

A SNAPSHOT OF

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(Gatto); and although the rate of femicide is declining among white women, it is rising among black and indigenous women.<sup>4</sup>

Women are increasingly entering the workforce, but remain underrepresented in positions of power. Mirroring trends elsewhere in the world, just 16 percent of Brazilian CEOs are women.<sup>5</sup> Although women are responsible for 70 percent of total scientific publications, they make up just 14 percent of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences (De Negri). And within the judiciary, the percentage of women judges

the ranks.<sup>9</sup> Women were elected to public office at record numbers in 2018, and are gaining ground in the private sector and the military (Gatto, Trabucco, and Milani). Moreover, the fight against corruption, in dismantling traditional male-dominated patronage networks, could create space for women to gain greater political power (T. Barnes). These are all positive developments on the road toward true gender equality.

As Alison Brysk persuasively argues, “women are both vulnerable and threatening to traditional masculine roles” during periods of modernization and globalization; essentially, women’s status is most precarious during the push for greater equality. Seen through this lens, the current conservative backlash on gender issues is itself a sign of the progress Brazilian women have already made in stepping beyond traditional gender norms.

The challenge now is to consolidate and build on these gains. Several of the essays in this collection offer concrete proposals to shift gender imbalances, from a case study on hiring practices at Azul Brazilian Airlines to the need for more educational campaigns to encourage girls to become scientists—or generals. Gender equity is important not only for women, but for society. Evidence suggests there are innumerable benefits to allowing men and women to share in a country’s resources and opportunities—benefits reaped by society at large. Closing the gender pay gap alone could add roughly 0.2 percentage points to Brazil’s annual GDP growth rate.<sup>10</sup> Women’s skills and distinctive perspectives enrich economies, policymaking, and the way companies do business.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, equal treatment of men and women, boys and girls, leads to stronger relationships, healthier child development, and more peaceful communities.

Despite the challenges, women are driving positive change for themselves and for Brazil. On March 29, the United Nations named Brazilian Lieutenant Commander Marcia Andrade Braga its Military Gender Advocate of the Year, in part for her work to integrate women into peacekeeping patrol teams. Lt. Cdr. Braga argued that “It is not about wanting a woman on the mission just to have equality. It’s because it produces results...[and] when you show the results, the prejudice begins to fade.”

As this report highlights, the status of women—and gender equality more broadly—is far from a niche issue: it touches every facet of society, with profound implications for governance, economic growth, public security, and more. Support for greater equality—whether through programs designed to increase gender bias awareness in the military, to improve maternal health outcomes, or to encourage more young women to pursue science—will also drive progress toward a more inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous future for all Brazilians.

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<sup>9</sup> Bruno Villas Bôas, “Mulheres ocupam apenas 38% dos cargos de chefia no Brasil, aponta IBGE,” *Ec*, March 7, 2018, <https://www.valor.com.br/brasil/5368813/mulheres-ocupam- apenas-38-dos-cargos-de-chefia-no-brasil-aponta-ibge>.

<sup>10</sup> Agénor and Canuto, “Gender Equality and Economic Growth in Brazil.”

<sup>11</sup> “2013 Gender Inequality in Emerging Markets: Findings & Recommendations,” The Emerging Markets Symposium, <https://ems.gtc.ox.ac.uk/ems-2013/findings-recommendations>.





special police, courts, and reporting mechanisms, which has resulted in increased reporting and limited improvement in some sectors. Similarly, Brazil further criminalized femicide in 2013, and broadened legal attention and social services for sexual assault. But recent governments have cut back the Women's Ministry and already woefully inadequate shelters, militarized policing, and weakened gun laws—even though firearms are used in half of femicides. Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro has

Despite Brazil's history of progressive legislation and protections focused on women's maternal health, Brazilian women continue to face significant challenges to their health, safety, and rights.

In the 1980s, Brazil established programs to support women's health and humanize labor and delivery, and Brazil's 1988 Constitution established health as a fundamental right and a responsibility of the state.<sup>1</sup> These efforts to acknowledge women's rights to health should have put Brazilian women on a path to equitable and quality care that respects their individual needs around sexual, reproductive, and maternal health, but much more needs to be done before they can arrive at their destination.

Three important maternal health issues continue to put women's lives at risk in Brazil today: high maternal mortality rates, the over- and under-usage of caesarean section (CS) deliveries, and the high incidence of unsafe abortions.

**Maternal mortality rates are five to ten times higher than in countries with similar economies.<sup>2</sup>**

Brazil's maternal mortality rate (MMR) is forty-four maternal deaths per 100,000 live

In Brazil, 68 percent of maternal deaths are due to unspecified obstetric conditions; hypertensive disorders due to pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum; and labor and delivery complications. Another 13 percent of maternal deaths are due to complications predominantly related to the postpartum period, and complications from unsafe abortions contribute to up to 12 percent of maternal deaths.<sup>4</sup>

These numbers can be explained in part by delays that slow women's access to care: the delay in deciding to seek care, the delay in traveling to a care facility, and the delay in receiving quality care once at a facility. Poor women and women living in remote areas face the greatest challenges in seeking and receiving quality care. Brazil's high rate of CS and unsafe abortions contribute to high rates of maternal death.

### **Brazil has one of the highest rates of caesarean section deliveries in the world.**

Almost 50 percent of all deliveries occur by caesarean section in Brazil and an alarming 80-90 percent of deliveries in private hospitals are done by CS.<sup>5</sup> For comparison, WHO advises that CS be performed only when medically necessary and that the CS rate in any population be kept under 15 percent, due to the many life-threatening complications that accompany them.<sup>6</sup> With 84 percent of CS deliveries being performed prior to the onset of labor, it is clear women are electing CS deliveries despite the documented risks.<sup>7</sup> Studies have also connected physician coercion and even instances of forced CS deliveries to explain the high rates.<sup>8</sup>

Caesarian deliveries, in Brazil, are associated with an almost threefold higher risk of postpartum maternal death compared with vaginal delivery mainly due to deaths from postpartum hemorrhage and anesthesia complications.<sup>9</sup>

Yet in stark contrast, some women are dying in Brazil due to a lack of access to medical professionals who can perform a CS. Women in remote areas or poorer women

<sup>3</sup> Katia M.S. Figueiredo, et al., "Actions of Primary Health Care Professionals to Reduce Maternal Mortality in the Brazilian Northeast," *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics* 17 (2018): 104, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12939-018-0817-x>.

<sup>4</sup> Do Carmo Leal, et al., "Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal v[er]idHP

are less able to procure a CS even when medically necessary because they cannot



# Women in Politics

Malu Gatto

In October 2018, women were elected to the Brazilian national legislature in record numbers. Despite this, when it comes to women's political representation, Brazil still ranks last in Latin America, placing 133<sup>rd</sup> globally. Currently, women occupy 15 percent of seats in the Chamber of Deputies and in the Senate (with seventy-seven and seven seats, respectively). In stark contrast, more than 40 percent of seats in the national legislatures of Bolivia, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua are occupied by women.

Women's low presence in office in Brazil is not restricted to the national level, also permeating other levels of government: only one of Brazil's twenty-seven governors is a woman (Fátima Bezerra, from the state of Rio Grande do Norte), with women also only occupying 15 percent of the seats in state assemblies and 13 percent of the 64,673 municipal-level elected offices.

Brazil's failure to elect more women despite its neighbors' successes has often been attributed to a mismatch between open-list proportional representation and gender quotas. First adopted in Argentina in 1991, gender quotas reserve a certain share of candidate nominations for women. In just under three decades, the policy has spread across regional borders, adopted in all Latin American countries to date (except for Guatemala), and becoming fundamental in transforming the gender composition of political bodies throughout the region.

Brazil first applied a 30 percent quota for women's candidacies in the 1996 municipal elections, expanding it to national elections for the first time in 1998.

Elsewhere in the region, the success of quotas have been attributed to strong policies. In Brazil, the policy's weak design and the use of informal institutions to circumvent the spirit of the law have largely undermined the quota's effects. For example, until 2009, the law only required parties to reserve 30 percent of the

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available candidate nominations for women. Because coalitions could submit lists with up to 150 percent of the number of seats (e.g., ten available seats means a list could have up to fifteen candidates), they could comply with the quota by submitting shorter candidate lists with a lower share of women and argue that empty nomination slots were being reserved (i.e., set aside) for additional women.

Starting in 2010, when the revised legislation establishing that parties had to fill 30 percent of nominations with women candidates came into effect, parties responded by nominating *phantom candidacies*: phantom candidacies with the sole aim of complying with the quota, or candidates who indeed had the goal of being elected but who were not given administrative or financial support to make their campaigns viable.

Recognizing how informal institutions prevented the effective application of the quota law, the cross-partisan Women's Caucus submitted numerous proposals to amend the quota legislation and close the law's loopholes. After failing to make substantial advances in Congress, women appealed to the judiciary. In 2018, judges' interpretation of overlap between the newly created campaign fund and the gender quota resulted in the reservation of 30 percent of public campaign funds for women's candidacies—a sum that corresponds to R\$510 million (\$135.7 million).

This decision could have transformed the dynamics of candidate nomination by ensuring that women were not only placed on candidate lists, but were also given the resources to conduct effective campaigns and viably compete.

Yet, soon after the 2018 elections, new scandals surrounding women's candidacies emerged. This time, however, besides using phantom candidacies to comply with the quota legislation without increasing competition, these candidacies were also used to fraudulently re-route women's campaign funds to party leaders. Most prominently, four female candidates from President Jair Bolsonaro's party (Social Liberal Party, PSL) allegedly received a total of R\$279,000 (\$74,221) from the public campaign fund, but did not carry out campaigns. This example showcases parties' continued defiance of the gender quota and their attempt to favor certain candidacies over others by concentrating resources among small groups of party elites, who tend to be male.<sup>1</sup>

Brazil's ongoing crisis of representation and voters' lack of trust in political elites, however, suggest that changes in electoral preferences can have transformational results in spite of parties' lack of support for women's candidacies.

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<sup>1</sup> *Example*: This example also shows the persistence of corruption in Brazilian politics and political parties, and the ways in which laws often are twisted for the illicit gain of those in power at the expense of those who lack power, including women.



Although the successes of the far-right have been widely discussed, far less attention has been dedicated to the inauguration of Brazil's most gender and ethnically diverse Congress. While still overrepresented, white men now occupy 62.5 percent of seats in the Chamber of Deputies (down from 72 percent in 2014), representing a loss of forty-eight seats.<sup>2</sup> Twenty-six of those forty-eight seats have been taken-up by women—including Joênia Wapichana (from the northern state of Roraima), the first indigenous woman to be elected to the Chamber of Deputies.<sup>3</sup> The number of self-identified feminists in Congress also increased (from twenty-seven to thirty-six seats), suggesting that a Feminist Caucus (in addition to the Women's Caucus) could be an important player in future legislative debates.

<sup>2</sup> White men correspond to less than 25 percent of the Brazilian population. Source: Murilo Roncolato, et al., "130 Anos Pós-Abolição: Os Obstáculos





up-and-comers are and, if the information is not volunteered, who the women are specifically.



Despite being the majority of people with doctorate degrees in several areas, Brazilian women are not so well represented at higher career levels. A recent study showed that women make up only 24 percent of recipients of a Brazilian government grant awarded to the most productive scientists in the country.<sup>3</sup> Underrepresentation in leadership positions also persists: female scientists are only 14 percent of the Brazilian Academy of Sciences.

One could raise the hypothesis that, for several reasons (such as still being the primary caregiver for children), women are less productive than men. However,

Although corruption in Brazil is widespread, penetrating all levels of government,

over-invoicing, or diverting funds from social programs to public or private goods.<sup>2</sup> So, why do women mayors combat corruption in Brazil? Probably because mayors are subject to random audits. Those implicated in corruption receive reduced federal fiscal transfers, which ultimately diminishes their probability of reelection.<sup>3</sup> In other words, they are held accountable.

Indeed, recent cross-national research indicates that higher levels of women in government are only associated with lower levels of corruption in democracies where politicians are held accountable for corruption.<sup>4</sup> Thus, for women's representation to lead to lower levels of corruption on the national political stage in Brazil, there need to be stronger political institutions that increase electoral accountability.<sup>5</sup>

### **What Can Women Gain by Combating Corruption?**

Women may have more than men to gain both economically and politically by combating corruption. First, corruption stifles economic growth and development. Women may have more than men to gain both economically and politically by combating corruption. First, corruption stifles economic growth and development. Women may have more than men to gain both economically and politically by combating corruption. First, corruption stifles economic growth and development.



<sup>7</sup> Frédéric Boehm and Erika Sierra, "The Gendered Impact of Corruption: Who Suffers More? Men or Women?" Chr. Michelsen Institute, U4 Brief 9 (2015), <https://www.cmi.no/publications/5610-the-gendered-impact-of-corruption>.

<sup>8</sup> Transparency International, "Corruption and Gender in Service Delivery: The Unequal Impacts;" Working Paper 2 (2010), [https://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/working\\_paper\\_02\\_2010\\_corruption\\_and\\_gender\\_in\\_service\\_delivery\\_the\\_unequal](https://www.transparency.org/whatwedo/publication/working_paper_02_2010_corruption_and_gender_in_service_delivery_the_unequal).

<sup>9</sup> Esarey and Schwindt-Bayer. 2018. "Estimating Causal Relationships Between Women's Representation in Government and Corruption," *Comparative Politics* (March 2019),



If you were to picture a judge—in Brazil or in the United States—who would come to mind?

Although women represent 51.4 percent of the Brazilian population, they are a minority in positions of power. Women account for just 38 percent of all judges: not negligible, but well below the

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<sup>5</sup> CNJ,

therefore only when men and women from diverse backgrounds equally participate in the decision-making process that we can ensure inclusive governance and development. The current lack of gender equity and representation on Brazilian courts and in other offices of power thus matters for political engagement.<sup>10</sup>

The path to equality is long, but there are concrete steps that the Government of Brazil can take to support women in the judiciary. Education about how gender biases affects recruitment can reduce bias and inequality and help women receive consideration for senior positions and appointments, and establishing quotas can prove effective in ensuring female participation in decision-making.<sup>11</sup> The OECD encourages mentorship programs and independent monitoring of outcomes as other decisive measures for a more diverse judiciary.<sup>12</sup> Now is a pivotal time for change. Underrepresented groups are engaging more than ever, with women demanding equal opportunities and assuming a greater role in Brazilian society. Representation on the bench is an essential part of ensuring women's equal access to their constitutional rights and to justice.

<sup>10</sup> Jeffrey A. Karp and Susan A. Banducci, "When Politics is Not Just a Man's Game: Women's Representation and Political Engagement," *Electoral Studies* 27, no. 1 (2008): 105-115, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.electstud.2007.11.009>; and Sonia Bhalotra and Irma Clots-Figueras, "Health and the Political Agency of Women," *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 6, no. 2 (2014): 164-97, <https://doi.org/10.1257/pol.6.2.164>.

<sup>11</sup>



Brazil is known for its cultural and demographic diversity, for its joy and peaceful coexistence between all people: (a country of celebration)!  
Looking closely, however, there are still historical maladies that need to be con-

<sup>1</sup> *Ethnicity*: The term *pardo* generally refers to Brazilians of mixed-race heritage. In 2010, in the most recent census, 44.2 percent of Brazilians identified as *pardo*.

<sup>2</sup> International Labour Office, *Global Employment Trends for Women: From Labour Force to Market* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 2017).  
[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms\\_575479.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_575479.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Departamento Intersindical de Estatística e Estudos Socioeconômicos, "PEC 06/2019: as mulheres, outra vez, na mira da reforma da Previdência," Nota Técnica, no. 202 (March 2019): 4, <https://www.dieese.org.br/notatecnica/2019/notaTec202MulherPrevidencia/index.html?page=4>.





ira, da interação com o mundo do trabalho e suas subjetividades na formação do caráter foi extremamente marcada pela desigualdade entre os grupos étnicos raciais, em especial entre negros e brancos, e também pela hierarquização – financeira e simbólica – do tipo de trabalho realizado. As funções desempenhadas por brancos/as eram e continuam sendo, melhor valorizadas em relação às funções executadas por negros e negras. Resultado da exploração de trabalho escravo por quase 400 anos.

O racismo e as experimentações simbólicas do trabalho definiriam essa situação de desigualdade, gerando um subsistema de retroalimentação tanto do racismo quanto das desigualdades socioeconômicas. O trabalho é definidor do lugar social, identidade e caráter em função das diversas conexões e simbologias envolvidas no ato de trabalhar.

Combater a exploração do trabalho escravo contemporâneo, bem como do trabalho infantil, serão essenciais para a construção de um país com maior dignidade e melhores condições de trabalho para todos e todas. Os dados apontam que a maior parte dos libertos do trabalho análogo ao escravo são pessoas pretas ou pardas. A maioria das mulheres que trabalham como doméstica não têm seus direitos respeitados, são pretas ou pardas, têm escolaridade baixa e estão no limiar de serem consideradas trabalhadoras escravas. Na última edição da portaria governamental de combate ao trabalho escravo cria procedimentos específicos para a libertação e assistência de trabalhadoras domésticas, sejam elas brasileiras ou estrangeiras.

No Mundo, segundo a Organização Internacional do Trabalho, a exploração do trabalho escravo atinge cerca de 40 milhões de pessoas, sendo que 71% dessas vítimas são mulheres, em especial para a exploração sexual. No Brasil, as estatísticas ainda não trazem uma real imagem do desafio, os dados de exploração sexual não se somam com as estatísticas de libertos de trabalho escravo em cadeias produtivas. Ainda temos um longo caminho para percorrer.

Dados da PNAD de 2018 apontam que as mulheres continuam em condições mais vulneráveis e com menor valorização social e simbólica do trabalho em relação aos homens, sendo 21% delas trabalhadoras na educação, saúde e serviços sociais; 19% no comércio e reparação e 14% no trabalho doméstico, locus de trabalho comumente relacionado à “extensão” do trabalho “feminino doméstico e de cuidar”. A remuneração de mulheres segue 28% inferior à dos homens. Mulheres brancas recebem mais de 70% do que recebem as negras. O quadro atual do trabalho da mulher no Brasil aponta que 47% delas estão na informalidade.

O sexismo também opera na lógica inversa: aos homens não é permitido “reclamar” das condições de trabalho ou de jornada exaustiva. Ao fazerem isto são considerados “menos homens” “mulherzinha”, e, sucumbem à pressão social do grupo e dos recrutadores, pois “homem que é homem aguenta trabalho pesado sem reclamar”.

A ideia de que há uma hierarquia entre as pessoas baseado no racismo, sexismo ou fatores econômicos proporciona que ainda haja trabalho análogo ao escravo no Brasil e no Mundo. É preciso mudar culturalmente, permitir que tenhamos novas gerações de trabalhadores com dignidade e valorizados, para ter um Brasil melhor para todos e todas!

# Women in Combat: The Long Fight to Join the Armed Forces

Livia Peres Milani

The Brazilian Constitution states that it is the president's duty to exercise "supreme command" over the armed forces, so technically and symbolically, Brazil has already had a female commander in chief, Dilma Rousseff—Brazil's first woman president.<sup>1</sup> In reality, however, women are a minority in the armed forces, making up only 8 percent of the military in 2016, and still face restrictions in access to certain military specialties.<sup>2</sup> Despite progress in recent years, there is a long way to go before the Brazilian Armed Forces are numerically proportional and equal when it comes to gender.

Worldwide, the military is one of the most difficult environments for the integration of women in equal conditions. However, among many advanced democracies, there are no longer formal limitations for women in the armed forces, including in the United States, where formal restrictions were eliminated in 2015; and Canada, where they were eradicated in 1989. Compared to many other South American countries, Brazil also lags behind in fully integrating women into the military: Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Venezuela and Uruguay no longer restrict women's access to all combat positions.<sup>3</sup>

The integration of women into the Brazilian Armed Forces goes back to the country's democratization process. The navy started to integrate women in 1980, the

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<sup>1</sup> Instituto Igarapé, "Papel feminino nas Forças Armadas não é consenso, mostra pesquisa inédita," Press release, August 11, 2017, <https://igarape.org.br/release-papel-feminino-nas-forcas-armadas-nao-e-consenso-mostra-pesquisa-inedita/>.

<sup>2</sup> Brazil, *Constituição da República Federativa do Brasil* (Brasília: Senado Federal, 2016), [https://www2.senado.leg.br/bdsf/bitstream/handle/id/518231/CF88\\_Livro\\_EC91\\_2016.pdf](https://www2.senado.leg.br/bdsf/bitstream/handle/id/518231/CF88_Livro_EC91_2016.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Renata Avelar Giannini, Maiara Folly and Mariana Fonseca Lima, *Seguindo o caminho: mulheres nas Forças Armadas brasileiras*, (Instituto Igarapé, 2017), <https://igarape.org.br/mulheres-forcas-armadas/pt/>.

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air force in 1981, and the army in 1992. Initially, women were only allowed to perform non-combat supporting roles, such as administrative and health functions, and were overrepresented in temporary positions. Additionally, women were unable to enroll in the military officers academies. As a result, women faced institutional obstacles to career advancement, as leadership positions are usually granted to graduates of the military academies and those in permanent career tracks.<sup>4</sup> Surmounting these challenges is rare: in 2012, Rear Admiral Dalva Maria Carvalho became the first and only female general officer in the Brazilian Armed Forces.<sup>5</sup>

Addressing some of these obstacles, Brazil recently began to integrate women into combat positions, although they are still barred from a few military occupational specialties. The Brazilian Air Force pioneered this shift by allowing women to enroll in the Air Force Academy and apply for the specialties of                      in 1996 and aviators in 2003.<sup>6</sup> The other services have followed suit, facilitated by a 2012 law requiring military academies to admit qualified female candidates: the Brazilian Naval School, for example, graduated its first class of female officers in 2017. That same year, the navy began allowing women to serve on naval vessels and to join the Marine Corps.

One woman who joined the Navy eighteen years ago, Lieutenant Commander Marcia Andrade Braga, recently received the 2019 UN Military Gender Advocate of the Year Award for her work increasing gender awareness while a peacekeeper with the UN Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. Lt. Cdr. Braga noted that the inclusion of women in peacekeeping forces is important not for optics, but because it produces better security results.<sup>7</sup>

The ongoing integration of women into direct combat positions and their full inclusion in the military academies is essential for the Brazilian military to become more gender-equitable. The 2012 law opening the military academies to women was a significant step forward. And in 2014, the Defense Ministry created an internal gender commission to research and make recommendations regarding the integration of women into the Brazilian Armed Forces and the Ministry itself. These developments show the positive impact policies can have in promoting gender equity, so that women generals and admirals become the norm, not the exception, in the Brazilian Armed Forces.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> "Presença feminina é cada vez maior no meio militar," Ministério da Defesa, accessed March 28, 2019, <https://www.defesa.gov.br/index.php/component/content/article/2-uncategorised/12854-presenca-de-mulheres-e-cada-vez-maior>.

<sup>6</sup> The Intendência is a military occupational specialty in the Brazilian Armed Forces responsible for logistics, including the distribution of supplies, financial management, and other administrative assistance to commanders.

<sup>7</sup> Brazil Institute, "Brazilian Navy Officer Receives UN Gender Advocate Award, Shows Why Women Peacekeepers Matter," *The Brazil Project*, April 12, 2019, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/brazilian-navy-officer-receives-un-gender-advocate-award-shows-why-women-peacekeepers>.



Xavier, Janete Ribeiro, Joice Berth, Luciene Lacerda, Winnie Bueno, and Ynaê Santos are just a few of the women who confront racism and machismo in order to further their intellectual production and pedagogical practices that strive for an anti-racist approach in different fields of knowledge.

Despite the growing number of black people producing important intellectual work, the political context has presented grave setbacks in the social sphere since 2016. The gains from civil rights struggles are faltering with the advancement of projects that question and immobilize affirmative politics, which principally affect the agenda to guarantee rights for black populations. And it is important to consider that it is these black populations, women as much as men, who account for the majority of cases of incarceration, perinatal mortality, obstetric violence, violent death from firearms, and truancy.

The guarantee of rights becomes even more fragile for black populations that intersect other categories. When blackness is linked to precarious socioeconomic conditions, to little or no formal schooling, or when black people do not conform to heterosexual norms, when they practice a non-dominant religion and are thus subject to “religious racism,” or reside in areas where the state apparatus is scarce and under the control of the police or criminal organizations, the experience of being black is even more of a risk. Social vulnerability becomes a precise indicator for the conditions of these populations.

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<sup>5</sup> Kimberlé Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color,” *Social and Legal Studies* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–299, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039>.

A strong body for manual labor, ready to perform sexual fantasies for someone else, [these] are stereotypes that deprive black womanhood of its humanity, and reinforce the common, subordinate places where black bodies should stay, according to whiteness.<sup>6</sup> With this in mind, the rolling back of affirmative politics contributes significantly to the strengthening of these stereotypes and the further deterioration of living conditions for these women.

In this moment, more than ever before, black feminism needs to be attentive to the demands of women.

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<sup>6</sup> Djamila Ribeiro, *O Justificando*, 2017).



(Belo Horizonte: Grupo Editorial Letramento and

### **À margem: mulheres negras, políticas públicas e feminismo negro**

Claudielle Pavão da Silva

“Agora o lixo vai falar, e numa boa”. Foi com esta frase que a intelectual negra Lelia Gonzalez abordou a domesticação e a infantilização das pessoas negras pela branquitude no artigo “Racismo e sexismo”. A análise sobre a insistente tentativa de subalternizar indivíduos negros não abordou somente a questão racial, mas também a questão de gênero. Ou seja, há trinta anos o impacto do machismo na vivência das mulheres negras era analisado a partir de uma perspectiva acadêmica por uma intelectual negra. As reflexões e práticas feministas não são novidades entre as mulheres negras brasileiras. Nossos passos vêm de longe, peço a benção às minhas ancestrais.

A intelectualidade negra tem produzido inúmeros trabalhos e reflexões acerca do feminismo negro e da racialização dos brancos. São diversos os coletivos e grupos de estudos acadêmicos criados para debater e pensar epistemologias que considerem a experiência negra no Brasil a partir de um olhar decolonial. Azoilda Loreto (in memoriam), Carla Akotirene, Carolina Rocha, Djamila Ribeiro, Fernanda Oliveira, Giovana Xavier, Janete Ribeiro, Joice Berth, Luciene Lacerda, Winnie Bueno e Ynaê Santos são algumas das mulheres negras que atravessam o racismo e o machismo para seguir com suas produções intelectuais e práticas pedagógicas que visam uma abordagem antirracista em diferentes áreas do conhecimento.

Apesar do crescente número de pessoas negras com importantes produções intelectuais, o contexto político tem apresentado retrocessos graves no âmbito social desde 2016. As conquistas advindas de lutas seculares estão esmorecendo diante do avanço de projetos que questionam e inviabilizam as políticas afirmativas, atingindo principalmente as pautas que garantem direitos para as populações negras. E é importante considerar que são essas

populações que ocupam a maioria dos casos de encarceramento – tanto mulheres quanto homens – de mortes de nascituros, de violências obstétricas, de mortes por arma de fogo e evasão escolar.

A garantia de direitos se torna ainda mais frágil para as populações negras que integram outras categorias. Quando a negritude está relacionada a condições socioeconômicas precárias, possuem pouca ou nenhuma formação escolar, ou quando essas pessoas negras não correspondem ao padrão heteronormativo, pertencem a religiosidades não dominantes e sujeitas ao racismo religioso e residem em territórios com escassez de aparelhos estatais e sob o controle policial ou de organizações criminosas, a experiência de ser negro é ainda mais arriscada. A vulnerabilidade social se torna um indicador preciso da situação dessas populações.

É sobre esse entrecruzamento de categorias que o conceito interseccionalidade, tão bem analisado por Kimberle Crenshaw, ao discutir políticas públicas, teoriza. Este conceito nos provoca a pensar sobre a intensa disputa a qual os marcadores sociais e raciais estão submetidos. E é através do uso deste conceito nos estudos feministas negros que tem se baseado as críticas mais recentes aos privilégios raciais estruturais reproduzidos no Brasil.

Uma vez que as identidades entrecruzadas por diferentes marcadores sociais submetem as pessoas negras a diferentes experiências do racismo, a interseccionalidade também tem corroborado nos debates acerca do colorismo negro. As concessões feitas pela branquitude às mulheres e homens negros de tom de pele mais claro ou traços mais próximos do fenótipo branco refletem a hierarquia racial no Brasil e os desdobramentos da política de eugenia do início do século XX. Dessa forma, o colorismo também se torna um marcador relevante nos estudos sobre negritude e branquitude.

A análise de Gonzalez sobre a domesticação, citada anteriormente, demonstra o quanto essa violência – em alguns momentos simbólica, noutros física – restringe o poder de atuação das mulheres negras, e tende a se tornar ainda maior nos momentos de crise econômica e política. O corpo forte para o trabalho braçal, e quente para a realização de fantasias sexuais do outro são estereótipos que esvaziam de humanidade a negritude feminina, e reforçam lugares comuns – e subalternos, em que os corpos negros deveriam estar, segundo a branquitude. Com isso, o retrocesso das políticas afirmativas contribui gravemente para que esses estereótipos se fortaleçam e definham ainda mais a condição de vida dessas mulheres.

Neste momento, mais do que nunca, o feminismo negro precisa estar atento às demandas das mulheres.





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