loosely tied around her neck, and a large hat. We hear the voice of a woman who says, "*Strange Fruit*, to me is my favorite." Simone swallows a drink and looks up straight at the woman as if thinking, "Oh Lord! What comes after that?" She focuses her gaze on the woman, who we cannot see, but I assume she is white because of her hesitancy to speak of blackness. She continues, "I think *Strange Fruit* deals with things, deals with America, shall we say." Nina interrupts and alerts her, "It deals with my people and I will pleasure you!" A tension occurs and the woman says, "I do not put in the ..." Interrupting again, Simone replies,

Yeah I mean the same as you. You are right. It deals with America, and the Black and white problem, really. The ugliness of it. That is about the ugliest song that I had ever heard. Ugliest in the sense that it is violent and tears the guts out of what white people have done to my people. Do you understand it? It really opens up the room completely raw when you think of a man hanging from the tree and you to call him strange fruit.

In the show *Beba-me* (2007), Elza Soares is dressed in a long and shining pink, gray, and gold tank dress that reveals her muscular arms. Two red flowers sit in her big

puffy natural hair. The audience is clapping. Elza stands close to a simple wooden chair that does not compete with her, in a way similar to how she never had back-up singers for her shows. She is enough. The musicians begin to play and she sits on the chair, spreads her legs and lays both hands in front of her vagina, as if preparing to give birth. She takes the microphone to her mouth using her left hand, and starts to sing while tilting her body forward and pointing to her vagina, denouncing with her powerful voice, “*A carne mais barata do mercado é minha carne negra!*” [The cheapest meat in the market is my Black flesh]. She gets up, goes to the back of the chair and dances interacting with her band. She resumes singing and every time she sings the verse that originally said “The cheapest meat in the market is my Black flesh,” she takes possession of the Blackness in the song and refers to her own flesh. She looks at her arm, touches her chest, and shows her arms stretching out towards the audience. The lyrics, composed by Seu Jorge, Marcelo Yuca and Ulisses Cappelletti, expose the mechanisms through which Black flesh becomes the cheapest product on the capitalist market that can lead them to jail, under black trash bags used to cover corpses, underemployment, and in psychiatric hospitals. The lyrics also address cultural genocide when she says that “*esse país vai deixando todo munto preto e o cabelo esticado*” [this country will leave everybody Black and with straightened hair]. After that part in the lyrics, Soares moves from the tripod where she read the lyrics to in front of the chair. She then starts a jazzy improvisation.

My Black flesh is already tired of being arrested. To live under the Black paper trash. Everything that happens is my Black flesh. Everything that happens is my Black flesh. Let's call a halt. It's time to end the violence. Violence. Violence. We live today in a country of war and we don't realize it. What are we waiting for? What are we expecting, women of my country? The matriarchs, let's fight, let's

fight. We need freedom! Peace! Peace! Go fight! Break these chains; take off the bars on our doors! Freedom! The right to come and go! Knowing that your child will be back home! Freedom! Freedom! My Black flesh, Black, Black, Black, Black, Black. My Black flesh. *Negra*! Justice! Enough to have thirteen year-old girl taking shots.<sup>63</sup> Black!

The music ends with Elza Soares lifting her arm, holding the microphone, and eyes closed.

The camera zooms in on her face showing her out of breath.

Jazz theorists emphasize how jazz singers and musicians must communicate their feelings in order to be successful (Vargas, 2006; Davis, 1998). Jurema Werneck (2007) points to the necessity of the same communication, and that Black women singers use samba to express their feelings (p. 175). Black people have used these two music styles as a vehicle to communicate their sentiments, difficulties, address issues of social justice and reaffirm their racial, gender, and political belonging. The three Black women's performances described above consist of communicating emotion, personal experience, embodiment, empathy, positionality, and political content. They all address suffering, either through the tone and affect in their voice, or through their body language. Billie Holiday and Nina Simone mainly address Black men's suffering through their embodiment of the metaphors in the lyrics, and highlight the ugliness that is a Black man hanged from a tree. On the contrary, towards the end of the song, Holiday's release of her arms

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<sup>63</sup> Since this show was in 2007 – the same year of Alana Ezequiel's murder – I inferred that Soares was referring to this fatality. On May 5, 2007, Alana Ezequiel, a 13-year-old Black girl, died after being hit by a stray bullet during a shootout between police officers and drug dealers in the poor neighborhood of *Morro dos Macacos*, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. When asked about her daughter's biggest dream, Alana's mother, Edna Ezequiel, a single Black mother of five, answered: "Those who live in *favelas* have no dreams, sir" (*O Globo* Online, March 7, 2007). For further information on this case see Luciane Rocha's *Research (ing/in) State Genocide: Toward an Activist and Black Diasporic Feminist Approach* (2010).

reproduces the loose swinging of the corpse as if she were hanging from the tree. Elza Soares goes further, clearly feminizing the suffering by offering her own flesh as the subject. She implores Black women to react to violence from their position as matriarchs to denounce killings and to prevent others from occurring. The content of her improvisation shows a clear opposition to patriarchy, which is also shown through her references to her lower body, specifically her legs and vagina.

The three performances highlight the meaning and political content of jazz and Brazilian Black music. *Protest Anthology* is a collection of Nina Simone's protest songs and interviews and creates a vivid picture of Simone's personal and political songwriting. She states that an artist's duty "is to reflect the times," and her performance of *Strange Fruit* relates to her performative analysis of the United States' reality. Similarly, Soares' performance of *A Carne* puts Brazil in the spotlight of terror and violence. Both show resistance, Simone through performative body language, and protest songs; whereas Soares clearly protests and inflames the audience in order to have them say "justice" every time she called herself "*negra*" [Black]. By contrast, Holiday holds her body in an expression of impotence in the face of the lynching. Her act of always singing *Strange Fruit* in a different style may have stemmed from a belief that resistance through creativity is still alive.

The diva Elza Soares always desired simplicity. Her biography, narrates that one day, when she started to be successful in her career,

Elza awoke crying, taken by a crisis of repentance. It pained her to be in a luxurious hotel while ... sons, parents and brothers were suffering the horror of living in a

*favela* and, worse, next to a quarry that covered her loved ones with dust, as if trying to prevent them from seeing a better world or blinding them for not dreaming about prospects for the future (Louzeiro, 1997, p. 121).

Soares' personal history has influenced her musical style. Her singing is metallic like the sounds from a quarry, with interruptions like explosions, and a general fogginess. When she is singing, she can suddenly transform her throat into something else that no other Brazilian singer can do. She makes a strong, high, and infuriating sound reminiscent of the explosions at the quarry. In addition, sometimes she does not sing the words of the song, blurr[ing] the words in fog. She covers the words with a sound, replacing the words of the song with nonverbal melodies, humming, or nonsense syllables, just like the people of the *favela* were covered with dust from the explosions. A difficult past can emotionally scar, but Elza Soares transforms these scars into sounds. This metamorphosis also appears in scholar Jurema Werneck's analysis of the cover of a Black singer's album. She states,

Her first solo album released in 1986 brings a broad sampling of musical forms through which she traveled, (...) But, despite the quality of sambas included on this disc, its cover deserves mention here. This consists only of a large color photograph of the face of the *sambista*, apparently without any retouching, who has very visible dark skin and head protected by a white scarf, highlighting the registered diagonal face with a distant look. A slight smile closes the composition of the face of a Black woman in order to assert her non-exceptionality. In fact, the image refers to ordinary Black women, those that can be found in suburban streets, on the way to her duties. What distinguishes this [image] from those relating to other Black women is in its context, the case of a disc, and the fact that, over the photography, words written in blue color for the name "Jovelina" and, below, in white and highlighted in the title of the album, "Perola Negra" [Black Pearl]. (Werneck, 2007)

Conversely, from the diva made into ordinary woman, scholar-artist Omi Jones and the Austin project (2010) suggest that "all Black women—all people—are inherently creative, are artists in their own right, and that claiming this identity can be transformative for individuals and communities" (3).

While conducting fieldwork and participating in Black mothers' in resistance political appearances, I interacted with them as if I was in a performance. Not the kind of performance where the audience is only a spectator of suffering (Hartman, 1997), but one in which I tried to be present, breathing, listening, improvising, hearing the simultaneous truths, collaborating with virtuosity, body-centered, and, thus, metamorphosing myself through these interactions as stated in Jones's jazz practice foundational precepts (2010, p. 6). The difference between their performance and the ones problematized by Hartman is that Black women's performance of suffering is a way to protest and a strategy of survival; it diverges from performances of suffering as a "spectacle" of Black subjection or as Black vulnerability facing white power and attempts of domination. In their condemning cultural productions, Blackness, poverty and consciousness are performed alongside the emotions they evoke. Their performances contradict what Vargas observed while working with CAPA [Coalition Against Police Abuse] in Los Angeles, where the CAPA manual generated "the notion that Blacks are overly emotional, idealistic, and incapable of being pragmatic" (2006, p. 118). On the contrary, these women use their emotion as a tool to induce their audience to feel and act the way they want. In this sense, their performances transform their audiences into witnesses to power.

Black women need to create strategies in their performances to be visible. Soares, due to her limited ability to move at 73 years old, uses a chair as a support in her performance to denounce the interrupted motherline, I engage with author Pearl Cleage's (1994) concept of a "hollering place" in order to read the March 31<sup>st</sup> walk as a stage where sorrow and activism is performed. Cleage says, "[t]he Theater is, for [her], one of the few

places where we [Black women] have a chance to get an uninterrupted word in edgewise” (1994, p. 13). For Black mothers in sorrow, public manifestations are one of the few spaces where they can raise their voices and talk aloud about their problems and the demands of society. Those are the moments to cry aloud revealing how the pain produced when their children were killed is still alive. Cleage explains that theater is her hollering place, “a place to talk about our Black female lives, defined by our specific Black female reality to each other first, and then to others of good will who will take the time to listen and understand” (1994, p. 13). In the public manifestations discussed below, the streets are the hollering places for Black mothers in sorrow. Improvisation holds a particular place in black mothers’ performance, similarly to black people’s daily strategies to survive and thrive in the midst of life’s barriers.

### **Solos**

The highlight in this case is on the disk, and the song, “Cidadã Brasileira” [Brazilian Citizen], released in 1990. This title has been decided upon by the composer even before its full production, with the intention of highlighting women's participation in society, which is found throughout her work, [and] also implies giving visibility to racial and class aspects. (Werneck, 247)

**DEIZE CARVALHO**



Figure 23 - Deize's Public Speech (Feb 8, 2012)

It was an hour before the judicial hearing. Deize moved toward the side of the Judicial Court building to begin her discourse. Downstage right was the sound car. She walked there, took the microphone, straightened her skirt that was flying with the wind and started her speech. Downstage left, there was a parked yellow taxi, traditional in Rio de Janeiro's landscape. At stage right, the flying flags of Brazil and in Rio de Janeiro marked how we were under the Brazilian National Constitution, and Rio de Janeiro's security policy, also evidenced in the police car parked under the flag. Standing alongside her at stage center, there were two traffic cones: the objects traditionally used to redirect or advance warning, hazards or danger. At that moment, they alerted the presence of a brave and outraged Black woman. The audience stood still. Some people interacted with her through sighs and shaking their heads in support; others left the performance before the end of the act to which Ntozake Shange would say, "if this hour n 45 minutes waz too

much/ how in the world did these same people imagine the rest of our lives where/ & wd they ever be able to handle that/ simply being alive & Black & feeling in this strange deceitful country” (n.p.).

Deize’s discourse and performance was very emotional and brought out various elements of her pedagogy of resistance. The first characteristic that I noticed was her outfit. There is a tradition in Brazil – most strongly in Rio de Janeiro – for people to wear white clothes as part of the ritual of welcoming the New Year on the evening of December 31. Deize’s outfit reminded me of the immortalized moment in her life, when she received the news that her son had been arrested. In the performance, Deize was dressed in a white t-shirt, a white skirt, with white sandals on her feet, and had white flowers in her hair. Stamped on her T-shirt was another image by cartoonist Latuff of a Black woman holding a bloody t-shirt and pointing to a police officer in an accusatory way.

The second aspect of her resistance was the way in which she marks her positionality in her speech as a citizen from the *favela* claiming her rights. She states, “Today, 1498 days after the death of my son, I’m here as every citizen from the *favela* who has come down the hill to the asphalt to cry for justice for her/his daughter/son.” This positionality is important because it contradicts a sense in Rio that symbolically (but not only) categorizes *favela* residents as ‘favelados’ and in opposition to the citizens of the asphalt, or ‘society’ as Deize would say. It also shows that *favela* residents have not achieved full citizenship yet, since they have to come to public spaces other than the *favela* in order for their voices to be heard. She also delineates Andreu’s positionality as someone who committed mistakes, but was still a citizen and had the right to be alive as any other

human being. In her own words, “My son, who was human, was a citizen like anyone else. ... Made mistakes, yes, made mistakes. Had erred, yes, but .... Nobody has the right to slaughter another human being in a room.” Deize showed that she had handled the lack of justice long enough through her counts of the number of days without Andreu.

Although, from my knowledge, she had never read Frank Wilderson’s *Red, White and Black* (2010), she is also aware that society tries to make people believe that Black people in general, and in particular young Black men, are not human. However, as a Black woman and single mother who gave birth and raised the boy for 17 years, she refutes this logic by attesting to his humanity. Deize also makes evident her emotions and agency as a human being particularly when her other son decided that he would avenge the death of his brother. As an act of despair and of avoiding losing her other son, Deize burned him by putting a hot spoon on his hand. She questioned,

I told him, 'look, my son, I'm doing it so you will not have the same end as your brother, to be tortured and killed.' Immediately UPP officers surrounded my house. Immediately the child protection agency arrived at my house because my son had a burnt hand. Immediately the media was called. Immediately justice was used against me. I was wrong, and I'm paying for this act I committed, but why do the six agents who tortured my son Andreu continue to serve as agents of discipline?

The structure of her speech revealed a third characteristic of her resistance. It presented a structure that asked the listener to construct her/his own decision instead of just agreeing with her arguments. She leaves questions that make people think; she compares situations; she presents the facts and shows the contradictions; and most of all, she relies on people’s emotions to analyze the situation. For example, she says,

They claim that my son tried to climb a fence and escape. But what wall is it that leaves one with a broken jaw? What wall is it that leaves one with a shattered face?

What wall is it? The IML [Forensic Institute] was negligent. If I, an ordinary citizen of the *favela*, if I disobey a court order, I will immediately be arrested, but when it comes to people who work in state agencies and violate a court order, nothing is done. The IML violated two court orders.

All these questions reflect her aesthetic of having a non-passive position of spectators in her performance. Scholar D. Soyini Madson (2010) engages with Dwight Conquergood's scholarship and argues that to intimately inhabit stories in the fieldwork,

We must become 'co-performative witnesses' rather than 'participant-observers.' [...] to emphasize performance over participation and witnessing over observation. Performative-witnessing is to be engaged and committed body-to-body in the field. It is a politics of the body deeply in action with Others. Conquergood believed that participant observation does not capture the active, risky, and intimate engagement with Others that is the expectation of performance" (Madson, p. 25).

No audience could be passive while listening to that strong Black woman whose body language shows her anger, and whose different tones and, sometimes, shaky voice made evident the deep feelings that help her to move forward. I saw people with teary eyes, shaking their heads, and heard murmurs of indignation. It is important to remember that police officers were present in the act and even one slowly passed behind her on a motorcycle as a way to intimidate her. In fact, they were also performing and her performance encouraged them to perform. She vividly used the threats she received from the security agents who killed her son to also address the symbolic threats she received in the presence of the cops. During that moment she recalled, "My greatest fear was losing my son and I overcame that fear when I saw him the way I saw." Her courage is built on

denouncing the brutality aimed at avoiding other deaths, and her fear is fed by the memories of Andreu's death, which indicates that the fuel will never end.

Deize's speech presents a fourth element, which is naming the oppressor. In her speech, Deize names not only people, such as the violent agents of discipline, the governor and the public security secretary, but also the institutions that help in the oppression of poor and Black people. This resonates with scholar Joy James's (1999) provocative book *Shadowboxing* that invites us to never stop fighting against this unseen opponent, the state, in whatever strategy we use. These women's strategy is to address them all. Deize highlights that violence is continuous and that she raises her voice to both encourage other mothers who went through the same situation and to avoid other deaths.

#### **MARCIA JACINTO**

On March 20, 2012, the day of Henry's murderer's trial, we stayed in front of the courthouse building for roughly two hours before entering. Marcia recorded a video for the NGO Com Causa (2012), which gives support to families in struggle by creating video reports about their cases. In the video, Marcia shows her outrage and expresses fury about the military police's corporatism towards her *luta*.

Scholar D. Soyini Madison (1993) suggests that Black women's speeches need to be transcribed as poetry, with an indication of when they raise their voices, talk fast or slow, speak up or low. Here I accept the challenge and present Marcia's speech in a way that her emotions and outrage are revealed also in the written form. In that sense, the italicized words between parentheses indicate body language, and the **bold words** indicate

when she raises her tone in a speech that already has a high tone. Similar to the lyrics of *Strange Fruit*, her speech, her song, “is about hate, indignities, and eruptions of violence that threatened Black people” (Davies, 1998, p. 182). She sang,

I found out their names,

I found out the **number** placards of their cars, *(as if counting with her fingers)*

**even** the information about the lieutenant who was there at the time **killing my son...**

all with my fighting,

crying and thinking, ‘I gotta do something.’

**And not knowing**

the physical location where my son was **shot**,

nor what they had **planted** on him.

I knew nothing.

I only had one certainty:

that something bad had happened and that my son was not a criminal. Not to say that the villain must die.

If they did not exchange shots [with the police], they have to be arrested.

At the moment they commit crimes, they are equal to bandits. To me they are also bandits.

They only are on opposite sides. [They] are uniformed and are representatives of the state and should represent us.

They are also bandits.

If I did not do what I did ... *(looking up as if wondering)*

Honestly...

Even with that pain that I have today

anything would have happened.

If today I do, it is that other mothers **have courage**. I was not only a mother who put a child in the world.

It was a terrible pain to put my son in the world.

I raised my son without ever having **benefits from the state**, (*lowering her upper body forward*)

but I paid for the bullet that killed my son.

**We paid.**

That bullet that took the life of my boy, who would be 25 years old today (*shaking her head left and right, as if to say no*).

I wonder why these monsters ... (*putting her right hand in her forehead*)

[they] were nine police officers (*keep moving right hand up and down*)

against a 16 year old boy with a set of keys in hand.

He was raised in Minas Gerais, a silly boy, quiet. **Why** did they do that?

To show to the [drug] traffickers who is the boss of the community?

Because trafficking did not pay the *arrego* [bribe]?

What does my son's life have to do with this brigandage? With the agreement that they have with the traffic? Why did my son, or any other innocent, have to do with it?

I asked the prosecutor why they did it; he replied that it is because they are **monsters**.

They do not know the pain they caused in my **soul** for the rest of my life (*Hitting her right hand three times to her chest*).

And they still have the right to be free?

If my son had stolen a mobile phone, a sausage, he **would be arrested**.

If I had to appeal, I would appeal **with him arrested**.

They took a life, and they had the right to lie? (*Crying*)

They all fell into contradiction.

I do not believe that police investigate police.

And the judiciary was similarly **silent** when, in 2008, they did not condemn Marcos and did not put him in jail.

**10 years after** [the death of Hanry] how many other people has he killed?

10 years **later**, I'm here again.

9 years and 5 months after the death of my son.

The lives of young people that are there in the community are not worth anything.

Most of them [the police officers involved in the case] have a criminal record.

*(At this point, the camera zooms in only showing her face to show her tears, as if this was the only way to show her emotion)*

The lieutenant who killed my son keeps going up in the hills [*favelas*] and committing atrocities, why? Because the bomb explodes on minors [the officers below in the hierarchy]. If it was not them [who killed Hanry], **they should denounce them** [the real killers]. Sometimes people on the Internet criticize me saying 'how do you know that these were the two that killed your son if you said there were 9 in the operation?' **They said who it was.** They were there.

[They] were nine, one shot, my son was shot dead at close range to the heart. So they talk to who it was, because I would not assume [the crime]. If the lieutenant would have ordered me to kill, I wouldn't, much less assume the guilt. If the sergeant killed, let them speak. Silence is consent. **If they assumed [the responsibility], they will have to stay in jail even.** The state is appealing to my claim [for reparation].

Do you know why the state is appealing? (*Drying her tears*) Because I should have requested a pension [as a reparation to her loss] before 3 years after the death and I entered one close to 5 years. They have no basis for appeal.

By **federal law, I have a five-year** [deadline to request a pension].

*(Talking very loudly, in despair)* I would not go because I thought I would live the blood of my son. I did not sell my child to the state, I never asked for anything from the state. I did not want compensation; **I wanted my son here.**

Today he would be 25 years [old].

I raised my son,

I loved,

I was a fully responsible mother.

I knew very well the steps of my son and who he was. And the state will tell me that he was a drug dealer and did not know that these two [police officers] **were criminals?** (*Yelling*) The department of public safety did not know these two were criminals? (*Yelling*) One is accounting for 157 [the federal penal code to thievery] and sentenced!

The other for homicide! And the judiciary ... (*putting her fingers together questioning the lack of the condemnation*)

and the dealer was my son? (*putting her hand on the chest in the direction of her heart*)

I do not accept that, (*drying her tears*)

I do not accept.

I do not accept it!

Marcia also performed a strategic display of sorrow. We stayed in front of the building for more than 20 minutes waiting for the trial to begin. Marcia distributed the t-shirts and we entered the building. In front of the courtroom, Marcia continued to vent, “It has been nine years of this suffering. I want justice.” She cried and a Black male friend of hers said, “The tears are your weapon. Do not let them dry. Do not dry them. Hold a tissue, but let them roll down your face.” Other mothers of victims of violence who were there giving support contributed, “they are all that we have. They are tears of justice.” At the time, I understood their action as a way to give comfort to her and I did not pay attention to the performative aspect of this advice.

At the trial, when Pascuini [the ex-police officer] was answering the judge’s first question, he started to be repetitious. The judge stopped him and said that if he did not have anything different to say, the interrogation would begin. Performing a sad voice, the defendant said,

I wanted to say to the mother of the victim, I’m not angry with her, I have no hate because I try to feel the pain of this mother. There is nobody better than her to express it because the natural order of things is to have our children and die before them, not bury any children and I want to say that I did not kill her son, I have not murdered Hanry, for God, I did not do it.

Since he was already talking about the case, the judge asked him to explain himself, regarding his statement in the previous trial that he had “shot, but not at the victim.”

Pascuini recalled,

We were asked via radio. The *guarnição* [group of police officers] was me and nine other cops. We were in two cars, but it was one *guarnição*. We were warned that on the hill ... we had to go to the Morro do Gamba. It arrived at 7 pm, 7:40pm. Getting there, the *guarnição* was subdivided into pairs. I went up through the Maria Luiza Street with officer Alves. Arriving at the foot of the hill, we were seen by the elements and...

“Liar! Liar!” Maria vociferously yelled while crying. As soon as she demonstrated her discontent with the version Paulo Pascuini was providing, the judge ordered that she could not be in the courtroom anymore. I was both confused and disappointed with her. We were anxiously waiting during the entire morning for the trial to begin, how could she do that? How could that strong woman lose control and be expelled from the room? How could she allow herself not to be able to testify to her struggle? It was only after the end of the trial that I understood why she did that: “I needed to bring the jury onto my side of the history. Were you paying attention to them? They were shaking their head affirmatively. They were buying it. Now at least some of them will doubt,” she assumed. “They needed to see my suffering. I have suffered for nine years, nine years. I do not accept this! I am a part of this society even though it doesn’t have me as such,” she continued. Why does a Black mother resident of a *favela* need to communicate her suffering about the death of her loved one? Isn’t it evident? I interpreted Marcia’s strategy as an attempt to emerge from the invisibility caused by the condition of social death (Patterson 1982) through the strategic performance of sorrow. She puts forward a plan where her suffering and outrage

become sources of a political experimentation of craziness where the power of emotion is implemented.

### **Collective**

Old-timers conceptualize their Blackness as an eminently political attribute. As such, Blackness is deeply associated with collective struggles and responsibilities, according to which, in theory at least, individual desires have little bearing. Still, what old-timers realize is that disciplined activities do matter and are important in creating social movements and new political identities; hence their emphasis on various supervised courses that aim precisely at providing youth with marketable skills (as in Amer-I-Can) and progressive political and social awareness (Vargas, 221).

#### **VIGÍLIA DA CANDELÁRIA**

In front of the Igreja da Candelária [Candelária Church] in downtown Rio de Janeiro there is a fountain statue of a woman holding a vase. According to the artist Yvonne Bezerra de Mello (2010), who worked in the 1980s and 1990s with children who lived in the streets nearby the church, the children used to shower in the fountain and call the statue *a mãe* [the mother]. Nowadays, between the powerful bronze mother and the Igreja da Candelária exists a green cross and shapes of bodies painted red on the floor memorializing the killing of eight children by military police officers on the night of July 23, 1993. Eighteen years after the massacre, in July 2011, I went to the Vigil of Candelária, which symbolically, and ashamedly, warned society about the amount of children and teens who are killed in Brazil every day. I say symbolically because the vigil is held on the night of the crime's anniversary and ashamedly because even after the 18 years since the killing, and in spite of many other massacres and children's deaths in Rio, there is but one officer

in jail following the more than 300 years of sentencing handed down to the officers involved.

The *Rede Contra a Violencia* is part of a group of NGOs and social movements that organized the *Semana em Defesa da Vida* [the Week in Defense of Life] event of which the *Vigilia da Candelária* takes part. The mothers are at the center of the vigil, and they receive special attention from the press. However, Patricia Oliveira is more requested because she is the sister of the only child who was shot and survived. He is the main witness of the murder and due to threats and an attempted murder, he received the help of Amnesty International to move to Switzerland. Patricia is adopted and Wagner was raised in a FEBEM unit.<sup>64</sup> Due to this, she followed the case without knowing their kinship. In 1995, when he returned to Brazil from Switzerland to serve as a witness in the trial, he gave an interview to *Rede Globo* and expressed his interest in connecting with his sisters. He gave a description of their birthmarks, and Patricia and her sisters, after seeing his resemblance and how his story added up, decided to contact him. The care necessary to protect her brother's life led Patricia to activism. According to her, when she reunited with her brother, she reunited with violence and the struggle, and it demanded learning about how the system functioned. Today, the courageous, powerful, passionate, and sagacious Black woman is one of the main supporters of the mothers in *luta* and the spokesperson for her brother. "I learned how a testimony should be collected, I know how an expert investigation should

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<sup>64</sup> The State Foundation for the Welfare of Children (FEBEM), has the state function to implement educational measures applied by the judiciary to adolescents who have committed crimes

be conducted, I know which organs we need to trigger, so I use this in service of families” (personal interview, 2011). A similar practice appears in João Vargas’s ethnography. Vargas states that filing a suit and undergoing a judicial process “also fulfills a pre-emptive purpose, making police officers feel encumbered by the possibility that their next victim might seek legal redress” (2006, p. 118). This dynamic accounts for why in Rio the decrease in death rates is occurring while there is an increase in the number of disappearances. Following the police’s logic already discussed in the experience of *Mães de Acari* in Chapter 4, if there is nobody there, there is no crime.

As usual on the night of the vigil, several family members of victims of violence met in front of the church as a display of sorrow and rage. It was the beginning of my participation with the *Rede contra a Violencia* and my only contact was Patricia Oliveira, who I had met in 2010 when I conducted preliminary research. I waved and went to her; she then introduced me to the woman who was with her, “*This is Luciane, do Criola.*” I stayed for several minutes observing people setting up their placards, mostly mothers. “Putz! I forgot my camera. I would love to take photos,” said Jade,<sup>65</sup> the aunt of the deceased Julio César and who was initiating her activism on the internet. “I have my camera, I can take pictures and send them to you if you want,” I said. I spent the night in her service and got to know the vigil through her eyes.

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<sup>65</sup> I use a fictitious name at the request of this activist.

According to Patricia, “There are so many killings in Rio de Janeiro that people end up forgetting. Only those who went through such a thing do not forget. That is why we are here, to present our demands.” Patricia thinks that the violence in Rio is not because some police officers commit crimes, but because of the public security policy of confrontation. She points out that if this was not characteristic of Rio’s police, several murders would not have happened. This policy is why there is a necessity to link the cases and collectively demand a change in the public security policy. In light of this, Patricia explains that the vigil serves to connect families who share the *luta* and to introduce the struggle to people who do not yet see that violence in a continuum (personal interview, 2012).

This was the case of Jade, who was discovering the excitement of being with other families with similar experiences of loss. That night, both of us learned from the mothers’ pedagogies of resistance and heard their collective demands. “*Tem que acabar com a matança!!* [This killing must end],” said Debora, a member of *Mães de Maio*, a social movement from São Paulo. Debora was talking with people close to the movement’s banner as Jade and I walked to take photos of posters. We stopped to hear her and when she finished talking about the atrocities that happened in São Paulo in May 2006, Jade asked to take a photo with her. They posed and I took the photo. “Can I see it?” asked Debora. “No, this is not a good political photo. You cannot smile in political photos, and you have to frame the banner. Otherwise it would be a photo at a party.” Jade and I learned the lesson and I took other pictures (figure 24):



Figure 24 - Debora and Jade

Her banner was referring to a national campaign to “demand the end of the records of resistance followed by death and resisting arrest. Abusive practice to kill.”<sup>66</sup> Even though Jade was happy to have met Debora, smiles were not consistent with what the banner was saying. Since it was not a party, the presence and the motivation for that mother to be there that night needed to be contextualized, on display. In the context of emphasizing the abusive use of force by the police, a display of discontentment was necessary.

Beyond *Mães de Maio*, other family members and organizations displayed their demands and discontent by placing banners in the grass in front of the Candelária church. Examples of the claims are, “Justice always, violence never” and “A coffin is not the place

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<sup>66</sup> There are details about the campaign in the section *Mães de Maio* of this chapter

for our children” (figure 25); Justice for Hanry and Julio Cesar (figure 26); “The jail is not the place for our youth” and “For peace in defense of life” (figure 27). For about two hours, the families gathered there posing for pictures, recording testimonies and interviews, and talking to each other about their cases and the necessary changes in society. Like an allusion to theater, it is possible that the chatting worked as a warm-up for the speeches during the interreligious celebration that followed. As if necessary, as if it was not always there, the rage and the outrage became collective.



Figure 25 - Banners Candelária



Figure 26 - Banners Andreu and Julio Cesar



Figure 27 - Banners Candelária 2

While the families were exposing their banners, a circle of chairs was being prepared to accommodate them in the interreligious celebration with representatives from different

religions. An altar was created close to the cross with the names of the eight boys who were killed there 18 years ago, and as decoration, pictures of several victims of the “politics of confrontation and extermination,” as Patricia Oliveira calls them. Each family representative talked about their cases, and after that, the religious representatives blessed the families and spoke about how their faiths’ value for life. To end the ceremony, the priest invited us to say aloud the name of a victim of violence. Anderson. Presente [Here] Gambazinho. Presente. Cintia Presente Marcelo. Presente. Valdevino. Presente. Rogerio. Presente. Rosana. Presente. Julio Cesar. Presente. Cristiane. Presente. Alana. Presente. Renato. Presente. Cosme. Presente. Marcela. Presente. Cristiano. Presente. Elisangela. Presente. Juliano. Presente. Leandro. Presente. Andreu. Presente. Paulo Roberto. Presente. Paulo Jose. Presente. MarcosAntonio Presente. AndersonPresente. VivianePresente. LuizHenrique Presente. Wallace. Presente. Marcela. Presente. Luiz. Presente. Eduardo PresenteLincon presenteFabioPresenteJulianoPresnteElisangelapresenteMatheusPresenteOdemarPresente ThiagoPresenteMichelPresenteWesleyPresenteFelipePresenteMarioPresentePriminhoPres enteJosePresenteIvoPresentePatrickPresenteHelioPresenteDaviPresenteJacksonPresente WellinPresenteSaturPresenteMaicPresentPaulPresenLeandroPreseBrunoPresenRenatPres eAureoPresFabianoPreLeandroPrBrunoPresente Renan. Presente. Renato. Presente.

Fabricio. Presente. Hugo. Presente    Amarildo. Presente    DG. Presente.    Claudia.

Presente - not the last, not the least.<sup>67</sup>



Figure 28 - Altar

The pictures on the floor (figure 28) and the call for the victims created a shocking visual and sound image, which associated with the symbolism of being there on the night of the Candelária Massacre 18 years ago. It made everyone very emotional. Some people cried, some people were speechless, and I went back home *triste e com raiva* [sad and angry].

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<sup>67</sup> Of course, this is not a faithful reproduction of the names called that night. I was not taking notes, but living in the moment, and also calling my dead. However, as a way to create a graphic/written representation of the moment that night, I collected the names of victims listed on the website of the *Rede Contra a Violência*. All of the names above are names of real victims of the abusive use of force of the state of Rio de Janeiro. I observed that Daniel Davis Clayton created the same graphic effect in his *The History of Jazz* in Jones et al. (2010).

## A PARADE IN CIDADE ALTA

On September 16, 2011, I was at home on Graveyard Street when Jade called me around 9 am to let me know about a parade happening in the Cidade Alta neighborhood where she lives. The parade was commemorating the death of Julio Cesar and mobilizing the local population to call for justice and cease the violence in the region. The military police killed Julio Cesar on September 18, 2010 while he was preparing a party for the children of the community; it was the first anniversary of the murder. Julio worked at a McDonald's and was not involved with criminal activity. However, "he received a shot in his abdomen, was put alive inside the *caveirao* [armored car of the police], and was given back to his family with another shot in his chest and portrayed as a criminal (the police registered his death as resisting arrest)," his mother said in an interview two months after the fact (O Dia, 2010).

Different from other *favelas* in Rio, Cidade Alta began as part of a housing development project designed to eradicate slums run by the state and federal governments in the 1960s and 1970s (Brum, 2009). She had given me directions to the community, which made it very easy to find the Praca Avila, the square where Julio Cesar was shot. At 1 pm, I was there, punctual after living in the U.S. for 3 years. Of course, I was the only one. I arrived and sat on a bench in a large square in the middle of the *favela*. It was surrounded by six-floored buildings from the original construction and several *puxadinhos*, the additional rooms that people build in adaptation for their needs. I saw a closed school in front of the square, an empty sports court, and a closed trailer with plaques naming the several products sold there. I saw a church, and people coming and going. Nobody was

sitting in the square. I looked closely and I saw many bullet holes in the walls. Immediately I thought, “What will I do if a shooting happens here?” I decided to call Jade, who was still on the bus coming from work. “*Você já está aí?* [Are you already there?] I scheduled it at 1 pm to account for the delays. I will be there in a minute. I’m on the bus.” I remembered that she said she worked in Botafogo, in the south of Rio. Mental note: “Never be punctual again. This is dangerous.” I waited there sitting on the bench for about an hour, then Jade, worried about me, called and gave me instructions to meet her in another place. It was another meeting point for people who do not live in Cidade Alta. There I met two activists from the *Rede*, and we all walked back to the place where I had first sat.

Back at the square, a group of residents were standing close to the trailer. The two activists and I were sent in the opposite side. I sat close the activists, but on a bench, since they did not talk to as we walked to the square. I observed as one activist placed posters on the floor and then began taking pictures. He then moved the banners closer, so that the people would make it in the picture frame. After that, he put his camera in his backpack and returned to chat with his partner. This was my time participating with the *Rede* and I was still trying to find my place as an activist researcher. “So, that’s what he does? Make the banners, take a picture and then write a report?” I wondered, and decided to differentiate myself by doing everything differently from what he had done. Later in my fieldwork, I got to know this activist who was also a doctoral student and saw his commitment to the cause. In fact, many families relied on the activists to prepare the events. For example, Deize Carvalho had been waiting for a month for someone to help her organize the launch of her autobiography and sent me an email regretting that I had not attended.

That day, I was not in contact with the activists, so I decided to approach the family members. “Hi. Do you know where Jade is?” I asked a woman who I learned was a family member. “No,” she replied while leaving the place. I had forgotten about the ‘I don’t know, I did not see, I did not tell’ rule. “I give up, I will just observe today,” I thought, taking advantage of the backstage access. By this time, the parade was late, more than two hours so, and I had not seen Jade. She had gone to the nearby neighborhood to invite the parents of another child who was killed there a year before. I leaned against a car near the church and waited until the walk began. A group of young women drinking beer leaned against the other side of the car and I heard their conversation. I was too shy to interact with them. It would be too much dumping for a single day. She vented, “I cannot drink here?! I cannot drink here!? I have to drink to forget the problems. A cousin and a brother arrested, and another cousin who died one year ago today. Where did you see that a *boca de fumo* [place that sells drugs] employs homosexuals?” The girls’ conversation addressed a topic that had already appeared in the Vigil of Candelária: the regulation of what is allowed in the political manifestations, and thus, what is political. In both situations, the smile and the beer, gave way to happiness and joy. Is there a place for these sentiments in the *luta*? Another important point that Julio’s cousin made was to note the gendered and queer aspect of violent activities in Rio. The certainty that Julio Cesar was not a drug dealer and, thus, could not be killed while resisting arrest was due to his proven employment, but also because of his sexual orientation. For example, when I interviewed Jade in July 2011, after the Candelária Vigil, she stated, “My nephew was very cheerful. His dream was to be a dancer, and he was studying carnival. How can such a person be a drug dealer?” Julio

Cesar's dreams and life history showed that he could not perform the necessary virility to be involved in violent activity, at least as a perpetrator; and this point was used to discredit the police officers' report that he resisted arrest. Jade's t-shirt and banner displayed Julio Cesar's joy as proof of a valid impossibility (see figure 26 above).

Jade arrived and we got ready to walk. She said aloud, "we will start the parade here in this square because it was here that Julio Cesar was murdered. Right there under that bench, he tried to protect his life." We walked through the streets of Cidade Alta holding banners and posters, and ended the walk in the Pica Pau neighborhood, where police officers from the same battalion also had killed a child. The purpose of the walk was to mobilize the local population to discuss the necessary demands for justice for the murders that happened in the community, thus we helped her distribute pamphlets for a neighborhood meeting scheduled for two weeks later. Jade was trying to get residents' support in responding to the violations that had happened in the region. However, during the parade, we could see the population's fear in even accepting the pamphlets. She let me know that since the police officers from the 16<sup>th</sup> battalion were very violent, free and still in service, the community feared that any activism would increase their violence directed towards community members. Jade participated in a few other *Rede* events, and, without the support of the neighborhood, her participation faded with time.

#### **MARCH 31ST: BLACK MOTHERS' WALK FOR MEMORY AND AWARENESS OF ANTI-BLACK VIOLENCE**

March 31st is a day not to be forgotten; at least according to Luciene Silva, mother of Rafael Silva, the first person murdered in the shooting that became well-known as the

*Chacina da Baixada* (the Baixada Massacre) in Rio de Janeiro. Every year, Luciene Silva, along with a group of mothers and relatives, organize a walk that retraces the path covered that night by the killers who were all military police officers. On March 31, 2012, while conducting fieldwork, I attended the seventh annual march in remembrance of the *Chacina da Baixada*. When I arrived, a group of about 30 people was preparing to walk following the trail of death that took the lives of 29 people. A young woman gave me white balloons. Other people received white gladiolus flowers, some received posters and signs, and everyone was a protagonist in that sad play.

On March 31, 2005, a group of military police officers launched a series of murders in Nova Iguaçu and Queimados, two cities of the Baixada Fluminense. It left 29 dead in less than two hours. It was the largest slaughter carried out by agents of the state in Rio de Janeiro at one time. The mobilization of civil society, especially the families of victims and human rights organizations, forced the state to do what usually does not happen when it comes to crimes committed by death squads: investigate and find the perpetrators. Of the 11 police officers directly involved, only five were tried, four were convicted, one was acquitted, and another, who benefited from the so-called “whistleblower award,” was murdered in prison by his former cronies. The other murderers were not prosecuted, and no principal or head of the death squad was investigated. However, the mothers’ mobilization successfully pressured the state to be charged for the slaughter. Due to this effort, the families now receive a lifetime pension as a “reparation” for their losses. Nevertheless, this legal gesture does not address the incessant racialized violence that

targets Black youth in Baixada Fluminense, which is the primary concern of mothers such as Luciene, who does not want another child from the community to be killed.

The real motivation for the Baixada Massacre was never discovered, but an investigation indicates that the murderers, all of them police officers, acted in retaliation for a police operation called *Navalha na Carne* [Razor in the Flesh] that had changed the command of the battalion covering the area. They arrested eight police officers suspected of the homicides. Witnesses to the crime testified that they did not have a specific target, but shot indiscriminately at whoever crossed their path (Nascimento, 2009). “What did my innocent son have to do with it?” asks Lidia, another victimized mother who spoke of the Baixada Massacre in the documentary *Luto como Mãe*.

Even though the Chacina da Baixada was largely discussed in the Brazilian media and in some newspapers throughout the world, its racial perspective was absent from the debate. According to anthropologist Christen Smith, the silence of these hegemonic discussions dismiss police violence into racialized phenomena (2008, p. 3). In the article *Scenarios of Racial Contact*, Smith examines the correlation between the encounter of police violence and the production of racial meaning. For Smith:

The enactment of police violence in and on the geographic location of the periphery also acts to map the landscape of that space. The boundaries of the periphery are in part defined and patrolled by the police ... This production of space contributes to the racialization of the periphery. Each act of police violence invokes the historical narrative of the police’s war on urban marginality, re-inscribing racial meaning back onto the landscape (2008, p. 12).

In addition to the silence about race, there is an effort to not link this episode to historical and continuous oppression, terror and control that the police usually implement

in this area; this disassociation leaves bodies exposed in the streets and in ditches, and as a spectacle of murdered Black bodies (Hartman, 1997). That is why the March 31 walk was so important. It was an opportunity to give to the population of the area, specifically Nova Iguaçu and Queimados, the possibility of another plot where their lives are valued.

The invitation to the march was posted on Facebook and distributed by email. It called attention to the continuity of violence that happens in Baixada, as well as a narrative of what happened on that terrible night. In a newspaper interview days before the walk, Luciene Silva said, “The goal is to not only remember the tragedy, but keep fighting against all acts of violence. We will show that there are people who don’t accept what is happening. We are outraged. We see people being murdered every day” (O Dia, 2013). The March 31<sup>st</sup> walk had become an event in Rio’s resistance calendar, and newspapers invited Luciene and other mothers to give their testimony around that time. It was their moment of visibility.

The walk started on a highway 10 minutes away from where the first death occurred. Activists and family members walked for three hours alternating between silence and religious songs, and then stopping for a speech where each death occurred. The first stop was where Raphael, Luciene’s son, was killed with his friends while they were returning home after fixing their bikes at a bike store. One of the collaborators gave some flowers to her, and she recalled, “*At this point the Baixada Massacre started. These flowers are to honor the life of my son and of his friend William.*” Luciene got very emotional and took deep breaths before she began a prayer. She closed her eyes and continued, “*Dear God, I thank you for receiving my son and his friend in your glory. Thank you, father, for*

*taking care of my son. I thank you. Thank you, father.*” She walked and put the flowers on the ground at the same spot where he was murdered. Deize, Andreu’s mother, put another. The procession continued for another 15 minutes and we stopped again. Someone set off fireworks in honor of the dead, but it also reminded me of the real shots that killed the third and fourth victims. Luciene crossed the street and put two flowers at the base of a large tree, where the deceased were found. Some cars passing on one side of the road honked. Some of them honked to show support, while other drivers were visibly against the march and asked us to clear the road. We then walked for a very long time until we arrived at another neighborhood where the police officers victimized the other 26 people. Luciene gave a speech in front of where a large number of victims were executed, stating that they were all innocent people and workers, and that even though their family members could not/did not want to go on the walk, we all were there to honor their lives. At the last stop, relatives of the last victims put the flowers on a rock and Luciene read the names of all 29 victims of the *Chacina da Baixada*. After that, she declared the walk finished, and all of us released the balloons.



Figure 29 - March 31<sup>st</sup> walk



Figure 30 - Placing Flowers



Figure 31 - Flower in the Tree



Figure 32 - End of the March

On that evening, for the seventh year, Luciene and other family members who attended the walk had a public place to gather and cry for their losses. They showed society that the lost lives had value, and that the deceased were loved and missed. I argue that Black women's struggles against the state and their struggles to have their voices heard make evident their institutionalized marginality, which leads to the invisibility of their suffering. As Zora Neale Hurston's allegedly said, "If you are silent about your pain, they'll kill you and say you enjoyed it" (n.d.). Many family members, aware of the local politics and fearing retaliation, opt to not raise their voices, but the bullets that killed Raphael, raised an *outraged mother*. The woman whose loss cannot be compensated, the person whose demands illustrate her antagonistic position towards the state. This mother is outraged because her son will never come back, her sorrow will never end, and she will work so that society never forgets her suffering. As an antagonism, the situation has no solution, and the march works to make visible the unsolvable problem in their lives. Luciene and the mothers from cases other than the Chacina da Baixada use their sorrow to make their voices heard. Many women strive to condemn the perpetrators of the violence committed against their families. However, the fact that their cases received attention is not sufficient to stifle their voices. Thus, in the hollering place that became the March 31<sup>st</sup> walk in Baixada Fluminense, Black mothers find in this political practice a space for action and reaction, where new memories and meanings are provided through the evidence of their sorrow. Because of this, depending on Luciene, the March 31<sup>st</sup> walk will never be forgotten.

## DIA COM MÃES DE MAIO

On May 11, 2012 at 11 pm, I met Patricia Oliveira and Dona Julia for a trip to Baixada Santista, to support the public act organized by the *Mães de Maio*. The group of mothers formed after the death of more than 600 youths in 2006 perpetrated by the military police in an alleged confrontation with the PCC – *Primeiro Comando da Capital* (Alves, 2012). We traveled all night and arrived in São Paulo at 6:30 am. After eating *pão na chapa* [French bread with cheese] at the bus station, Patricia called Debora Silva to let us know that we were there. Debora then asked a *compa* [comrade] to give us a ride to her house. When we arrived, Debora was stressed on the phone complaining that her actions were sabotaged. City Hall, which agreed to lend a stage and the sound equipment, had backed out of its agreement a few hours before the act. She had scheduled a soiree to give a voice to the funk MCs (Masters of Ceremony) from the region who were receiving threats from the police for denouncing state violence through their lyrics. She let us know about the difficulty in organizing the act, about her sadness a day before Mother's Day, and the longing for her son. She also let us know that our presence there was fortifying and that she would celebrate Mother's Day with all of the youth coming to participate. We took a shower, and a quick nap, and headed to the square where the act would happen.

We helped Debora to hang banners around the square under the watch of a man we suspected was an undercover cop. He was standing on one side of the square with his legs wide open and his arms crossed behind his back. The sagacious Patricia read his body language and suspect warned, "*Fica ligada. Aquele cara ali é polícia* [Be aware. That man

over there is a cop].” He stayed there long enough to watch us inflate more than 500 balloons, before a car drove by the square very slowly, and he entered and left. The worried Debora shared with us the news she got by phone, “the bus that is bringing the kids was stopped by the federal police. They said that the bus was not allowed to ride in the city.” Several mothers from the movement arrived and gave interviews to radio stations, local TV channels and independent journalists that host YouTube channels. “I found a speaker to help us.” The first bus with dozens of youth arrived. It was already lunchtime and we went to a space nearby where Debora asked for the food to be delivered. After lunch, the act began.

Debora picked up the microphone that a labor union lent her and welcomed the people who were there:

We are here to show the dark side of our society that is life in the suburbs, the lives of poor youth. We are here for you to fight and scream: Stop the extermination of our population! We want the demilitarization of the police! We are mothers. We are victims. Tomorrow is Mother’s Day, we do not have our children to embrace, and this is very painful for us. We got the knife in our chest six years ago. We cannot see the periphery being massacred by capitalism. Each person falling in Baixada Santista and in the country as a whole is as if they are the son of *Mães de Maio*, as if it were my son. We cannot bear to count corpses. The mothers were not born to count corpse, but to give life. Happy Mother’s Day to everybody here.

Debora’s opening remarks clarify not only the main problems that people from their region face, but also demand an end to the violence, to let the mothers be mothers, and for the demilitarization of the police. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Brazilian military police have always worked to restrain the Black and poor population to benefit the elites. Therefore, they have never strayed from the tactics applied during slavery, which were sophisticated during the military dictatorship when the tactics were expanded to non-Blacks. Those are

the practices that the *Mães de Maio* want to change in a country that allegedly is democratic and “for everybody”, as the Federal Government’s slogan says. Thus, the police demilitarization campaign is among a series of changes that the *Mães de Maio* outlined in a letter addressed to the current Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff.

The *Carta das Mães de Maio à Presidente Dilma Rousseff* [Letter from Mães de Maio to President Dilma Rousseff] shows the controversy in the juxtaposition of a picture of Rousseff arrested during the dictatorship in the 1970s and one of Debora, during the era of the “democratic genocide” addressing the killing of her son. The problem presented is that Rousseff made it a goal of her presidency to search for justice and truth around the unveiled crimes of the dictatorship, but that does not address the crimes committed nowadays. The letter invites Dilma to have a conversation in which the *Mães de Maio* could explain the 15 demands highlighted in the letter. The 15 demands are:

- 1) A political and legal monitoring by the federal agencies in the current crisis of public safety in São Paulo;
- 2) That Dilma addresses the *Mães de Maio*’s request for the federalization of the crimes committed in May 2006 [they want the crimes to be investigated at the federal level];
- 3) A bill abolishing the records of “resistance followed by death,” “resisting arrest” across the country;
- 4) The establishment of a National Policy toward the families of victims of violence with the guidelines for support, protection, psychosocial assistance, and material repair;
- 5) That the National Council of Justice address and monitor the cases of killings committed by the state along with the public defenders;
- 6) The urgent enforcement and strengthening of all state public defender agencies;

- 7) The judgment and punishment of superiors, superiors' officers, and public safety officials responsible for state agents who commit murders, abuses, torture and summary executions;
- 8) The monitoring of the police activity by prosecutors and police ombudsman with participation of the population for external control;
- 9) Expansion of spaces, effectively democratic and popular, to increase the monitoring, oversight, transparency and control of the population regarding the role of the prosecution, magistrates and judges;
- 10) Revision of the criteria for the formation of the popular jury so that it effectively represents society;
- 11) Against the prohibition of family and friends of victims attending trials with clothing that has symbols and photos on them;
- 12) Against court decisions that grant freedom to state agents accused of human rights violations;
- 13) Against the rescheduling of judgments of state agents accused of rights violations, for trivial or dubious claims such as the health problems of lawyers of the defendants;
- 14) Require from the Presidency and the Ministry of Justice the establishment of the first commission of memory, truth, and justice for victims of state agents during the democratic period;
- 15) Demand the creation of a committee on amnesty for prisoners, persecuted political deaths and disappearances committed by state agents during the democratic period.

Overall, the *Mães de Maio*'s demands aim to decentralize the power of decision-making in the cases from the state of São Paulo, which is the main perpetrator of the crimes, to a federal level where the responsibility lands for the social control of society over the police and justice operationalization. The mothers' demands also highlight the problems they faced in *luta* in Rio de Janeiro, such as the rescheduling of trials, impunity of police officers already condemned for their crimes, and the lack of psychosocial assistance. Another

important aspect of their demands is the non-individualization of crimes. They call for an expansion of the charges to include the ones responsible for public security policies.

After her opening remarks, Debora introduced Patricia and praised her as a true warrior who encouraged her to pursue her *luta*. He also honored her as someone who is an example of resistance and who nurtured Debora's strength. Patricia then said that it is the families in the movement that nurture each other, and that her strength comes from the organized groups in Bahia, Minas Gerais, and from the *Mães de Maio* in São Paulo. She provided a contextualization of the public security policy in Rio de Janeiro and stated, "they are all the same police, because they are all against us." As a way to demonstrate this, she talked about the national campaign to end the resisting arrest reports, which is how it is referred to in Rio and Bahia. In São Paulo, they call it "resistance followed by death." She says we should not be so afraid of police repression, because she "understands that fear is a part of life, but there are fears and *fears*. To be too afraid means cowardice." Patricia always encourages us to face police actions and to speak aloud about the repression. This was what the youth did when presenting their political poetry and lyrics.

The soiree was beautiful and the youth showed their support of the *Mães de Maio*'s *luta*. We all sat in a circle engaging with the crosses and pictures of the dead. Close to the crosses, there were dolls representing mothers in mourning, crying for their deceased sons (figure 33 below). Even though it was not on purpose (one Black and one white doll were the ones left from the other acts), the dolls coincided with the advice that Debora gave me when she found out about my work at the Candelária Vigil: "you should consider the Black and the poor mothers, because in the peripheries there are non-Black mothers suffering the

same consequences of this extermination policy.” One by one, men and women poets went to the middle of the circle to read their poetry, which addressed different issues of life in the periphery of São Paulo. One caught my attention. It was as if a deceased son had written a letter to his mother to explain why he had not come back from his gathering with his friend to celebrate Mother’s Day. Some of the verses that I noted were, “Sorry, mom, I was going back home, but it happened so fast ... the Brazilian flag is missing the red from my blood, mom. ... O *luto* [the mourning] will end, and it will in the *luta* [struggle] be that you will find me. ... I will always live through your *luta*. Fondly, your son.” This was the last poem to be read and after that the MCs sang several songs, and a closer circle formed a unified group of all singers. I helped to distribute balloons to the crowd and we sang until sunset. To finish the act, Debora, the main leader of the *Mães de Maio* gave a final speech embraced by her *companheiras*. She used the speech to say to two other mothers who had just lost their sons that they are not alone in their loss, and to give comfort to the youth. Then the MCs sang the last song and we all released the balloons (figure 34).

I loved you all as sons and daughters. We are very grateful for you coming here today. I wanted you here in my *Quilombo* to strengthen myself in you and you in me. I fight for your right to life, I fight for you. You are my walking and my food. I live for you. I need you and I love you. Believe in it. I am sure that this area now will know the power of the *Mães de Maio*.



Figure 33 - Soirée



Figure 34 - Balloons

## MOTHER'S DAY

I arrived in Rio around 7 am and spent the morning at a family reunion with my paternal aunts in celebration of Mother's Day. It had been three years since I had spent Mother's Day with my mother and my mother became sad when I told her that I would go to a mass to celebrate Mother's Day in the favela da Mare. I invited her to go with me, but she said that if she went with me she would be preventing my brother and niece from spending the afternoon with her. She added that she understood that it was a part of my work. I had helped to organize the celebration and it was an important event for my fieldwork, so I was glad that she did not guilt trip me, as mother's do, or try and convince me to stay with her. I left my aunt's house around 3 pm to meet my other eight mothers.

The political act during the mass is a vestige of the influence of liberation theology in the Latin American Catholic Church. The *pastoral de favelas* [favelas pastoral] organized the act and invited the *Rede contra a Violencia* to contribute. The bishop of Rio de Janeiro would celebrate the mass, which drew the attention of the media. Therefore, the Pastoral de Favela's coordinator, an activist woman who lives in the Baixada Fluminense, thought that it would be wise to have the mothers present their demands. At the altar, a banner had an article from the Brazilian Federal Constitution (CFB) imprinted on it, "No one will be submitted to torture nor cruel, inhumane or degrading punishment"; on the floor, a placard had another CFB article stating, "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security"; on the left side of the altar, family members of victims of violence wore their characteristic t-shirts with pictures of their murdered family members. It was raining heavily. The water hitting the power transformer made it spark, and the *favela* was without

light. When Patricia gave me the video camera and went to the pulpit to read the mothers' demands as a representative of the political group, the spotlights of the press and the holy candles were her only lighting. The demands presented were:

- 1) Expedite the processes;
- 2) Protection to families, who are the main witnesses in the cases;
- 3) Popularization of legal ways to seek justice;
- 4) Humanization of the access to justice;
- 5) Participation of people in decision-making instances and in the formulation of guidelines adopted by the state public safety;
- 6) Emergency financial-support for families of victims of violence committed by the state
- 7) Indemnification for relatives of the victims of violence committed by the state
- 8) Psychological support
- 9) Autonomy in the forensics report in cases of violence and murder committed by police.
- 10) Support in a campaign to end the resisting arrest reports
- 11) Compensation for relatives of victims of violence committed by the state with the establishment of the law guaranteeing pensions
- 12) Guarantee that a committee of independent researchers will investigate all cases with representatives of the church and social movements, with special attention paid to the cases in the UPPs.

Although the mothers were able to present demands and request the partnership of the church in their *luta*, I saw the act as a manipulation of the mothers' hollering place. In my view, they were an ornamentation similar to the banners on the floor. They were part of a ritual where words are offered to the heavens, but the lack of action remains on earth. The bishop neither addressed nor gave a single word of support to their demands. This is not to say that the clergy of the *favelas* and its representatives are not committed to the cause, they are. However, the Catholic Church, as an institution, is associated with the state and supports the current public security policy.

## MÃES DA PLAZA DE MAYO IN RIO

On Friday, June 15, 2012, the organization *Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais* [Torture Never Again], along with several organizations, including the *Rede contra a Violencia*, organized the meeting of the mothers in struggle in Rio de Janeiro with the Argentinian Mother Nora Morales de Cortinas, from the association *Madres de Plaza de Mayo, línea fundante*. The Argentinian *Madre* was in Rio to participate in the Rio +20 Environmental Conference, and the organizations saw that it was a good opportunity to have the groups dialogue in the context of the *Investigations for Memory and Justice* that were ongoing in several Latin American countries. Leftist inclined presidents such as Rousseff in Brazil, and Cristina Kirchner in Argentina had initiated these investigations. Brazil implemented a *Comissão Nacional da Verdade* (CNV-National Commission for the Truth) in May 2012 through the law nº 12.528/11 aiming to investigate severe human rights violations that occurred between 1946 and 1988 by state agents –a period of a civil-military dictatorship in the country.

*Madre* Dora was wearing the traditional white scarf and the badge with the picture of her missing son, the outfit worn by *Madres de Plaza de Mayo, línea fundante* in political acts and public appearances (Taylor, 1997). Beside her stood Victoria Crabois, president of the *Grupo Tortura Nunca Mais*, and Deize Carvalho, Andreu's mother representing the *Rede* and the mothers of Brazil. In the audience, students, supporters, and several other mothers in *luta*, including Marilene Silva and Mãe de Acari, who had her daughter kidnapped two years after the official end of the dictatorship and 102 years after the official end of slavery. Victoria introduced the event stating that practices implemented in the

Brazilian dictatorship are still inadequate, and that we needed to learn what happened in this period as to not allow similar acts to occur again. She then invited Deize to speak. As she always does, Deize presented her son's case and articulated how the violence and justice in Rio is one of class and race, acting differently according to the potential victim and the victimized. As soon as the *Madre* Dora started to talk, introducing herself as a mother of someone who had disappeared 25 years ago, a woman who worked for the *Tortura nunca mais* started to distribute white scarves to the crowd, similar to the one *Madre* Dora was wearing. "What is this? Is this a theater to please the mother? Or a serious conversation? For god's sake!" exclaimed the outraged Marilene, who was sitting in the row behind me. Her dissatisfaction was so great with the interference and the forced participation in the performance that Marilene did not stop talking and nobody near her could hear what the *madre* was saying. Marilene addressed her discontentment with the event, and that their *luta* was being commoditized through the NGOs. She also said that some mothers needed to be more politicized and recognize the struggle of mothers who came before them, a clear reference to Deize who, during a panel about memory and justice, did not address the recent memory of the Acari case, which has remained unsolved for 22 years. However, Marilene's last straw was when towards the end, Marcia Jacinto was invited to give flowers to Dora. "Ah, come on! Do not invite me to these events anymore. This is pathetic! Where is the politics of it? It is costly for me to leave my home to see things like this." While *mãe* Marcia was hugging the *madre* Dora, irritated *mãe* Marilene left the auditorium.

I read Marilene's discontent with the event as an outrage with the manipulation of the mothers' hollering place. The political activity, created so that the mothers could listen to each other and talk about their demands, was being used by external subjects who formed a hierarchy among the mothers characterized by the fact that flowers were given only to the Argentinian mother. Flowers have a meaning of docility and fragility that is not characteristic of the mothers' activism. The expedient Marilene saw the mischaracterization of years of struggle and invalidated the meeting by leaving.

### **Conclusion – Refashioning Black resistance**

Chapters 4 and 5 are interconnected. Chapter 4 introduced the epistemology of the *luta* of Black women who engaged in a search for justice after either the killing or disappearance of their children in the state of Rio de Janeiro. These women are protagonists of their *luta*, and have endless strength to circumvent the trappings of the state. In this endeavor, the main way to support each other and show to society their collective demands is through the preparation of political acts, which is the focus of Chapter 5. In this chapter, through a Black feminist approach to performance, I analyzed Black mothers' political appearance and acts as a jazz aesthetic inspired manifestation to present their demands.

The examples of each woman/mother's performances contribute something to the political potential of their struggle. Collectively, they created an aesthetic of Black mothers in resistance that involves the multiplication of their voices through a chorus. They show the importance of community involvement in the struggle and point to the possibility of recreating the community's memory and raising consciousness through anger. Their

aesthetic also shows that it is necessary to be in contact with the young as a mutual exchange, but that they do not accept the manipulation of their hollering place. When such things happen, they rebel, talk over and let the audience and other performers show their discontent. Similar to samba and jazz, their aesthetic uses creativity and strength of simple gestures and bodily language as a way to address socio-political issues and as an attempt to transform it. The courage and strength exhibited by these mothers is remarkable, and they affect those to participate in their performance, at least those who were open to interact with their Blackness, gender, class, and suffering as tools to resist anti-Black violence.

Thus, while part of the Brazilian Black movement and Black women's movement representatives are sitting in comfortable chairs at their offices, in air-conditioned rooms or in academic roundtables <sup>68</sup>, those women put Black resistance back in the center of their efforts. They unveil the ugliness of state-sponsored and stimulated violence in Rio de Janeiro and in São Paulo, and teach us to use this ugliness in our favor.

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<sup>68</sup> Or even struggling to show who has the most beautiful afro-turban in a march that became known as the *Marcha dos Turbantes* [March of Turbans] (Santos, nd).

## CONCLUSION

### Love

Love is contraband in Hell,  
cause love is an acid  
that eats away bars.  
But you, me, and tomorrow  
hold hands and make vows  
that struggle will multiply.  
The hacksaw has two blades.  
The shotgun has to barrels  
We are pregnant with freedom.  
We are a conspiracy.

(Assata Shakur, 1997, p. 130)

Sometimes the sun will come in  
making a bright yellow day. But  
then again, sometimes it won't.

(Sarah E. Wright. *This Child's  
Gonna live.* p. 1)

In *Continent of Mothers, Continent of Hope*, scholar Torild Skard (2003) analyses the place of mothers in traditional African societies. Skard argues that the majority of the work done by white feminists obsessed with visualizing patriarchal power dynamics does not understand the role of women and mothers in such societies. She explains that the fact that we live in a patriarchal world does not mean, “relationships have been similar to those

in the Western world” (2003, p. 174). She states that women’s power varies from society to society, from generation to generation, and from tribe to tribe in Africa. In defining gender roles in traditional African societies, she explains that:

Women were agriculturists, while men were hunters. (...) a mother and her children constituted a separate economic and social unit – the smallest unit within the family structure and productive activity. The matricentric unit produced food for itself, had its own compound and brought together in one household those who ate from one central cooking pot or plate. The members of the unit experienced a strong solidarity, bound in a common spirit of motherhood with a strong emphasis on love. A family included one or more matricentric units. The head of the family represented fatherhood, law and justice and the ancestral patriarchal ideology emphasizing violence and power. The family head was normally a man. But in some ethnic groups it could be either a man or a woman. Such groups had a flexible gender system, which could include both ‘male daughters’ and ‘female husbands’. This implied that women could assume the legal and social duties usually allocated to men, after a special ceremony (2003, p. 174-175).

In this dissertation, I have shown several black women’s power and courage even though they had their motherline interrupted by the murder of their sons and daughters. Their outrage for having suffered the loss of a loved one introduces us to a vivid alternative to ensure black sociality in a genocidal society. It may seem contradictory that I have chosen to address the experience of mothers of victims of violence instead of focusing on mothers who could successfully preserve the life of their children or *de-kill* them. However, my point was to present the intersection between anti-black genocide and black mothering in order to highlight the strength that emerges from genocide and to whet the inquisitiveness about the possibilities of existence that Black mothering introduces.

Studies on genocide tend to focus on the black male experience since their deaths are the most visible effect of genocide. By doing so, it leaves little room to think about

possibilities of resistance since death is the main outcome. However, it is impossible to think of black people surviving the acts of continuous, structural, and gratuitous violence throughout the African Diaspora without taking into account the social, cultural, and emotional contribution of black women. Most of all, it is impossible to deny the importance of our thoughts and participation in the political strategies to transcend genocide. For each life taken, a structure of care and sociability among women is created around the mother in sorrow. The mothers achieve the participation of other women in their family and friendship circle to create the conditions to allow the mothers to pursue justice.

This dissertation calls attention to black mothering as an alternative to black sociability in genocidal conditions. We have resisted, and lived despite black people's engagement in their own elimination by participating in crimes, and the work of genocidal states committing murder and not providing the necessary conditions for a full existence, Therefore, my dissertation calls attention to the work of several Black women who, similar to Mamie Elizabeth Till-Mobley in Mississippi and Sybrina Fulton in Florida, fought to give visibility to their interrupted motherline and to denounce the horrors present in their lives. The women whose stories were analyzed in this dissertation all have in common not only the murder of a daughter/son, but they also share strength, love, anger, power and above all, the tremendous courage to denounce the terror that affects the lives of the black population of which they are a part. Their strength comes from the outrage created after they suffered a loss, and their activism in search of justice opens up paths of visibility and mobilization around premature and inevitable black (male and female) death. Their

experiences suggest that the suffering caused by the disrupted motherline and the struggle to deal with the terror in their lives makes them a distinct political group.

Therefore, Chapter 1 exposes how discourses about motherhood were shaped by historically racist and eugenic contexts while Brazilian intellectuals were discussing the possibilities of the nation's progress. They created notions of black people as degenerate to Brazilian society due to their alleged biological inferiority and pathological threat to the country. Thus, these discourses informed public security policies and the *modus operandi* of the police, and it has been reproduced and reformulated until today. The Brazilian anthropological literature during the first half of the twentieth century portrayed Black women as impure and their cultural mothering was seen as a cause of distraction since it could affect capitalist production. At the same time, black women's mothering (as wet nurses) was treated as a commodity to feed the settler children. On the contrary, when black women write about themselves, they address the structures of power that prevent them from enjoying their motherhood fully. They present their demands and their discourses provide a counter narrative to the societal attitudes constructed about them.

Chapter 2 shows how the genocidal state operates in Brazil, providing as an example the installation of the Pacification Police Units (UPP) in Rio de Janeiro. I contend that in Rio's *favelas* and peripheries, terror and violence are a precondition for social peace. I examine how the male-on-male violence affects the lives of black women and their mothering since their sons and daughters are the ones who are stereotyped as criminals and more likely to become bandits because of the social racial structure. Therefore, in order to ensure their motherlines, Black mothers engage in acts of *de-killing*, which are exemplified

by women's attempts and strategizes outlined in Chapter 3. This chapter shows mothers' experiences of trying to remove their sons from a life of crime and that after unsuccessful attempts, opt to grieve through outrage. They reconstruct their life activities and take care of their families, while the continuous sorrow exposes/voices/illustrates their unresigned loss.

Chapters 4 and 5 address the lives of mothers who make their sorrow their strength to pursue justice. Chapter 4 focuses on their individual strategies to prosecute the killers of their sons and daughters. Their encounter with the state makes them analyze, strategize, and execute actions to push the state to operate during slowdowns in the judicial process. I put their analyses in dialogue in order to consider the epistemologies of their antagonism with the state. I examine the ways in which the mothers represent themselves in relationship to the community, society, the state, and activists/researchers. Even though they do not accomplish personal success and sometimes die without seeing a resolution to their cases, their *luta* teaches us that a step further is possible. The *luta* is individualized, but above all it is collective, which is shown by their support of each other. Chapter 5 focuses on this support by analyzing their public appearances as performance. It shows how black mothers in struggle create spaces to make their demands visible, build collectivity, and change community's memory by addressing the causes of their victimization.

I understand that resistance based purely on the reaction of state practices does not make us protagonists of *our* own demands, and the effectiveness of a contemporary resistance decentralized from state/civil society and on an autonomous basis still necessitates a collective articulation. Black liberation is urgent and requires urgent

innovation. Dona Zica, advises us: “I think we need to create something very big. Something like when you stretch and then let go of a piece of elastic. You know? It is fast, strong, and stunning. It hurts. We need something to create this effect” (Anazir, Personal interview). However, while the black collectivity cannot yet provide a definitive solution and we continue to seek the “beloved community” (James, 2013), I call attention to black motherhood as the most effective tool available.

The Brazilian media and literature marginalizes and denigrates Black motherhood. In addition, due to the lack of scholarship produced by Brazilian black women on the theme, I understand that the importance of Black motherhood as a category of analysis still needs to be enhanced. Therefore, this dissertation attempts to provide a notion of Black motherhood as positive, valuable, and empowering to Black women and to Black communities. In placing Black motherhood on the frontline against genocide, I show how strong Black mothers’ positionality is and the possibilities it opens for Black women’s politics. Black women, when claiming their power as mothers, call attention to their position as the quintessence response to Brazil’s development and those responsible for ensuring proper living conditions for the Black community.

Black motherhood does not depend on genocide to exist. However, genocide would be complete if it were not for Black mothering generating Blackness and Black people through its biological, cultural and emotional nurturance and creative acts. Black motherhood is an alternative to, and different from, ideas of Black annihilation. It is an alternative in the sense that it utilizes love, care, and protection in the face of terror and gratuitous violence. It is different because it utilizes power as a way to ensure life instead

of death and suffering caused by the racist capitalist patriarchal modernity that implements anti-Black genocide to the benefit and privileges of the white supremacist state.

In conclusion, I argue that Black motherhood has been our possibility to transcend anti-Black genocide. We need to ensure that the efforts of black mothers are recognized in academia and society. Thus, Black Studies should understand Black motherhood as a valid notion of African Diaspora, and incorporate the struggle of Black mothers in coursework and in the agenda for collaborative research. In addition, the Black women's movement should take a stand in the recognition of motherhood as a source of power and a strategic position from which to make politics. Finally, the Black community needs to incorporate Black mothering's nurturing, resisting, and recuperative acts "in the daily resistance and support to each other as an alternative anthology that can extract Black people from this racist state" (Gordon 2014). In order for this to happen, we need to recognize the power of Black mothers and perhaps, overall, the power of Black women.

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## VITA

Luciane de Oliveira Rocha was born in the State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Since the age of 16, she has participated in social movements and organizations seeking social change. She studied at and later became a collaborator of the movement *Pré-Vestibular para Negros e Carentes - núcleo Pastoral da Juventude* between 1998 and 2004. She graduated from Colégio Estadual Rui Barbosa and attended the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro from 2002-2005 where she received a Bachelors degree and the teaching certificate in Social Sciences. After three years of work at Criola, a Black feminist organization based in Rio de Janeiro, she entered the graduate program in Anthropology and African Diaspora Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. She received her Master of Arts in Anthropology in 2010. She likes to smile and enjoy the life.

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