Amefricanizing Social Media: Black Women Intellectuals in Brazil

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to look critically at, and demonstrate how, the use of social media by Black women intellectuals in Brazil can be seen as an enactment of Amefricanity, a concept coined by the Brazilian scholar Lélia Gonzalez (1935–1994). Amefricanity values experiences of Black people and their search to decenter colonial power structures in the Americas. This thesis helps to fill the gap regarding the study of social media in relation to decolonial feminisms by considering the relationship between Black women intellectuals in Brazil, social media, and Amefricanity. This work analyzes the Instagram profiles of Juliana Borges and Joice Berth, two intellectuals who often discuss topics related to Black women and the Black population in Brazil. I conducted a qualitative content analysis of their Instagram posts from March 2018 to October 2019. I argue that their posts constitute a form of meaningful knowledge production and dissemination that (a) does not rely on the approval and acceptance of formal scholarly institutions, and (b) enacts decolonial feminist practices through emphasizing their narratives by making their achievements, struggles, and knowledge accessible. The growing presence of Black women intellectuals in digital platforms has become fundamental to feminisms in Brazil.

      Keywords: Amefricanity, decolonial feminisms, Lélia Gonzalez, Instagram, intellectuality

General Summary

This research uses the Instagram profiles of two Black women intellectuals in Brazil, Joice Berth and Juliana Borges, to understand if their posts could be enacting a concept called Amefricanity. Created by Brazilian intellectual Lélia Gonzalez, this concept re-interprets stories so that the experiences of Black people are seen as fundamental for understanding Brazilian culture and its history. Because the concept of Amefricanity aims to understand Black stories through an alternative lens, I consider Gonzalez's work within the context of decolonial feminism, a theoretical and political approach to research and activism that challenges colonial perspectives. With this understanding, I investigate how Amefricanity is present in and through Borges's and Berth's virtual presence on Instagram. I conclude that the presence of Black women intellectuals on digital platforms has become fundamental to feminisms in Brazil and can enable transformative change.

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Chapter 1: Beginnings

I was inspired to start this research because of social media's role in my understanding of my identity as a Black woman. It all started in 2014, when I finished my undergraduate degree in History, and the Brazilian history curriculum was starting to include African History (pre-colonial, post-colonial, and contemporary) as a mandatory course for all students. At that time, I was doing an education degree to teach History in basic education, which included a field trip to the *Quilombo do Bracuí*, in Rio de Janeiro.

Quilombos or, in English, Maroon communities, were places where slaves who escaped used to run to after they fled captivity. Some of those spaces became lively communities and they remain a steady source of culture and knowledge to this day (Cunha Junior, 2011). During this field trip, while walking around the land with the women who lived there to see the houses and hear stories about their ancestors, I noticed that I shared many physical characteristics with one of the women who was walking beside me. That struck me because I knew from my life experience that I was not a white person, but I had never thought about why this was or how it came about. I started to chat with her about it. We had a long conversation about her ancestors, and I came to understand they were also mine in a certain way. We also talked about how our forbearers shape most of our experiences and how we can work to value that.

The internet was a great ally in finding new sources of knowledge on this matter. I was able to encounter, for example, Black women intellectuals who were working inside academic institutions and using the internet to make their work accessible to the public at large. Besides the use of open databases, they were using social media to make their knowledge and reflections available to other people. Thus, my research emerges from a wandering process through the interconnected experiences that together led me to construct my method, methodology, and

theory. These experiences grounded me and taught me that life experience is fundamental to building decolonial feminist research.

Today, I am both geographically and temporally far from these interconnections. Consequently, it was a challenging process to position and think of this research while being away from my home country, especially because I am interested in decolonial theory, which, as I discuss below, is deeply connected to lived experience and activism. Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh (2018) explain that decolonial thinking begins with praxis, that is, from daily experiences and practices of resurgence that make visible practices of racialization, exclusion, and marginalization (p. 18). Along the way, I questioned—many times—the possibility of a research project that does not directly speak to my current context as a Black feminist, immigrant, and newcomer to this province and instead, speaks *with* the current struggles of the Black women in Brazil whom I have left behind, at least geographically speaking.

What I have learned is this: I am just shifting where the knowledge is being produced. This speaks to the work of Black woman intellectual Lélia Gonzalez (1935–1994), on which I draw for my theoretical framework and research design. Gonzalez used contact with other geographies and cultures to build her reflections on what she termed *Amefricanidade,* or Amefricanity—the knowledge system and worldview of Amefricans, the descendants of enslaved Africans in Brazil. In addition, as I write and engage with her research, I am sharing and dialoguing with people here in Canada who might also become interested and engage with feminist struggles from the Global South. Having this in mind, the point of my research is to consider this question: What is the relationship between Black women intellectuals in Brazil, social media, and Amefricanity?

Recently, Black women intellectuals[1] in Brazil have been gaining more visibility. A few reasons for this increase in prominence are as follows: a) the fact that Black women's agendas have become fundamental to feminisms in Brazil; b) the increase of social media as a vehicle for activism; and c) the increase of people of colour in universities due to affirmative action policies. The growth in education levels combined with easier access to new information is having a transformative effect on a part of the population that was historically excluded from higher education and access to traditional communication platforms.[2] This context opened up the possibility for Black women intellectuals to use virtual spaces to make their achievements, struggles, and knowledge accessible and visible.

To reiterate, in this thesis, I address the relationship between Black women intellectuals in Brazil, social media, and Amefricanity. Specifically, my goal is to understand if and how the use of virtual spaces might be seen as an enactment of *Amefricanidade* or Amefricanity, as mentioned above, a concept coined in 1988 by the Brazilian scholar and activist Lélia Gonzalez that provides a lens for understanding the identity and history of Black people in the diaspora in Brazil. Gonzalez was deeply aware of the intersections of race, class and gender in Brazil and the aftermath effects of slavery on Black people in the diaspora. She defends Amefricanity as an alternative lens that acknowledges the influences of African and Indigenous cultures on the formation of Black identity in Brazil. Amefricanity, then, allows us to reinterpret the past as well

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[1] In this thesis, I apply the description by bell hooks and Cornel West (1991) of "an intellectual [as] somebody who trades in ideas by transgressing discursive frontiers, because he or she see they need to do that. Secondly, an intellectual is somebody who trades in ideas in their vital bearing on a wider political culture" (p. 152)

[2] From 2010 to 2019, access to the internet grew from 30% to 70% including rural and urban areas. By 2019, 70% of the Brazilian population had access to the internet (CETIC, 2019, p. 105). This means that seven out of ten Brazilians have access to a cellphone network, Wi–Fi, or direct connection. The possibility of internet access gives marginalized populations, such as people of colour, access to information, entertainment, and education. In relation to the increase of people of colour in universities, a massive investment in education happened between 2003 and 2014 during the respective governments of former presidents Luis Inácio "Lula" da Silva and Dilma Rouseff. Both presidents developed a series of public policies to increase diversity in Brazilian universities and created several federal universities in remote places in the country (Lopes & Rech, 2013).

to shape the future. In this sense, Gonzalez calls on Amefricans to embrace their unique histories and knowledges as a way to define themselves on their own terms.

With the concept of Amefricanity, which Buarque de Holanda (2019) places under the broader umbrella of decolonial feminism, a theoretical and political project that challenge imperialist and colonizing practices, Gonzalez expects people to dialogue directly with their experiences as racialized people in the Americas, instead of coming from a Eurocentric perspective (p. 69). In Gonzalez's (1988a) words, "Yesterday, as today, Amefricans from different countries in the Americas have played a crucial role in the elaboration of this Amefricanity that identifies, in the diaspora, a common historical experience that needs to be properly known and carefully researched" (p. 77).[3] She proposes that we, people of colour, look into our own lives and trajectories and value the epistemological potential of our voices.

Drawing from my initial reflections on the importance of social media for providing Black women with a means to self-discovery and access to information, I noticed that there is considerable literature both about the uses of social media by Black feminist women as well as about decolonial feminisms. However, there is a clear lack of scholarly literature bringing these two themes together. My research, which centres on a close and focussed analysis of a number of Instagram posts by two notable Black feminists in Brazil, helps to fill the gap regarding the study of social media in relation to decolonial feminisms or, more specifically in this research, social media and Amefricanity. I consider the relationship between Black women intellectuals in Brazil, social media, and Amefricanity with this context and gap in mind. In the process, I

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[3] Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Portuguese to English are my own. Importantly, instead of providing literal translations, I consider the context of the texts and titles so that the translations feel more integral to the text for the reader.

comment on how Amefricanity itself is a decolonial feminist project, and why Black women intellectuals in Brazil engage in social media.

1.1 A Brief History of Black Feminism in Brazil

My research question involves a concept (Amefricanity) developed by one of the most important reference points for Black feminist thought in Brazil, Lélia Gonzalez. At the same time, I analyze the social media profiles of two contemporary reference points for Brazilian feminism: Black women intellectuals Joice Berth and Juliana Borges. In order to more effectively situate my analysis, in this section, I briefly outline Black feminism in Brazil.

Contemporary feminism in Brazil developed through the second half of the 20th century. Feminist initiatives came from study groups who discussed the position of women in society, using theorists such as Fredrich Engels, Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, and Kate Millet as the basis of their ideology (Holanda, 2019; Silva, 2018). In the 1960s, the military regime began in Brazil and the feminist movement formed links with the Communist Party and progressive Catholic Church, despite the fact that this alliance against the dictatorship had its problems. The Communist Party claimed a general fight against the political regime at the cost of the women's agenda and the progressive Catholic Church had its limitations regarding abortion and sexuality. Moreover, in the 1960s and 1970s, feminist ideas traveled in academia, especially in the humanities, but without great recognition from mainstream scholars in these spaces.

While Black feminism developed alongside feminism more broadly speaking, it was initially related to the general Black movement for civil rights, because the universal definition of women that was central to feminist thought at the time was not inclusive of Black women. Important to this discussion is Lélia Gonzalez's paper "For an Afro–Latin American Feminism"

(1988). Here, Gonzalez lays out the plurality of Black feminisms based on her experience as an intellectual and activist in the continent. She identifies the importance of feminist theory in bringing to light issues related to capitalist patriarchy. For Gonzalez, thinking about discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation was fundamental. However, she also observes that mainstream (white) feminist thinkers did not theorize gender discrimination in relation to race. Gonzalez argues that this "oversight" was tantamount to racism by omission within the feminist movement and was caused by a Eurocentric colonialist view of the world.

Another critique Gonzalez brings forth about the feminist movement more broadly is about the sexual division of work. While mainstream feminism speaks to this topic, it still largely fails to consider what Gonzalez (1988) terms the pluricultural and multiracial aspect of Latin America; consequently, the positions of Black and Amerindian women in the workforce causes them to experience the most brutal forms of racial and sexual discrimination in a capitalist economic model. These experiences in turn cause them to "organize themselves around issues of family survival" (Gonzalez, 1988b, para 28). Because of these particularities, Gonzalez proposes an Afro–Latin feminism that encompasses the plurality of experiences of Black and Amerindian women, where solidarity is central. Importantly, this Afro–Latin feminism is separate from Gonzalez's theorizing on Amefricanity, which is the focus of my thesis.

Beatriz Nascimento (1976), a contemporary of Gonzalez, argues that before and after the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888, the white woman served as the wife, upholding the ideological foundation of the patriarchal system, whereas the Black woman served the system itself. For example, Black women, as slaves and commodity breeders, worked on plantations and performed house labor, serving the white plantation owners. Nascimento further explains that much of this structure perpetuates itself through the achievements of white women. For example,

during the industrial development of Brazil in the 1930s, we see flexibility in the structure, especially for white women, who were now allowed some autonomy to work outside the household. However, racial differences kept Black women in socially ascribed labour and social functions. With their roles barely changed, Black women still served the racist, patriarchal household. Nascimento argues that the change for white women was possible because of increased access to education and pressure for change. Although the same access to education was possible in theory for Black women, their opportunities translated into low paying factory jobs and relatively minor bureaucratic/administrative jobs.

Reflecting on this structural racism and the predetermined roles it relegated to them, Black women began to interrogate the invisibility of their demands in the mainstream feminist context. As Djamila Ribeiro (2019) says, "The invisibility of Black women in the feminist agenda causes none of their problems to be mentioned [in the movement] whatsoever" (p. 101). Through the 1980s and onward, Black women's collectives became more common with the intention of gaining more political visibility. Those actions were already a step towards breaking the silence imposed by the mainstream feminism movement and, in some instances, the Black movement. Black feminism in Brazil gained strength in the 1980s (Ribeiro, 2019), in good part through Lélia Gonzalez's efforts to centre Black women in debates about race, class, and gender.

According to Sueli Carneiro (2003), Black women have educated themselves to transform and construct their representation. Carneiro, who studies the first decade of the 21st century, explains that with broader access to education and technologies, Black women are becoming their own subjects, working towards dismantling the structure that made them invisible. The results were seen in the National Conference of Brazilian Women in 2002. This conference repositioned the feminist fight in Brazil through an intersectional lens that included

Black and Indigenous women, LGBTQ+ people, *quilombos* (maroon communities), disabled women, and women of diverse political and religious affiliations.

In the last 40 years, feminism in Brazil has continued to consolidate itself as a plural movement. That said, Black women and Indigenous women in particular are fighting the ongoing consequences of colonialism. As I now discuss, their work speaks to the decolonial characteristic of Brazilian feminism in the 21st century.

1.2 Black Women Intellectuals in Brazil

Black feminist scholar and activist Patricia Hill Collins (1990) argues that Black women intellectuals have been exploring the strength of their own narratives for a long time, rejecting controlling images of themselves, such as mammies, matriarchs, and others (p. 98). Similarly, bell hooks (1991) argues in her paper "Black Women Intellectuals" that to become an intellectual, a Black woman must decolonize her mind, given we live "within a White supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal social context" (p. 160). I understand that to "decolonize the mind" is to understand the oppressive aspects of Eurocentric knowledge and to draw instead on epistemologies and theories such as Amefricanity that value ancestral knowledges.

If Amefricanity considers the specific culture and experience of Amefricans in the Americas as a disruptive way of being, and if such ways of being have not necessarily fit neatly into academic institutions and practices, then looking to alternative forms of self-publication, such as social media, might offer a way forward. In other words, social media might be a productive tool to broaden Black feminist discussions, practices, and struggles.

In order to elaborate on this, I analyse the presence of Black women intellectuals in Brazil on the social media platform, Instagram. I based my choice of Instagram on how this platform allows for both visual and textual self-definition, which, in turn, gives the possibility for challenging socially imposed stereotypes using one's own image, worldview, and stories. Keeping this in mind, I analysed the Instagram profiles of two contemporary Black women intellectuals in Brazil, namely, Juliana Borges and Joice Berth. In order to choose these two intellectuals, I drew from the catalogue, *Visible Black Women Intellectuals,* organized and edited by Giovana Xavier (2017). The catalogue features 120 Brazilian Black women intellectuals, along with self-descriptions of their skills and fields of work. Not all women in the catalogue are engaged in social media. However, Borges and Berth are active on Instagram and use this platform as another place to both exist and resist from their perspectives and experiences as Amefrican intellectuals. As I explain in more detail in the next chapter, the intellectuals I chose share with the readers and viewers of Instagram their daily lived experiences as Black women intellectuals from a personal standpoint, potentially allowing solidarity with one another and other women through engagement such as commenting and reposting. In addition, with Amefricanity as its conceptual lens, my research provides a singular approach to Lélia Gonzalez's work in relation to the current experiences of Black women intellectuals in Brazil and their relationship with social media.

1.3 Research on Social Media

What might it mean to conduct research in social media environments? As Yasmin Gunaratnam and Carrie Hamilton (2017) explain, "What we might think of as research and

where research is located and produced is transforming with new [online] technologies" (p. 3).

The authors observe that these technologies are full of methodological potential but that they "do not lessen the political and ethical challenges of longstanding feminist concerns with the politics of research" (p. 3). While they acknowledge that the use of new technologies is rich for research making, they also warn that it is necessary to consider the exploitation of data by corporations among other ethical issues. For example, in her PhD research, Carolina Are (2020) protests algorithm biases and argues that at times Instagram silences the same people to whom it gives a voice. Along the same lines, Cat Mahoney (2020) analyzes the accounts of three feminists who resist neoliberal regimes of beauty and self-regulation on Instagram. This shows that although social media platforms have the potential for activism and to spark change, this happens in the same context of biased algorithm and self-regulation.

Social media is a space of deep social interaction, community formation, and collaborative opportunity (Husinger & Senft, 2014, p. 9). Social media is also an environment where people relate to each other, creating a community–oriented space that connects to the formulation and circulation of knowledge (Dias & Couto, 2011, p. 636). For example, Borges and Berth, the two subjects of my case study, use their online presence to share their views about issues regarding race, class, and gender in Brazil, and in that way connect with other people who might have similar views and experiences while also contributing to their activism.

When I refer to activism in online spaces, I am speaking of it like Eileen Mary Holowka (2018b), who defines it as:

> any kind of political participation on Instagram—including ones that involve self-
> representation, feminist dialogue, self-expression, the exploration of identity, self-
> imaging, and the creative construction of memes—that has the potential to create

alternative images and narratives, change a conversation, or foster new forms of thinking. (p. 164)

In other words, Holowka proposes activism in online spaces as an articulation of personal subjectivities that exist outside the mainstream and that contribute to alternative ways of thinking and being. This approach fits well within my research, since the intellectuals I chose for my analysis, Joice Berth and Juliana Borges, weave their identities into their posts, sharing knowledge with a reflexive approach.

I am an avid user of Instagram and I have noticed that in the last few years intellectuals have begun to use this platform as a site of activism and a forum for empowerment and idea sharing. Their approaches appear to mirror observations made by communications scholar Cheryl Thompson. In her blog post, "#Hashtag and Memes are the New Black Power Salute" (2020, July 31), she writes:

It is not that social media is itself a movement, but rather, digital platforms have enabled forms of interactive communication that give marginalized groups the ability to mobilize and disrupt the omissions, invisibilities, and blatant erasures that have, for too long, existed in the "real world." That is, social media does not exclude the struggles of the "real world" but rather enables Black people to make their ideas, issues, and achievements more visible on a global scale. (para. 8)

Thompson defends the potential of social media to mobilize, disrupt and call attention to issues of marginalized groups. This approach resonates with my research since I am interested in how Black women intellectuals are using social media to make their knowledge visible. Building on the ideas of these social media scholars, I seek to understand if, how, and why Black women intellectuals in Brazil enact what Lélia Gonzalez calls Amefricanity. To do so, I conducted a

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qualitative content analysis of the Instagram posts of Borges and Berth from March 2018 to

October 2019. This timeframe encompasses three significant events that increased the use of

social media in Brazil by Black women: the murder of Marielle Franco (March 2018), the

Brazilian presidential elections (October 2018), and the visit to Brazil by American Black

political activist, thinker, scholar, and academic Angela Davis (October 2019).

1.3.1 Social Media and Feminism in Brazil

One of the first significant uses of social media in Brazil as a form of activism

happened during protests against hikes in the cost of public transportation in 2013.[4] The

protests started against a rise in bus fares but grew into a protest against other issues

related to the political climate in the country. Those protests were marked by the advent

of new uses of media for activism, including by Brazilian feminists (Porto & Brant,

2015).

Julia Paiva Zanetti (2017) argues that in 2015, Brazil had a "Feminist Spring," and that

social media played a considerable part in it. For this author, technological innovations from the

last decades brought new forms of communication and sociability that impacted social

organization and political engagement (p. 192). By examining a number of case studies from

2015, such as #meuprimeiroassedio (#myfirstharassment) and #meuamigosecreto

(#myanonymousfriend), Zanetti claims that the feminist appropriation of new technologies

makes it possible for women to share their stories and experiences, as well as to listen and

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[4] In 2013, the cost of public transportation rose by 20% for the second time in less than two years. At the same time, issues related to corruption and lack of investment from the government in areas such as education and health started to rise in the year before the World Cup happened in Brazil and in which millions were being invested (Wills, 2013).

recognize themselves in other women's stories.[5] For Zanetti, this was the "necessary fuel for blooming feminisms in the streets and other spaces" (2017, p. 208). Adding to the discussion, in her article "Voices that Echo Feminism and Social Media," Mayara Coelho (2016) also supports social media as a way for us to become protagonists of our own stories. Coelho's main argument is that by using a digital platform, women have an ally to break with cycles of violence and silencing (2016, p. 223).

Regarding the intersection of race and gender, a number of Brazilian scholars have been discussing the role social media plays in Black feminisms. In a 2016 post for "Blogueiras Negras" [Black Women Bloggers], a blog that seeks to create visibility through writing for Black women, Mariana Barbosa wrote a self-reflection about blogging as the most inspiring experience of her activism. Barbosa places herself as part of a social movement that is only possible in the form and strength that exists because of the internet; for her, it gives the opportunity of a quicker response, action, and connection. She also points out that her online activism does not necessarily change the issues she has to face in her daily life as a Black woman, but it does help this "offline" struggle because it provides the opportunity to dialogue with other Black women who share similar struggles.

In the article "Blackening the Internet: The Activism of Black Women in the Virtual Space," Renata Malta and Laila Oliveira (2016) debate the pursuit of visibility in virtual spaces by Black women. They argue that throughout Brazilian history, Black people hesitated to share their experiences, especially Black women (p. 57) due to a Eurocentric education and the constant imposition of subaltern roles to Black women and men and structural racism in various

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[5] The hashtag #myfirstharssement started after a 12-year-old contestant in a Junior MasterChef (cooking contest) received highly sexualized comments on Twitter. That ignited other women to speak up about their first harassment experiences. The second hashtag #myanonymousfriend was an analogy to Secret Santa to bring awareness to sexist comments co-workers, family and male friends make towards women (Xavier, M., 2015, December 3).

societal institutions. Malta and Oliveira briefly discuss case studies of Black women actresses and reporters attacked in comment sections on online news sites and how these experiences demonstrate issues of racism towards those women. A March of Black Women, which took place in 2015, was an answer to the racist episodes these women went through. For the authors, with social media, Black women are decentering knowledge and bringing awareness to issues specific to Black women in Brazil.

With online movements, some organizations that offered support and information to Black women before the advent of social media started to participate in virtual spaces. The Black Women Institute named Geledés,[6] the Organização Criola [Network Criola] and Blogueiras Negras [Black Women Bloggers] are the first references regarding Black women and activism on the internet (Silva, 2018, p. 74). The first, Geledés, is an organization founded by Sueli Carneiro in 1988, which has had a website since 1997. Carneiro is a Black intellectual, philosopher, and activist who argues that race is fundamental to thinking about gender in Brazilian society. Carneiro also stresses the importance of affirmative action in higher education and politics. The second, Network Criola, was founded in 1992 by Lucia Xavier, a Black intellectual, social worker, and activist. The network is an organization that aims to teach skills online for Black women and girls so they can engage in society as agents of change. The third, Black Women Bloggers, was created to bring together Black women engaged in blogging who want to decenter knowledge regarding intersectional feminism and blackness and assert the importance of sharing their stories as an act of resistance and existence.

Some recent events have also ignited the use of media platforms by Black women in order to call attention to their demands and struggles. In 2016, Black intellectual rapper and

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[6] Gèlèdè is a Yorubá word that references a secret society that expresses the power of the feminine.

historian Joyce Fernandes started the Facebook page "Eu, Empregada Doméstica" (I, Domestic Worker) where she shared her experiences of racism as a domestic worker when she worked in Santos and São Paulo. "I, domestic worker" was a project that aimed to bring awareness to the treatment house workers received from their employer. In Brazil, most house workers are women of colour and many of the aggressions they suffer are related to structural racism in Brazilian society. Joyce Fernandes points out that housekeeping work in Brazil has its roots in the idea of the house–slave. Even today, many women sleep in their workplace and are told that this is the job for the skin colour they have. It is also important to mention that the bill that gave housekeepers workers' rights was only sanctioned in 2012. The page inspired other women who had a domestic worker in their family (or who were one), to speak up. In 2019, she published in book form, a collection of stories she gathered on her page.

In March 2018, a specific event would make social media in Brazil even more of a catalyst for Black feminism and social justice. The execution of councilwoman Marielle Franco, a Black, LGBTQ+, feminist, and human rights activist for the *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro brought indignation to the Black movement in Brazil. Even today, the hashtag #whokilledmarielle, which while most active in 2018, is still well known and is used at least monthly to reinforce the fact that, to this date, no one has been held responsible for this act.[7]

In the same year that Franco was murdered, presidential elections were held in Brazil. One of the candidates, Jair Bolsonaro, gained visibility and supporters among right–wing and conservative voters who were frustrated with the previous government. But Bolsonaro is also widely depicted as a racist homophobe and sexist who is sympathetic to the military dictatorship

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[7] Franco was murdered while coming back from a speech. She and her driver were shot and killed by two people in another vehicle. Since her killing in 2018, two people (the driver and alleged shooter) were arrested but no one has been held responsible for ordering her execution (Tucker & Camara, 2020, March 14).

that lasted in Brazil between 1964 and 1988.[8] An enormous movement started on social media with the hashtag #elenao (#nothim) and #naoemeupresidente (#notmypresident). These campaigns brought up issues regarding Bolsonaro's character, past political doings, and hate statements; nonetheless, he won the 2018 presidential elections with 55% of valid votes.

Another example of the social media activism of Black women is related to the visit Angela Davis made to Brazil in October 2019. Davis is a US Black intellectual, political activist, feminist, and philosopher. The 2019 visit was her eighth visit to Brazil—the first was in 1997—but it was also her first time going to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In these cities, she gave the lecture "Freedom is a Constant Struggle" to an audience of 15,000 people with many more following a livestream of the event. During her visit, social media became a reagent, once again, for bringing awareness to Black women's issues in Brazil. The hashtag #angeladavisinbrazil was used to share powerful quotes from her lectures where she emphasized the importance of Black Brazilian feminists and intellectuals, especially Lélia Gonzalez and Sueli Carneiro, and how they should be visible to the rest of the world. The powerful message brought by those movements and events are what inspired me regarding the possible role of social media for enacting Amefricanity.

1.4 Roadmap of Chapters

In this thesis, I share my thoughts on how Black women intellectuals are using social media to broaden the experiences of what it is to be a Black intellectual in Brazil. I consider their use of social media to further conversations and democratize discussions about the situation of

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[8] In a newspaper article, Mario Pimentel (2018, October 28) translates several of Bolsonaro's prejudiced quotes.

Black women in the political and social context of Brazil. I point to how, in order to connect with other women, they speak from their own experiences, with an approachable language, and become more accessible despite their academic formation.

In my first chapter, I outline my theoretical framework and explain who Lélia Gonzalez is and how her concept of Amefricanity figures in the field of decolonial feminisms and in my research. Following this explanation, I lay out my research design, where I explain in more depth my rationale for choosing Borges and Berth, my methods for selecting Instagram posts and, lastly, my methodology (content and visual analysis) for providing an analysis of Instagram posts that considers both image and caption.

The first analysis chapter shows the enacting of Amefricanity as resistance, first in relation to aesthetics and Black culture in Brazil, and then to Borges's and Berth's participation in events and conferences (mostly book releases and events where the relationships between Black women intellectuals and their work are central). In the second analysis chapter, I discuss the enacting of Amefricanity in relation to Black women intellectuals' knowledge production achievements in two sections. The first one includes Berth's and Borges's respective reflections on knowledge production and intellectuality, and the second focuses on how they celebrate their encounters with other intellectuals. Finally, I conclude by explaining how the research process was, discuss the experience of using the concept of Amefricanity in a social media context, and offer some possible directions for future research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Research Design

As I lay out in my introductory chapter, I examine how Black women employ online platforms, like Instagram, to both denounce the patriarchal racist oppression Black Brazilians experience and to celebrate their blackness. Additionally, I seek to understand how these women use such platforms to make their knowledge available to a larger audience. Although scholars have pointed to the limits of social media as a tool for mobilization and organization (Benjamin, 2018; Silva, 2019; Simpson, 2017), I argue that social media nevertheless provides an avenue for expression otherwise unavailable as it allows Black women to speak in the first person, instead of being spoken for. In my analysis, I demonstrate that Black female intellectuals in Brazil are using Instagram to create awareness of their social movements and narratives, a process that I interpret as enacting *Amefricanidade* or Amefricanity.

In this chapter, I focus specifically on questions of theory, methodology, and method. I define Amefricanity and how it falls under the banner of decolonial feminism as well as detail my methodology for using social media and how I analyse the posts chosen for my analysis.

Broadly, Amefricanity is a political and cultural framework developed by Black Brazilian feminist and activist Lélia Gonzalez to refer to raising consciousness about, and constructing a society anchored in, epistemologies, ontologies, and cosmologies arising from Black peoples' experiences in the Americas. Amefricanity suggests valuing and theorizing from the Black experience in Améfrica (Latin America). Through this concept Lélia Gonzalez reframes the unique experiences of Black women in Brazil as the backbone of Brazilian society, emphasizing the relevance of their narratives to the process of decolonization. Due to its epistemological

potential, it is common to reference the concept of Amefricanity as part of decolonial feminism, which I explore below.

2.1 Lélia Gonzalez: A Brief Biography

Over the last ten years, a new generation of scholars and activists engaged in Black feminist thought and practice is reviving Gonzalez's work (Barreto, 2020; Rodrigues, 2019). One recent example of this renaissance are the lectures the Black intellectual and activist Angela Davis gave in 2019 when she visited Brazil. When referring to Black Brazilian feminists who inspire her, including Gonzalez, Davis declared, "We, in the US, need to have access to those writings, these ideas and practices that constitute Brazilian Black feminism, much more than you need our references" (Davis, 2019). Sentiments such as the one that Davis implicitly critiques are not uncommon in Brazil; we frequently value North American Black scholars instead of our own. Therefore, Davis's statement speaks to the importance of bringing to light scholars and scholarship from the Global South, especially Southern and decolonial feminisms. Through this initial exercise of connecting Lélia Gonzalez to Angela Davis, I am, in my work, following Raquel Barreto (2020), who also argues for the broader use of Gonzalez's work in a North American context.

Known among Brazilian feminist groups as a *criadora de caso*, or troublemaker, Lélia Gonzalez (1935–1994) is the penultimate of a family of 18 siblings; her mother was an Indigenous woman and her father, a Black man.[9] When she was seven years old, she moved from

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[9] In Gonzalez's works I read for this thesis, Gonzalez does not mention her relationship with her parents or with her Indigenous heritage. Even though she acknowledges that heritage, it is not a topic in the materials on which I drew for this thesis.

Minas Gerais, a city in the state of the same name with six million people (in the 1940s), to Rio de Janeiro, at the time the capital of Brazil. In Rio, she had the opportunity to pursue post–secondary education, which was not the norm for Black girls at that time. In an interview, Gonzalez talks more about her experience in primary education: "I had the opportunity to study, go to kindergarten, primary school, and go through a process I call brainwashing disseminated by the Brazilian pedagogical discourse. As I deepened my knowledge of these parameters, it was as if I was rejecting my condition as a Black [woman]" (Gonzalez, as cited in Barreto, 2020, p. 286). In other words, her educational process was a step towards whiteness, because Brazilian education and knowledge production were even more Eurocentric back in the 1940s.

Gonzalez's re-discovery of her identity as a Black woman came later. As Gonzalez would say, "We are born Black, Mulata, Brown, Purple, etc. but becoming Black is an accomplishment" (Gonzalez, as cited in Barreto, 2020, p. 268). The previous quote was part of a lecture about the role of Black women in social transformation and feminism Gonzalez gave in the first Black Women National Conference in Brazil in 1988. Inspired by Alice Walker and adapting Simone Beauvoir's famous phrase—one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman—Gonzalez explains that "woman" is a consequence of the Western ideological tradition and that to consider the intersection of race adds another layer, as she explores in her work. Gonzalez believed that Black identity is an achievement that results from struggles and a rising consciousness.

Gonzalez's work both extends into and reflects the world beyond Brazil's borders. In fact, her biographers, Alex Ratts and Flavia Rios (2010), call Gonzalez a transnational activist, intellectual, and feminist in the sense that her ideas, concepts, and work were inspired by not only her academic background, but also and especially by her life experiences with the Black

movement and her travels at home and abroad. She travelled around Brazil during the late 1970s and most of the 1980s to help organize the Unified Black Movement in Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, and São Paulo, and to fight against the military government within and outside the Unified Black movement. Gonzalez's international trips were also a way of raising awareness about what was happening in Brazil within the military government.

In her first international trip in 1979, she stayed with US-based intellectuals Abdias do Nascimento (a prominent Brazilian intellectual and activist for the civil rights of the Black population in Brazil, and one-time professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo), and Lisa Larkin (an activist, scholar and currently the director of the Afro–Brazilian Studies and Research Institute in São Paulo, Brazil). During this trip Gonzalez participated in events in Buffalo, New York City, Pittsburgh, and Los Angeles. After this trip, she went to countries in Europe and Africa, the latter where she met with Carlos Moore, a Cuban activist in exile, and Shawna Moore, an African American intellectual, both of whom are dedicated to the study of African and Afro–American history. During these travels, Gonzalez focused on spending time with people to understand their culture and customs.

According to Ratts and Rios (2010), Gonzalez coined the concept of Amefricanity after a sequence of travels that included Venezuela, Colombia, and Martinique in the late 1980s. At a dance festival in Martinique, she started reflecting about the similarities between the Caribbean and Brazil in relation to their African and colonial influences. One of the results of her transnational experiences in Latin America is the article "For an Afro–Latin Feminism*"* (1988b) mentioned in the Introduction where Gonzalez proposes an Afro–Latin feminism that encompasses the plurality of experiences of Black and Amerindian women, where solidarity is

central. Describing these experiences during the DAWN/MUDAR[10] meeting in La Paz/Bolivia in 1987, she writes:

> It was, really, an extraordinary experience for me to hear the frank and honest accounts of the Latin women present there, who were confronting the racial question. I left revived, confident that a new era was being opened for all women of the region. More than ever my feminism was strengthened. The title of this work was inspired by that experience. (Gonzalez, 1988b, para. 10)

The essence of Gonzalez's argument here is that by expanding her geographical borders and engaging with other forms of feminism, she became inspired to keep investing in her activist and intellectual work. At this point, it is also important to mention that although Gonzalez acknowledges Amerindian women and their importance in building a collective feminism in the Americas, her concept of Amefricanity is focused on the development of an identity and history of Black people in the diaspora in Brazil.

Lastly, it is also important to mention how this specific paper, "For an Afro–Latin Feminism" (Gonzalez, 1988) links with the idea of decolonial feminism, where praxis and theory making related to lived experiences are fundamental to building a feminism "otherwise." Gonzalez's transnational experience both gave more depth to her understanding of her blackness and feminism and inspired the formulation of the political and cultural category of Amefricanity. In the following sections, I give an overview of decolonial feminisms and how Gonzalez's work, especially Amefricanity, can be considered part of decolonial feminisms.

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[10] DAWN is the English acronym for MUDAR (Spanish) and referrers to a network of researchers focused in women's issues in Latin America.

2.2 Decolonial Feminisms

Decolonial feminisms has multiple lineages beyond and in parallel with the "decolonial turn" ushered in by the Modernity/Coloniality (M/C) group formed by intellectuals from the geographical space called Latin America.[11] The most common narrative is that decolonial feminisms developed from feminist critiques of the M/C group's inattentiveness to gender. The M/C group explains modernity and coloniality as an ongoing issue in Latin America, responsible for a model of power based on the Western idea of race—broadly referred to as the coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000, p. 572). Their main argument is that modernity and capitalism came into being through colonialism in the Americas, which sustained the development of the Europe. The decolonial turn follows from these observations, offering a reinterpretation of the relationship between capitalism and race (Mendoza, 2015; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018).

This scenario resulted in lingering issues of race, class, and gender in Latin America, with the latter category usually overlooked by M/C scholars, as María Lugones (2007) points out in her article "Heterosexualism and the Colonial/Modern Gender System." Here, she explains that gender as it is understood in contemporary terms was not an organizing principle of society before colonization. Instead, as Lugones argues, the gender binary, much like the hierarchy of race, was forced onto Latin American and African diasporic populations (2007).

Frequently, Lugones's critique of the coloniality of power is used as the primary departure point of decolonial feminisms. Nevertheless, proposing a different lens about the

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[11] Nelson Maldonado–Torres (2011) engaged in developing a genealogy of the decolonial turn. In short, it refers to diverse views that place coloniality as a fundamental problem in modernity. Maldonado–Torres also points out that the decolonial turn includes social, artistic, and political movements that gained strength during the late 20th century with increasing "self-conscious and coalitional effort to understand decolonization" (p. 2).

genealogy of decolonial feminisms, Emma Velez and Nancy Tuana (2020) urge us to consider

the feminist contributions to this genealogy beyond the M/C group. By using authors besides the

usual ones affiliated with the decolonial turn, Velez and Tuana challenge the idea that theories

are linear, instead proposing they are more like branches. The point is that decolonial feminisms,

in addition to its Latin American roots, has been influenced in its creation and development by

Latinx scholars in the diaspora, Black feminist scholars, and Indigenous feminists.

Carol Lynne D'Arcangelis (2020) takes this approach when drawing on Indigenous and

Latin American scholars to explain the genealogy of decolonial feminisms. She places side by

side the works of María Lugones and Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson to find

resonances and dissonances between them as well as to suggest the importance of mapping how

decoloniality is perceived in other spaces in and beyond the Americas. Most helpful for my

purposes, D'Arcangelis distills decolonial feminism into three core characteristics: a focus on the

intersection of gender and race, the practice of constructing a future using ancestral knowledge

(what she calls "the propositional imperative of decolonial feminisms"), and the importance of

building coalitions among women of colour especially (pp. 3–4).

Along the same lines, Breny Mendoza (2015) defines anticolonial feminisms, which

include decolonial feminisms, as theoretical and political projects that challenge imperialist and

colonizing practices. Using authors such as María Lugones, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui and Rita

Segato, similar to Velez and Tuana, she suggests alternatives to think about the journey of

decolonial feminisms beyond the narrative of the decolonial turn. Moreover, Mendoza insists

that the racialized logic brought by coloniality necessitates a decolonial feminist approach to

promote change and produce a different future. These authors outline different perspectives from

the Latin American, Caribbean, and African continents. Following their footsteps, I propose including Lélia Gonzalez and Amefricanity as part of the genealogy of decolonial feminisms.

At the heart of the decolonial approach is the aim to "de-centre Eurocentric hegemony in the production of knowledge" (Barreto, 2020, p. 17), which is also the centre of Gonzalez's activist and academic work. For example, in accordance with this goal, even before Gonzalez explains the concept of Amefricanity, she proposes using the term Amefricans as an alternative approach to the hegemonic US terminology of African American and Afro–American. Gonzalez provides further explanation in another article, *A Categoria Politico–Cultural de Amefricanidade* [The Cultural and Political Category of Amefricanity]:

> African American and Afro–American lead us to a first reflection: that Blacks only exist in the United States and not in the entire continent. And another one, which points to an unconscious reproduction of the imperialist position of the USA, where they claim to be the AMERICA. What does that mean in relation to other countries of South, Central, Peninsular, and North America? Why consider the Caribbean as something separate, "the Caribbean," if it was there, precisely, that the history of this AMERICA? It is interesting to observe that all of us, from any part of the continent, carry out the same reproduction, perpetuating US imperialism. (1988, p. 76)

In making this comment, Gonzalez urges us to have a critical look at the politico–ideological domination of the United States in matters of blackness during her time, while also recognizing Black US intellectual contributions to her work by using the word Amefricans. Her idea is to reinforce not only the importance of different terminology, but to demonstrate that the experiences of colonialism and blackness in America (South, Central, North, and Peninsular) are different from the US.

Claudia Pons Cardoso (2019) argues that Amefricanity is a Black, decolonial feminist theory with ample pedagogical potential. Referring to Lugones's concept of the coloniality of gender to situate Amefricanity within decolonial feminist theory, she writes: "Amefricanity has, in its conception, a distinctive character that defines it as a pedagogical decolonial feminist proposition, weaving a path of learning, constituted by the knowledge and the stories rewritten by women against subordination and exploitation" (p. 47). In other words, she reminds us of the importance of decoloniality as a propositional, forward-looking practice anchored in traditional knowledge. In this sense, Amefricanity invites a re-thinking of the experience of Black people in Brazil that considers subsequent knowledge production. Centring Black women, Cardoso also suggests that Amefricanity is an intersectional approach that aligns with decolonial feminisms.

Cardoso's approach reminds me of Catherine Walsh's (2018) and Breny Mendoza's (2015) take on the importance of intersectionality to decolonial feminisms. As Walsh (2018) puts it, "Central [to decolonial feminisms] are interrogations of race, ethnicity, gender, and patriarchy, but also of the heteropatriarchal frameworks and norms that organize social structures and institutions, as well as most aspects of everyday life" (pp. 39–40). In making this comment, Walsh stresses the necessity of understanding feminism as plural rather than "universal," that is, as white and Eurocentric. Additionally, Walsh expands the idea of transgressing the gender binary that colonization imposed, as Lugones explains, since the 16th century. Adding to Walsh's argument, Osmundo Pinheiro (2019) explains that in Afro–Brazilian religions (Candomblé and Umbanda) and among Indigenous groups, which rely on different cosmologies, sexuality and gender norms are often plural rather than binary.

Expanding on Amefricanity as part of decolonial feminism's branches, Raquel Barreto (2020) makes a convincing case that one of the pillars of Amefricanity is to bring "together the

disavowed experiences of African and Indigenous descendants into a single category" (p. 15). In other words, this collectivity both stems from ancestral knowledge and facilitates new epistemologies, and consequently disrupts the matrix of power imposed by colonial structures in Brazil and throughout the Americas. By advocating that the disavowed experiences of Black and Indigenous descendants be brought together, Barreto builds on the concept of Amefricanity, which, as developed by Gonzalez, focuses on the experiences of Black people in the diaspora and does not place Indigenous and Black folks under a same category.

Barreto explains that Gonzalez's analysis of the relation of capital, labour, race, and gender was rooted in Latin American reality, and the concept of Amefricanity is an "alternative perspective" (p. 17) to mainstream feminism where Black women should be the protagonists. Barreto's analysis aligns with Gonzalez's view that when people from the Caribbean to South America accept and prioritize their Amefricanity—i.e., their knowledges, stories, and movements—the histories and epistemologies of Black people will become prevalent throughout the continent. In this sense, Amefricanity can be interpreted as a form of resistance by people who are the representatives of African diaspora on this continent.

Importantly, Gonzalez was not alive to see her concept being engaged with by other scholars and activists; nor did she have the opportunity to expand further on how Amefricanity could be also used more broadly in a Latin American context. Gonzalez's work needs to be understood inside the broader context of Brazil at the time, which included a process of re-democratization after thirty years of military government and an erasure of Black subjects in Brazil. In the following section, I describe in more detail how Gonzalez' life and work can be intertwined with decolonial feminisms.

2.3 Gonzalez's Contributions to Decolonial Feminisms: Amefricanity and Other Works

Lélia Gonzalez's theory and activism emerge at the intersection of history, anthropology, psychoanalysis, and the Afro–Brazilian religion, Candomblé (Pinheiro 2019, p. 41). According to Luiza Bairros (2000), by drawing on Freud and Lacan, Gonzalez looked into epistemologies outside the disciplines of history and anthropology to examine racism in Brazil (p. 352). Building on these scholars, my intention is to place Gonzalez's work, in particular Amefricanity, as part of the multiple lineages of decolonial feminisms. As I present them here, Gonzalez's contributions to decolonial feminisms contain three overlapping themes: psychoanalysis, the myth of racial democracy, and intersectionality. As a multi-layered concept that is fundamental for a different interpretation of Black people's experiences in *Améfrica*, especially in Brazil, Amefricanity encompass all three themes.

As Pinheiro and Bairros suggest, Lélia Gonzalez drew on psychoanalysis to analyze the structures of racism in Brazil. For instance, an important part of the concept of Amefricanity is Gonzalez's use of the psychoanalytic concept of disavowal/denial to address the rejection of the African and Amerindian presence in the construction of Latin America. It is possible to connect the concept of disavowal/denial, as presented by Gonzalez (1988a), to colonialism. As Gonzalez explains: "The so-called Latin America, is in reality, much more Amerindian and Amefrican than anything else; the denial of this origin is the best example of racism by disavowal" (p. 72). For example, in her article, Gonzalez lays out linguistic, religious, and other cultural aspects common to the Caribbean and Latin American regions and explains that all of this gets covered

"through the whitening veil" (p. 70) that minimizes the importance of Amerindian and African influences in the historical–cultural construction of Latin America.

She bases her approach not only in psychoanalysis, but also in the configuration of Spain and Portugal, which colonized the majority of South and Central America. Through a historical analysis of the treatment of the Moors in the Iberian Peninsula, Gonzalez recounts the Portuguese and Spanish practice of stipulating hierarchical difference based on race in geographical spaces. This legacy of this history is a painful ideology where the desire to become white results in the negation of our own race and culture (Gonzalez, 1988). In other words, because of disavowal/denial, Amefricans have been coerced by coloniality to strive to be something they are not (white). Therefore, the narrative of coloniality is sustained by fallacious comments such as, "in Brazil there is no racism, because Black people know their place in society" (Fernandes, as cited in Gonzalez, 1988, p. 73), and promotes a harmony of races sustained by the myth of racial democracy, which I explain next.

The myth of racial democracy has its roots in the sexual subjugation by colonizers of Black women during slavery that persisted through generations. Abdias Nascimento (2019) explains that in the myth lies the idea of eliminating the "racial threat" represented by the African presence in Brazil (p. 81). The *mulato* was the first step towards whitening Brazilian society—an ethnic bridge, as Nascimento points out. The dominant class, some intellectuals, and the Catholic Church were all supportive of the genocide of the Black population in Brazil through this forced miscegenation. I say forced, because according to Nascimento, miscegenation most often happened without marriage or consent.

Another steppingstone towards "racial democracy" were incentives for European immigration to Brazil with the goal of rapidly erasing blackness. For example, laws from the first

two decades of the 20th century forbade the entrance of racialized people to Brazil and in 1945, dictator Getúlio Vargas approved a bill that only allowed immigration with the goal of "preserving and develop[ing the] ethnic composition of [the] population towards European characteristics" (Nascimento, 2019, p. 86). This scenario gives a false impression of racial harmony, which was paved by years of the systemic genocide of the Black population in Brazil. Gonzalez was a contemporary of Nascimento's, and both are foundational to studies of blackness and the Black movement in Brazil. For Gonzalez, the myth of racial democracy, as presented by Abdias, is at the core of racism by denial/disavowal.

Furthering the discussion about the consequences of the myth of racial democracy and forced miscegenation in her paper "Racism and Sexism in Brazilian Culture" (1984), Gonzalez questions: "What happened for the myth of racial democracy to have so much acceptance and dissemination? What is the process that determined its construction? What is hidden, a part of what the myth shows? How are Black women situated in this discourse?" (p. 224). Evoking intersectionality, Gonzalez poses such questions to point to the effects of the overlapping oppressions of racism and sexism for Black women. In particular, she concentrates on the notions of *mãe preta* [mammy], *empregada doméstica* [maid] and *mulata* [mixed-race] in Brazil.

The *mulata,* which refers to the Black woman with lighter skin, often perceived for/as entertainment, is prevalent in the sexual imaginary of the racist structure. Gonzalez (1984) gives the example of *Carnaval* [Carnival], where the *mulata* is often seen as a "goddess of samba" (p. 228). Using samba lyrics and her own experiences with *Carnaval,* Gonzalez explains that in that moment, when the *mulata* is dancing and seen by all in the samba school parade, she is not invisible anymore; she is seen, but through the lens of racial democracy that sexualizes her body in the context of *Carnaval*:

For the other side of the carnivalesque deification takes place in this woman's daily life,

at the moment when she transforms herself into the house worker. That's where the guilt

engendered by her deification is employed with strong loads of oppression. That's also

where it appears that the terms *mulata* and house worker are attributions of the same

subject. The designation will depend on the situation in which we are seen. (p. 228)

With this passage, we see that the myth of racial democracy operates in two lanes: one where the

oppression is masked by deification and sexualization and a second one where she becomes a

servant, a house worker to the white gaze. Gonzalez corroborates the strength of the myth of

racial democracy in Brazilian culture and introduces the consequences for Black women. As

previously noted, at other times, the *mulata* becomes the *empregada doméstica* [house worker].

As such, she serves, cleans, cooks, and does other household tasks, while often subjected to

psychological and sexual abuse from the family she serves. This structure, sustained through

slavery, remains in the Brazilian socio–cultural imaginary today. However, as I discuss in the

Introduction, it is my observation that nowadays through expanded access to education and

labour rights, Black women in this position are changing not only their understanding of

themselves, but also inspiring others to do the same and thriving in other ways.

The *mãe preta* is the household worker who cares for the white children. In this role, she

also influences their development. Gonzalez (1984) points to the role of the Black mother in *dar*

uma rasteira [tricking] racial democracy, because her role during and after slavery was part of

the consolidation of the African heritage and presence in Brazil. As Gonzalez explains, "Who

breastfeeds, who bathes, who cleans diapers, who puts to sleep, who wakes up at night to take

care of the children, who teaches them to speak, who tells a story and so on?" (p. 235) In posing

these questions, Gonzalez explains to us that mothering and care work in Brazil is performed

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predominantly by the Black woman, which can be understood to represent a form of "passive resistance" (Barreto, 2005, p. 40) to dominant structures. Moreover, this figure (*mãe preta*) in a conscious or unconscious way passed along African values and culture to white children. In summary, *Racism and Sexism in Brazilian Culture* is an important work by Gonzalez, because it explained more specifically how the myth of racial democracy affects Black women and explored the specific oppression of race, class, and gender suffered by Black women in Brazil.

Gonzalez's critical views on the formation of Brazil and her activism place her as a forerunner in producing epistemologies that center Black experiences, which in turn transforms Amefricanity into a concept to explore not only past colonial experiences, but also present ones. The main point here is that Gonzalez shares the fundamental premise of the decolonial turn: the Eurocentric ideology of white racial superiority as it developed during colonial modernity is fundamental to the coloniality of power and must be dismantled and replaced. Importantly, she also brings gender into the mix, making her essentially a decolonial feminist. This suggests that Black women disrupting existing structures and producing knowledge is already Amefricanity. To put this another way, from Gonzalez's interpretation of the role of Black women in Brazil's formation, it is possible to see the importance and urgency of shifting narratives from the views about Black women to what they have to say for and about themselves.

All of this is to say that, for Gonzalez, the concept of Amefricanity opens perspectives for a deeper understanding of this part of the world. In her words, Amefricanity "incorporates a historical process of intense cultural dynamics, adaptation, resistance, reinterpretation and creation of new ways that is Afrocentric" (Gonzalez, 1988, p. 76). Gonzalez's point here is that once in the *Améfricas*, Africans and their descendants create unique ways of existing through, for example, language and music: Portuguese spoken in Brazil is different from that spoken in

Portugal, precisely because of African and Indigenous influences, and the same can be said about samba, a specific Brazilian music style.

References to language and music remind me of Catherine Walsh's (2016) approach to decoloniality as praxis above all else. Walsh defines decoloniality as a way of thinking, knowing, and undoing hierarchical structures, which clearly aligns with Gonzalez's work. Walsh also encourages us to start thinking with praxis instead of theory (2016, p. 21). The point is to produce decolonial knowledge and methodologies through dialogue and to avoid a colonizing approach in one's knowledge making, which would objectify others. In this sense, Walsh reinforces the "epistemic force of local histories and struggles" (p. 29). Therefore, Amefricanity leads to other ways of thinking about the collective experiences of Black people in the Americas. In her 1988 paper, Gonzalez puts this explicitly:

> [Amefricanity] is about a new and creative look at the center of the historical–cultural formation of Brazil that, for reasons of geographic order and, above all, the order of the unconscious, it does not come to be what is generally stated: a country whose formations of the unconscious are exclusively white and European. (p. 69)

In other words, Gonzalez is suggesting another way of thinking about the formation of Brazil that encompasses experiences that are not European and white. That is, Gonzalez's overall proposal is to interpret Brazil through an *Amefrican* lens. According to Gonzalez, the core of *Améfrica* is both the permanence and transformation of African and Amerindian cultures in the formation of a Black identity. This means that our language, culture, and ways of living have various African and Indigenous influences particular to our geographic region, Latin America. For me, Amefricanity has decolonial feminist potential because it comes from Lélia Gonzalez's reflections on the role of sexism and racism in Brazilian culture. It relates to her lived

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experiences, and is the building of praxis and theory together, as well as an epistemological possibility against the Eurocentric norm.

In my research, I argue that the use of social media is a way to investigate—and produce—other forms of knowing and doing. More specifically, I consider Instagram as a network where knowledge can circulate more freely compared to an institutional environment such as the academy and thereby influence a wider range of people. My argument does not undermine the importance of occupying academic spaces. Rather, the presence of intellectuals in mainstream social media platforms allows people from diverse backgrounds to connect with stories and knowledges that might not be accessible otherwise. One's online presence is also part of the constantly changing ways in which people connect to and relate with the world.

Perhaps contradicting the foundational thinking of Audre Lorde, Black women intellectuals such as Juliana Borges and Joice Berth *are* using the masters' tools to destroy his house and make a new one where knowledge does not necessarily have to be authorized by academics and where experience is balanced with theory. Berth's and Borges's Instagram posts, alongside those of so many other Black intellectuals who take their knowledge online, are making it possible for people to embrace and express their blackness to self-reflect on the times in which we are living. My goal is to show how sharing and engaging on Instagram using traditional references, books, and articles as well as lived experiences is a way of enacting Amefricanity, or as Walsh says, combining practice with theory.

I consider it possible to intertwine Amefricanity with Borges's and Berth's production on Instagram because their online presence, even though not the "real" picture of their day-to-day lives, allows for self-representation and is an expression of their subjectivity. They are approaching their life and work first and foremost as Amefricans, feminists, and anti-racists.

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Through their posts, Borges and Berth contribute to a change in the narrative of a single history and produce knowledge centred in their lived experiences, which can be considered a decolonial feminist practice, namely, Amefricanity.

2.4 Joice Berth and Juliana Borges

The most significant influence for my project is the professor, activist, and historian Giovana Xavier. A professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), she is a specialist in the field of Education in History. Adept with online spaces, Xavier recently released the book *Você Pode Substituir, Mulheres Negras como Objeto Estudos por Mulheres Negras Contando sua Própria Historia*. [You Can Replace Black Women as Objects of Study by Black Women Telling Their Own Story], which is a selection of articles she originally published in an online newspaper. Through her online work, Xavier opens a dialogue with other academic scholars and other forms of intellectuality that have influenced her life journey such as music, dance, surf, yoga, and motherhood.

In addition to her social media scholarship and activism, Xavier created a study group called *Intelectuais Negras UFRJ* [Black Women Intellectuals UFRJ] at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Xavier founded this group in 2014 after noticing the absence of Black intellectuals in the university curriculum.[12] In addition, she started offering an elective course called *Intelectuais Negras* [Black Women Intellectuals], which related Black feminist theory to pedagogical practices.

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[12] I was also a student at the UFRJ between 2010 and 2017 as an undergraduate and later as a graduate student. I had my first contact with Giovana Xavier in 2014 when I was doing my education courses to become a history teacher and then in academic events inside the university. The last time I talked to her was in December 2019 during a lecture about her work during that academic year.

In 2017, the study group released the catalog *Intelectuais Negras Visíveis* [Visible Black Women Intellectuals], which features 120 Black intellectuals from different regions of Brazil who work in various fields of study. In Xavier's (2017) words:

> *Intelectuais Negras Visíveis* [Visible Black Intellectuals] is woven as a balance of the advances we have built through participation in Black, feminist, LGBTQ+ social movements in the last two decades. In public schools and universities, in the Arts, in the fields of Human Rights, Literature, Health and many others in which we are present, making a difference, but not often seen. (p. 8)

In the introduction, Xavier and her team address the challenges of selecting a diversity of women for inclusion in the catalog across age, geographical location, class, gender, and sexuality, bearing in mind the catalog's main guideline, "many, strong and visible." Xavier's *Intelectuais Negras Visíveis* [Visible Black Intellectuals] lies at the heart of my research method because I used it to determine the parameters of my choice of intellectuals. The book has 10 sections: research and academia, Afro–business, visual arts, communication and media, human rights, public intellectuals, literature, education, health, and grassroots movements. For this project, I focused on two: "Academics/Research" and "Public Intellectuals" because they dialogue best with my research question.

Taken together, these two categories—"Academics/Research" and "Public Intellectuals"—include 33 intellectuals. Using the Instagram research tool, I searched for all 33 women on Instagram. Roughly half of these 33 intellectuals use this platform. To limit my research to an in-depth engagement with just two of them, I established a series of criteria. These included questions such as: How many posts do they have in total? How long have they used the platform? How do they use the platform? For instance, do they use Instagram to inform other

Black women about current issues regarding Black women? Is Instagram a way for them to communicate their research or work interests? I also employed exploratory observations to see if they shared content during the timeframe I proposed. Based on these parameters, I narrowed the field down to the following intellectuals: Joice Berth [@joiceberth] and Juliana Borges [@julianaborges_1]. Both are active Instagram users. Over the twenty months period under consideration, Berth published 1,023 posts, while Borges published 633 posts.

Although there are considerable differences in their number of posts, I chose these two intellectuals for specific reasons. First, although both Berth and Borges have formal academic backgrounds, the core of their work is activism and public scholarship; that is, public lectures, events, and publications. They are visibly active in the public sphere broadly speaking. Secondly, both intellectuals place importance on self-education and building a critical view of the world through Black eyes. One way Juliana Borges does this, for example, is by using the hashtag #dicasliterarias [#bookssuggestions] in which she recommends Black–authored books on a particular topic. Lastly, they are both part of the Plural Feminisms Project.

The Plural Feminisms Project, founded by the philosopher Djamila Ribeiro (2021), is dedicated to "the dissemination of critical content produced by Black people, especially women, at an affordable price and didactic language, as a way to build instruments to understand the reality and deep debates in Brazil" (Sobre a Coleção [About the Collection], para 1). In other words, the Collective uses accessible language to engage more Brazilians on issues of race, class, and gender. Since its founding in 2019, Plural Feminisms Project has published seven books written by Black intellectuals, including Joice Berth and Juliana Borges, who are active in social media. In addition to this, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Djamila Ribeiro developed an

educational platform where people can subscribe to courses and lectures related to project publications.

Juliana Borges is a self-described writer, vegetarian, bookworm, and currently, columnist of *Claudia,* a virtual magazine that takes a feminist approach to issues around women and work, the household, and relationships. Borges also writes for *BemGlô*, a website dedicated to slow fashion and environmental impact. Borges is an anthropologist who received her training at the School of Sociology and Politics of São Paulo. She works as a consultant to the Commission of Human Rights and Coping, Monitoring and Memory to Fight Violence at the Bar Association of São Paulo. She defends alternatives to imprisonment and considers herself a decolonial Black feminist as is evident in my analysis of her posts.

Borges's research interests are mass incarceration and its intersections with race and gender. Her book *Encarceramento em Massa* [Mass Incarceration] was published in 2018 in the Plural Feminisms Project and helped launch her career as a preeminent writer. Since its publication, numerous newspapers, magazines, and websites such as *Piauí*, *Midia Ninja*, *Nexo Journal*, and *Justificando* have invited her to write for them. Her second book, *Prisões: Espelhos de Nós* [Prisons: Mirrors of Us] (2020), is a series of essays about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Brazilian prisons.

Similarly, Joice Berth defines herself in her Instagram profile as a Black decolonial feminist, daughter of *Osún,* an orisha[13] of the Afro–Brazilian religions Umbanda and Candomblé, and a mother. She is also a writer and currently has a column on the virtual version of *Elle,* a fashion and lifestyle magazine that became a pioneer in inclusion and diversity when it

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[13] People who engage with the Afro–Brazilian religions Umbanda and Candomblé through study and practice eventually learn which *orisha* or deity guides their journey in this life. In the case of Berth, her guide is the orisha *Osún.*

comes to fashion in Brazil. Previously, Berth has had regular columns in other publications, including *Justificando, Gama, Carta Capital*, and a profile at *Medium*. From her Instagram posts, it is clear that Berth is deeply interested in popular culture. From movies to TV shows, music, and art, Berth is incisive about pop culture and its relationship to and influence in our daily lives. When posting about the latest popular TV show or movie, she usually adds a reflection alongside additional material for her readers to reflect on regarding current and past social issues.

Also, like Borges, Berth has published in the Plural Feminisms Project. In *Empoderamento* [Empowerment] (2019), she defines empowerment as a collective practice for equality, drawing on the work of authors such as bell hooks, Angela Davis, Patricia Hill Collins, and Paulo Freire. Moreover, Berth is an architect and urban planner and is currently studying psychoanalysis. As an urban planner, she seeks to connect her activism with her planning work by bringing awareness to the social–spatial segregation and exclusion of big cities. She also works to develop solutions to this problem. Reminiscent of Lélia Gonzalez, Berth sometimes applies a psychoanalysis lens to her reflections on behaviour, mental health, and self-care.

To reiterate, Borges's and Berth's Instagram posts form the basis of my analysis, which uses visual and content analysis as a way of interrogating both text and image, while also considering each author's individual subjectivity.

2.5 Feminist Research Design

Lina Leavy (2011) contends that content analysis is essential in feminist research because it allows for the investigation of dominant narratives, images, and ideas, thereby both challenging stereotyped representations of people and identifying how people challenge these

representations (p. 221). Content analysis also allows the researcher to code data into categories and produce thematic analysis without fixed rules (pp. 225–231). In other words, content analysis provides the tools to identify themes and patterns in a given text, image, or video (or combination thereof), notice language and its implications for the audience, and show recurrent themes or absences (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Because of this potential, content analysis allows me to investigate if, why, and how Black women intellectuals in Brazil are enacting Amefricanity through their activity on Instagram.

That said, a feminist approach to content analysis using social media is not new. For example, Geniece Crawford Mondé (2018) uses content analysis to investigate Tumblr (a microblogging community). Mondé analyzed the hashtag #blackdontcrack to discuss the aging Black female body and the intersections of age, gender, and race. Her work responds to the underrepresentation of women over 40 in mainstream media even though they comprise most women in the United States. With this in mind, her goal is to show how social media can challenge the stereotypes of older women. Mondé argues that content analysis for gender and race intersections is not uncommon but emphasizes that intersectional approaches that address other social categories such as age are fewer (p. 49). Mondé's article resonates with my research because she investigates images and text using a feminist content analysis approach.

Ebonee Jackson (2018) also uses content analysis on social media. She investigated Twitter's reactions to the casting of Black actress Leslie Jones as one of the protagonists of the remake of the movie *Ghostbusters*. Jackson analyzed tweets of three moments related to the movie: when the trailer was released, when the movie was released, and when Leslie Jones left Twitter after the movie premiere (pp. 20–21). For Jackson, "[Content analysis] becomes important in helping researchers analyze how people and concepts are being represented by

addressing underlying issues within the text, such as language and implications" (p. 19). Adding

to Jackson's quote, one possible way of addressing issues is the use of hashtags in response to

contemporary events and discussions (Berridge & Portwood–Stacer, 2014). For Black feminists,

hashtags can spur action about a demographic that still has little support from the state

(Williams, 2015). Although my research is not premised on hashtags, it is vital to mention the

relevance of hashtags for Black women's issues. Many times, hashtags such as #sayhername—

used to address police violence against Black women in the US —fill the gap in media coverage,

leading to further action and making visible the overarching experiences shared by Black women

(Jackson et al., 2020).

This thesis keeps in mind the importance Black feminists give to bringing attention to

issues related to Black women. In it, I identify common and recurring themes and subjects on

Instagram during a particular timeframe in Brazil through a content analysis of the posts of two

Black women intellectuals: Juliana Borges and Joice Berth. I now turn to my method for content

and visual analysis and explore in more detail my approach to analyzing the relationship between

image and text in Instagram.

2.6 Visual Analysis and Instagram: The Relationship Between Image and Text

Instagram is a social media venue that depends on images. As a result, I also apply visual

analysis in my research. According to Geoff Payne and Judy Payne (2011), "Visual methods

cover all uses of images, with or without accompanying words, such as photographs, video, film,

television, or hand–drawn artwork, whether pre-existing or generated as part of the research

process, as data for social research purposes" (p. 238). I employ visual analysis to understand and analyze various forms of images Berth and Borges use in their Instagram profiles.

Sarah Pink (2013), a pioneer in doing visual analysis, describes this method as interdisciplinary and adaptable, and asserts that it is not necessarily affiliated with a particular discipline. She argues that it is also a form of knowledge from which discussions can emerge regarding the choice of colors, type of image, location of the image, and the meaning the image has in the bigger picture of the research. Bell (2011) argues that although Pink's description makes visual analysis seem like an extensive general method, it also shows the importance of clearly specified concepts and hypotheses when using visual and content analysis.

While Pink engages with visual ethnography, her contribution to visual analysis is rich for my research because she traces the genealogy of analyzing images, including why it is a broad interdisciplinary method. As Pink (2013) writes, "The visual is not simply a recording of data or illustrating of text, but it is a medium through which new knowledge and critiques might be created" (p. 25). This quote comes from her perspective as a visual ethnographer, but it also applies to my research. Because the images carry meanings, through analyzing the image within its context— in my case, the caption and comments—it is possible to interpret the overall intention of the authors and whether their posts can be considered enactments of Amefricanity.

According to Hand (2018), "social media researchers have to think about what specific images do socially in our time and space and how this might be accessed and assessed given the multiple audiences" (p. 9). In other words, the relationship between who posts and who interacts with posts is fundamental to the meaning of the posts. Following Pink (2013) and Hand (2018), when I consider the subjectivities of Berth and Borges in my analysis, I can see that their choice of images is not random. They put affective work into selecting images to accompany their texts,

in this way bringing deeper meaning to their followers. In this research project, I consider the context of the image in relation to the text, which I explore next.

Instagram tells a story, starting from the most recent to the oldest story, which is probably a result of the current necessity of having the most updated version of people's lives (Cornelio & Roig, 2020). At the same time, the image–based nature of this platform results in a complex relationship between image and text. Kruk et al. (2020) explain that the combination of text and image made possible through Instagram generates a multiplicity of meanings. Nevertheless, they argue that most scholarship considers either the image or the text as primary and the other as complementary causing an unbalanced relationship between them. Chen & Hsieh (2020) call Instagram a multimodal platform, meaning that an analysis of any combination of modalities such as image and/or text, hashtag, emojis, and geolocation can predict authorial intent.

For Holowka (2018b), the frequent articulation of text and image enables the beginning of a conversation because, as she observes, "Instagram can be a surprisingly good platform for creating conversations because the image–based design [of Instagram] allows for easy circulation, while the text offers the chance to communicate more critical or informative ideas, say to organize educate, or challenge" (p. 163). The essence of Holowka's argument is that the combination of text and image has potential when it comes to sharing ideas. For instance, in my own work, I consider the image as a starting point of conversation given it is the first thing we see when exploring Instagram, and the text as a narrative in dialogue with that image.

Recent scholarship on Instagram such as that of San Cornelio and Roig (2020), Karsgaard and MacDonald (2020), Mahoney (2020), Are (2020) and McCosker et al. (2020) considers the challenges, pitfalls, and relationships between image and modality (caption, hashtag, emoji, geolocation). Apart from Mahoney, who considers captions, and Are, who approaches the biases

of algorithms, the other authors use image and hashtag or image and geolocation. Following

Kruk et al. (2019) and Chen and Hsieh (2020), my focus is the relationship between image,

caption, and reception to understand their combined meaning. I do this through visual and

content analysis, as I explain in the sections that follow. Through applying the aforementioned

feminist methodology, I am to glimpse the role of Instagram in the lives and work of Black

women intellectuals in Brazil.

2.7 Data Analysis: Choosing Posts, Choosing Stories

Historians are just starting to understand the Internet as a primary source. Social media,

in particular, allow for other forms of writing history; that is, Instagram, alongside other social

media platforms, is changing the tradition of how we collect and save stories (Kelly, 2018, pp.

221–226). Instagram, for example, presents the possibility of constructing narratives in an

experimental way and gives space for an "archive of life" where it is possible to scroll back

giving a sense of nostalgia. Niels Brugger and Ralph Schroeder (2017) stress not only the

importance of the Internet as a source but also as an archive for content, which can help us

comprehend the past, present, and future. According to Bloomfield and Jacobs (2018), "Online

sources add another rich layer to narratives, stories, and perspectives that are already being

recorded or told, and in this regard, they will add to the storehouse of empirical data to be

crunched by future historians" (para. 1). I agree with Bloomfield and Jacobs (2018) when they

call attention to the richness involved in the narratives told in the online world. In my exploration

of the Instagram posts of Berth and Borges, I understand these posts as an alternative to

conventional and formal scholarly approaches.

As an historian, my approach to Instagram was the same as going to an archive: I knew

what I was looking for and where to go, but I couldn't predict what I was going to find. I

explored the content available in the timeframe proposed (March 2018–October 2019) searching

for clues that could answer my research question: What is the relationship between Black women

intellectuals in Brazil, social media, and Amefricanity? Through my historian's lens, my exercise

involved first getting an overview of the 'archival' landscape. I did this by scrolling through

Borges's and Berth's Instagram accounts from the oldest posts in March 2018 to the newest ones

in October 2019, considering both images and captions. Initially my intention was to investigate

only the Instagram activity related to the three main events of my proposed timeline: the murder

of Marielle Franco (March 2018), the presidential elections (October/November 2018), and

Angela Davis's visit to Brazil (October 2019). However, during the exploratory incursion, I

noticed other events and content produced by Borges and Berth that could also potentially

answer my research question.

The number of posts I encountered after choosing to immerse myself in the content of the

whole timeframe called for a different approach. With the support of a colleague, I scraped

Borges's and Berth's Instagram posts from March 2018 to October 2019 to create an archive to

develop my analysis. Scraping enables researchers to grab digital content from webpages.

Nevertheless, it can be controversial since it can increase traffic on the platform's servers, allow

access to private profiles, and enable access to data that can be sold by social media platforms

(Baionotti et al., 2020, pp. 4–5). However, I used the technology only to create and archive posts

from public profiles to facilitate my analysis. Because Instagram is a public space, there were not

issues when it comes to data security and ethics. The next step was to choose posts for my

analysis. The scraping tool separated caption and image, which meant that in this second stage of

analysis, I had to consider images and captions separately. Starting with the captions, I used a software called MAXQDA to create codes/keywords related to the captions presented. I disregarded posts where there were no captions, or where the caption was just an emoji or hashtag. Using the word search on MAXQDA, I searched for captions with content words such as intellectuals, Black women, Amefricanity, racism, violence, Marielle Franco, and ancestrality. From this search, I developed codes to further filter the captions, paying attention to content words I identified on Borges's and Berth's Instagram profiles that could provide possible answers to my research.

Most researchers use filtering modalities available on Instagram such as hashtags, geolocation, or a specific type of image (selfies, workout, bodies, and colors). In my research, I did not use those modalities because I focused on captions, as opposed to established hashtags, which posed an extra challenge for selecting posts for my analysis. In fact, I found little in the scholarly literature about selecting posts through considering captions (Bauch & Pramiyanti, 2018; Karsgaard & MacDonald, 2020; McCosker et al., 2020; Tiidenberg, 2018; Toffoletti & Thorpe, 2019). However, as I explore later, my research lies in the relationship between text and image, which is a relatively recent topic when it comes to Instagram research.

After coding the captions, I categorized the images according to the codes associated with the captions so they would make sense together. After, I sorted the images into three categories. The first type of images are photographs—of the authors themselves, of other Black women intellectuals, or of events in which they participated or were interested. The second type of images include text. In these images, text—often in capital letters— is superimposed over an image or a colored background. These images generally call attention to specific social problems

that are further developed in the caption. Lastly, Berth and Borges posted images that were print screens of other web–based materials, for example a tweet, a newspaper article, or a website.

Through this process, I was able to filter posts to be analyzed under two themes "Black bodies and/as resistance" and "Black intellectualities," giving me a total of seventeen posts with which to conduct a visual and content analysis by considering the comments sections as well as the posts. The first analysis chapter, which focuses on the themes of bodies, embodiment and resistance, shows how Berth and Borges enact Amefricanity in relation to aesthetics and Black culture in Brazil, and to violence against the Black population in Brazil. The second analysis chapter, which considers intellectual motivations, discusses the enacting of Amefricanity in relation to the forms of achievement of Black intellectuals. In particular, I focus on events and encounters.

2.8 Conclusion

Amefricanity is a concept developed through both theory and praxis; that is, through both Gonzalez's experience and scholarly knowledge. As a theoretical concept, it proposes a different lens on the historical and cultural formation (both past and present) of the Americas. Moreover, as I demonstrate in my analysis of the enacting of Amefricanity through social media, it is expressed through language, music, religion, and knowledge production. The use of social media by Black women intellectuals can be seen as a way to break with beliefs that center Western culture and its values in communication platforms, such as what Gonzalez accomplishes in her "Racism and Sexism in Brazilian Culture" paper. Through sharing their experiences of blackness and connecting experience with theory, Black women intellectuals are weaving practices of

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Amefricanity through their posts, engaging with their virtual communities, and in some instances promoting change online and offline too.

The following question has guided this chapter: To what extent is Amefricanity itself a decolonial feminist project? As becomes clearer in the analysis chapters, I demonstrate Amefricanity not just as theory, but also as praxis: I embody it in my feminist writing practice. That is, I understand my research itself as an enactment of Amefricanity. Its precepts not only guide my analysis of Instagram posts, but also weave through my process of becoming an intellectual otherwise. Through this chapter, I also described and explained my choice of the Instagram profiles and posts of Borges and Berth for this research and how my process of selecting posts worked. The literature poses few guidelines when it comes to selecting Instagram content by considering captions instead of hashtags, geolocation, and certain types of images. Although this gap made the selection of posts challenging, at the same time, I believe it allowed me to contribute to the discussion when it comes to social media research and qualitative analysis.

In conclusion, the platform Instagram offers rich data possibilities and functions as a space to cultivate content and a collective memory for a broader audience. In my research, I understand the posts by Borges and Berth as an alternative to conventional scholarly approaches. Not necessarily written with an academic approach, their posts often value other forms of knowledge and provide venues for understanding if and how the emerging content can be considered an enacting of Amefricanity, as I explore in my analysis chapters.

Chapter 3: Amefricanizing Social Media: Bodies, Resistance, and Taking Spaces

As I discuss in the introductory chapter, Brazilian feminist Lélia Gonzalez offers Amefricanity as a conceptual lens through which to investigate Brazil's history—one that accepts Brazilian heritage as both African and Amerindian—and to understand these distinct epistemologies. Amefricanity refers to the knowledge system and worldview of Amefricans, the descendants of enslaved Africans in Brazil. Amefricanity provides a chance to reframe the Black experience in society as multifaceted. Through being protagonists and producers of history in the first person (Xavier, 2019, p. 18), we can tell our own stories as Black people in the Americas and become the subject of narratives based on our own experiences.

Some Black women intellectuals who use Instagram to analyze their own stories are already taking a step towards this narrative shift. We live in a time where social media content has an impact; through the combination of image and text, Instagram shows that Black women exist in ways beyond the stereotypes provided by the racist structure of society. In fact, Joice Berth (2020) argues that social media has a significant role in causing fissures in that structure precisely because it opens up new possibilities for existence. What Berth means is that in a society where the homogeneity of whiteness limits physical spaces for blackness, social media allows Black people to explore their subjectivity and more in online spaces. Nowadays, in Brazil, the progress of Black people's achievements is in danger because of right-wing president Bolsonaro. It is of the utmost importance to develop and defend channels such as social media that bring awareness to these achievements and continue to construct substantial changes.

With this in mind, my overall goal in my analysis is to understand if Black women intellectuals are using Instagram as a space to enact Amefricanity. To do so, I draw on the Instagram accounts of Juliana Borges and Joice Berth, considering, in particular, those posts that

bring attention to the collective struggles and achievements of Black people. I read the Amefricanizing of social media through the topics they address, the affect they put into their posts, and the engagement of their followers. In this chapter, I focus on posts that explicitly emphasize Black bodies, resistance, and intellectuality. In the first section, I consider aesthetics and Black culture in Brazil. In the second, I turn to Black women's presence in academic and public spaces and intellectuality and blackness. The final section looks at encounters between Black women intellectuals.

I understand resistance as acting against systemic, structural, institutional, and cultural racism using tools that incorporate and value existing ways of being against coloniality's norms. In this, I draw on Hollander and Einwohner's (2004) work, which explains different possibilities of resistance, such as through talking, writing, breaking current norms, or making silence, collective or individually, to achieve some sort of social change. I also rely on hooks (1992), who talks about resistance concerning blackness in relation to various themes, such as self-love, education and intellectuality, and activism. In my analysis, I argue that Borges's and Berth's posts give space for activism and everyday forms of resistance where they can speak without a mediator and connect with others.

3.1 Embracing Blackness

Scholarly discussions about the body and the Black body specifically are well established. They include works such as that of Radhika Mohanram (1999), who argues that racial difference is spatial difference and that Black bodies were dislocated because of colonialism and placed in a narrative where blackness has no space for belonging. We can also

consider Sara Ahmed (2000), who explains that "the body becomes imagined through being related to, and separated from, particular bodily others" (p. 44). In other words, bodies are defined through other bodies, where one consequence is the establishment of hierarchical differences. I agree that a Westernized and Eurocentric society relegates the Black body to marginalized spaces and a feeling of not belonging—a point that needs emphasizing since, as I assert in this research, an online presence can be a site of affirmation and connection for Black bodies. Latoya Lee (2015) uses social media to explore spaces that Black women created to celebrate and reconstruct ideas about their bodies. Adapting bell hooks's concept of homeland for the virtual world, Lee argues that social media is a space where Black women can "discuss issues of concern, provide support, elevate spirits and also resist hatred; a site of networking, a space providing economic independency (and dependency); and as a site of recovery, a space of healing for Black women" (p. 93). In making this comment, Lee defends virtual sites as possible spaces for discovery and of development of their identity and self-awareness. In the following sections, I rely on these approaches to blackness, the body, and resistance to think about the possibilities of enacting Amefricanity.

Kandace Harris (2017) discusses the use of Instagram by Black women in the United States to argue that self-representation is central to Black participation in social media. By curating self-representation on Instagram, Black people can connect and promote change by deploying social media's visuality. An example is breaking with racialized and hypersexualized stereotypes. In this sense, Harris says, "Instagram can provide African—American women an outlet for creative storytelling and engagement with tight communities of people who share a passion for the same values" (p. 135). The essence of Harris's argument is that virtual spaces can work as a refuge for Black women to connect. This connection can be seen, for example, through

the comments section in Berth's and Borges's posts and by how frequently followers share how

their perception about the subject at hand has changed, or how Borges's and Berth's content

relates to their own experiences.

For example, in the following posts, Berth and Borges discuss self-image and Black

bodies and the importance of loving oneself and celebrating the body. They also provide an

opportunity to discuss blackness in a culture where the consequences of coloniality historically

marginalize blackness.

Figure 3.1

Joice Berth Speaks About the Importance of Self-love

Note: Berth (2018, June 22).

As shown in Figure 3.1, published in 2018, Joice Berth shares a selfie and a text. The

selfie, taken with the back camera pointing at a mirror, features an elevator as a background. In

this case, the selfie involves Berth's face and the upper part of her body. Berth's hair is "free" or

"natural" (that is, not tied up or stylized in a specific way, nor "relaxed" or straightened) and she

is wearing a dark pair of red glasses. Berth is wearing a white shirt with a denim shirt over it and holding a green jacket. More to the point, in this selfie, she is not wearing visible makeup, which is part of the self-reflection she makes in the text that accompanies the image. In the text, Berth writes:

> A lot of love for my appearance. Except this is the result of an arduous struggle against what I saw and thought about myself and what others told me. Many years of living under the stress of looking in the mirror searching for hidden defects: the nose, the mouth, the cheeks, the hair. Nothing was good enough ever. Finally, I learned that freedom and self-love are the best makeup and clothes that a Black woman can use in her favor. The distorted way racism manipulates our view of our appearance is difficult to notice and get rid of. It is a long process and full of setbacks until you get to where you need to be. But it is worth investing in.[14]

Before we delve into the specifics of this post (Figure 3.1), it is relevant to consider what is unique about selfies. Selfies are a type of image that became popular in the early 2000s with the advent of smartphones with front cameras. According to Terri Curtis (2015), "most are taken with a telephone's camera that is held away from the body, propped and put on a timer, or strategically aimed at a mirror" (p. 183). In other words, you become the photographer and the image's subject, which invites the person towards a self-gaze.

Although self-portraits are not uncommon, the selfie is particular to the digital world. Senft and Baym (2015) define a selfie as a "photographic object that initiates the transmission of human feeling in the form of a relationship" (p. 1589). In other words, it can be a starting point of connection. Senft and Baym further argue that the relationship created through the selfie

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[14] As noted, unless otherwise noted, all translations from the Portuguese are mine. To offer full context to readers who are not fluent in Portuguese, I offer full translations of each Instagram post I analyze.

involves many agents such as the viewer and the viewed, individuals to whom the image arrives, and the relationship among those agents. In addition, Boller and Guinnes (2017) argue that the selfie "is understood as a self-reflexive agency" (p.160). Basically, selfies compel the photographer to look at themselves through producing a self-portrait.

In the post accompanying this image, Berth writes, "I learned that freedom and self-love are the best makeup and clothes that a Black woman can use in her favor." In my reading of this comment, I believe it is possible to relate Berth's statement to the fact she chose to post a picture without makeup, meaning she sees herself as beautiful without needing to enhance her appearance. Although she is not using makeup-free hashtags or advocating for this specific cause, her choice of photo might be influenced by other users who do use the #makeupfree hashtag in their posts. For example, Curtis (2015) says Instagram also offers users the possibility of editing and enhancing photographs with predesigned filters. In this sense, when Berth decides to post a selfie without boosting the picture with the resources from the app, she uses the selfie's visuality to support her message while simultaneously challenging the trope of the platform.

In the same post, Berth explains that her journey towards self-love was a struggle: "The distorted way in which racism manipulates our view of our appearance, is difficult to notice and to get rid of." In other words, racism turns one's gaze sharply inward since Black people often spend part of their lives trying to disguise or ignore their blackness. One possible reason for this self-gaze being complex is what Rosemarie Garland–Thomson (2009) calls the ethnographic or the colonizing look, a type of staring that fixes a person in their gender, race, disability, class, and sexuality, to control the other (pp. 42–43).

In her post, Berth talks about breaking this colonial preconceived or fixed idea of her appearance: "It is a long process full of setbacks until you get to where you need to be. But it is

worth investing in." Berth's followers reacted to these posts in a reflective and celebratory manner. One of them said, "@joiceberth a lot of love for you too. Wonderful. Your words always make me reflect […]. We keep on going, its necessary to have courage." Others wrote, "Queen;" "Beautiful <3;" Self-love, always."

The acceptance process that Berth suggests, alongside her followers' comments, connects with bell hooks's discussions on love. For hooks (1993), "Given the politics of Black life in this white–supremacist society, it makes sense that internalized racism and self-hate stands in the way of love" (p. 231). Although hooks speaks of the United States, her observation can also apply to Brazil. In a society that places blackness as something to be avoided, to be "inwardly loving" (p. 235), like hooks proposes, is a revolutionary act. When Berth says that "it's worth investing in" loving yourself, she encourages Black women to take up this journey of recognizing themselves as good enough.

When coining the concept of Amefricanity, Lélia Gonzalez called on Amefricans to embrace their unique histories and knowledges as a way to define themselves on their own terms. Through self-reflection on her selfie, Berth shows it is possible to reframe her experience as a Black woman using her Instagram platform to share her journey concerning her appearance and her reflections on the role racism plays in the Black folks' self-images. Through this discussion, Berth enables others to also *Amefricanize* their narratives. Moving towards inward loving, Berth demonstrates the possibility of reinterpreting oneself when it comes to appearance and beyond as a Black woman. In the following June 2019 post, Berth criticizes Eurocentric standards of beauty in a similar discussion:

Figure 3.2

Joice Berth Discusses Beauty Standards

Note: Berth (2019, June 21).

The image Berth chose to include in her post (Figure 3.2) is a close-up portrait of a Black

woman, centered in front of a blurry grey background. This background has the effect of

focusing on the woman's face. The woman is wearing a dark purple head turban and purple

makeup around her eyes and cheeks. There is also some gold makeup above her eyes and on the

tip of her nose. Her hand lightly holds her chin, and she has a relaxed but direct gaze towards the

camera. Accompanying this image, Berth offers the following commentary:

> Never compare your aesthetics regarding Eurocentric standards or different from your
>
> natural characteristics. Unfortunately, mass media and marketing only present us with a
>
> single way of being beautiful. And that way is exclusive and committed to a political
>
> logic built to create inferiorities and devalue everything that is not the ideal stereotyped
>
> ideal. Those who suffer most from these patterns are Black women with markedly dark
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> skin and African characteristics. It is not by chance that there are many countries in

Africa and Asia where girls and women fervently desire to have lighter skin and adhere to creams. In addition to being harmful to physical health, it is also detrimental to emotional health.

In the caption, Berth writes about the beauty standards imposed by mass media and marketing and their effects on Black women. In her words, "Unfortunately, mass media and marketing only present us with a single way of being beautiful." This caption criticizes how the beauty industry is harmful towards Black women. In this context, the close-up photograph of a Black woman with "markedly dark skin and African characteristics" (a point to which I return later) suggests Berth is urging us to challenge our perceptions of beauty patterns. As Berth continues, "Never compare your aesthetics with references to Eurocentric standards or away from your natural characteristics."

The standards Berth is talking about require a closer consideration of body politics and the construction of the Black body. Nadia Brown and Sarah Gershon (2017) argue that bodies are a site of power where "citizenship entitlements are not available for bodies that transgress cultural, social, sexual and/or political boundaries" (p. 1). In other words, bodies that transgress societal norms are also potential sites of resistance, existence, and change. In Brazil, for example, whiteness is the norm for social acceptance, and physical characteristics are the main factors used to determine blackness.

Berth says in her post that "those who suffer most from these patterns are Black women "with markedly dark skin and African characteristics." Here, Berth's criticism of the ideology of colourism links to Berth's own features. As Kabengele Munanga (2019) explains, colourism defends a hierarchy of blackness based on the phenotype of Black people. This topic is relevant in a country where (forced) miscegenation and the myth of racial democracy serve as excuses to

point to Brazil as a non-racist country. As discussed in the Theoretical Framework and Research Design chapter, the myth of racial democracy is a fundamental part of Gonzalez's thinking about Black women's role in Brazilian society and relates directly to Berth's statement that women with darker skin usually suffer more aesthetic pressure than others.

This post also represents a counter to the photos of white women that Black women see every day on social media. In other words, by posting this image to her followers, Berth insists on challenging white beauty standards and celebrating alternatives. Some of her followers' comments corroborate Berth's attempt to spark attention to beauty patterns. For example, one commenter writes, "For minutes I stared at the beauty of this goddess. I feel like I want to look at her forever," in this way referencing the almost mythical presentation of this portrait. Others comment, "Perfect 😍"; "Beautiful, the picture speaks for itself." Going further, another commenter states emphatically, "The chains of aesthetic pressure don't interest me ♥ ." I read this reference to chains as the limitation those beauty standards place on Black women and how harmful it can be to be seen as the Other. Together, the comments suggest that followers are attentive to her posts because they bring awareness to a relevant topic for Black women.

In this post, Berth enacts Amefricanity by rethinking Black experiences. In particular, she offers her community the possibility of changing the narrative about beauty standards. In addition, Berth's previous post about self-love reminds us of Amefricanity as an alternative perspective where Black women shift from the margin to center. Resistance also comes from celebrating blackness. Surviving intergenerational trauma can also be understood as celebrating our ancestors' existence, which allows us to be here. In a March 2019 post, Borges speaks about her experience going to the first LGBTQ *baile* funk or funk dance party. DJ Renan da Penha a

famous *funkeiro* from the complex da Penha, a cluster of slums in the Penha neighborhood of Rio de Janeiro, promoted this event.

Figure 3.3

Juliana Borges Talks About Funk and Resistance

Note: Borges (2019, March 23).

Figure 3.3, published in March of 2019 by Juliana Borges, shows a screenshot of a tweet by Raull Santiago, a citizen journalist and an activist for the *favela*s in Rio de Janeiro. Santiago's tweet calls attention to the imprisonment of DJ Rennan da Penha, a Black Brazilian musician, for allegedly having links to drug trafficking. The screenshot translates to:

@rennan_penha is one of the biggest revelations in the *favela* [slum] in the last years, a

brother who, from nothing, became a phenomenon through and because of FUNK. His

imprisonment is political, racist, damaging, and directly attacks FUNK, *FAVELA*, and the

growth of someone who became huge out of nothing!

The caption that accompanies the image reads:

I had the opportunity to go to #BaileDaGaiola. I went precisely on the First LGBT Parade

of the Ball. It was wonderful! I have never seen so many people moving together as a

community: shops, stalls, coolers, car apps, *mototaxi*, ball merchandise. I left CPX [complex] da Penha at 7 am energized. The music was still pumping, and people kept coming, bodies in sync. Every time there was a hit by @djrennandapenha, the ball went on fire. Happy Black bodies. Black bodies were celebrating. Black people earning their money, a community turning their economy from what they (whiteness) only want to criminalize: funk. The only intimidation I felt was from the police, who sported their rifles, always in position as if ready to shoot at any moment. I saw smiles and excitement from the people, the urge to touch the sound box wall and dance around until I couldn't take it anymore. bell hooks, a Black intellectual, says that being Black is dangerous. But even more difficult is to love blackness, to love being Black.

You can lose your life by celebrating and proudly displaying your blackness. Being a *favelado* [slum-dweller] is dangerous. But being proud of being a *favelado*, positively subverting the symbolism about the *favela* is more dangerous because it can make people question more. Another Black intellectual, Beatriz Nascimento, when commenting on the Black parties of the 1970s, in contrast to a Black movement that criticized them, said of the importance that it was the gathering of Black bodies recognizing themselves. This dangerous power of recognition and identity can be highly mobilizing and result in *aquilombamento*.[15] They don't want us to come together around positive references. They know the danger it is when Black people recognize themselves: we don't back down!

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[15] *Aquilombamento* refers to transforming a space or an institution by infusing it with the beliefs and knowledges of the *quilombos* [maroon communities] which were, as mentioned before, spaces of resistance where knowledge and practices were centered in blackness.

Influenced by New York MCs from the 1960s and 1970s, *funk carioca* is a music style that originated in the *favela*s during the 1980s. According to Benites (2014), "The lyrics of the songs deal with themes such as sexuality, money, ostentation, the characterization of men and women, poverty, drug use, drug trafficking, addictions, promiscuity, social protests, among others" (p. 47). Benites's point is that funk has aspects that encompass the experiences and expectations of people who live in the *favela*s. *Bailes funk* or funk balls/parties usually happen in the *favela*s, and because of society's stigmatized view about the *favelas*, these parties and the people, mostly Black, who attend them are strongly targeted by the police.

As Borges points out in her post (Figure 3.3), "The only intimidation I felt was from the police, who sported their rifles, always in position as if ready to shoot at any moment." By focusing on police intimidation, Borges's post can be linked to the work of Marielle Franco, whose career included efforts to reduce police violence in the *favela*s (Loureiro, 2020). Franco's most significant contribution was activism against the military intervention in the *favela*s, especially UPPs (Pacifying Police Units).[16] Those interventions resulted in a rise in deaths in the communities where Franco worked. After Franco's death, activists and intellectuals say that she became seeds and that these seeds spread around Brazil and the world, allowing her work towards insurgence and change to flourish.

Borges, a specialist in imprisonment focusing on race and gender, knows both the importance of Franco's work against the military intervention in the *favela*s and the relevance of

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[16] In 2008, pacifying police units became a tactic of the military police of Rio de Janeiro to assume territorial control of the *favela*s. Ideally the UPPs were to provide support to the community to reduce violence. While violence and drug trafficking were somewhat reduced, repressive tactics such as curfews, random searches, and bans on social events, such as *baile* funk, were reported by residents. Since 2018, UPPs are being removed from the *favela*s due to lack of funding after the World Cup and Olympics and pressure from the residents, who believe the military presence in the favelas brought a sense of insecurity and no social policy change.

Renan da Penha's incarceration. Along the same lines as Berth, Borges speaks in her post

(Figure 3.3) to the importance of loving blackness in this context:

> bell hooks, a Black intellectual, says that being Black is dangerous. But even more
>
> difficult is to love blackness, to love being Black. You can lose your life by celebrating
>
> and proudly displaying your blackness. Being a *favelado* [slum-dweller] is dangerous.
>
> But being proud of being a *favelado*, positively subverting the symbolism about the
>
> *favela* is more dangerous because it can make people question more.

Having just argued the importance of celebrating blackness by using hooks's work, Borges

brings attention to the relevance of self-love as an act of resistance, the embodiment of

blackness, and the joy this can bring. It is a moment where we as Black women cease using the

colonizer's gaze and start seeing blackness with joy; along these same lines, we resist, transform,

and progress in a holistic manner (hooks, 1992, p. 243). Like Berth's arguments about Black

aesthetics, Borges asserts that the joy of acceptance also means decolonizing the gaze towards

the self.

Without romanticizing the space of *baile* funk or the *favela*, Borges aims to

commemorate the opportunity to celebrate Black bodies through dance and music in a space

where she feels allowed and proud to be Black. For her and many others, *baile* funk is about

resistance and survival playing a part in accepting blackness, embracing identity, and knowing

that Brazilian culture is multifaceted, that is, as Gonzalez insists, Amefrican.

I take multifaceted to mean that Black culture in Brazil was built primarily through the

merging influences of Africans in the diaspora, Indigenous peoples and Portuguese colonizers.

Gonzalez (1982) explains how Black culture in Brazil defends this Amefrican identity by giving

examples of Amefrican (Brazilian) traditions such as the day for Black Consciousness

(November 20) when the community of Palmares remembered. Palmares was a maroon community in the Brazilian state of Alagoas with twenty thousand people; it is described by historians as the first free democratic state created by Black folks in the Americas. Gonzalez also mentions the day of samba (December 2), *Carnaval* (March or February)*,* and *Candomblé* New Year's traditions. This shift towards celebrating blackness is part of enacting Amefricanity by breaking the whitening veil and embracing our Afro–Brazilian (Amefrican) culture.

For Borges, music and celebratory gatherings can be a productive tool for resistance. To convey this idea, she uses *aquilombamento,* a term coined by Beatriz Nascimento (1990) that refers to occupying spaces, places, and roles with Amefrican culture, bodies, ideas, struggles, and joy. In her post, Borges writes, "This dangerous power of recognition and identity can be highly mobilizing and result in *aquilombamento*. They don't want us to come together around positive references. They know how dangerous it is when Black people recognize themselves: we don't back down." The concept of *aquilombamento* makes sense because Borges talks about a feeling of belonging and celebration. In this context, social media can be considered a tool for resistance, a space to Amefricanize or *aquilombar*.

Interestingly, while references to *aquilombamento* in social media sites are popular in Brazil, academic works about it are few. Two examples are Kelly Conceição (2020), who uses digital *aquilombamento* to talk about Black women's entrepreneurship online, and Analia Santana (2020), who uses the term to suggest reinventing Black–focused online events during the pandemic. Bringing this concept to the current digital period means drawing inspiration from ancestral knowledge and creating spaces that operate from Black epistemologies that consider the variety of Black people's experiences as a starting point.

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In this way, digital *aquilombamento* is another form of enacting Amefricanity. As Gonzalez (1988) explains, Amefricanity "incorporates a historical process of intense cultural dynamics, adaptation, resistance, reinterpretation, and creation of new ways that are Afrocentric" (p. 76). Read through this decolonial feminist lens, *baile* funk is Amefrican, a new way of combining the processes Gonzalez just mentioned, especially resistance and reinterpretation. For example, while mainstream opinion about the *favela* is negative, *aquilombamento* is a positive reinterpretation of the *favela* in practice.

The upshot of all this is that by sharing experiences of self-worth and acknowledging Black women's lived experiences, Berth and Borges are enacting two different forms of resistance through these posts: first, through an insistence on self-care and recognizing beauty through a different lens, and second, through celebrating Black cultural practices such as *baile* funk.

3.2 Occupying Spaces and Sharing Knowledge

Social media is a space for mobilization, organization, and self-promotion. Indeed, much has been published about the relevance of marketing and self-promotion on platforms such as Instagram (Poletti & Rak, 2014; Alvares, 2018). More recently, scholars have turned to issues regarding algorithmic racism, a concept that explains how racism permeates technology, in the process undermining the work of Black social media influencers (Vasconcelos & Santos, 2020). This more recent research suggests that visibility on this platform can be more challenging for Black women intellectuals.

For instance, Holowka (2018) explains that Instagram aims for constant posting that serves capitalist goals (pp. 61–62), that is, to incentivize consumerism and a culture of a filtered life. However, it is clear that many social media influencers—intellectual or otherwise—use the platform to serve anti-capitalist ends. For example, when Borges and Berth use their platform to talk about events, they articulate the importance of occupying spaces or *aquilombar.* The intellectuals claim agency to inspire other Black women to actively participate in these events and on social media, engaging with other Black women in the process. In this way, Borges and Berth disrupt Instagram's existing structures by emphasizing Black women's agency in spaces where whiteness predominates.

However, Borges and Berth also take their activism further. Both are professionals in their field and part of a more significant collective project, Plural Feminisms, which explicitly encourages them to disrupt the structure of the broader editorial market beyond social media. To get an idea of the widespread reach of this project, take these two books published by Djamila Ribeiro, the Black intellectual who founded the Plural Feminism series. Both *Meu Pequeno Manual Anti-racista* (2019) [My Mini Anti-racist Manual] and *Quem Tem Medo do Feminismo Negro?* (2018) [Who is Afraid of Black Feminism?] have been Amazon bestsellers in Brazil since 2019. With this in mind, it is possible to relate seeking knowledge and producing written work as a relevant part of Borges's and Berth's Amefrican and decolonial feminist journeys.

In November 2018, Borges published a post (Figure 3.4) where she shared information about a book launch event she attended. Borges shared a selfie in which she is holding Sueli Carneiro's book *Escritos de uma Vida* [Writings of a Lifetime]. The image shows an interesting doubling that I interpret as intergenerational: the elder stateswoman on the cover of the book, with her black skin and braids, with a book that focuses on her life's writing, being held up by a

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younger woman with black skin and hair extensions. The two images reflect each other but also demonstrate intergenerational teaching and learning. Borges's face and mouth are completely hidden behind Carneiro's book, arguably paying homage to the voice that came before and influenced her work. We see, for example, the post-it notes that Borges has placed in the book: she is actively learning from this woman who came before her. Both Borges and Carneiro, in their respective spaces, are looking directly into the camera. Carneiro looks calmly at the camera. Borges, meanwhile, turns her intense gaze directly to the camera as if she is inviting readers to devour Carneiro's book by its cover.

Figure 3.4

Juliana Borges Shares an Image of Sueli Carneiro's Book

Note: Borges (2018, December 6).

Accompanying this image, Borges writes:

And today's #dicasliterárias is more than memorable. This week the Selo Sueli Carneiro [Sueli Carneiro Stamp] was launched, coordinated by Djamila Ribeiro. The stamp has as a goal

the publication of classic literature of Brazilian, Latin American and Caribbean Black thought, or as Lélia Gonzalez taught us, our Amefricanity. The flagship publication of the seal could not be different: "Sueli Carneiro: writings of a lifetime" brings together articles and breathtaking and radical formulations by the philosopher, writer, and founder of Geledés, Instituto da Mulher Negra [Black Women Institute]. The launch celebration was beautiful, filling Sesc Pompeia (São Paulo) at a table with leading names in Brazilian Black production and movement. I highlight, in this book, the chapter in which Sueli presents a balance of the advances of feminism in Brazil. Most importantly, it indicates the challenges faced by the new generation of Black feminists. Among the obstacles, a struggle towards another civilizational framework where diversity is the potential and the richness of living in society. This book is a treasure. Read Books! Read Black Women! Read Sueli Carneiro!

The so-called "book selfie" is a particular subgenre of selfie that focuses on the self in relation to a book. Prominent in these selfies are book covers. The viewer's gaze goes directly to the book cover. The caption for this post, meanwhile, brings a sense of celebration as Borges writes about the event she attended to honor not only the book in question, *Escritos de uma Vida,* but also the release of a stamp honouring Sueli Carneiro: "The stamp has as a goal the publication of classic literature of Brazilian, Latin American and Caribbean Black thought, or as Lélia Gonzalez taught us, our Amefricanity." Here, Borges characterizes Amefricanity as the common denominator of Black thought.

As mentioned in the Introduction, Carneiro is a leading Black feminist scholar in Brazil who developed the concept of epistemicide in the Brazilian context. Epistemicide in Carneiro's conceptualization refers to the constant erasure of Afro–Brazilian knowledge that has ranged from forcing miscegenation to erasing Black stories and knowledge that are Afro–centred. This

connection between Carneiro, Borges, and Amefricanity shows the effort by Black intellectuals to bring together Black Latin American feminisms against coloniality. In this sense, a main purpose of decolonial feminism, which is to spur the formation of coalitions, is denoted here by the intergenerational image. Side by side, text and image encourage the construction of a society anchored in the epistemologies, ontologies, and cosmologies arising from Black peoples' experiences in the Americas.

Borges furthers the discussion by sharing her favorite chapter with her followers. According to Borges, the chapter includes a discussion about the challenges facing the new generation of Black feminists. Of these, the biggest is "a struggle towards another civilizational framework where diversity is the potential and the richness of living in society." In this quote, Borges also brings us back to Amefricanity by highlighting the intention behind the Sueli Carneiro Stamp, which is to guarantee the relevance of Black women in the construction of another civilizational framework.

Finally, Borges's analysis resonates with her followers. One commenter writes, "Reading Black women saves us! Read Black women! Always." The commenter urges us to read Black women writers because, in their understanding, such thinking is a basis for Black salvation. Importantly, this sentiment relates to decolonial feminism's idea of constructing a future based on ancestral knowledge (Walsh 2018, D'Arcangelis, 2020). Here, the word "always" can be understood as a temporal reference to imply that reading Black women authors should happen consistently across time, and links us also to Borges's assertion of Carneiro's "writings of a lifetime" and her evocation of an alternative pantheon of leading Black thinkers: through her reference to "leading names in Brazilian Black production and movement. Here Borges offers an alternative to the white colonial education in which Amefricans were raised, offering instead a

different Amefrican trajectory of thought and being. Borges takes up the importance of the collective work of building and occupying spaces in another post:

Figure 3.5

Plural Feminisms Project in the Book Chamber of Rio de Janeiro

Note: Borges (2019, August 15)

In August 2019, Juliana Borges published a post (Figure 3.5) showing herself, Joice Berth, and Djamila Ribeiro participating in a public event at the Brazilian Book Chamber. The photograph, taken from the audience's perspective, shows not only the three women panelists but also a generous audience, all of whom seem to be listening attentively and taking in the event. If we look closely, we can see that some of the seats are not chairs but small ottomans, which could indicate that the event was busier than anticipated. Also, if we pay attention in the heads, we can see that probably most attendees are Black. In the accompanying text, Borges comments:

Today, I, @djamilaribeiro1, and @joiceberth were at @sescguarulhos to talk about #FeminismosPlurais. It was beautiful! Very gratifying to live this process, with so much exchange, meeting people from many places, stories, and dreams. People even left Maringá, and Foz do Iguaçu just to honor us! 😍 Feminismos Plurais is this: the mobilization of thoughts and activism. The authors have traveled all over the country, encouraging knowledge. I was reading that the Brazilian Book Chamber points out that the average sale of books in the country is 2,500 copies per title. "Lugar de Fala" is a bestseller with the new publisher, and the other titles have sold over 4,000 copies per author. And all this, I repeat, ONLY at the new publisher. Thousands of minds are encouraged to investigate decolonial thinking and activism to produce knowledge. I am immensely proud to be part of this team!

Borges writes that "Thousands of minds are encouraged to investigate decolonial thinking and activism to produce knowledge. I am immensely proud to be part of this team!" Similar to Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh (2018), Borges understands the decolonial as a constant insurgence to construct alternatives that dismantle coloniality (Borges, June 22, 2020, para 3). This understanding is also consistent with my assertions that Amefricanity is a decolonial feminist project dedicated to redressing the sexism and racism that are core parts of ongoing systemic inequalities in *Améfrica* (including the Caribbean and Latin America). When Borges describes Plural Feminisms Project as a decolonial approach, she is purposeful: she knows the relevance of Black women centered knowledge production and the possibilities it opens up to change the reality of Black people in Brazil.

As shown in Figure 3.5, the photo also represents the possibility of change. Most participants we see are likely Black people who are attentive to what three Black women intellectuals, Joice Berth, Juliana Borges, and Djamila Ribeiro, have to say. Borges makes a

point of detailing the growing sales and prosperity of Plural Feminisms Project to emphasize that more people are listening, reading, and probably changing.

Borges also dedicates space to comparing the sales metrics of the book with those of average books in Brazil: "Yesterday, I was reading that the Brazilian Book Chamber points out that the average of book sales in the country is 2,500 copies per title. *Lugar de Fala* is a bestseller with the new publisher, and the other titles have already sold more than 4,000 copies per author." In other words, the decolonial work produced by the Plural Feminisms Project sold more than 1.5 times as much as average books at that time. This statement leads me to think about the significance of the content written and produced by Black women intellectuals. For example, Angela Figueredo (2020) argues that these intellectuals articulate theory, methodology, and politics aiming at social transformation. She also defends digital platforms as part of the constant growth in the sharing of ideas, which creates greater awareness about gender and race-based inequalities as well as possible solutions. I agree with Figueredo and cite intellectual movements such as Plural Feminisms Project as an example of collective action and empowerment.

Decolonial feminism proposes knowledge production through praxis—especially through collectives or coalitions—as part of moving knowledge production away from Eurocentric perspectives to other epistemologies. The picture that accompanies Borges's post represents the idea of community: the success of the Plural Feminisms Project is only possible because people can relate to its members' writing and experiences, afford the books it publishes, and attend its events. Borges, Berth, Ribeiro, and others who are part of the project show that by changing to narratives focused on blackness, they are also transforming the publishing sector.

In Figure 3.6, published in July 2019, Joice Berth shares a screenshot of an article from 2016 in *El País*—a Spanish newspaper that has a Brazilian branch—on a topic related to the lack of Black women intellectuals in literary events. The article, titled "There is a lack of Black People on the Stage of FLIP [Paraty Literary Fair], but also in the Audience," features an interview with Paulo Werneck, the former curator of Brazil's most famous literary fair. Werneck tries and fails to explain the lack of Black people as guest speakers and attendees in the event. The small-block text below the title reads, "Paulo Werneck, curator of Paraty Literary Fair, defends event as in synch with current social transformations."

Figure 3.6

Berth celebrates changes in the Paraty Literary Fair

Note: Berth (2019, July 15).

The text that accompanies the image reads:

In 2016, Brazilian feminists celebrated the unprecedented space given to women on @flip_se[the Literary Fair]. But the space wasn't for all women, just white women. Black women needed to stand up in mass protest, denouncing the racism of the party. The

justification in 2016 was that there were no Black authors at the main tables because the audience was predominantly white and that there were no Black intellectuals in Brazil. The curator of the literary fair resigned, and in the following year, things would change smoothly. Unfortunately, Brazil is a country with little memory and many erasures. But the fact is that the growing space of blackness in the most significant literary fair in the country (and in Latin America) is the result of the struggle of several Black women who did not remain silent both in 2016 and before. Evidently, within the whiteness [of the fair], some heard and understood that the protests were more than fair. I feel I deserve to occupy this space as a writer, even though I am not among the main attractions and I feel I deserve to celebrate blackness, especially Black women writers, who are at the top of the most sold and popular books. That's what I call justice. That's what makes the fight worth it. We are intellectuals, we are opinion makers and motivators of critical thinking, contrary to what the dynamics of exclusion and dehumanization of racism say all the time. The Brazilian publishing market is still racist and elitist and there is a lot to be achieved, as there are many Black intellectuals being seriously ignored by the literary mainstream. And there are many, many international Black authors serving as tokens for racist Brazilians, who from the depth of their neurosis, prefer to accept Black authors from outside than from their country. But the fact is that we did win a monumental and historic battle and I'm just proud and happy to witness it in real-time. @djamilaribeiro1, congratulations and thank you for shining and showing many that it is necessary to understand and assume that our place IS SUCCESS! I love you; I respect you and admire you. As our friend @rodneywilliam2018 says: This is only the beginning.

The Feira Literária de Paraty [Paraty Literary Fair], or FLIP, is a literary fair that takes place every year in Paraty, Rio de Janeiro. In 2016, the fair theme was "women who write," but the fair included only white women. Werneck, the fair's curator who left the organization a year later, argued that there was a lack of prominent Black women authors in Brazil. At the time, the *El País* article that Berth chose as her screenshot ignited protests on social media in which intellectuals such as Berth explained that the lack of Black authors and attendees was due to structural racism.

By displaying a screenshot from an article from the recent past, Berth pushes back against the point she makes in her post that "Brazil is a country with little memory and many erasures." This saying is not uncommon in Brazilian popular culture, where people often move forward without bringing a solution to the problems in question. In the case of the 2016 article, change came slowly, but it still came. In an open letter to the FLIP, Giovana Xavier (2019) made the case that in a country where most women are Black, it was, at a minimum, strange that they were not represented at the literary fair. Xavier explained that by ignoring the existence and value of Black women's literary work, organizations such as FLIP naturalized racism and showed a lack of commitment to undoing the erasure of Black women writers in their events.

Berth brought the 2016 subject back in a 2019 post because FLIP 2019 had a new curator and a new staff that ensured the presence of various Black intellectuals from Brazil and other countries in the fair. These included Angolan musician and writer, Kalaf Epalanga, Nigerian writer, Ayòbámi Adébáyò, visual arts professor and writer, Marcelo D'Salete, Portuguese–German artist and writer, Grada Kilomba, Brazilian Indigenous leader and writer, Ailton Krenak, Brazilian poet, Conceição Evaristo, and many others. Berth and her Plural Feminisms Project peers also held a roundtable as part of the fair. This transformed fair affirms the point made by

Xavier and other critics that organizational change ignited a program that better represents most of the Brazilian population.

About the new FLIP configuration, Berth wrote, "The fact is that the growing space of blackness in the largest literary fair in the country (and in Latin America!) is the result of the struggle of several Black women who have not been silent." When Berth talks about women who have not been silent, she refers to many Black women who have raised their voices against the inequalities they suffer and have promoted a change in their communities. Moreover, the increased interest in Black-centered literature can be traced in large part to the growing presence of Black students in Brazilian public universities. Figueredo (2020) argues that the Black presence in universities created a scenario where inequalities of gender and race have become more evident, showing the urgency of decolonizing knowledge. The presence of Black bodies in spaces such as universities ensures that Eurocentric knowledge is in the process of unbecoming the norm. It is not for nothing that participation by Black intellectuals at FLIP has grown to the point where their works are best sellers in the fair, and their presence is celebrated.

Published in July 2019, Figure 3.7 (below) shows a post by Joice Berth featuring five people grouped in a panel formation. From left to right, they are Juliana Borges, Joice Berth, Carla Akotirene (author of the book *O que é Interseccionalidade?* [What is Intersectionality]), Djamila Ribeiro, and Rodney William (author of *Apropriação Cultural* [Cultural Appropriation]). All those represented in this photo have published with the Plural Feminisms Project and gathered as part of the Paraty Literary Fair 2019, where they participated in a roundtable to celebrate the first anniversary of the Plural Feminisms Project. In the picture, Borges, who is wearing colorful clothes, is speaking while her peers seem relaxed, yet deeply focused on and respectfully listening to what she has to say.

Figure 3.7

Gathering of the Plural Feminisms Project

Note: Berth (2019, July 14).

The accompanying post reads:

It was beautiful, as it always has been. Lots of affection, interesting and interested

people, good energy, and so much quality content. When I think that it's been one year

since the start of this collection (Plural Feminisms Project) and how many people still

celebrate us. It makes me more confident to use the written word to promote social and

individual transformations. As a bonus, during our presentation, there was a hug from

@conceicaoevaristooficial to warm our hearts. I am immensely grateful to those who

were present, to those who wanted to be present but couldn't. I thank our warrior and

generous master @djamilaribeiro1 and the most charming and intellectualized staff in

Brazil and surroundings @isisvergilio and @brennotardelli and the beautiful companions

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who with their speeches moved me, strengthened me and inspired me to continue in this fight for the paths of intellectuality: @carlaakotirene, @julianaborges_1 and @rodneywilliam2018, the latter with their teaser for the book *Cultural Appropriation*. I am very grateful to the entire loving @taglivros team for the space and opportunity and to the queen @lizandramagon of our elegant new editorial home, and @polenlivros for their loving presence. To the partners of @diaspora.black for the wonderful stay and to @lolacosmetics always present, grooming us. Until next time @flip_se ♡♡.

In the above post (Figure 3.7), Berth writes, "It was beautiful as it should be. A lot of affection, interested and interesting people, good energy and quality content." This comment reveals that these women's presence online and offline brings a sense of community, ignites discussions, and engenders a sense of gratitude for their journey. The group of Black authors sitting in a semi-circle shows a collective energy, dialogue, and the potential of their collaboration. They are respectfully listening to each other, leaning forward, relaxed with each other's presence, while engaged in a public intellectual conversation.

Analyzing caption, comments, and the picture, I circle back to Claudia Pons Cardoso (2019), for whom Amefricanity has pedagogical potential as a forward-looking practice anchored in Black traditions. Thinking through Cardoso's ideas makes me reflect on the publishing successes of the Plural Feminisms Project. Although the books published by the authors featured in this post are not part of my analysis, the fact that Plural Feminisms Project published four books in the first year of its existence is a reason to celebrate, and particularly so considering the challenges Black intellectuals face in Brazil. In short, in this" (Figure 3.7) and the previous post (Figure 3.6), Berth celebrates Black activists' efforts to assert their right to be part of events such as the Paraty Literary Fair (FLIP). As she writes, "I feel I deserve to occupy this space as a

writer, even though I am not among the main attractions and I feel I deserve to celebrate blackness, especially Black women writers, who are at the top of the most sold and popular books" (Figure 3.6).

Black women disrupting existing structures and producing knowledge is already Americanity. This means that by transforming the process of knowledge production, Berth, Borges, and their colleagues are incorporating the results of a process of adaptation, resistance, and reinterpretations that is Afrocentric (Gonzalez, 1988a). Cristiane da Silva (2017) suggests that "in the face of the racism and sexism present in our society, the action of speaking, writing, researching, and participating in events inside academic/intellectual spaces approaching Black lives is revolutionary" (p. 76). I agree with da Silva that there are reasons to celebrate. In my experience, I know that by occupying spaces such as FLIP, we are challenging the dynamics of knowledge production while also promoting the urgency of shifting narratives from the views about Black women to what we have to say for and about ourselves and our community.

Berth also makes a point about the editorial market, "[The] Brazilian editorial market is racist and elitist and there is a lot to be conquered. Many Black women intellectuals with relevance and expression have been ignored by the mainstream national literature." Berth's point is not that Black intellectuals are not publishing or that their work has less relevance. Rather, the issue once again is structural: it is the effect of ongoing coloniality in all institutions from which Black people were excluded. As Anibal Quijano (1992) points out, independence in Latin American countries happened without a transformation of the social, politic, and economic structures that characterize those societies as independent but not decolonized. With this in mind, I suggest that Berth's post, both in terms of image and text, enacts Americanity by centring Black people's knowledge making as a way to transform the publishing context.

The comments that follow both Figure 3.7 and Figure 3.6 show the importance of Borges's and Berth's presence in online platforms to connect with their communities and to give a sense of love and hope to others who also choose any form of intellectual journey. One of Berth's followers writes: "That the pathways open for us! Thank you, you are wonderful ✻ ♡"; another said, "It's just the start! We are the majority; we will be the revolution 💪💪💪." Those comments, when put in the context of this research, are powerful because they show Instagram being used as a support or even a starting point to inspire others.

When the commenter says, "that the pathways open for us," I envisage Black women intellectuals on mainstream social media platforms offering people from a range of backgrounds a way to connect with stories and knowledges that might not be accessible otherwise. When the other commenter says, "we are the majority and we will be the revolution," it reminds me of Gonzalez's (1988) interpretation of Brazilian culture where coloniality rejected African influence in its construction. The post (image and caption) alongside the comment make clear the importance of the exposure of Black authors and intellectuals on mainstream platforms such as Instagram.

To sum up, in the posts I analyzed in the first part of the chapter where Black bodies are the focus, Borges and Berth focus on how Black women are becoming the owners of our own experiences and celebrating what has been cast out by society. By celebrating themselves and their peers, the intellectuals are inwardly loving their blackness and spreading those ideas through their digital platforms. Amefricanity is enacted in this context, when they decided to reframe their experiences as Black women using Instagram to share their journey. I also believe that perceiving Amefricanity in this context brings a contemporary perspective to the use of the concept. In the second half of this chapter, I consider Amefricanity as a common denominator of

Black thought: here where Black women intellectuals become the subject of their own narratives. The posts I analyze celebrate intellectual movements, such as Plural Feminisms, and show their presence in spaces where they can present their production. By doing this, Borges and Berth challenge the dynamics of knowledge production and show the importance of shifting narratives to transform the context in which they live.

Chapter 4: Amefricanizing Social Media: Crossroads of Knowledge

In addition to discussing the Black body and the importance of occupying spaces, Borges and Berth also criticize mainstream understandings of the locus of intellectuality as solely academic, arguing that other spaces, independent of the academy, also produce knowledge. Other scholars agree. Giovana Xavier (2019) talks about cooking, gardening, and braiding hair as instances of intellectuality where Black women transfer their ancestral knowledge through gathering with their offspring. Along the same lines, Elaine Lima (2019) explains that her first intellectual reference was her mother, who worked very hard for Lima to get an education. In fact, Lima argues that her mother's generation was responsible for making it possible for Black women such as herself to attend university. This influx of Black university students also influences the university as well. Cristiane da Silva (2017) speaks about academic spaces and how Black women in spaces of Eurocentric intellectualities, such as universities, are changing how research is done, pointing to the importance of experience in building research.

Angela Figueredo (2020) says that among most Black people engaging in academic research, there is a search for approaches towards studies that make sense within the community's daily life. One way of making sense is intervene in the community while establishing a more horizontal relationship with research making. Formulating and employing new perspectives, concepts, theories, and methodological tools is necessary for constructing a house with no master. Amefricanity is one of those tools since it acknowledges the emergency of perspectives that are Amefrican centered.

4.1 Questioning the Locus of Intellectuality

The following two posts (Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2) touch upon debates Borges and Berth brought to their Instagram about intellectuality.

Figure 4.1

Juliana Borges Comments on Alternative Forms of Intellectuality
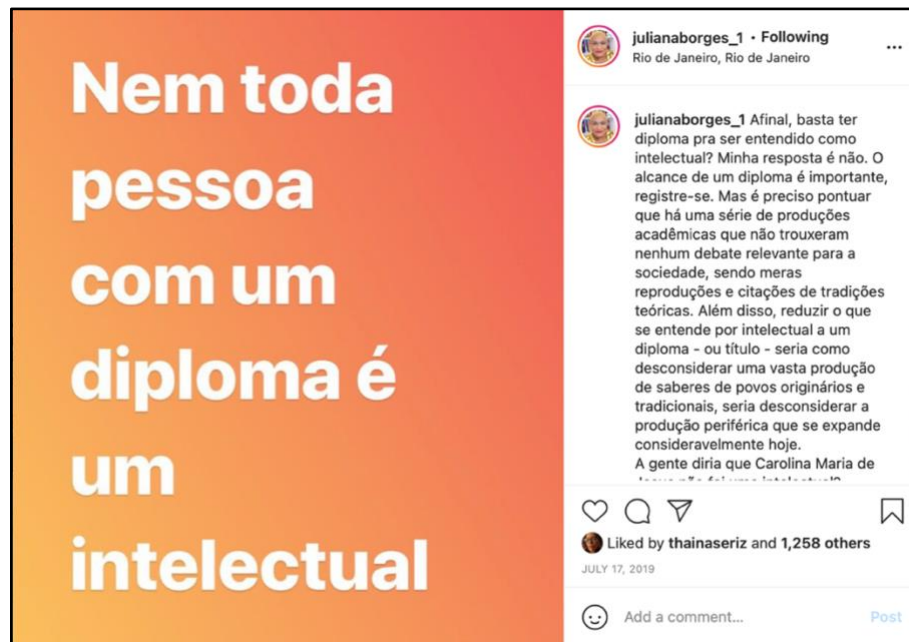
Note: Borges (2019, July 17).

The image shared by Juliana Borges in her post (Figure 4.1), features an Instagram-generated coloured template, with warm colors, including orange, yellow, and hints of red. Published in July 2019, Borges wrote the following statement over the background with large bold white letters: "Not everyone with a diploma is an intellectual." To accompany this image, she wrote a lengthy statement:

> After all, is it enough to have a degree to be understood as an intellectual? My answer is
>
> no. Achieving a degree is essential, I know, but it is necessary to point out that there is a
>
> series of academic debates that are reproductions and quotations of theoretical traditions,

bringing no relevant discussion to society. Reducing what we understand as an intellectual to a piece of paper—or degree—is like disregarding an extensive production of bits of knowledge from traditional populations and the output from the margins of society that lately has been expanding considerably.

Would we say that Carolina Maria de Jesus was not an intellectual?[17] I do not think so. But it is becoming common to confuse necessary earned access to the university with a direct entry into the intellectual universe. Despite academia, the intellectual universe can and should be accessed and supported by everyone. The university must be a space that provides the tools for you to better develop, to learn about methodologies, and to expand theories that you may or may not engage with. I mean to say that having degrees makes a person an academic, but not necessarily an intellectual. It is the ability to use academic tools critically, presenting connections or criticisms and articulating these when thinking about the society that makes someone intellectual. Also, the ability to look at society, present questions, and seek to answer them in a dynamic relationship with society is, for me, what would configure an intellectual thought.

It is not your portfolio of diplomas, reproducing the logic of whiteness, which makes you a Black intellectual. But your ability to observe, formulate and present thought, knowledge, and relevant reflections to the environment makes you an intellectual. This was a brief rant that deserves a much more in-depth conversation. Therefore, this is not an intellectual text but a very short provocation in the face of my daily discomfort with those who think that an academic CV guarantees the status of anything. Do not place yourself within the parameters of whiteness. Break them.

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[17] Carolina Maria de Jesus was a Brazilian writer who lived in a *favela* most of her life until a journalist discovered she had several diaries about her life in the *favela*s published.

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With this post, Borges reinforces the relevance of thinking with and from alternative forms of knowledge production as mentioned in the work of Xavier, Figueredo, Lima, and da Silva introduced in the previous chapter. That is to say, our understanding of intellectuality and what is considered a product of this intellectuality should be more plural.

In the caption that accompanies the statement, Borges continues, "Reducing what we understand as an intellectual to a piece of paper—or degree—is like disregarding an extensive production of bits of knowledge from traditional populations, and the production from the periphery that lately has been expanding considerably." Here, Borges is speaking about different forms of intellectuality, including that generated through day-to-day experiences and the knowledge passed down by our ancestors. In the introduction to this thesis, I cited Collins (1990) and hooks (1991) to explain that for a Black woman to become an intellectual, she must bypass white patriarchal capitalism toward an otherwise of knowledge production. When Borges defends intellectuality as necessarily more than a diploma, she speaks to the importance of coming from epistemologies and theories that value both ancestral knowledge and day-to-day experience as theory-making.

At the same time that Borges values ancestral knowledge and day-to-day experience, she also argues about the importance of taking ownership of the academic space and its possibilities to learn and unlearn: "The intellectual universe can and should be accessed and carried out by everyone. The university must be understood as a space that provides the tools for you to develop to, meaning learn about methodologies and expand theories that you may or may not dialogue." Although I agree with her, this is a tricky theme. I say this because university students from marginalized upbringings tend to experience challenges finishing university, usually due to monetary restrictions or a lack of a sense of belonging. During my time at the Federal University

of Rio de Janeiro, some colleagues had to drop classes or take an extended break because they could not afford transportation or textbook costs. In a more subjective sense, personally, it seemed senseless at times being in a space I couldn't relate to. I mean by all this that in the Brazilian context, that while the academic universe has come a long way, it still has much to improve. To "decolonize the mind," as hooks proposes, can be challenging in a space where Eurocentric knowledge is the norm.

An alternative for decolonizing the mind emerges from epistemologies and perspectives that are not Eurocentric. In this sense, Amefricanity can be an alternative, especially when Borges speaks to other forms of developing intellectuality outside of academia. I believe this discussion is due to the changes made in the education curricula due to affirmative action. As a consequence, the question of what makes an intellectual has led to frequent discussions in Brazilian universities (Da Silva, 2017; Figueredo, 2020). The traditional understanding of academia implies a neutral, objective subject who is looking at an object—something or someone from outside of the academy—elaborating theory through empirical research in a way that keeps themselves at a distance from the object. Nevertheless, once said objects—Black and Indigenous people in particular—start going to the university, the systemic racism of the academic structure becomes even more evident.

Nowadays, more than ten years after affirmative action in public universities, diversity—or better said, the true face of Brazil—is making its way into Brazilian academia. I dare say this marks the beginning of decolonizing the academy and challenging research practices, methodologies, and theory. Likewise, I believe that other forms of intellectuality are being considered, such as rap music, art, Afro–Brazilian religions, oral *Quilombola* [Maroon] stories, and so on. In order to decolonize academia and value subjects that are not Euro-centered,

Indigenous and Black folks have to have space to be researchers and professors, not just students. Beyond affirmative actions, Indigenous and Black people need committed representatives and allies in all instances of academic institutions. What I mean to say by this is that alternative epistemologies such as Amefricanity can be used as a tool for students and staff to bring to the fore those other forms of intellectuality to transform the academia.

Borges followers' comments show how the topic of Black women intellectuals resonates with the audience. Commentaries included several clap emoji—notably with Black hands—and others with words of affirmation such as "I loved your reflection," "Enlightening," "I totally agree." A more in-depth comment reads:

> Thank you, @julianaborges_1. It's exactly through this framework that I read the book *Black Women Intellectuals* when I bring forward Conceição Evaristo, Miriam Alves, and Cristiane Sobral as intellectuals. What motivated me in my thesis was the discomfort in academia toward accepting what we are saying.

> This comment supports the claim that intellectuality should be plural and that

intellectuals such as those mentioned in the commentary should be reference points in Brazil. About this, Borges makes a relevant comment in her post, "It is not your folder full of diplomas, reproducing logics of whiteness that makes you a Black woman intellectual. But your capacity of observing, formulating, and presenting relevant thinking to your community makes you an intellectual." In her view, being an intellectual goes beyond one's presence in academia; it necessarily involves having the critical skills to apply that knowledge to your community.

We can link Borges's reflection to Amefricanity. Recall that for Gonzalez, *Améfrica* denotes a historical process of intense cultural dynamics (resistance, accommodation, reinterpretation, creation of new ways) grounded in Amefrican models and bound up in identity

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construction (Gonzalez, 1988, p. 151). Those models are specific and range from everyday

vivências [life experiences] to ancestral knowledge, which are also exercises of Amefricanity. In

the following post (Figure 4.2), we see a similar discussion brought by Berth:

Figure 4.2

Joice Berth Shares a Post Regarding Her Bestseller Book

Note: Berth (2019, June 10).

The image above (Figure 4.2), published by Joice berth in June 2019, shows a print

screen of Berth's book *Empoderamento* [Empowerment][18] , which was number one in Politics

and Social Sciences on Amazon.br in 2019. Berth accompanies this screenshot with the

following text:

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[18] The book in question proposes a socio–political path of reconstruction to break the oppressive strands of history that placed Black people in the margins, away from educational and professional opportunities. In it, Berth draws on intellectuals such as Paulo Freire and bell hooks to explain empowerment not only as a subjective transformation but also as collective action.

In a lecture on empowerment for a group of women in political science, I shared a roundtable with a [white?] professor from a large Brazilian university. I received applause, and the women gave me incredible feedback, insights, and inspirations for their struggles based on empowerment. I talked about my research process, the references I gathered to write the book, etc. In the end, the professor told me how she was *very surprised*[19] with my intelligence and *the amount of knowledge*, as I mentioned references that she thought to be unreachable for a woman like me, meaning, BLACK.

The detail was that her lecture at this roundtable was based on North American references to Black feminism, and I could see she was not a specialist. Besides, for me, she was the example that talking about blackness doesn't exempt you from racism. We, Black feminists, have been saying this for decades... To a feminist who is academic and white, it seems unthinkable that a non-academic Black woman knows more than or as much as her. This discomfort is translated in astonishment as if I was a point outside the curve. I intend to return to academic spaces, of course, but not hide behind a dubious title given by people who dehumanize themselves by reducing themselves to a title or production. I am much more than that... the human mind is much more than that. Finally, I thank Brazil for the excellent reception of my book. Even one year after its official release, it is among the bestsellers for all that year and, sometimes even occupying the podium in Political and Social Sciences on a site the size of Amazon. The labour of research should be independent of academic recognition. Intelligence is a trait that is present, even without backing from the Eurocentered and genocidal academia. I keep doing my work with the seriousness and commitment that are part of who I am. Also,

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[19] On social media, blogs and chats the * is used to give emphasis in an expression.

proud to be part of this Black team (Plural Feminisms[20]) that challenges the logic of academia.

The post (Figure 4.2) is from Berth's lecture at a Brazilian university about her new book. As Berth notes in the final paragraph of her commentary, broadly speaking, it is about challenging the logic of academia. During the lecture, the white academic coordinating the event commented on being surprised by Berth's intelligence and the extent of her knowledge. About this, Berth said, "To a feminist who is academic and white, it seems unthinkable that a non-academic Black woman knows more than or as much as her. This discomfort is translated in astonishment as if I was a point outside the curve." With this statement, Berth points to something that is not uncommon to Black intellectuals, which is having their capabilities questioned due to racist and sexist constructions.

According to bell hooks (1991), institutions often deny or doubt the intellectual ability of Black women. hooks also points out that since Black women were used as a currency, when a Black woman sees herself as an intellectual, she breaks stereotypes imposed on her by white supremacy (p. 154). Along those same lines, Gonzalez (1984) observes that assuming our voices becomes a way of breaking the societal roles assigned to Black women. Giovana Xavier (2019) sounds a hopeful note. While discussing academic *escrevivências* [writing–living]*,* Xavier shared several experiences regarding the discomfort she caused as a Black intellectual inside the academy. However, she called attention to the fact that the "era of the exceptions is crumbling" (p. 77), a hopeful comment towards the changes Black intellectuals are making in Brazil.

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[20] Plural Feminisms is a project started by the philosopher Djamila Ribeiro that offers tools to comprehend and change the reality in Brazil through courses, lectures, and inexpensive books with accessible language. The project is not funded by the government or any academic institution.

At the time of the post, Berth had no affiliation with a university, either as professor or student. Hence, she uses this milestone, the success of her book, to argue that research does not necessarily need to be done in an academic setting or to have academic recognition. In the caption, Berth explains that being outside academia does not change the value of her work. Nor does it compromise her intellectuality:

> The labor of research should be independent of academic recognition. Intelligence is a trait that is present, even without backing from the Eurocentered and genocidal academia. I keep doing my work with the seriousness and commitment that are part of who I am. Also, proud to be part of this Black team (Plural Feminisms) that challenges the logic of academia.

To make sense of this statement, I raise two points: Black intellectuality and the relationship with Eurocentric academic standards and what it means to challenge the logic of academia. Rodriguez et al. (2018) explain that Western culture's idea of an intellectual makes the idea of a Black intellectual impossible. Their main argument is that intellectuality is related to power, and coloniality placed Black and Indigenous folks as powerless, and marginalized their knowledge. Drawing on these scholars, it is possible to better understand what Berth means when she delinks intelligence from "the Eurocentered and genocidal academia." Put another way, on the one hand, the university is a place where Black and Indigenous knowledges has suffered erasure. On the other, it is a space that should belong to diverse communities as one more place where it is possible to learn, unlearn, and create theories and methodologies to transform our realities.

This changing scenario resonates with Berth's followers. Dozens of them congratulated Berth on her book being a bestseller and agreed with her analysis. Some even offered insights

from their own experience. One wrote, "Joice, once again I felt seen." The sentiment of feeling seen suggests both the importance of the Black feminist community in the face of white supremacy *and* the importance of documenting and sharing racist experiences within the academy. As Berth writes in her post, "The women there gave me incredible feedback, insights, and inspirations they had for their struggles using the concept (empowerment)." Berth shows that amidst the racist episode, she experienced solidarity and community with women who felt inspired by her work.

The commenter continues by offering an example from her own experience:

A few months ago, one of my dissertation examiners, a white woman (allegedly progressive), said as a compliment, "you really put yourself out there." One of the suggestions she gave me was to drop the theory I was using and use another person—a white, cis, heterosexual, North American man, who I had already presented as not sufficient for what I was doing in my thesis […] Thank you for being a committed and admirable researcher and activist.

This comment adds weight to the argument that academia needs to change from the inside. The presence of students of colour from several racial backgrounds is a start, but what is accepted as theory and methodology must change as well.

When Gonzalez (1988a) tells us Americanity is "a new look in the social–cultural formation of Brazil," (p. 69) in my view, she provides an opportunity to rethink the ways different cultures and social norms shape Brazilian culture. In this sense, the epistemological potential of Americanity offers a possibility to work towards transforming the current context of academia in Brazil. This potential includes the decolonial aspect of prioritizing practice before theory and focusing on collective struggles when doing research to change the reality of the

Black population in Brazil. In short, Borges's and Berth's posts about academia show how social media is proving to be an avenue for expression for Black people, in this case, those searching to build their intellectuality in and out academia. Enacting Amefricanity here is the practice of thinking about other possibilities of knowledge production and understanding the necessity of changing what is accepted as intellectual.

4.2 Celebrating Black Women Intellectuals

In the last twenty years, the work of historical and contemporary Black women intellectuals who have been ignored by the mainstream academy and publishing environment is surfacing. Authors from the 19th and 20th centuries, such as novelist Maria Firmina dos Reis, psychoanalyst Regina Bicudo, writer Carolina Maria de Jesus, scholar Beatriz Nascimento, and others are referenced and celebrated now more than ever.

There are at least two explanations for their surfacing. First, with increased access to higher education, Black people have noticed this lack and changed the research culture to take these intellectuals seriously. Second, and even more relevant for my research, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and blogs work as tools for visibility and self-publishing for a new generation of Black intellectuals. Alongside the blogs mentioned in the Introduction, such as *Blogueiras Negras* [Black Bloggers], *Geledés*, and the Plural Feminisms platform, there are other important Black influencers out there. For example, Nataly Neri is a social scientist who uses her platform to talk about race, feminism, and environmental issues and solutions. Gabi de Pretas, who began by studying the aesthetics of Black women on social media in the early 2010s, nowadays also talks about veganism and motherhood. Alongside many others,

their presence on platforms such as Instagram allows them to perform their intellectual identities and share their achievements in a country where intellectual work is seen as a privilege instead of a possibility. In this context, Borges and Berth not only make public their intellectual achievements, but they also celebrate the work and influence of Black women intellectuals.

The final four posts of my analysis concern Borges's and Berth's encounters with other intellectuals and their journeys. The first one is an event where Borges met Conceição Evaristo.

Figure 4.3

Juliano Borges meets Conceição Evaristo

Note: Borges (2018, November 9).

As shown in Figure 4.3, Borges shares a photo of herself (left) hugging Brazilian writer and scholar Conceição Evaristo with the FLUP [Literary Fair of the Peripheries] logo as a backdrop. Both are wearing black cardigans with long colourful scarves. Borges carries her book *Encarceramento em Massa* [Mass Incarceration] in one hand while embracing Evaristo's shoulder with the other. Both are smiling at the camera—perhaps a sign that they are in a space where they feel comfortable and welcomed. The text that accompanies the photo reads:

I lived one of the most intense moments of my life. I met and was hugged by @conceicaoevaristooficial. She went [to FLUP] to follow our roundtable #FeminismosPlurais @fluprj. She arrived during my talk. I was so emotional that I had to pull myself together. I had just talked about why her words touched me most profoundly as part of the epigraph of my book.

When I read Conceição Evaristo's writing saying that writing makes you bleed, I felt present and alive in those words. They went through me with such force that they completely changed me. Since then, I walk with her words wherever I go. I need those words: they feed me, they comfort me, they take me off my feet, they shake me, they teach me. Thank you for existing. Thank you for being a lighthouse and opening the way for us. Long live Conceição Evaristo!

Conceição Evaristo started writing at a young age, but only published her first work in 1990 when she was 44 years old. She is well known for her poetry and narratives that value the experiences of Black women in Brazil. For this reason, Evaristo (2013) asserts that writing is a political act for Black women: since no one else told our stories, we should take ownership of our story and experiences. She calls this type of writing *escrevivência* [writing–living], meaning the text that you write carries your lived experiences as a Black person individually and in community. Knowing about Conceição Evaristo's background, in this post Borges also elevates the writing form *escrevivência* as a valid approach to knowledge production.

The event in question—the Feira Literária das Periferias [Literary Fair of the Peripheries] in the city of Rio de Janeiro—typically happens in spaces such as *favelas* that have been traditionally excluded from literary events in the city. The event is also characteristically dedicated to publishing authors from those spaces and celebrating them. In this instance,

alongside other colleagues from Plural Feminisms, Borges presented on a roundtable with the same name, which Evaristo attended. Borges describes the first time she met Evaristo at this event as "one of the most intense moments of my life." She continues by explaining that Evaristo arrived at the roundtable at the exact moment Borges was talking about the effect of Evaristo's words on her own book. What it is possible to understand from the description of Borges's experience is that the encounter with Evaristo was not just casual; it was a moment of respect and understanding of the importance Evaristo carries in Borges's construction of herself as a Black woman and intellectual.

In her post (Figure 4.3), Borges indicates that reading Evaristo's work has been a life-changing experience: "They [Evaristo's writing] went through me with such force that they completely changed me. Since then, I walk with her words wherever I go. I need those words: they feed me, they comfort me, they take me off my feet, they shake me, they teach me." In making this comment, Borges shows vulnerability as she demonstrates affection for Evaristo and an appreciation for Evaristo's role in her development as a Black woman and intellectual. Here we see the relevance of bell hooks's (1992) depiction of the collective Black female experience as a tool for survival (p. 51). We also glean the importance of community as a tool for feeding, comforting, shaking, and teaching. In her book *Becos da Memória* (2017) [Memory's Alleys], Evaristo tells her childhood story while interweaving the stories of survival of her neighborhood. That is to say, her story is one of entangled journeys of people who, in collective struggle, survive and at times thrive amidst the layers of violence Black people suffer in Brazil. It is no surprise that a new generation of Black intellectuals including Borges and Berth look up to Elders like Evaristo and Sueli Carneiro.

When Evaristo and other intellectuals urge us to write, I understand this need to write as an act of resistance. This need comes from the historical invisibility Black women have suffered through centuries of being silenced by the colonialist structure of Brazil. Borges understands the importance of being in the presence of such an influential writer: "When I read that writing makes us bleed. I felt present and alive in these words." This statement evokes one of Evaristo's popular phrases "writing is a form of bleeding" from her book *Olhos D'agua* (2015) [Eyes of Water]. This resounding phrase means that for Black women, writing comes from deep inside and necessarily opens up wounds to give us strength to tell our stories. This post shows Amefricanity being enacted as a tool where the stories, perspectives, experiences, and influences are Black-centered.

In the next post (Figure 4.4), Borges celebrates Evaristo and other intellectuals:

Figure 4.4

Juliana Borges Celebrates Black Women Intellectuals

Note: Borges (2018, December 7).

Figure 4.4 shows a photo published in December 2019 by Juliana Borges featuring three Black intellectual women powerhouses—Conceição Evaristo, Angela Davis, and Benedita da Silva, a feminist, activist for the *favelas*, and the first elected Black councilwoman in Brazil—all gathered at the National Meeting of Black Women against Racism, Violence, and Good Living—Black Women Moving Brazil. This event took place in December 2018 in the city of Goiás. In the photograph, Evaristo, Davis, and da Silva hold a sign for a street now named after Marielle Franco, marking the place where Franco and her driver were executed in March 2018. The trio is smiling, but they are looking in different directions, which might indicate that many people were taking pictures at the same time. Borges writes:

> That moment when you feel fully represented artistically, intellectually, and politically. Conceição Evaristo, Angela Davis, Benedita da Silva, and Marielle Franco. The answer for the crisis and organization of the (political) left is in this picture and nowhere else.

Borges cites the poet Evaristo as her artistic reference; Angela Davis, a reference point for Black feminist thought in Brazil for a long time, as her intellectual reference; and da Silva and Franco, both Black women from the *favela*s who became councilwomen in Rio de Janeiro, as her political references. Notably, Rio de Janeiro is one of the cities where violence against the Black population is massive. The significance of the gathering of three prominent Black women intellectuals must be understood in the political context of 2018, beginning with the murder of Marielle Franco in March, and ending with the presidential elections in October. Franco's assassination inflamed the Black movement, turning Franco into a symbol of social and political struggle (Loureiro, 2020).

When Borges says, "the answer for the crisis and organization of the (political) left is in this picture and nowhere else," she is referring to the current political climate in Brazil which has

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only worsened. With the election of Jair Bolsonaro in October 2018, the political left was fractured. In particular, the Partido dos Trabalhadores [Workers Party] defeat after fourteen years in power due to the coup against President Dilma Rousseff and corruption accusations in 2016.

However, even in this alarming context, celebrating Black lives brought joy and healing for the women attending the meeting, including one of Borges's followers, who commented, "What a beautiful round table. I'm carrying with me the amazing words from you, @joiceberth and @silviovlq. Thank you very much." Another comment said, "My references of fight and love for our Black people in one picture." These claims matter because they show social media working as a space not only for sharing but for exchanging with people who might feel connected through virtual spaces. Amefricanity here is enacted through Borges's efforts to express the effects such encounters have on her journey as an intellectual and Black woman.

The following two posts (Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.6) depict Berth's experiences celebrating other Black women.

Figure 4.5

Joice Berth celebrates Lélia Gonzalez's Birthday

Note: Berth (2019, February 1).

Published by Joice Berth in February 2019, Figure 4.5 features a photograph from

Gonzalez's archive which was taken in 1979. The photograph shows Gonzalez smiling with her

left hand up (text is over her hand); she is wearing oversized sunglasses and a flowery blouse.

The background has several leather items such as belts and purses. In the original photograph, it

is possible to notice some sunshine. Superimposed on this photograph is an excerpt from

Gonzalez's and Carlos Hasebalg's 1982 publication, *Lugar de Negro* [Place of Blackness]. In the

passage in question, Gonzalez speaks to spatial issues and racism, explaining how the

configuration of the cities in post-abolition Brazil relegated blackness to subaltern spaces.

We see an apparent separation between the physical spaces occupied by oppressors and

oppressed. The "natural place" of the dominant white group is in the most beautiful

neighborhoods of the city or countryside—large, spacious, and adequately protected by different

types of policing. The "natural place" of blackness is the opposite: from the slave quarters to the

*favela*s, tenements, basements, occupations, flooded places, and public housing. Nowadays, the

criteria are symmetrically the same as before, the racial division of space. To accompany this

image, Berth writes:

> The woman I am today, I've always been. However, the courage to show the world I
>
> have something to share and add to the struggle for rights denied to women, Black men,
>
> Black women, and Indigenous men and women, was a process. [It] started with her
>
> (Gonzalez), continued with Sueli Carneiro, and flourished with Djamila Ribeiro. Many
>
> other women influenced me, especially from my family, my grandmothers, aunts, and
>
> mother, for their life trajectories marked by sexism and racism combined. But Lélia made
>
> me understand that I wasn't crazy or excessive, strict, or obstinate. And not
>
> "complicated" for being a Black woman. Quite the opposite. Lélia is my rebirth, and to

her, I owe all my respect and reverence. She lives in me, in my heart. And she will always live. In everything I do, there is always my eternal thanks to the beloved Orishas for Gonzalez's giant Ori (head, mentality) that moved me so much with her words and wisdom ahead of her time.

I interpret this post as revealing just how much of an inspiration Lélia Gonzalez was to Berth. For instance, the Gonzalez quote over the picture resonates with Berth's work since her formation as an architect and urbanist led her to research the division of cities with a race and gender lens. Berth states that "cities carry in their formation and function the oppressive discourses that mutilated citizenships as an inherent part of urban development and design" (Berth, 2021, September 30th). In this sense, Gonzalez seems to have inspired Berth's work toward changing the configuration of urban spaces. Not incidentally, Berth published a post on Lélia Gonzalez's birthday to celebrate the life and legacy of one her biggest inspirations. Gonzalez is part of Berth's intellectual formation, and they share interests such as blackness, cities, feminism, and psychoanalysis. As Berth writes in the caption:

> The woman I am today, I've always been. However, the courage to show the world I have something to share and add to the struggle for rights denied to women, Black men, Black women, and Indigenous men and women, was a process. [It] started with her (Gonzalez), continued with Sueli Carneiro, and flourished with Djamila Ribeiro.

When Berth names her influences, she invites us to understand how her intellectual upbringing developed. Gonzalez is a reference point for Black feminist thought in Brazil, specifically in relation to understanding the intersections of race and gender in the Brazilian context. Since the 1980s, Sueli Carneiro works in promoting public policy for Black women. Lastly, Djamila Ribeiro, a contemporary of Berth, is responsible for creating the project Plural

Feminisms that launched Berth's first book *Empoderamento* [Empowerment]. Through the post, we learn about Berth's inspiration and connection with these women, which resulted in her flourishing as a professional, intellectual, and the Black woman she always knew she was. This is also reflected in the book's title. Empowerment, in this case, comes from the Black feminist intellectual, creative, and political lineage with which she aligns herself.

By affirming herself in this way as well as presenting an intellectual lineage that includes her grandmothers, aunts, and mother, Berth echoes Gonzalez in challenging the conventional space of blackness. In her 1984 article about racism and sexism in Brazilian culture, Gonzalez explains the roles relegated to Black women during and after slavery. Notably, Evaristo (2013) also speaks to this when she explains that Brazilian structures still see Black women as great cleaners, nannies, and maids but not as great intellectuals. What such posts offer, therefore, is an alternative intellectual scenario. Numerous commenters engaged with this post. One of Berth's followers took up the theme of hope:

> I know Brazil is an invaded territory and constructed under violence and a constant
> process of colonization. Still, it cheers my heart knowing I can read you in the same
> language I learned how to write, and you were born in the same place as I have. What is
> most important about various issues and struggles was written here (Brazil), with a lot of
> effort, but we keep ongoing. I stay here with a feeling of modesty.

This rich commentary, among others that included emoji hearts, claps, and power fists, stood out as it shows that Berth, as an intellectual could be for her follower what Gonzalez and the other intellectuals were for Berth; that is, she could be part of this follower's intellectual lineage. We can connect this comment to the relevance of Berth's broader presence online and how her reflections, pictures, and insights offer her followers an opportunity for self-reflection. The

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commenter also raises the issue of the ongoing consequences of coloniality when they point to Brazil as an "invaded territory constructed under violence and constant process of colonization." However, even under the circumstances, the commenter argues that having access to knowledge in their own language in their own country makes a difference in their process of learning about specific struggles from Brazil—it brings hope.

The above commentary perceptively dialogues with the ideas of both Berth and Gonzalez. The commenter talks about the ongoing consequences of coloniality and touches upon relevant topics, including the land and the language. In Brazil, especially since the election of Bolsonaro as president, the rights of Indigenous peoples are not consolidated in government institutions, and there is no formal plan to deal with issues regarding land. The other topic, language, points to the importance of valuing knowledge produced in Portuguese by Black women to resonate with and better serve the Black community.

The upshot of all this is twofold. First, we need to consider the relevance of sharing content that is accessible and relatable to a vast number of people. In this case the work of Gonzalez and, we can develop the intellectual and political conversations to continue through the comments from Berth's followers. Through the comments and likes, followers share how Berth's content helps them feel connected to larger Black feminist issues, and also, how their consciousness has changed. Second, it is easy to connect this post to the enactment of Americanity. Berth and Borges, like Gonzalez, organized their writing in a manner that involves their experiences, through their acceptance of their blackness and specific knowledges they hold *as* Black women. The praxis that lies on Americanity is seen in this post when Berth decentres her references from the Eurocentric standard to Black women intellectuals and other women who are part of her life.

The next and last post (Figure 4.6) features another moment of celebration. The photograph published by Joice Berth in May 2019 (Figure 4.6), shows four Black women holding one another, forming a circle. The focal point—and the woman to whom all the others direct their gaze—is Sueli Carneiro, who has braided hair and wears a long grey dress. To her left is Carla Akotirene in a long white dress. Next comes Juliana Borges, mostly hidden apart from an arm hugging Joice Berth, who stands to Borges immediate left. For her part, Berth is wearing a white t-shirt and black skirt and is also looking towards Carneiro. The three visible women are all smiling. The background is the media wall for an event that took place in the city of São Paulo.

Figure 4.6

Joice Berth comments on the power of ancestrality and union

Note: Berth (2019, May 1).

Berth accompanies this image (Figure 4.6) with a very short textual commentary, writing "Moments of love and intense admiration! We are seeds from Sueli Carneiro and her unbeatable generation!!!" This caption says it all, perfectly encapsulating the meaning behind the picture of four Black women hugging each other in admiration of their elder, in this case, Sueli Carneiro. The image itself is also a celebration: while media walls are generally designed for those who attend gala events to pose for assembled photographers, this group of four women ignores the media all together; rather, they are focused on each other and, in this way, on Black feminist community.

In relation to the theme of celebrating Black women intellectuals, in the two last posts under consideration (Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.6), both Borges and Berth insist on celebrating the women who have come before them: Gonzalez, Evaristo, and Carneiro, as well as their contemporary Djamila Ribeiro. Considering the extreme violence that the Black population suffers in Brazil, growing old is a privilege. Further, as previously discussed, becoming a Black intellectual is the result of a series of choices that also emerged out of longer community histories, because of their mothers' and foremothers' efforts. Here it is possible to envision the relevance of community in knowledge production for Black women.

The warmth exuded in both the image and caption are echoed in comments from Berth's virtual community. Comments such as "Here is the joy of a living picture of AFFECTION! All my thanks for having the humility to share their knowledge! This moves me so much" and "Four inspirations, one picture" resonate the most with my analysis of how Borges and Berth enact Amefricanity from sharing their experiences and reflections. These comments also circle back to the idea of social media and Instagram, which allows Black women to connect with their intellectual inspirations, even if such interactions are solely in the form of a "like." Although the

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comment/like process is not enough, I believe it is a start to stir enactments of Amefricanity on social media, because it prioritizes experience when producing knowledge and celebrates the importance of intellectual and political lineage and inheritance in any range of areas, places, and spaces.

This chapter discussed alternative forms of intellectuality and how Borges and Berth bring such forms to their Instagram platforms. It also discussed the relationships Borges and Berth have with other Black women intellectuals who are an inspiration to their work and their lives. Initially, I showed the importance of plural understandings of what being an intellectual is and the crossroads of how we built ourselves as intellectuals despite academia. For example, as shown in Figure 4.1, Borges argued that not everyone with a diploma is an intellectual and in Figure 4.2, when Berth discussed the occasion where someone undermined her work and her references based on her blackness. What emerges from this analysis are discussions about transforming academic spaces to make other ontologies and epistemologies possible and visible, with Amefricanity being one of those alternatives. By reflecting on other ways of thinking, Berth explains that the labour of research should be independent of academic recognition.

In the second half of the chapter, I examined the importance of celebrating and recognizing Black intellectuals, as well as the influence they have in other people's intellectual work. By using Amefricanity as a lens to interpret these posts, it is possible to argue that intellectuality is constructed collectively and that it encompasses influences beyond academia and indeed, beyond the conventionally intellectual. These influences include Black women intellectuals' affection and emotions for one another, lived experiences, ancestors, and communities. In conclusion, intellectuality and research making for Black women are also part of their understanding of their Amefricanity as a characteristic of their knowledge production.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this research project, I sought to answer the following main research question: What is the relationship between Black women intellectuals in Brazil, social media, and Amefricanity? Specifically, my goal was to understand if and how the use of virtual spaces might be seen as an enactment of *Amefricanidade,* or Amefricanity, a concept coined by the Brazilian scholar and activist Lélia Gonzalez in 1988. I premised this research on the fact that social media has become a catalyst for Black women in Brazil and decolonial feminist approaches such as Amefricanity are on the rise. Importantly, this research emerged out of my exploration of my own Black identity and the role social media has played in providing resources in that exploration.

In using Instagram as a research site, several challenges surfaced regarding data collection, organization, and selection due to the nature of the platform, where scraping data is difficult due to constant changes in the software. Another point is the double-edged characteristics of social media: while it can be a fantastic tool to find resources and communities, it can also be harmful to its users. There will always be critiques of the use of social media since it is possible to cause harm and detach people from offline spaces. At the same time, it can be a tool to learn about firsthand experiences of political, feminist, artistic, and activist identity (Holowka 2018a, p. 193). I also acknowledge that social media alone cannot carry and implement the entire political change process. It requires the help of those offline and those with access to academia and other venues where individuals are informed and educated about these issues (Kasana, 2014, p. 241).

The selection of Borges and Berth as the intellectuals to be analyzed was an important part of this research. To do so, I used a catalog organized by Giovana Xavier, starting with the 33

intellectuals included under two categories, "Academics/Research" and "Public Intellectuals." I then searched for all 33 women on Instagram using the Instagram research tool, discovering that roughly half of these intellectuals use this platform. It stands to reason that if this many intellectuals are active on Instagram, more research is necessary about the uses of Instagram as a research site.

To lay out my theoretical starting point of Amefricanity, I reviewed Gonzalez's work in relation to decolonial feminist scholarship. In this way, I demonstrated that the scope of Gonzalez's work contains core decolonial feminist characteristics such as decentring Eurocentric knowledge, centring Black women's experiences, and building knowledge from ancestral references towards a decolonized future. With the support of this literature, I explained the origin of Amefricanity in order to use it in a contemporary context as a decolonial feminist lens.

To summarize, I considered whether Amefricanity, as defined by Lélia Gonzalez, is enacted by Borges and Berth during their discussions online, and whether it is a feminist decolonial project. Through a careful, close, and focused reading of several of Borges's and Berth's posts, I identified how and why social media has become an essential platform for them and for other Black women intellectuals. My analysis prioritized posts about body, intellectuality, and collective understanding. I demonstrated that these texts, alongside their choice of images, contemplated a digital form of meaningful knowledge production and dissemination that did not necessarily rely on the approval and acceptance of formal academic or scholarly institutions. In doing so, I also argued that there is a relationship between Berth's and Borges's posts and Amefricanity. More broadly, my work contributes to decolonial feminist approaches to social media and the application of the concept of Amefricanity in the context of a research project located in North American. In this way, I sought to promote a way for the idea

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to travel throughout the Americas. Finally, I used social media as an archive and a different form of academic knowledge production. Nonetheless, this thesis only scratches the surface of placing Gonzalez's work in the decolonial approach.

A number of possible avenues for future research emerge from this project. First and foremost, would be a project that considers how Black feminist intellectuals in Brazil engage in solidarity work with their Indigenous counterparts, and how such activist and intellectual work might also manifest in social media spaces. In other words, where my work has focused on Black feminisms in Brazil, a relevant future research project might focus on Black and Indigenous coalitions. For example, one could consider building relationships between Gonzalez's work beyond Brazilian intellectualities to include connections with Indigenous feminisms and other Black feminisms. The fact is that Gonzalez touches on Indigenous scholarship only briefly in her work, and this notion has not been further explored by other scholars who have studied her work more extensively. Another possibility, which builds on one of the contributions of this thesis, is to examine Amefricanity in contemporary contexts where the concept can be used to understand current issues. There is strength in using this concept in the contemporary moment especially because of the current importance of decolonizing ways of thinking and doing research.

The experience of writing this research was part of my own experiences as a newcomer to Canada and a Black woman, as well as a re-encounter with my researcher self. Through the exploration and understanding of decolonial feminisms, I started to see research making as not only something that you do outside yourself, but also as something that comes from within. By using social media as a primary source for this research, I had the opportunity to stay connected to intellectuals who have been and continue to be important influences on my own intellectual development, as well as to share their achievements and to expand their knowledge beyond the

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frontiers of their original publications' intended audiences. In this way, my work promotes the concept of Amefricanity as envisioned by Lélia Gonzales, by valuing experiences of Black people and their search to decenter colonial power structures in the Americas. The possibility of fostering research that focused on my country of origin (Brazil) in a Canadian context, allowed me to increase my understanding of issues that Black women face in Brazil but also to start to understand how I can contribute to decolonizing the spaces of which I am part in Canada.

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