

ARTIGO

**DOSSIÊ QUESTÕES RACIAIS, EM INTERSECÇÃO, COMO AGENTES DE
TRANSFORMAÇÃO NO CAMPO DOS ESTUDOS DA LINGUAGEM**

**ARE BLACK WOMEN CISGENDER? ANALYZING BRAZILIAN BLACKGENDER
INTERVENTIONS**

¿Las mujeres negras son cisgénero? análisis de las intervenciones del género negro brasileño

Tanya L. Saunders¹

(Doctoral Program in Language Literacy and Culture, University of Maryland Baltimore County
(UMBC))

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¹ Dr. Tanya L. Saunders is a sociologist and cultural studies scholar who is interested in the ways in which the African Diaspora throughout the Americas uses the arts as a tool for social change, specifically through decolonizing systems of thinking and knowing in the Americas. *Program in Language, Literacy and Culture, University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) tanyasau@umbc.edu*

RESUMO

Neste ensaio, coloco teóricas negras trans e feministas negras das Américas em conversa para considerar a questão de: será que uma mulher negra que foi classificada como feminina ao nascer a mesma ser que uma mulher branca que foi classificada como feminina ao nascer? Neste artigo, argumento que o surgimento da categoria não marcada de "cisgênero" como um marcador de identidade e um marcador social em debates hegemônicos (re: dominado por branquitude) sobre a diversidade e as desigualdades de gênero, invisibiliza as intervenções e denúncias políticas feitas por negrxs trans*, feministxs negrxs Blackgender e dissidentes de gênero e sexualidade.*

Palavras-chave: Negritude, genero, sexualidade, trans*, feminismo negro

ABSTRACT

In this essay, I place Black trans and Black feminist theorists from across the Americas in conversation to consider a question: is a Black woman who was classified as female at birth the same as a white woman who was classified as female at birth? I argue that the emergence of the unmarked "cisgender" category as an identity and social marker in hegemonic (i.e. white dominated) debates about gender diversity and inequality undermines the interventions and political denunciations of Black trans*, Black feminist, and Blackgender gender- and sexual-dissidents.*

Keywords: Blackness, gender, sexuality, trans*, Black feminism

RESUMEN

En este ensayo, yo coloco algunas teóricas trans negras y feministas negras, atravesando las Américas, en conversación para considerar la pregunta de: ¿será que una mujer negra que fue clasificada como hembra al nacer es la misma que una mujer blanca clasificada como hembra al nacer? En este artículo yo propongo que el surgimiento de la categoría "cisgénero" marcada como una identidad y un marcador social en los debates hegemónicos (re: dominados por los blancos) sobre la diversidad y las desigualdades de género, resulta en la invisibilidad de las intervenciones y denuncias políticas hechas por trans* negrxs, feministas negras y Blackgender disidentes de genero y sexualidad.*

Palabra clave: Negritud, genero, sexualidade, trans*, feminismo negro

Seeing our bodies, our knowledge production, creative work, and memories as places of resistance against racializing gendered violence against bodies that are not considered normative is where trans feminism and black feminism meet. (SANTANA, 2019, p. 217)

pra quem não sabe saber eu sou um masculino em de amigas y amantes y to em choke mano na segunda me inskrevi pra tokar num bloko de carnaval de lesbika y bi ... então as mina do rolê chegou pra me kumprimentar fikei até me sentindo artista fi achando ke era mol konsideração ai elas me disse ke não tinha komo eu tokar porke elas ainda não sabem komo se posicionar referente a ke tao de pessoas não binárias dentro dakele espaço aí v14d0 ai sai do ensaio né eu to em choke porke não ia poder konstruir um espaço lesbiko porke é um espaço ke só aceita mulheres lésbikas y bi primeiro ke se elas não tivesse me kolokado no grupo do zap eu nem ia saber dessas fita zuado ter me kolokado no grupo sabendo ke eu não ia poder tokar ja ke eu não tinha komo atender o telefone ela podia ter me mandado um áudio né gastei condução pra kolar no piko y não poder fazer parte do rolê pra quem tá desempregado igual eu 4 reais y 40 centavo de conducao faz diferença viu eu entendo ke tem ke se nomeia mulher komo uma estratégia política feminista essas mina do bloko de carnaval de mulheres lesbikas y bi diz ke o espaço delas é aberto pra mulheres trans elas se dizem aliadas das pessoas trans mas não entende um negro favelado kerer ser chamado de ele y fazer parte da comunidade lesbika essas mina fokam na minha dissidência da mulheridade pra não

me aceitar no bloco y elas não fokam no nosso elo ke é a lesbianidade esses dia trokando ideia kom um mano meu \$ap44ta0 ele me disse ke a lesbofobia é parte da nossa história eu entendi ke tipo assim komo auto ódio internalizado mesmo y eu não tenho dúvida disso numa sociedade ht cis patriarkal branka o lesbo ódio é mato y mata nossos kor-pos y mentes não tirando pai mas eu acho ke essas mulheres lesbikas y bi são lesbofóbikas porke elas não entendem kor-p-oralidades lésbikas fora da mulheridade elas são kapazes de aceitar mulheres trans no bonde delas mas não aceitam no primeiro ensaio um \$ap44ta0 maskulino será ke essa aceitação de mulheres trans tem uma inklusão de fato ou é karteirada não sei eu achava ke kaminhoneira era uns naípe tipo o meu boné mochilas nas costas roupa larga kabelo raspado bofe paraíba maskulina virado komo diz na gringa stud stone butch parece ke kaminhoneira é uma palavra esvaziada se elas veem uma pessoa igual eu y não me reconhecem komo sapa mais só porke tirei o a do nome acho ke me perguntaram o ke eu kero num espaço tipo akele de mulheres lésbikas eu kero desenvolver minha habilidade nova de tokar algo mais além de siririka fazer amizades criar redes de apoio mutuo solidarirdade konstruir laços de afetos conhecer afro-futuras amantes mas ali é sem chance pai kaminhoneira só se for mulher

*texto publicado no dia 25 de novembro de 2021 no Instagram @formigaoreal do poeta Formigão, porém foi considerado impróprio e apagado pela mesma rede social acusado de violar as diretrizes da comunidade.

I start this essay with a quote from the trans Black feminist scholar Dora Santana and place her quote in conversation with a post from the non-binary, masculine-sapatão poet, activist, and anarchist formigão from November 25, 2021. In the post, formigão details his disappointment at not being allowed to participate in a carnival group for lesbian and bi people. formigão learned about the group because he was included in a WhatsApp group for lesbians. Given formigão's gender identity, it made perfect sense to be included in the WhatsApp group and invited to participate in a carnival group for lesbian and bi people. There was no reason to suspect that upon his arrival to the group's practice, he would be excluded from participating because of his identity as a non-binary, masculine sapatão.

Sapatão, as I will discuss later in this essay, is a slur against women perceived to be lesbians, but the term has been taken up and resignified by lesbian and feminists groups. As formigão argues in his post, there are women who continue to call themselves sapatão as a feminist political strategy. However, more recently, there are others who would be classified as lesbians within a Eurocentric western ontology. They theorize sapatão as a gender category that disidentifies with a Eurocentric western ontology, which opens the door to theorizing gender—and implicitly sexuality—from a Brazilian, Indigenous, Afro-Diasporic, or even Afro-Indigenous ontology. formigão argues that even though he shares a convergence with lesbian and bi women through the subject position “sapatão,” which is based on the lived experience associated with lesbianism, it is because he explicitly

disidentified with the Eurocentric western category² of “woman” that he was excluded from the group. The group claims that it is in solidarity with trans women and that they are welcome in the group, but some of the very people that the group was created for—people whose identities map onto or converge with a lesbian existence—are excluded. formigão wonders if the group is actually in solidarity with trans women, or if that is just a formality.

To formigão’s point, the group would more than likely include trans women because trans women are women, thus identifying with (i.e. not challenging) the white supremacy and Eurocentrism that underlies “woman” as a normative gender category. That is, trans women, from a medical perspective, naturalize the category of “woman” as rooted in biology. This is what Oyěwùmí argues is a colonial bio-logic. The twentieth-century medicalization of trans*³ identities was rooted in the belief that trans* identities could be addressed (re: “corrected”) psychologically and medically (i.e. biologically). That is, the medicalized history of transgender identities centering on the process of transition was seen as a way to correct a psychological disorder. This medical and psychological intervention permitted people who were psychologically women (and it initially was almost always women) to be and live as women. It is important to note that while white transgender women could be, like Christine Jorgensen, hailed as America’s sweethearts in the mid-twentieth century, Black trans* women and trans* men were presented in newspapers as curious deviants (SNORTON, 2017).

In this essay, I center the epistemic interventions of formigão and place him in conversation with Black trans* and Black feminist theorists from across the Américas to consider these questions: is a Black woman who was classified as female at birth the same as a white woman who was classified as female at birth? That is, are Black women who were classified as female at birth cisgender? What political implications does classifying Black women as “cisgender” have for anti-racist solidarity and decolonial activism? In this article,⁴ I argue that the emergence of the unmarked “cisgender” category

² Here I write “Eurocentric western category” because, for me, western does not mean European. There are multiple and competing visions of what constitutes the west. The hegemonic one is a Eurocentric vision, but other ones include an Afro-Centric/Afro-Indigenous vision, which is hemispherically counter-hegemonic, and an Indigenous vision, which is regionally counter-hegemonic. The discussion of gender in this essay centers the Afro-Centric/Afro-Indigenous vision of western sex/gender systems. I write Afro-Centric/Afro-Indigenous vision because there is an Afrodiasporic vision that recognizes the contributions of Indigenous cultures on our hemispheric understanding of Blackness (as defined by Lelia Gonzalez’s coinage “Améfrican”). This vision is in conversation with an explicitly Afro-Centric vision, which gives more weight to the African influence on hemispheric Black identities and less to Indigenous populations.

³ Trans* refers to anyone who does not identify with the gender that they were assigned at birth. Whereas transgender is understood by many to refer to those who have transitioned within the gender binary, for others it refers to an inclusive umbrella along the lines indicated by the term trans*. The term trans* gives clarity to the fact that one is talking about gender non-conformity in its many forms, not only people who transition or live along a gender binary.

⁴ Just a note that I am focusing here primarily on the experiences of sex/gender deviants who were assigned female at birth. This article is based on an expanded book chapter from my forthcoming book on Brazilian Blackgenders and Sexualities, where I discuss the experiences of Black travesties, Bixas Pretas, and the politics of fatness as it pertains to Black women’s bodies.

as a universalized identity and social marker in hegemonic (i.e. white⁵ dominated) debates about gender diversity and social oppression undermines the interventions and political denouncements made by Black trans*, Black feminist, and Blackgender and sexual-dissidents. In Brazil, in particular, the term “cisgender” is increasingly being used to silence Black Feminists, Black sapatões, Black lesbians, and activists who challenge the whiteness and anti-Black violence that often goes unaddressed in white trans* and queer social movements. This is not a common occurrence among activist communities within a U.S. American context, where Trans* and Disability Studies locates its roots in Black Feminist Studies and Critical Race Theory. Thus, Black scholars and activists in the U.S. do not face the kind of viscous public attacks and social exclusions that Black activists and scholars face in Brazil when they are in conversation or debate with white trans*, queer, lesbian, and bi activists. They live in a context where Black people, Black thought, and intellectuals are generally not respected outside of Black social movements.

The ubiquity and ease with which Black people, and especially Black women and sex/gender deviants, are positioned as both oppressed *and* oppressor/aggressor, while white mestizos position themselves as the oppressed victims of Black aggression, follows a specifically Brazilian⁶ form of white fragility. In a context where white mestizos use their mestizo identity to declare, as Liv Sovik (2009) argues, “Here no one is white” (and therefore here no one can be a racist), white sex/gender dissidents implicitly argue that since they are not “cisgender” nor heteronormative, they cannot be oppressors but only victims (instead of, perhaps, both). If a white person (whether trans*, lesbian, bi, or a sex/gender dissident) is challenged on their racism, and at times on their classism, by a Black person, the Black person is always under threat of being seen as overly aggressive, perhaps even a bully, and is expected to address the issue in a way that actually respects and accommodates white fragility. However, in the case of a Black person (whether trans*, lesbian, bi, or a sex/gender dissident), no such overture is made to address, extend respect, or demonstrate empathy when seeking redress. Instead, all of the power behind whiteness that allows it to emotionally and psychologically

⁵ Here I think of whiteness as a normative Eurocentric ideological formation and affective register rooted in white supremacy. In conversation with José Muñoz’s work, whiteness is imposed as a universalized modality, where those classified as white are assumed to embody this modality, while non-white populations are defined out of whiteness because they are understood as not embodying this modality because of their racial difference. Thus, while non-white populations can internalize whiteness as an affective register, much of the experience of non-white subjects and their identities are centered around managing one’s failure to embody (and thereby to adequately perform) this modality. This work contributes to larger efforts to theorize identities that, following Muñoz (1998), disidentify with whiteness; that is, constructing identities within the joints and ideological ruptures (i.e. contradictions) of whiteness across the Américas. It is also in conversation with work that theorizes other identities that, like formigão’s, draw from the continued presence of, and connections to, non-European epistemologies that persist in the west; that is, people who realize that they inherited non-European epistemological framework which facilitates their ability to define themselves, and exist as, as something else.

⁶ Though I am focused on Brazil in this essay, I am also thinking of how this dynamic plays out in similar ways in parts of Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean.

annihilate that which it sees as a threat, inferior or subordinate is directed at the non-white Afrodescendant body. In cases where “cisgender,” hetero, or homonormativity—all white supremacist ideologies—cannot be leveled as justifications for discursive violence and the social exclusion of Black bodies—specifically sex/gender dissidents—it is their racialized sex/gender deviance (i.e. refusal) that is used to position them as a threat.

In this essay, I am in conversation with Fatima Lima (2018) and Maria Lugones (2016) in thinking about how the coloniality of the race/sex/gender/class matrix limits white trans*, queer, and sex/gender dissidents’ capacity to be allies to Black people; that is, to work in solidarity with Black women and sapatões, specifically, and Black trans*, sex/gender dissidents in a broader sense. While Lugones focuses on the challenge of oppressed groups working together across gender, I want to think within a Brazilian context about the challenges of oppressed groups working together across race. Such a move would require white women, white queers, and white LGBTrans* and Travesti activists to think about power and their complicity in Brazilian white supremacy. This means recognizing that the discourse of challenging power “no matter where it is” can run contrary to its intended goal of fighting oppression. When a white minoritarian subject does not consider why they may feel threatened in a particular moment, the result can lead to forms of violent discursive aggression against racialized minorities that has three major effects.

First, it reproduces a colonial racial order centered on Black silence and subordination via (re)naming and (re)defining what constitutes oppression. Second, the aggression negates that white minoritarian subjects are engaged in this form of affective necropolitics. This is done by reformulating the Brazilian discourse of *mestizaje* to argue that the psychological and affective nature of their sex/gender oppression places them in a position of absolute precarity. They note that, in comparison to U.S. American whiteness, they are actually biologically non-white. Third, it co-opt discourses of *difference* and normalizes human “difference and diversity” within whiteness. By discursively dismissing the fact that race was never about biology, but about relations of power symbolically encoded on the body, white mestizos are able to dismiss the reality that they are socialized to reproduce a Brazilian white supremacist social order. This erasure supports an internal narrative that their sex/gender oppression overrides the kind of internalized anti-Black racism that is foundational to one’s socialization as a white subject. In this way, as Liv Sovik argues: “*Aqui, ninguém é Branco*” (SOVIK, 2009). This move prevents non-white subjects from talking about how racism impacts gender and sexual identities, because white mestizos to use categories of *difference* to police and exclude Black sex/gender dissidents who do not fit into white normative categories of *difference*.

The result of this violent discursive aggression is that white sex/gender dissidents are largely uncritical about how their own implicit, and at times explicit, investment in whiteness undermines

and reinforces the racist, cis-normative, Eurocentric gender regime that is at the root of their own oppression. One manifestation of this is how the category “cisgender” is used to exclude Black sex/gender dissidents from inclusion in interracial non-normative erotic and social spaces. Most critically, we are in a moment where Black people are in the process of reclaiming our bodies and theorizing the various sex/gender traumas that we have and continue to suffer individually and collectively. When white subjects weaponize the term “cisgender,” for example, in political contexts, it results in the silencing of Black peoples’ discussions about our bodies. The result is little space for Black people, whether they end up transitioning or not, to recognize and reconnect with our bodies, so that we can then decide what we would like to do to those bodies. In other words, Black people are never given the space, within whiteness, to talk about their cu, xuxota, penis, clitoris, and everything in-between.

White sex/gender dissidents start their lives with the assumption that, on some level, they have a body. The question is then about their connection (or not) to that body, the ability to express affect, how to experience their bodies, and/or the right to define themselves in their bodies. Black people, on the other hand, are in the process of reconnecting with the idea that we even *have* bodies, much less that we own them. Talking about a vulva, penis, clitoris, taint, or prostate for a Black and non-white Afro-descendant person points to a whole different set of meanings and affective, psychological, and decolonial processes, given the historicity of the Black body. As Snorton (2017) points out, the history of gender and sexuality embodied by white bodies is not the same as those embodied by Black bodies. Black sex/gender dissidents, Blackgenders, and sexualities are not the same as those associated with whiteness. Thus, for a white trans woman, for example, to attack a so-called “cisgender” Black woman who has begun the process of embracing her vagina, is a specific kind of racial violence rooted in coloniality. Black people are rarely offered the space, in the face of whiteness, to talk about, name, understand, and redefine our own bodies. This negation is a reimposition of a western Eurocentric bio-logic, while Eurocentric understandings of sex and gender are defined and redefined within a colonial Eurocentric frame and then universalized and imposed onto all bodies.

In this essay, I am employing the term “Blackgender” to refer to the distinctiveness of Black sex/gender embodiment. “Blackgender” recognizes the African, Afro-Indigenous, and Afro-Diasporic nature of how Blackgenders are understood and embodied by Black and non-white Afrodescendant people. It recognizes the historically constituted nature of Blackgenders as being imbued with coloniality. By invoking this term, I turn away from “gender,” which is a specifically Eurocentric, anti-Black, and anti-African ideology. It is imposed onto non-white bodies, in which non-white persons are expected to imagine the constituted nature of their gender identities and

experiences as being reflected only in European histories of embodiment, dating back to the Greek and Roman empires but stopping short of including Egypt (which is the ancient foundation for the modern “West”). If we continued western genealogy into Egypt, then we would have to talk about Africa, Nubia, and therein we would end up undermining the colonial matrix imposed by Western European imperialism and its resultant white supremacist, cisnormative (racialized), patriarchal, extractivist system. I also want point to a door that is now wide open: Black folks across the hemisphere are rethinking and redefining sex/gender based on our own histories, inherited non-European epistemologies, and metaphysics. formigão's work is an important example of this process and of what happens when Blackgenders and Blacksexualities challenge Eurocentric (i.e. white) cooptation of “difference.”

Here, I think it is important to note how I conceptualize whiteness. I conceptualize whiteness as a normative Eurocentric ideological formation and affective register rooted in white supremacy and coloniality. This forms the basis for Eurocentric definitions of Humanity, Citizen, and the Humanoid (WYNTER 2003). In conversation with José Muñoz’s work (2020), I conceptualize whiteness as an imposed and universalized modality, where those classified as white are assumed to embody this modality, while non-white populations are defined out of whiteness because they are understood as not embodying this modality due to their racial difference. Thus, while non-white populations can internalize whiteness as an affective register, much of the experiences and identities of non-white subjects are centered around managing one’s failure to embody (and thereby to adequately perform) this modality. This work contributes to larger efforts to theorize Blackgenders and sexualities following Lima (2018). It is also in conversation with activists who, like formigão, draw from the continued presence of, and connection to, non-European epistemologies that persist in the west. I am in conversation with people who realize that we can define ourselves as something else, a something else rooted in both our present and in our ancestry.

1 TOWARDS AN ORI-CENTERED THEORY OF GENDER: THINKING BLACKGENDERS AND SEXUALITIES, CENTERING BLACK TRANS* IDENTITIES

Tito Mitjans Alayón (2022) writes from Chiapas, Mexico:

Afro-diasporic thinkers have shown us how gender is a colonialist fantasy. Hortense Spillers (1987) explained how during slavery black bodies became a territory of cultural and political manipulation. Generic meanings and uses were imposed on them according to the interests of the slavers. bell hooks argued that given “the persistent masculinization of black women, we should all be understood as queer and trans” and Afro-Brazilian teacher Dora Santana advocated more practice of “black trans-cis-terhood” (Tinsley, p. 33). Young Afrotransfeminist intellectuals and academics are emphasizing black genres as queer, as trans (Gossett, 2016; Snorton,

2017; Ellison, 2017). They helped me to reflect joyfully on the queer and trans paths of our Orishas like Yemayá Olokun; enjoying the pleasure of fully existing while dancing and moving my fat-black-hairy-trans body to the beat of the Afro-Caribbean rhythms. They are part of my daily healing ceremonies, when talking to nature, the ancestors, the orishas, asking them for guidance and protection.

-Tito Mitjans Alayón⁷

In the book *Black Freedom: Queer Sovereignty*, Ana-Maurine Lara (2020) shows how the attempt at colonial conquest continues throughout the Americas and that we often miss a reality in clear view: that there are Afro-Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the world that continue to rival the hegemony of a Eurocentric Western system with global designs. Lara's central argument is that being Black and queer undermines the Christian colonial hermeticism at the root of the colonial systems of the Americas and opens a doorway—a portal even—to systems of knowledge and *being* that remain present despite the colonial orders' declaration that Indigenous *body-lands* are extinct and African *body-lands* are evil and demonic. In the text, "body-lands" refers to the recognition that nature has its own type of sociability which is perceptible in the visible world as spirit and other invisible forces. It also recognizes the body as being part of the natural world, thereby both material and of the spirit (that is, we are embodied-spirits who are not removed from nature). This allows movement and communication between various entities in material and nonmaterial states. By engaging Afro-Indigenous spiritual practices that are present in our everyday lives, but which are secreted and we are taught not to see, we can live an existence that runs counter to the colonial grammar imposed on our queer bodies. The Christian colonial grammar serves as the foundation for Black and Black queer oppression and the oppression of all of humanity. Lara refers to this system as a "Christian colonial hermeticism." In conversation with Sylvia Wynter's theory on the coloniality of being, Lara shows how this hermeticism is racialized, since "race" as we understand it in the West is a colonial grammar written on the body, coded in affect and on the soul. Lara situates this analysis within the context of the Dominican Republic.

⁷ Alayón, Tito Mitjans. 2020. "Audre Lorde Now: Letter to Audre Lorde from the Future." Center for the Humanities (CUNY Graduate School). Accessed January 25, 2022. <https://www.centerforthehumanities.org/distributaries/letter-to-audre-lorde-from-the-future>.

Pensadoras afrodiáspóricas nos mostraron como el género es una fantasía colonialista. Hortense Spillers (1987) explicó cómo durante la esclavitud los cuerpos negros se convirtieron en un territorio de manipulación cultural y política. Se le impusieron significados y usos genéricos según los intereses de los esclavistas. *bell hooks* expuso que dado "la persistente masculinización de las mujeres negras, todas deberíamos ser entendidas como queer y trans" y la profesora afrobrasileña Dora Santana abogó por practicar más la "black trans-cis-terhood" (Tinsley, p.33). Varixs jóvenes intelectuales y académicxs afrotransfeministas están enfatizando los géneros negros son queer, son trans (Gossett, 2016; Snorton, 2017; Ellison, 2017). Me ayudaron a reflejarme gozosamente en los caminos queers y trans de nuestros Orishas como Yemayá Olokun; disfrutar el placer de existir plenamente mientras bailo y mover mi cuerpo gordo-negro-peludo-trans al compás de los ritmos afrocaribeños. Son parte de mis ceremonias cotidianas de sanación, al platicar con la naturaleza, lxs ancestrxs, lxs orishas, pedirles guía y protección.

Tito Mitjans Alayón, Spillers, formigão, Lima, Tinsley, Strongman, and a whole host of intellectuals across the diaspora argue that Indigenous and African ways of knowing and being are still very much a visible part of our everyday existence if we choose to see them; meaning, decolonial praxis is here and now. Non-Eurocentric ways of embodying genders and sexual identities would be present in subtle yet obvious ways, as well as in blatantly obvious ways, if we chose to see them. There is a whole canon of Black feminist scholarship pointing to the ways in which colonialism and the experience of racialization resulted in a gendered experience for Black women that was not the same as the implicit whiteness associated with the normative category of “woman.” Like formigão, scholars such as Mignon Moore (2011), in her work on the gender identities of Black lesbians in the U.S., showed that they have worked to name and define their own Blackgender identities. Moore shows that Black lesbian gender identities are not the same as the gender identities of white lesbians in the U.S.

As Oyeronke Oyěwùmí argues, the “cultural logic of Western social categories is based on an ideology of biological determinism,” which is “the conception that biology provides the rational for the organization of the social world...” (Oyěwùmí 1997, p. ix-x) such that categories like “woman”—and here I would add Blackgender identities such as Brazilian *travestis* and *bixa pretas*—are elaborated in relation and opposition to another category: Human. This bio-logic is also foundational to cultural understandings of the non-material world, particularly as it is theorized in religious and spiritual practices. In the case of the African Diaspora in the Americas, we also inherit resonants of how gender is understood in precolonial Africa in our social life, artistic and religious practices.

In the case of gender and sexuality, scholars have addressed the deployment of an imagined African gender and sexuality rooted in homophobia and patriarchy as a logic maintained in many diasporic African-based religious communities and various countries' national Black identity politics (BELISO-DE JESÚS, 2015; MATORY, 2005). Matory (1994) argues that the political structure of the pre-colonial Oyo-Yoruba empire was gendered. The ritual role of what we call “women” and “wives” in this empire were mapped onto the socio-political and economic organization of society. The Oyo-Yoruba gender order (male wives, female husbands, and female warriors) was disrupted and altered because the political structure (which could not be separated from how bodies are ordered) was altered by British colonialism, the rise of Christianity, and Islam-inspired Jihadists. That is, a gender order is certainly rooted in a larger political order, but also in an epistemological one. Roberto Strongman (2019, p. 2) connects this to diasporic epistemologies with his conceptualization of transcorporeality, which he describes as a distinctly Afro-diasporic cultural representation of the human psyche as multiple, removable, and external to the body, which functions

as its receptacle. One cannot understand Afrodiasporic sex/gender identities without understanding precolonial African metaphysics, specifically Ifá and Vodoun. Sapatões, like formigão, point to this in their work.

2 FORMIGÃO THEORIZES BRAZILIAN BLACKGENDERS: THINKING SAPATÃO AS A NON-BINARY AFRO-DIASPORIC GENDER IDENTITY

Sapatão is a slur that was initially reclaimed by grassroots feminist and lesbian social movements. There are many perspectives on the origins of the slur *sapatão*.⁸ In the larger political context of Brazil, it is increasingly common for people who are often read as Black lesbians to reject the term “lesbian.” They reject its European history and dependence on a racialized white normative vision of womanhood for its definition. Many gender-nonconforming people, regardless of race, who are classified as female at birth also embrace the term *sapatão*, as they do not fit the gender normativity implicit in the term “lesbian.” In activist, artivist, and literary circles, *sapatão* is sometimes theorized as a non-binary gender category, since *sapatão* refers to people classified as female at birth who identify neither as men nor women in their gender identity, but can identify with or exhibit traits associated with masculinity, femininity, androgyny, and racialized gender non-normativity.⁹ Others locate the term within a kind of womanhood, but one that rejects the normative gender expectations associated with femininity, such as cisheteronormativity. What is clear is that it was a pejorative term leveled at gender non-conforming women.

Scholars such as myself, C. Riley Snorton (2017), Siobahn Sommerville (2000), and Jessica Oliveira and Bruna Barros (2020) have argued that western notions of gender non-conformity are rooted in anti-Blackness, as it is the Black body that served as the marker of humanoid animality, gender, sexual abjection, and the morally atavistic/demonic/satanic/anti-Christ tendencies against which normativity and humanity (i.e. whiteness) are defined. Here I am pointing to the work of Sylvia Wynter, who has developed a genealogy of the term “Human” and its relationship to scientific racism, Christian colonialism, capitalism, genocide, and Afro-Indigenous epistemicide. That is, the way in which secular understanding of the modern Human is defined in moral and racial terms is mapped onto European Christian colonial understandings of demonic, evil, sexual, gender-deviant heretics who are seen as non-humans, as humanoid animalistic demons. It is for this reason that, in my essay *Epistemologia negra sapatão como vetor de uma práxis humana libertária* I place the Black witch in

⁸ For example, one commonly held belief is that the term points to the large black boots lesbian militants wore during the 1970s, hence the term *sapatão*, which translates to “big shoe.”

⁹ Racialized gender non-normativity refers to how non-white subjects are not included in normative gender because of their racialization. That is, normative gender is racialized in which normative gender refers to normative gender performance by white/white mestizo bodies.

conversation with the *sapatão* Negra, because they are sisters, or even better, they are twins who coexist and move between intersecting temporal dimensions. In this sense, the Black witch, for me, represents the Eurocentric, colonial ecclesiastical understanding of the Black witch as morally and sexually perverse. She (and at times “it”) is seen as a gender deviant, animalistic demon who embodies and emanates sorcery (i.e. African, Afro-Indigenous and Afro-diasporic spirituality and metaphysics). She re-incarnates in the modern period as the Black *sapatão*. In the case of contemporary Brazil, both have come to exist on the same temporal plane, and as a result, they spark an intense fear in a Western nation that seeks to rid itself of, borrowing from Fanon, its national fact of Blackness.

As Ana-Mauríne Lara (2021), Natasha Tinsley (2018), and I (forthcoming 2023) argue, it is the presence of the Black sex/gender dissident that points to the Afro-centric vision of Western modernity and continues to be a counter hegemonic threat. Through a Eurocentric lens, one imagines existing in a space inhabited by monsters, demons, and deviants. It is for this reason that Brazil is at war with itself. Here, I would like to return to formigão’s post about his exclusion from a carnival group. In the excerpt above, he writes

...that their space is open for transwomen they say that they are allied with trans people but could not understand how a black [gendered masculine] *sapatão* from the favela who wants to be called him and to be a part of a lesbian community these *sistas* focused on my dissidence from womananity to not accept me into the group and they did not focus on our link which is lesbianism...not throwing shade but i think that these lesbian and bi women are lesbophobic because they do not understand lesbian cor-p-oralities beyond womananity...[i’m] masculine queer like the gringos say a butch stud stone butch seems like a *kaminhoneira* is an empty word if they see a person like me y they dont recognize me as another *sapatão* only because only because i took it out of the name i think that they asked me what i wanted in that kind of womans space i wanted to ... make friends create networks of mutual support solidarity create affective connections to get to know future black lovers but there is only there for *kaminhoneiras* only if they are women

In this excerpt from the longer post, formigão mentions how the term *kaminhoneira* (*caminhoneira*, or female trucker), *sapatão*, stone butch, stud, and butch are terms that apply to him. But because he disidentifies with being a woman, and though his masculine identification is informed by an identity based on a lesbian existence, he is excluded from lesbian-centered space. He argues that the women are being lesbophobic because they do not understand lesbian cor-p-oralities (*kor-p-oralidades*) beyond the Eurocentric gender category of “woman.” Here formigão is invoking lesbian feminist and Black feminist challenges to what constitutes womanhood.

According to Black feminists and lesbian feminists, given the criteria used to define what it means to be a woman, Black women and lesbians do not fit. This perspective is centered in Brazilian

lesbian feminists' interventions into the debates surrounding women's oppression in Brazil. That is, by using local terms like *sapatão* and *caminhoneira*, they point to a specifically Brazilian experience of lesbian embodiment, history, and subjectivities. Black *sapatões* point to the way in which Blackness defines Black people as sex/gender deviants. The violent exclusion of Black women from the category of "woman" (i.e. Humanity) is still a central part of Black women's experiences. One only has to consider, for example, how modern gynecology began as a major site of trauma for Black women and continues to be a site of trauma today (SNORTON, 2017). This brings me to a question: why was *formigão* excluded from this space? Further, why didn't the women in the group, out of solidarity as *caminhoneiras* and *sapatões*, just let *formigão* enter? They had invited him after all.

There are two reasons that immediately come to mind. The first is that these kinds of spaces emerged in response to the violence faced by oppressed minorities within the larger public sphere; such spaces for specific types of stigmatized identities are understood to be safe spaces, free of oppressive violence. Did they think that *formigão*, a well-known *sapatão* and *caminhoneira* poet, could potentially be a violent oppressor that would place the group's participants in danger or make them feel afraid? If that was the case, why did *formigão* go from being included under the umbrella (or intersecting subjectivity) of "lesbian" online to a potential threat when he showed up in person? What were they afraid of? What did they need to police, to protect?

The second reason is that if it is not a question of safety, then it is a result of the impulse to simply exclude someone they saw as not being like them. If that is the case, what made someone who is known as a *sapatão* and *caminhoneira* different from the lesbian, bi, and trans women who were included in the space? Remember that some of the participants in the space also identify as *sapatão* and *caminhoneira* as a way to challenge the various lesbophobic normativities associated with femininity, including female masculinities/masculine women. What made it possible for this group, which is targeted by violence for many of the same reasons that *formigão* is targeted, to feel comfortable, even confident, about excluding someone known as a *sapatão* and *caminhoneira* while questioning him about his intentions for participating? *formigão* also addresses this in his post with a play on words and in the poem projected behind him in figure 1: the problem was *formigão*'s clear rejection of whiteness as an affective register and his embracing and embodying of stigmatized Améfrican ontologies as a legitimate way of presenting self in a Eurocentric, white supremest society.

It is *formigão*'s play on words that points to another dimension of his experience, Blackness. *formigão*'s deployment of the word "kor-pos" is a play on the word "body" in Portuguese. The play on words points to both "kor," or color, while referencing bodies. His usage of the term "kor-poralidades" refers to embodiment (*corporalidades*), color (*cor*), and orality (*oralidades*), with oralities pointing to non-European, and specifically African, ways of both subject formation and the

recording and transmitting of historical experiences. Image 1, at the beginning of this essay, points to and explicitly makes these connections.

In image 1, formigão is standing in front of an excerpt of one of their poems. It reads:

(...) todo sapatão preto exu
 não sou demônio
 todo sapatão preto é exu
 negociando no mercado
 todo sapatão preto é exu
 rímando mando meu rekado

This poem has multiple pointings and epistemic interventions. It highlights many of the key points discussed in this essay. In the poem projected behind formigão, there is a reference to formigão's anarchist philosophical influences via their anti-capitalist, pretuguês (Black Portuguese) intervention into written language through spelling and lower-casing. The essay starts out with the line "all Black sapatão is exu." Exu is the Orisa of all marginal worlds, crossroads, the marketplace, and entrances to homes. Exu is a deity that governs doors; that is, forms of communication. Exu sees and records all things that happen in the universe; he/it is central to the process of people understanding their spiritual and material paths. To put this another way, given the intersectional nature of the oppressions that Black¹⁰ *sapatões* experience (nearly every form of human oppression, including histories of colonization and embodying the histories of the before colonization), then we could say: *sapatões* are beings that inhabit all marginal worlds, the crossroads, the marketplace, and entrances to home. *Sapatões* embody wisdom (deity) that governs doors (entrances and exits) and forms of communication (exchanging knowledge, understandings, articulations of self). *Sapatões* see and record (embody) *all things that happen in the universe* (memory); they are central to the process of people understanding their spiritual and material paths. Then, after saying that their existence messes with one's sense of desire (pheromones), formigão writes that they are not a demon.

When the Christians began to colonize West Africa, missionaries equated Exú with a demon, with Satan. In English translations of Yoruba language and Yoruba metaphysics (Ifá), Exú was translated as demon, devil, or Satan. As aforementioned, gender non-conforming Black queers are

¹⁰ I believe that the stigma of identifying/being seen as a sapatão for white people who are assigned female at birth has to do with the history of racialization and sexism imbedded in the social fear and moral panics governing white women's sex/gender non-conformity. The fear of this type of "perversity" is linked to a fear of white women potentially darkening the white race instead of keeping it already white, or in the case of Brazil and other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, undermining the whitening of the population.

often associated with being demons or demonic and practitioners of Afrodiasporic religious traditions are seen as such as well.¹¹ This has resulted in violent attacks on African-based religious practitioners.

In Brazil, Blackgender non-conforming women and girls (here I mean Black and visibly Afro descendant women and girls), those assumed to be sex/gender deviants, and *sapatões* are subjected to multiple forms of violence because they are seen as demonic, likely witches, because of their sex/gender dissidence; literally practicing “macumba,” a slur that refers to African-based religious traditions as witchcraft; or sexualized for being visibly non-white Afrodescendant people. This violence includes rapes from a very young age (many before they are old enough to speak), “corrective” rapes, gynecological violence, economic violence, psychological and physical assault, and murder. This plays out for Black femininities across multiple indices—Black and Afro descendant women and girls, Black trans* and transwomen, Black bixas, and Black travesties are the populations that are most likely to suffer various forms of psychological and physical assault, economic violence, sexist, anti-trans*, and homophobic violence. This is something that formigão theorizes from his lived experiences and positionality as a Black trans* masculine *sapatão*.

The poem centers on the subject position and identity *sapatão*, which Jessica Oliveira and Bruna Barros (2021) and I (SAUNDERS, forthcoming) have argued is a racialized sex/gender identity, as it is a naming of West African cultural retentions of gender. Given the way in which the identity is being taken up, resignified, and theorized by Black feminists and sex/gender dissidents, the resignification of *sapatão* offers new possibilities for thinking and naming African and Afrodiasporic cultural retentions. Here I turn to two lines in formigão’s poem: “(...) *all black sapatão is exu; I am not a demon.*”

Another pointing is to formigão themselves. Over the course of the last few years, formigão changed their name from *formiga*, which is a feminine noun meaning “ant,” to *formigão*, which translates into the masculine noun meaning “giant ant.” The name change maps onto formigão’s internal transition to embracing their gender non-conforming, Afrodiasporic non-binary, masculine sex/gender identity. This is connected to a final pointing in this poem: the religious/spiritual/non-material dimension of Blackgender identities.

¹¹On the 21st and 22nd of January, 2019, various Brazilian media outlets published the following headline: “Homem é preso em Campinas após matar travesti e guardar coração: ‘Era um demônio’” [Man is arrested in Campinas after killing a travesti and keeping the heart]. The murderer, 20 year old Caio Santos de Oliveira, stated the following upon being arrested: “Ele era um demônio, eu arranquei o coração dele. É isso. Não era meu conhecido. Conheci ele à meia-noite.” <https://g1.globo.com/sp/campinas-regiao/noticia/2019/01/21/homem-e-presos-em-campinas-apos-matar-e-guardar-coracao-da-vitima-em-casa.ghtml> Accessed March 15, 2022.

3 THE COLONIALITY OF (UN)GENDERED BLACK FLESH: THINKING WHITENESS, OPPRESSION(S) AND POSSIBILITIES FOR INTER-RACIAL DISSIDENT SOLIDARITY POLITICS

First of all, their New-World, diasporic plight marked a theft of the body—a willful and violent (and unimaginable from this distance) severing of the captive body from its motive will, its active desire. Under these conditions, we lose at least gender difference in the outcome, and the female body and the male body become a territory of cultural and political maneuver, not at all gender-related, gender-specific (206). ... that the African female subject, under these historic conditions, is not only the target of rape— in one sense, an interiorized violation of body and mind - but also the topic of specifically externalized acts of torture and prostration that we imagine as the peculiar province of male brutality and torture inflicted by other males. A female body strung from a tree limb, or bleeding from the breast on any given day of field work because the "overseer," standing the length of a whip, has popped her flesh open, adds a lexical and living dimension to the narratives of women ... (SPILLERS, 2003, p. 207)

In this excerpt, Spillers points to how the slave trade was also a process in which the African body was stolen and the mind was severed from its connection to body. What was left goes through a process of ungendering. The brutality that enslaved male and female bodies experienced was not only undertaken by men, but by all who held a position of power within colonial societies, including white women. During the colonial period, enslaved people were oftentimes the only property a white woman could own or inherit (JONES-RODGERS, 2019). These violences, rooted in the body and psyche, give another dimension to the narrative of what constitutes “woman” and impacts possibilities for thinking an interracial feminist solidarity politic. In conversation with scholars such as Spillers, Fatima Lima (2018) points out the uniqueness of Black feminine sex/gender dissident experiences in Brazil. Lima writes:

Negras/os, transexuais, sapatões, afeminadas, machonas, putas e travestis constituem corpos- subjetividades privilegiados nas relações de poder, nas violências, assujeitamentos e opressões, em que uma necroeconomia da matabilidade (vidas que se tornam cada vez mais matáveis), um necropoder (poder de morte) e uma necropolítica (política da morte) (MBEMBE, 2018) infelizmente vão colocando em degradês econômicos as vidas que são mais possivelmente matáveis ou mais matáveis do que outras. Em nenhum momento estou afirmando ou tomando esses modos de vidas como iguais. Pelo contrário, é na força de suas diferenças e diferentes modos de ser e estar nos mundos que pode residir um comum: marcadores categoriais e dinâmicos como raça, gênero, sexualidade, território, classe, entre outros, interseccionados, vão compondo uma gramática em que a política da matabilidade opera ações cotidianas. (2018, p. 74)

Linking this to the kind of coloniality that Spillers describes, Lima makes the case that masculine Black lesbians face a specific kind of necropolitics rooted in anti-Black racism that is mapped onto various kinds of social exclusions. As she argues, this is not about an oppression Olympics, but instead a call to really think about, theorize, and address the modes of domination that

come together to make being a Black sex/gender dissident a target for Brazilian necropolitics. This is linked to how the Black body, specifically the Black female body, became scientifically and medically classified as not human and deviant. Centuries of colonial practices of ungendering end up coalescing in modern sexology and psychology, which is something that is not addressed within white feminism.

Here I bring bell hooks into the conversation. In her book chapter entitled “Black Women Shaping Feminist Theory,” hooks argues that we have to think of class not only in economic terms, but in terms of a set of behaviors. White feminism does not theorize white supremacy as a racial politics, or as being intertwined with the psychological impact of both white socialization and class socialization. Thereby it does not consider how this structures white feminists’ political status within a racist, sexist, capitalist (i.e. neoliberal) state. hooks argues: “There is much evidence substantiating the reality that race and class identity creates differences in quality of life, social status, and lifestyle that take precedence over the common experience women share – differences that are rarely transcended” (1984, p. 4). We find the same dynamics at play within trans* communities that are dominated by the voices of white trans folk who claim to speak for all trans women. As hooks argues in the case of feminism, “slogans like ‘organize around your own oppression’ provided the excuse that privileged” persons needed to ignore the differences between their social status and the status of Black trans*, Black sex/gender dissidents, and Black women (including Black lesbians). That is, defining any of these subjects as “cisgender” allows for white minoritarian subjects to weaponize transphobia (which has been historically challenged mostly by Black and Latinx (in the U.S.) minoritarian subjects), in order to not be challenged on their racism and classism. Black minoritarian subjects, including Black women recognized as “cis,” are dismissed as being the same as middle-class whites, unless they fit a variety of stereotypes (e.g. prostitutes, etc.). All of these tools are used to silence minoritarian Black subjects and to justify white aggression and condescension. The goal of these attacks are to create an environment so psychologically unbearable that the Black minoritarian person is too demoralized to speak.

Students of histories of gender and sexuality¹² are familiar with the reality that much of the (marked as) deviant sexual and gender identities that we have today were the result of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century scientific and medical classifications rooted in scientific racism. Research in these areas was largely used to create a basis for formally delineating normative and deviant sexual

¹² For those who may not be familiar with this history, see the works of Alice Dumont Dreger, Siobhan Somerville, and Michele Foucault. See the works of the first sexologists themselves: Magnus Hirschfeld and Richard von Krafft-Ebing, and for feminist biologist critiques of how western bio-logics concerning the body works, see Annie Fausto-Sterling’s *Sexing the Body* (2000).

practices and gender identities within Western European cultures. Research in this area emerged during the time that Scientific racism was the accepted framework through which to understand human (and non-human, i.e. nonwhite) bodies, societies, and cultures. In early sexology, as a delineated discipline that drew from medical and social science disciplines, it was understood that gender and sexual nonconformity was a characteristic of the “darker races.” Early on, privileged white men had the social status and economic means to hide their gendered and sexually non-conforming lives outside of the public sphere. If they were caught, or their tendencies became public in some kind of way, they were generally given the benefit of the doubt and used excuses such as having been seduced by the other, it being a tendency they could get a handle on or repenting with the help of a priest. In the case of white women, the result was a moral crisis where the white woman was seen as becoming part of the darker races, as white women were seen as underdeveloped men, but human nonetheless.

By the mid-twentieth century, white sexual and gender deviance was seen as something that was treatable medically and psychologically. For transgender people, who were classified as “transsexuals” in the twentieth century DSMs,¹³ the “medical treatment” was to help a *person* transition into a body that reflected their gender identity. After transition, the *person* would be medically reclassified as male or female. In the case of white lesbians and gay men, medical and psychological “treatment” was also an option to “correct” deviant behavior. For those who were non-white, sexual and gender deviance was seen as a biological trait of being non-white—another example of how non-white people, specifically Black/Afro descendant people, were not human and closer to being animals; that is, not a *person*. While white trans* subjects have the possibility to write themselves into humanity through medicalization,¹⁴ Black subjects never had this possibility, as sex/gender deviancy was inherent to Blackness. On the other hand, Black men who conformed to patriarchal notions of masculinity could make an anti-racist claim for access the realm of the human.

I would like to complicate these intersections even more, in order to address the question of interracial solidarity politics among sex/gender dissidents—a question that Spillars addresses in the opening quote of this section. Here I would like to place hooks in conversation with Spillars and Snorton to recognize something important. I begin by citing hooks:

¹³ American Psychiatric Association. 2022. “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5-TR).” Accessed January 26, 2022. <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm>.

¹⁴ I used possibility here because for those white trans* folks who are not able to “pass,” being written into humanity only exists in theory – in terms of everyday lived experiences and on legal documents. It is also largely white subjects are able to get laws to change, though it is Black and other non-white minoritarian subjects who have done the work of naming and bringing sex/gender dissident subjectivities to the larger public sphere (See Roderick Ferguson’s *One Dimensional Queer* (2019)).

As a group, black women are in an unusual position in this society, for not only are we collectively at the bottom of the occupational ladder, but our overall social status is lower than that of any other group. Occupying such a position, we bear the brunt of sexist, racist and classist oppression. At the same time, we are the group that has not been socialized to assume the role of exploiter/oppressor in that we are allowed no institutionalized “other” that we can exploit or oppress. (Children do not represent an institutionalized other even though they may be oppressed by parents.) White women and black men have it both ways. They can act as oppressor or be oppressed. Black men may be victimized by racism, but sexism allows them to act as exploiters and oppressors of women. White women may be victimized by sexism, but racism enables them to act as exploiters and oppressors of black people. Both groups have led liberation movements that favor their interests and support the continued oppression of other groups.... (1984, p. 16)

Throughout this essay, I have been sure to use the term *sex/gender dissidents*, thereby referencing the work of tatiana nascimento (CRGS, 2019). This is because there are *sex/gender dissidents* who are Black men (specifically *bixas pretas*), whose non-normative gender expression within a Eurocentric western ontology (they do not assume the role of a Black macho) places them within a different kind of *sex/gender* system than white *bixas*, for example. Here I point back to formigão’s intervention “*todo sapatão preta é exú,*” referring to processes of racialization in *gendering*, but also to the African cultural legacies that Afro-diasporic subjects inherit that have an impact on our understanding of our *gendering*. It is not uncommon for a boy, especially a boy who is seen as effeminate, to grow up (until about the age of 12) in Black women’s space, for example. In thinking *Blackgenders* and *Blacksexualities*, we must remember that the histories of *gendering* in the west take a different path when we consider racialization, in which African epistemes are racialized as irrational or childlike.

Blackgender and *sexuality studies* has its roots in Black and Latina/Chicana¹⁵ feminist thought in the U.S., and in Black feminist and *travesti* activism in Brazil (SANTANA, 2019). Additionally, Santana shows that Brazilian *trans** studies is firmly rooted in *travesti* activism, remembering that *travesti* activism is rooted in non-white, Afro-descendant, and Black *travesti* praxis. These connections are at the heart of Dora Santana’s work; it allows her to theorize *Afro trans vivências*.

I have been invested in the methodology I call *papo-de-mana*, roughly translated as “*sista talk*.” That is, foregrounding conversations with and from, as well putting in conversation with, black women’s voices, be they *trans* or *cis*, through face-to-face and also digitally mediated interactions as a site of dialogic theorizing. I draw from the legacies of already everyday ongoing practices of caring for one another with intimate checking ins between black and *trans* sisters, such as a phone conversation started by ‘E aí, mana!’ (Hey sis!) and from the black feminist critiques that black people have always been theorizing through oral history... [T]his approach stems from the usual meaning of the term *sister-to-sister talk*: “Afrocentric slang to

¹⁵ Here I am referring to the history of Latina/Chicana, including transgender Latina/Chicana activism and thought, which is foundational to contemporary Latinx/Chicanx theorizations of gender and sexuality.

describe congenial conversation or positive relating in which life lessons might be shared between Black women....” (2019, p. 211)

This points to the quote at the beginning of this essay, which demonstrates convergence between the experiences of Black and Black transwomen—that is, the gender non-conformity rooted in racialization and the influence of Afro-diasporic cultural legacies on Blackgendering. Dora can theorize black sisterhood, while centering her experience as a Black transgender woman. Given the histories of racialization and gendering, in which whiteness functions as a point of exclusionary praxis, these kinds of convergences and possibilities for sisterhood between white women and white transwomen, for example, would require a tremendous amount of work, since whiteness has an antagonistic relationship with difference and is constructed through exclusion(s).

The impulse for this essay results from witnessing how quickly white trans*, white trans women and men, white queers, and white cisgender LGB people feel entitled to insult, demean, silence, and exclude Black bodies from the spaces whiteness occupies. These actions not only silence those whose identity as Black women, Black lesbians, Black sapatão, and Black sex/gender deviants who face the contradiction of being called cisgender (though they do not live a cisgender existence); it renders invisible the *Afro trans vivências*, racialized non-white *kor-p-oralities*, and Afro-diasporic knowledge practices of Black trans* and travesti persons. Here we must return to the experience of formigão and his attempts at accessing safe space.

Safe space as a concept emerged in U.S. LGBT/queer and feminist movements. Given that Black, Latinx/Chicanx and other non-white racial and ethnic groups were key figures in these movements, safe space was also a staunchly inclusive and *accepting* space for people who also face racism/ethnic discrimination, in addition to being a part of minoritarian sex/gender groups. That is, safe spaces are also anti-racist spaces. formigão shared the gender identity of some of the people in the carnival group, but disidentified with Eurocentric bio-logics. The group, which also welcomed trans* women regardless of sexual identity excluded formigão, who is trans* and part of a racial minority. In terms of anti-racism, the group failed to offer refuge to a person who is not just a sex/gender minority, but a racialized sex/gender minority who, as Lima points out, faces constant threats of serious harm in the larger public sphere. If the argument was to protect safe space, the group failed to meet the anti-racist solidarity politic rooted in the emergence of safe space as an anti-racist political praxis in the U.S. Perhaps this points to a suspicion that formigão expressed in his post: is this really a trans* friendly group? The question is asked because the setup seems like a group that sought to hide its exclusionary white feminist ideological tendencies by claiming to include transwomen.

In the case of feminists who are transphobic, the most prominent TERF voices, for the most part, have been white women. One can easily argue that transphobia is a central current of white feminism, whereas, as the scholars mentioned in this essay have argued, Black feminist traditions are more inclusive of gender and sexual dissidents, considering the multiple axes of oppression that structure Black women's (broadly defined) subjectivities and oppression. I want to be clear here that I am not talking about white women who are feminists or Black women who are feminists; what I am pointing to is *white feminism* and *Black feminism* as ideological formations and theoretical frameworks. Because Black feminism focuses on human liberation (i.e. inclusivity and acceptance) through situating the unique positions of Black women in their diversity, it became theoretical point of departure for white U.S. American queers, trans*, and Disability Studies scholars – different contexts and different trajectories, but useful points for thinking hemispherically.

As I argue in this essay, part of this connection is linked to the colonial roots of Black women's gender, sexual, and racial non-normativity, in which the results include not being seen as “real” women, as mothers/parents, material inequality, little control over reproductive health (i.e. bodies), and little to no access to the affective markets that underlie partnership and kinship networks (*solidão*) (RAMOS SILVA, SAUNDERS, AND SOANIRINA OHMER, 2021). In fact, given the colonial process of ungendering bodies within Western ontologies, one can easily argue that the fungibility of Black women also reflects the fungibility of Black feminine subjects, broadly speaking. In this colonial process, Black women's bodies are reduced to a kind of masculine feminine flesh. Lélia Gonzalez (2018) theorizes an aspect of this fungibility in the concept of *mãe preta*. In fact, the role of Blackness in gendering some and ungendering others complicates our understandings of gender and trans*ness (SNORTON, 2017). It is this fungibility that allows for Black bodies to be defined as oppressor/aggressor, invisible, or whatever else whiteness desires them to be in any moment.

Because of Américans ancestral connections to West African understandings of femininity that are rooted in the Ori, in one's spiritual connections with Orisha, this opens the possibility of thinking and theorizing Black sisterhood, and *Black feminism* as containing the seeds of a trans*affirming praxis. This is the central point of theorization for the work of Black trans Brazilian scholar Dora Santana. In comparison, when we think of the history and political praxis of white feminism as an exclusionary feminist discourse, we could easily argue that *white feminism* is inherently anti-trans*. This is why Black trans scholars such as Dora Santana (2019), Black travesti Megg Rayara (2018), and Black Bixas' work are so powerful, and even possible—because of our inheritance of African-based understandings of gender and the canons of Black Feminist, Black Lesbian, and Black Queer intellectual work which demystifies the coloniality of gender. That is,

Black sisterhood does not depend on how the body looks. This is not possible from a white feminist framework.

In turning to the larger point of this essay, there must be an effort within interracial minoritarian communities to address a minoritarian political culture that seems to be rooted in annihilation, thereby reproducing necropolitics among the various populations that are its target. That is, to have effective networks of solidarity centered on an anti-oppression politics depends on seeing the humanity in each other. This is one important way to undermine the necropolitical tendencies (in its various forms) that we all have inherited in the Americas. We must learn how to have moments of empathy in moments of tension with another oppressed person. Such a move should not continue to be one-sided, with white subjects being offered care and human respect while Black, Indigenous, and Afro-descendant people are not seen as worthy of dignity and respect as a human. Here I again turn to Lima, who argues that Brazilians need to dismantle the myth of racial democracy and the idea of cordiality to focus on the coloniality of everyday social practices and its relationship to Brazil's slavocratic history. For this to happen in Brazil, and in any other part of the Américas, everyone, including white minoritarian subjects, must do the self-work necessary to address the socialization that justifies any form of anti-Black violence, social death, or exclusion.

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