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Brazilian Black Women's NGOs and Their Struggles in the Area of Sexual and Reproductive Health: Experiences, Resistance, and Politics

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Brazilian Black Women's NGOs and Their Struggles in the Area of Sexual and Reproductive Health: Experiences, Resistance, and Politics

by

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Dedication

TO MY FAMILY, specially my dear Paulo, Eliane, Márcia, Mônica, Tia Maria, Tia Lindaura, Tia Tereza, Tio Bertinho, Caio, Ana Beatriz e Roberto; and in memory of my grandmother Felismina da Paixão, my mother Olinda Arminda Rosa dos Santos and my father Orlando dos Santos. To CRIOLA.

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My research does involve human participants and is in accordance with Federal Regulations for review of research protocols. It has been approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), Office of Research Support & Compliance at the University of Texas at Austin.

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Brazilian Black Women's NGOs and Their Struggles in the Area of Sexual and Reproductive Health: Experiences, Resistance, and Politics

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This dissertation develops a social analysis the Brazilian Black women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) by focusing on their political activism around issues of Black women's sexual and reproductive health. My research responds to two major questions: (1) what has been the effectiveness of the political work of Black Women's NGOs in the areas of sexual and reproductive health in Brazil, particularly with respect to reducing the effects of racial, gender, and class discrimination; (2) what are the contributions that these NGO's have made to the formation of Black women's agency and collective organizing in their communities?

The finding of this study is that claims and struggles for political autonomy and citizenship rights waged by Black women's NGOs around women's sexual and reproductive health (and health in general) have played a central role both in

transforming Black women's life conditions and in promoting their agency and collective organizing in the country. In the 1990s and 2000s there has been an increase in the number of Black women's activists affiliated to NGOs involved in local and national debates with policymakers and healthcare administrators about health disparities and health services. Furthermore, because of the activism of these NGOs, the federal, state and district governments have been forced to endorse and implement specific policies and programs that directly benefit the Black population generally, and Black women, in particular. This dissertation analyzes issues such as feminist movement, aspects of sexual and reproductive health and rights, violence, vulnerability, and Black women's experiences in relation to race, gender, class, and sexuality as major systems of oppression. It focuses on the histories of four Black women's organizations in the Brazilian cities of Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre: Criola, Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa, ACMUN (Cultural Association of Black Women) and Maria Mulher. In addition, this dissertation contributes to the documentation of Black women's contemporary history concerning political organizing in Brazil. Ultimately, I hope this dissertation will be beneficial to scholars and activists in Brazil and elsewhere focusing their political work on the eradication of racial and gender oppression, and winder issues of social justice.

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Introduction: The Personal Became Political

Women respond to racism. ***My response to racism is anger****. I have lived with that anger, ignoring it, feeding upon it, learning to use it before it laid my visions to waste, for most of my life. Once I did it in silence, afraid of the weight. My fear of anger taught me nothing. Your fear of that anger will teach you nothing, also.*

Women respond to racism means women responding to anger; the anger of exclusion, of unquestioned privilege, of racial distortions, of silence, ill-use, stereotyping, defensiveness, misnaming, betrayal, and co-optation.
My anger is a response to racist attitudes and to the actions and presumptions that arise out of those attitudes. If your dealings with other women reflect those attitudes, then my anger and your attendant fears are spotlights that can be used for growth in the same way I have used learning to express anger for my growth. (Audre Lorde. Sister Outsider, 1996:125)

Anger is loaded with information and energy (Audre Lorde. Sister Outsider, 1996:127)

Every Black Woman in America lives her life somewhere along a wide curve of ancient and unexpressed angers. My ***Black woman's anger*** *is a molten pond at the core of me, my most fiercely guarded secret. I know how much of my life as a powerful feeling woman is laced through with this net of rage. It is an electric thread woven into every emotional tapestry upon which I set the essentials of my life – a boiling hot spring likely to erupt at any point, leaping out of my consciousness like a fire on the landscape. How to train that anger with accuracy rather than deny it has been one of the major tasks of my life (Audre Lorde. Sister Outsider, 1996:145)*

I. UN-LEARNING TO BE HUMBLE & FINDING MY OWN VOICE AND FREEDOM

"Be humble, Sônia!" This was my father's advice for me! I heard these words from my early childhood – in my first attempts at trying to understand the world around me – until my father's death when I was 22 years old. He would tell me almost every day, "To get what we need from anyone in this world, we have to be humble and modest." His words were a guide for survival, an education to my mind, body and interpersonal skills. The echo of his words is disappearing, but I have yet to force myself against my own internalized oppression to fight against allowing people to be violent towards me and to discriminate against me. Since my childhood I have been trained by my family, school, and society to be a humble, passive, modest and scared human being against my own 'wild and ANGRY persona.' As much as my father was repressing his daughter, he was also trying to instill in me what he believed was proper behavior for women. My undomesticated and ANGRY spirit as a child and later as a teenager was tamed by monstrous words, a remainder from slavery times only uttered in rare occasions. "If these were the days of slavery, you would be punished every day." I heard this expression many times in my life, not just from my father, but also from other family members and friends. I became AFRAID for my father's words were meant to make me survive, to guarantee that I would be able to eat, get an education, and get a job; and so I learned humility as a survival tool. When I became a member of Criola – an Afro-Brazilian women's non-governmental organization – I could then understand, through one of our leaders, Lúcia Xavier, how deeply I had internalized the logic of exclusion that

I was exposed to as a child. Lúcia wrote: "Racism is an element that sustain vulnerability because it deprives the individual of his/her dignity, of power, and of citizenship rights that could guarantee his/her access to the means of subsistence and to society's services in an egalitarian way. Racism also puts the individual in a situation of inferiority and social exclusion, and obstructs the possibility that he or she can break out of political isolation (Xavier, 2004:36)." Drawing on Xavier and Collins (2000), I realized I needed to erase my father's (and others') words from my mind, soul and body.

I was seven years old in 1976 when my mother passed away due to several serious complications with her pregnancy. She gave birth to my youngest brother and died a few hours later in the middle of the night, alone in a public hospital room. The nurse responsible to care for her found out about her passing the next morning. She was only thirty-five years old, a Black domestic and dressmaker, who had not finished elementary school. She left five small children and one teenager. My father, influenced by several people (including family members), decided to put my youngest brother (a new born) up for adoption. My mother's passing caused deep distress in our family, and in order to protect my older brother, my younger sisters and myself, my father would not let us leave the house without him to go anywhere, especially the girls! Reflecting on this situation now, I realize how much my overprotective father contributed to my state of being FRIGHTENED about life in general. My first experience going out or being home unattended began when one of our neighbors – a white woman, married to a Black man and mother of three mixed-race girls – became acquainted with my father since one of my sisters and two of her daughters studied in the same class. This woman liked us very much and started asking my father for permission to take us to a Presbyterian Church

with her; it was 1982. Perhaps because she had three girls and was a good person, my father trusted her and conceded. Every Sunday morning my sister and I were ready to be taken to church. In fact, going to the church was my passport to freedom; my first real sense of freedom. I was an ANGRY and FRIGHTENED thirteen-year-old, smart and creative, and churchgoing gave me what I needed in that period. There I learned new, important social skills and added a new background to my life in terms of gender and race relations. It was in the church that I learned that people related to each other on the basis of racial and gender hierarchies. All the religious discourses and materials were structured in a way that reinforced the inferiority of women, Blacks, and indigenous people. This reality pushed me to try to understand where those assumptions came from, because although I had many problems in terms of self-esteem, I felt from my own experience of struggle that my capabilities, intelligence and creativity as a young Black woman were better than most people around me in that Church, in the in youth meeting; I knew I was leader. It was also in church that I began to better understand concepts that I already experienced in my family, such as poverty, injustice and discrimination in general, racism both implicit and explicit; the church's priest was also a high school philosophy teacher and spent time mentoring the parishioners, especially the youth, to do something about social injustice.

However, I went through a painful period in this church, which was one of my most traumatic experiences with racism. I was considered a rebellious and problematic teenager by many of the church members who had difficulty understanding why I was so angry, or why I had to confront them and argue about everything. Instead of helping me

to overcome my crisis, they decided to deal with me through two ways: (1) ignore and isolate me or (2) make fun of me by doing things such as telling racist and sexist jokes about women and Black people because they knew I did not like those comments, or they would tease me about my hair. The isolation process came from my female peers, all considered whites; although many of them belonged to race-mixed families, they were considered white because of their very light skin and straight hair (or something more close to white people's hair). At that time I was the only young Black woman in the group; I remember there was a light-skinned Black woman in her mid-30s that participated in the youth group, and although she sympathized with me and tried to advise me in order to keep me out of trouble, at the same time she disapproved of my behavior. The church socialization was a very significant experience for me and ironically, in spite of all the hard moments I spent there, it provided me with a better environment than my own home to grow among adults; the majority of the adults in the church had higher educational background and status than my family members, and they also were more open to talking to me or listening me, despite their efforts to control me in the most "friendly" manner possible.

Moreover, although in my beginning in the church I faced so many conflictive situations, it was there that I have the opportunity to break the silence and argue about how I felt about my life and oppression because although many members were trying to control me, at the same time they could not have enough power over my thinking and ideas. Thus, even when they ignored and isolated me or teased me about my personal appearance, I always have the opportunity to argue back, to break the silence; I knew I was oppressed there, but I could talk and say something about how I felt and that was an

exercise to me. It is strange to say that but in some sense, these early struggle built some confidence upon myself; and later it was crucial to gain the church respect and became one of the main leader in the church. In my home and family silence was the rule, so I was not allowed to exercise my free speech and open a conversation to say how I felt regarding my father's, oldest aunt's and grandmother's sexist rules, about how overwhelming their controlling behavior was to my sisters and I, and how I felt regarding the six years my sisters and I suffered with my youngest uncle's sexual abuse. I could not confront the adults in my family because of my fear of being punished and also there was no space in my family to be rebellious and challenge adults under any circumstances. However, although I was afraid I always found ways to express my disagreement through my body language and attitude, which led me to be punished, most of the time through beatings. However, at thirteen, my youngest uncle tried to rape me, but I was able to escape from him. Even now recalling those days still brings me painful memories; in fact I am surprised that I have developed the courage to express this emotional issue. As a result of this painful experience, looking after the safety of women and girls, as I did for myself and my sisters through my childhood and adolescence, became a political issue for me. Importantly, this pivotal moment of domestic and sexual violence I experienced from my uncle disrupted the silence within my family and home. The same afternoon my uncle attempted to rape me, I decided that would be the last time in my life that my sisters and I had to go through violence in our home. When my father came home later that night I told him everything: about my uncle's abuses prior to the attempted rape, and my sisters helped me with that. To our surprise he believed us; I was shocked because we had tried to tell my aunt about it but she would not believe us or pretended not to

believe or know that her younger brother was abusing us. So, from that confidence my father gave me I started to confront adults in my family when I would observed any wrong situation linked to power abuse, it does not mean that I was disrespectful with them adults in my family; I contrary I reverence them very much because it was part of the education they gave me, but I would contest their authority when they have wrong or unacceptable attitudes. My relationship with the adults of my family also changed because in some point they also started to respect me and in some ways treat me like a mature young woman. I had so much energy and wanted to save the world, specifically Black women and children, which led me to work in the Church's communitarian projects.

In the Church I worked as volunteer for the community from 1993 to 1998. The church provided educational support for poor children and aided some of their mothers. As a communitarian volunteer and later coordinator, of this project, I saw the hard life and poor health conditions of those children and their mothers, most of whom were Black. I observed also that the public health service available in those communities did not allow improvements in their health situation. Most of the services offered were uncertain and unsafe and, in the case of sexual and reproductive health for women, the situation was downright dire.

Lastly, one of my other motivations happened in 1996 when I participated in a project with sex workers. My colleagues and I worked in the streets in the southern area of Rio de Janeiro city, a major center for sex work. Our job was to offer advice about sexually-transmitted diseases (STDs) and small packets with male condoms. In these places, I could once more observe how difficult and vulnerable these women's health

situation was. Most of them stated that access to public health services was insufficient. They did not like the services because they received rude treatment by medical staff and they were packed into crowded units. Once again, these women were mostly Black women.

These events motivated me to study the public health system. My mother was the first victim of maternal mortality that deeply impacted my life and well-being. I have come to study Black women's sexual and reproductive health due to the need to make sense of my mother's absence in my life. These experiences helped me to figure out the research I would like to conduct and to realize that, based on my experiences and perspective, I could make a contribution towards making visible and known the process by which health policies and services become absent and inadequate to Brazil's Black population, especially Black women.

These experiences coupled with my introduction to Black feminist politics through my political work and reading this growing body of literature led me to Criola, an Afro-Brazilian women's organization, of which I am still a member. As a Black feminist scholar and anthropologist (still living under oppression), I am ignored, marginalized and my scholarship has been minimized within both anthropology and the larger academy (McClaurin 2001a, Harrison 1999b). Drawing from these social, political and intellectual locations, I consider my Black-Latina feminist scholarship to have practical implications for Black women and Black women's social and political organizing in Brazil, as well as for the area of Black women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. My role as a researcher is to collect and analyze information that is valuable to the development and promotion of social justice agenda in the area of sexual

and reproductive health in Brazil. Using Sudbury's (1998) words I am "concerned with the new margins, the voices which have never made their way to the centre" (31), the women that have been disregarded, silenced and dehumanized by state healthcare policies and services. The challenge, then, is to understand how I can conduct research that will be useful to Black women's health needs as an underprivileged group in Brazil.

II. YES! RACISM DOES EXIST IN BRAZIL, AND I AM VERY ANGRY ABOUT THIS, BUT I AM NOT CRAZY!

Before I go any further in this discussion, it is important to engage the ideology which presents one of the strongest ideological challenges to my research – namely, the denial of the existence of racism in Brazil, sustained by the myth of racial democracy Racism and racial democracy are central elements in Brazilians' social behavior and practices. I want to reflect on my experience of being constantly disregarded, and not taken seriously or being considered "crazy" because of my claim that racism exists in Brazil. Focusing on my particular universe, all of the social institutions that were part of my younger life – the family and domestic environment, the school, the church – refused to consider racial differences and their consequences. This denial is so strong that is capable of alienating Black people, such as myself. During my youth despite the signs that indicated otherwise and of my own refusal to accept the myth of racial democracy, I was forced to believe that all people in Brazil had the same rights, and that the "color" ("race") and social status did not matter. "'Bad things' happened with me only because I

was poor, my family was poor"; I cannot remember how many times I heard this explanation. Brazilian society and culture are structured in a way that made it difficult for Blacks react, even when they know they are facing racial discrimination.

For many people, Brazil is a racial democracy, where people of African descent, European descent, and indigenous people live together in perfect harmony; and where a mixed racial population is characterized by the happiness and innovation that this mixture represents. However, in this Brazilian "racial democracy", differences are translated into inequalities.[1] These inequalities are reproduced by social policies, resulting in differences in education, health care, housing and social welfare access for different ethnic/racial groups. Black women in this context live a dramatic situation, where the consequences of the inequalities are deep and intense. Poverty, mass sterilization, unsafe abortions and illiteracy are some of the signs of the prevalence of racism, sexism and the social class subordination that still inform Brazilian society.

Black scholars Michael Hanchard (1994 and 1999) and João Vargas (2004) among others have pointed out the paradoxical denial of racism's existence in Brazil, and how it has supported past and present-day forms of discrimination, violence and inequality (see also d'Adesky 2001; Degler 1986 [1971]; Gilliam 1992; Twine 1998). Their analyses also demonstrate how racial democracy has prevented the development of Afro-Brazilian racial consciousness and mobilization. Vargas (2004) argues that,

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[1] Alberti 2005, Andrews 2004, Carvalho (unknown date), Chacham 2001b, Inter-American Foundation 2001, Lima, 2003, Martins 2004, Moreira and Lopes 2005, Reichmann 1999, Romary 2001, Salles 1998, Sant'Anna (unknown data), Sant'Anna and Paixao (unknown data).

> Brazilian social relations—their practices and their representations—are marked by a hyperconsciousness of race. Such hyperconsciousness, while symptomatic of how Brazilians classify and position themselves in the life world, is manifested by the often vehement negation of the importance of race. This negation forcefully suggests that race is neither an analytical and morally valid tool, nor plays a central role in determining Brazilian social hierarchies (2).

Hanchard (1994) criticized the ideology of Brazilian racial democracy arguing that the notion that the Brazilian state is neutral in the production of racial discrimination and inequality is misleading. Hanchard pointed out that "Racial democracy and its racist ideology of whitening" was a consequence of Brazilian elite's attempt to settle the country's social relation with scientific racism's ideology (8).

It is through this framework for understanding processes of racism in Brazil that I have begun to reflect on the circumstances of my mothers' death. My family was unable or probably felt powerless to do anything about my mother's death, which was clearly a case of negligence, racism, classism and sexism inside the hospital where she went to give birth to my younger brother. In the case of my church, I also found constraints to fully address racism. The priest, who I liked and respected so much, could provide well-crafted and argued claims and speeches relating to social discrimination, Brazilian social inequality, and human rights violations, but the words racism, racial inequality and the damaging effects that it caused were never addressed in his speeches. I did not remember him talking about Black people at all. In addition, in the church there is an idea that everyone is equal in the eyes of God, but I knew since I entered in this church that this was not true. The church itself represents physical and symbolically a rigid hierarchical

structure that is based in a White Western and capitalist culture, middle-class, male, heterosexist, and nuclear family patterns – a model that resemble colonialism and its patriarchal system; which as I mentioned in previous paragraphs are expressed in the religious discourses and materials that portray women, Blacks and low income people as powerless and inferior. Moreover, even though I did not have such a vocabulary to named this system of oppression I was facing there in those times, I was feeling it, and I really do not perceive any distinction between what I confronted in those past days and what I am feeling in present using my ability as a researcher. The communitarian project for low-income children, which I coordinated and helped to create and the negative reactions of many members of the church was a sign that this dream about the equal rights of all church members was not true. Many people in the church felt very uncomfortable with the presence of these children (and sometimes their mothers), which lived in the slums (*favelas*) around the church building, a predominately Black area. The justification for this behavior was clearly racist and classist; for example, all damages in the furniture, walls, objects and other propriety of the church were addressed to those kids.

Finally, this denial concerning the existence of racism was also present in the university, but it in the academic world this denial is articulated in different ways. In the academy, professors and students reflected on racial issues and racial democracy, but instead of producing critical knowledge and discussion on these topics, many of them have managed to avoid and/or disregard those topics, choosing to keep a racial discourse of "cordiality," which is disseminated through university circles, as well on a daily basis, shaping Brazilian racial common sense (Hanchard 1994). This is a very serious issue

because the university should be responsible for generating knowledge about social reality; moreover, it has strong influence in terms of education and the consciousness of the general population. Unfortunately, Brazilian public universities seem to work to guarantee the power and privileges of a minority, which has not accepted dialogue and have not collaborated to change the circumstances and mechanisms that cause inequality and segregation within Brazilian society. In this regard, I have learned in the course of my life that to acknowledge the existence and pervasive influence of racism in Brazilian society is to give up the possibilities of having privilege in the family, in the church, in the school, in the academy, among your best friends, and in the society as whole. I say possibilities because as said by Black feminists of the Combahee River Collective "we [Black women] do not have racial, sexual, heterosexual, or class privilege to rely upon, nor do we have even the minimal access to resources and power that groups who posses any one of these types of privilege have (277)."

III. ELABORATING MY RESEARCH

My research interests are rooted in my mother's death and my struggles as a young Black woman. In order to follow my research aspirations, I decided to undertake my journey into social science, and later on professional anthropology, mainly because I considered it would be the right field to look at the hazardous circumstances Black women were facing in terms of their sexual and reproductive health during the earlier 1990s in the city of Rio de Janeiro. I wanted to bear witness and shed light on the

historical context and daily stories of Black women concerning public healthcare and health policies, which have been relegated to the bottom of Brazilian society. I sought to understand what Black women were experiencing; a reality that I had observed since 1990, in the course of my work as a volunteer in the community services my church organized on behalf of children and women that lived in the slums located in the neighborhood of Taquara/Jacarepaguá, western zone of the city of Rio de Janeiro.

In 1993, at 24 years old, I was admitted into the Institute of Philosophy and Social Sciences, a unit of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro that offers degrees in philosophy, social sciences and history. In the Institute I did my undergraduate studies from 1993 to 1997, graduating with a B.A. in Social Sciences, and attended the Graduate Program in Sociology and Anthropology, from 1998 to 2000, receiving a Master's of Arts in Sociology and Anthropology. The Institute of Philosophy and Social Sciences is one of the oldest buildings in the downtown area, surrounded by other centuries-old and contemporary design buildings. The area is a busy commercial and business district ranging from fashionable and sophisticated shops to a popular marketplace, street vendors, bars and restaurants, fast food joints, etc. This part of the downtown area is a mixture of old and new. It is also a mixture of extreme poverty and wealth. I remember that the area was peopled with street beggars and homeless, and as far I know we can still observe these same conditions in that part of the city. Most of them, including children, women and the elderly are Afro-Brazilian people. Many commute on a daily basis from the suburbs or neighboring cities to spend time (days and even weeks) begging for money, picking leftover food, and performing small chores for pennies. There is a public square in front of the Institute of Philosophy and Social Sciences' building where these

Black people reside temporarily and/or permanently: they rest, sleep, do their laundry, cook, and relieve themselves in this open space. Many times they asked the building's security personnel to use the facilities, which happened on occasion and mostly with women and children. This was the main contact this group had with the Institute. The Institute has a long tradition of training and graduating Brazilian intellectuals; and in contrast to their low-income and mostly African-descendent neighbors that lived nearby in the public square, its academic community was composed largely of elite and upper middle class white Brazilians. Black students, faculty and staff were a very small group during the years I studied there, whereas one could more easily see Black faces among the custodians and janitorial services. Thus, the largest amount of Blacks was to be found either outside of the building or in front of it. At times, especially during the crowned periods, it was difficult and embarrassing for me to cross that square and to see those people with which I share the same socioeconomic status (working class), skin color, and racial identity; my feelings could be described as a mixture of guilt and anxiety, it was a sensation of displacement in relation to the Institute. I knew the presence of those people living in that square was a contradiction generated by poverty, injustice, and discrimination. In that moment (in my first years of college), however, I did not think or name such process as a consequence of "racism" and I did not know what "racial democracy" meant exactly.

I was a student in the Institute for eleven years. During this time, there were only four Black faculty members: three in the Social Sciences Department and one in the History Department. Only one of them was a Black woman. As she was hired while I was attending the Graduate Program, I did not have a Black woman professor as a

reference during my time as an undergraduate. Upon being admitted, I became interested in applying for one of the departmental research groups, which offered scholarships to undergraduate students and possibilities for working on a research project. At first, I joined the NEPI - Núcleo de Estudos sobre an Infância [e Juventude, that was incorporated later] (Childhood and Youth Study Center), which discussed poverty, social exclusion and prejudice in relation to children and young people. I felt this could be a good place, based on my life experience, to develop my studies. I was interested in working with racism, health and women; as a result, I ended up researching young girls and teenage girls engaged in sex work. My first advisor, the center's general coordinator, was a woman from the Northeastern of Brazil, considered by most to be white. But being from a region known by its large concentration of both Blacks and poverty, she seemed like that of a woman of color in the U.S. When I joined the research group, there were two Black female students who were about to leave. I noticed they were upset with something they declined to comment on; so, in my freshman year, after they left I was the only Black student in the group. For five years (1993 to 1998), I have neither good and unpleasant moments studying in the Institute, problems that I believed were connected with my social and racial status, but I chose not to present these part of my story because it would expose people that were related to me during those times.

In my senior year 1996, I decided to apply to the Master's program starting next year. Without my advisor's full approval, though, I had to work alone. In that year, my first advisor told me that my decision was not a good one because I was not prepared to attend graduate school. Three other group members had applied to Graduate School as well, but I assumed I did not have the same background as they had. I ended up not

being accepted, but I continued to work in the center because my advisor told me to apply for a scholarship for newly-graduates who intended to work as research assistants.

Next year 1997, I decided to go to a five week Program in the University of Campinas, in the state of São Paulo that basically focused on issues such as sexual and reproductive health, gender, sexuality, and healthcare public policies. Although there was little information relating those issues to race and racism, that experience was the starting point I needed to develop and formulate my research topic and apply for graduate school again. Therefore, I applied to the same Master Program for a second time but I decided to change who would be my advisor in graduate school. I studied for the exams harder than the first time. I was helped by one of the research center's vice-coordinator. I spent all my time reading the recommended bibliography for the exam, which I discussed with this woman. She was a white, middle-class woman who claimed to have the status of a "woman of color" because she did not have straight hair, for which she was discriminated against during school and by members of her own family. Moreover, she was a brilliant intellectual and political activist in human rights and normally worked with the Catholic Church in low income communities in Rio de Janeiro; she was widely acknowledged as a brilliant doctoral student in the Graduate Program. When I passed in the first round (writing test), my advisor told me that she was astonished by the fact that I had increased my potential enormously. According to her, my background was incredible. So, in my second attempt I was accepted in the Graduate Program in Sociology and Anthropology. Two weeks after the result, I told my advisor that I wanted to change for another one. She was caught off guard and tried to argue her way into keeping me as her advisee. I declined and answered that she was not an expert in racial

issues, the area I would like to explore as a graduate student. The Black woman in the faculty at that time had been with the Social Sciences Department for only about a year. The Graduate Program's coordinator told me she was not qualified to teach graduate courses, which reflected the hierarchy in Brazilian academia that restricts newly-hired professors with recent Ph.D. degrees from teaching at the graduate level and advising graduate students. I had only another possible option for an advisor. My Master's advisor, my second one, was a white woman, a member of the upper-class carioca (natives of Rio de Janeiro City). As my choices were really few, she was a pragmatic choice, rather than a desired one; she was the only female professor specialized in racial relations in the program. We were off to a promising start, but things soured when I revealed my research topic.

During my Master's program, my research project's goal was to analyze the ways in which Black women in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, were being affected by racism and sexism in the provision of public health services and the making of health policies. However, I was not able to conduct my research as planned because my advisor had different, and opposite, ideas to developing my research topic. I ended up inserting some of the content I wanted to privilege in the Master's thesis, which reflected my perspective about the subject. Nevertheless, I was frustrated with the results because I did not have my advisor's support for my argument that Black women's health conditions were affected by the racial discrimination they suffer historically and in the everyday life. My dissertation was titled "It Does Not Happen Only with Me: Family Planning in a Rio de Janeiro District Health Center." The thesis described and analyzed representations

and meanings of sexuality, sex, gender, family, contraception and the body in groups of women that were clients of the Family Planning program.

I have outlined how my political and intellectual concerns, which I presented in the previous paragraphs, were developed within my early experiences in the southeast of Brazil, Rio de Janeiro – as a Black girl growing up in between several distinct, but complementary worlds that were simultaneously Black, multiracial, and white, working class and middle class, male and female. My dissertation is located between my personal, academic and political experiences living in the intersections of these systems of oppression. In this study I draw on the major axes of domination that constitute the core of Afro-Brazilian women's experiences of oppression – race, gender, class and sexuality. In other words my dissertation is very connected to my personal life. My dissertation draws strength from my personal life and vice versa. As a starting point I argue that the politics of my research is shaped by the "politics" of my "location"[2], as an Afro-Latina-Brazilian women, thirty-eight years old, dark-skinned, with natural-short hair, straight-single, suburban-working class, a high school teacher and college professor, member of CRIOLA, an insubordinate Presbyterian church member, and an alien student from the so-called 'undeveloped' or 'Third' world It is from this standpoint and experience that informs my analysis that I construct my dissertation and analysis.

My purpose in this study is to account for and explore the intertwined histories of contemporary Black women's organizations, particularly non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and of Black women's sexual and reproductive health in Brazil.

[2] Sudbury 1998:p. 31

Through this analysis I attempt to address two questions: (1) what has been the effectiveness of the political work of Black women's NGOs in the areas of sexual and reproductive health in Brazil, particularly with respect to reducing the effects of racial, gender, and class discrimination? (2) Second, what are the contributions that these NGOs have made to the formation of Black women's agency and collective organizing in their communities? To accomplish this proposed study I have divided the dissertation into: the Introduction, Methodology section, Fieldwork section, three Parts, seven Chapters and Conclusion. Part I comprises Chapters I and II; Part II is constituted by Chapters III, IV, and V; and Part III is composed by Chapters VI and VII.

Methodology Section: *The Nature of My Research* elaborates my methods of data collection and analysis. It also draws from the conceptualization of activist research in relation to my study and the processes that are involved its construction. The nature of my research has had no place in Brazilian academy. For instance, looking back to my Master's degree and my debates with my advisor and classmates regarding their skepticisms on the effect of racism under Black women and Black population's health and life in general lead me to think now how their doubts corroborate many other Brazilians' opinion inside and outside academy. **In the Fieldwork:** *Walking through My Networks* describes my fieldwork in Brazil. **Part I** – Living *in Between the Extremes of Oppression and Resistance: The Experiences of Afro-Brazilian Women* examines the conditions and struggles of Black women in Brazil in relation to vulnerability and female sterilization; in other words it explores the needs for Black women's organizing. **Chapter I**, *Black Women and Vulnerability*, examines the social mechanisms in Brazil that have produced and sustained Black women's vulnerability, particularly those that are

responsible for generating the circumstances of discrimination, violence, and vulnerability that have affected Black women in all aspects of their lives, and particular the issue of sexual and reproductive health. In **Chapter II**, *The Female Sterilization as a Starting Point*, I recount how the process of female sterilization (and the attempts to establish a family planning policy) in the country played a major role in the emergence of the Black women's movement and organizations as a strong political entity, particularly as demonstrated by the growth of Black women's NGOs. In addition, I identify the existence of two key elements in the attempts to control women's reproduction, especially Black women in the country: (1) the attempts to improve the 'race', in order to prevent the racial degradation of the country, which stimulated a pro-birth politics in order to assure the racial 'quality' of the population; (2) the birth control policies, established to control population growth. Finally, I seek to demonstrate the complexity of Black women's struggles and how these contexts intersect, simultaneously reproducing local and global structures of inequality that oppress, exploit and render Black women vulnerable to patriarchal racist violence.

Part II – *Black Sisterhoods and Feminismo Negro [Black feminism] in Brazil* explores the idea of sisterhood or gendered racial solidarity, which is used to examine the commonalities and differences within Black women's NGOs. This part is composed of four chapters. **Chapter III**, *Four Black Women's Sisterhoods*, explores my fieldwork findings and ethnographic data collected in several locations of the state of Rio de Janeiro, and in the cities of Porto Alegre and Passo Fundo, both located in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. I also look at the social and organizational elements of four Black Women's NGOs (Criola, ACMUN, Maria Mulher and Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de

Sousa) I researched. In addition, I describe and analyze some of these organizations' strategies concerning the improvement of Black women's health and life conditions, and the Black population as a whole. **Chapter IV**, *Black Women's NGOs in Brazil –[ONGs de Mulheres Negra]*, analyzes what precisely are Black women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Brazil; it also examines how these organizations have represented themselves as part of civil society, what has been the main objectives of their struggles, especially their focus on and investment in on public policy through a gender and racial perspective that seeks to eradicate Black women's deep conditions of oppression. **Chapter V**, *Feminismo Negro [Black Feminism] in Brazil* will analyze the reasons and the key socio-economic, historical, cultural and political issues that led to the emergence of *Feminismo Negro* (Black Feminism) in Brazil.

Part III – *The Impact of the Activism of Black Women in Brazil* examines the impact of these NGOs on Black women's health, in particular, sexual and reproductive health in Brazil, and the issues of effectiveness and Black women's agency and collective organizing among these NGOs. **Chapter VI**, *The Activism of Black Women's NGOs on Sexual and Reproductive Health*, is organized in two parts and look at the activism of Black women's NGOs in Black women's health, particularly sexual and reproductive health. The first part provides a panoramic regarding the current impact of the activism of these NGOs in the health area. The second part examines the specific thematic of Black women's sexual and reproductive health, which is divided in two subsections: (a) The Social Context of Black Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Brazil; (b) Redefining Black Women's Health and Sexual and Reproductive Health in Relation to Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality, where I present some data and cases from my primary

and secondary fieldwork resources. I conclude the chapter by conceptualizing Black women's health and sexual and reproductive health. **Chapter VII**, *Effectiveness, Agency and Collective Organizing among Black Women's NGOs in Brazil*, addresses the two main questions that I propose to investigate in this study: first, what has been the effectiveness of the political work of Black Women's NGOs in the areas of sexual and reproductive health in Brazil, particularly with respect to reducing the effects of racial, gender, and class discrimination? Second, what are the contributions that these NGOs have made to the formation of Black women's agency and collective organizing in their communities?

The **Conclusion** discusses addresses the absence of gendered perspective in the study of racial politics and forms of resistance within Social Sciences in general, and particular in African Diaspora studies. It also addresses my concerns regarding the present and future of Black feminist scholarship in Brazil. Some Brazilian scholars seem to agree that studies about racial relations have been important in revealing certain aspects of racial inequality in Brazilian society, but I have observed that when such analyses challenge and endanger white supremacy and racial privilege, and in the particular case of Black feminism, heterosexist and sexist privilege, those who feel most threatened will contest the legitimacy of such knowledge that deconstructs racial discrimination and inequality. For instance, all of the extensive research analysis that demonstrates the relevance of affirmative action and policies concerning education, healthcare and employment on for the Black population and other minorities such as indigenous people, have been under massive attack in Brazil.

METHODOLOGY: The Nature of My Research

I. ACTIVIST RESEARCH STATEMENT

I Give you Back

I release you, my beautiful and terrible fear. I release you. You were my beloved and hated twin, but now, I don't know you as myself. I release you with all the pain I would know at the death of my daughters.
You are not my blood anymore
I give you back to the white soldiers who burned down my home, beheaded my children, raped and sodomized my brothers and sisters.
I give you back to those who stole the food from our plates when we were starving
I release you, fear, because you hold these scenes in front of me and I was born with eyes that can never close
I release you fear, so you can no longer keep me naked and frozen in the winter, or smothered under blankets in the summer.
I release you
I release you
I release you
I release you
I am not afraid to be angry.
I am not afraid to rejoice.
I am not afraid to be Black
I am not afraid to be white.
I am not afraid to be hungry.
I am not afraid to be full.
I am not afraid to be hated.
I am not afraid to be loved.
to be loved, to be loved, fear.
Oh, you have choked me, but I gave you the leash.
You have gutted me but I gave you the knife.
You have devoured me, but I laid myself across the fire.
You held my mother down and raped her, but I gave you the heated thing.
I take myself back, fear.
You are not my shadow any longer.
I won't hold you in my hands.
You can't live in my eyes, my ears, my voice, my belly, or in my heart my heart my heart my heart
But come here, fear
I am alive and you are so afraid of dying.

(Joy Harjo. (1990). Making Face, Making Soul – Haciendo Caras: Creative and Critical Perspectives by Feminists of Color).

In accordance with Charles Hale's (2002) definition of activist research, I consider my research on Black women's organizations in Brazil to have important political consequences. My research is committed to assist activists and academics "to understand the root causes of inequality, oppression, violence and related conditions of human suffering" (13). Furthermore, Hale writes that activist research, "is carried out, at each phase from conception through dissemination, in direct cooperation with an organized collective of people who themselves are subject to these conditions; is used, together with the people in question, to formulate strategies for transforming these conditions and to achieve the power necessary to make these strategies effective (13)."

In addition to Hale's definition, I understand activist research as an important approach to study and develop research topics on the emergence of political struggle. As an activist researcher I have been mediated by my roles as both an insider and an outsider of Black women's NGOs, so I locate my research in between, and sometimes on the extremes of these two roles. I consider myself to be an "insider" because I came from and have developed political struggle "on the ground." By "on the ground" I mean, that my activism comes out of the Black communities that are waging struggle. By an "outsider" I am referring to coming to the United States , and the University of Texas at Austin in particular to obtain my PhD. This experience forced me to look at Brazilian Black women's political struggles with a certain distance – physically, emotionally, and then even later intellectually – and I develop the abilities to dislocate myself from such a

frame to be able to analyze and perceive that reality; with this statement I am not claiming complete objectivity, but a necessary distance.

Activist researchers, who actively participate in the political struggles they research, do not simply work for themselves, their own individual interests, nor their own research, but for the collective needs and demands of the social movements of which they are part. For example, in my own case, Criola supported my enrollment in the University of Texas at Austin not necessarily to benefit me as an individual (although it is true that I have benefited very much because they chose me), but to benefit the collective of Brazilian Black women affiliated in the organization. They wanted to incorporate the discussion about the African Diaspora in their political work. In these examples, there is a political choice where the group or the collective interest of the organization is the most important.

My understanding of activist research has been shaped by what I called key commitments. First, to elaborate an activist approach that constitutes a useful literature about how Black women's social movements have struggled with other Black women to pressure governments and civil society for "more gender [and race] sensitive approaches to development policies to understand and fight against systems of discrimination, to develop this framework of analysis to provide a more accurate description of the experiences of women in different situations" (George 2001). This approach helped me "to develop a framework of analysis to provide a more accurate description of the experiences of women in different situations" (George, 2001), and my research contributes to Black feminist scholarship that conceptualizes new experiences from Black

women who struggle on the ground and provide insights on ways to forge political struggle against racial, gender, and class discrimination across geographic regions.

Second, to be an activist researcher is to be revolutionary. By this I mean, activist researchers must work towards guarantee an "empowering pedagogy as an essential step in social transformation" (Lather, 1991: 56). According to Lather, to conduct social research that contribute to liberation, means "calls for empowering approaches to researcher and become changer and changed (56)." In this regard, "it means researchers doing empirical work that may offer a powerful opportunity for praxis to the extent that it enables people to change by encouraging self-reflection and deeper understanding of their particular situations (56)." This is a very interesting aspect for me because I chose to approach Black women in my research through a combination of semi-structured interview framework and life history techniques, and such methodology produced intense moment of exchanges between the collaborators and me; so by the middle or end of the interview most of them pointed out the fact that during the process of conversation they were compelled to engage in a tour about their life in terms of past and present, to rescue desirable and undesirable memories, they felt they engaged in a self-evaluation about their lives, relationships to other people, particular family and peers and friends from the political field. I remember some of them were emotionally impacted by the interview, and some of them even cried during the interview.

Third, the practice of reciprocity is an important aspect of being an activist researcher. I use Lather's (1991) conception of reciprocity as "a mutual negotiation of meaning and power" (56). Tripp (1983) highlights the importance for the interviewee to

be co-author and to negotiate in a conscious effort to democratize the research situation (58). It is important for the activist researcher to be open to dialectical practice and to engage in reciprocal self-reflexivity.

My previous experience as an activist in Brazil and my knowledge gained as a graduate student in the U.S. were essential in assisting me to develop my research. I consider this activist approach I constructed is a valid research tool in academia as well as in the Black women's feminist movement. My research approach reflects my personal experiences in Brazilian society – I was navigating my own racial and gender experiences during the production of this study. First, regarding who I am from my racial identity, my limitations and vulnerability as a Black woman; second, I tried to understand racism and sexism as central mechanisms, which structure, order and define Black women's relationships, life conditions, access to the well material resources, such as health and education.

Therefore, I can see myself when I am analyzing statistical data about high rates of mental health problem among Black women generated by racial stress or the increasing rates of maternal mortality due to the unqualified health service and mistreatment that Black women are exposed. Using a quotation from Jackson's (1990) work, many times throughout the fieldwork I felt as "a fieldnote". In fact my starting point to go all over these matters, was my mother's death, she was a victim of maternal mortality due to mistreatment and the unsafe environment in a public hospital in the city of Rio de Janeiro. More specifically it was from this study that I discovered that my mother died, as many other women, during an epoch of deep investments in family

planning policies and massive female sterilization as socio-economic strategies to stop what the specialist in population development called a demographic boom in the world. A period when the Brazilian State (and other so called "developed" countries) and its healthcare institutions and many of their professional representatives were devoted to neglect, discrimination, and committing violence against Black and/or poor women that had many kids, like my mother who went to a public hospital to give birth to her sixth child during the 1970s. It was not an exception, an incident, but a 'necessary' measure justified by the needs of Brazil's and the world's socio-economic development. She was one of the millions of Black females, whose health and life was viewed as something that was not worth saving or keeping.

I took a long time to understand and process the racial and gender violence Brazilian society has imposed (and still imposes) in my life and the lives of other Afro-Brazilian women. I see myself trying to understand this complex reality in the African Diaspora. I am assuming that my first steps in this purpose started when I tried to understand myself as a Black woman from the so called "Third world". Addressing my own life, I discovered that when people deny the existence of racism and racial difference in Brazil, they are in fact denying my own existence as a human being, in this way, they never will conceive my rights, my citizenship, as well as, those of other Black people, especially women. It means I continue to be marginalized. I could not accept this for myself or for others Black people anymore. Thus, in order to fight against this oppression I became a Black activist. I decided to become part of a Black women's organization, Criola, because I understood that it was impossible to confront this reality

alone; solidarity among Black women has been an essential tool to facing racist and sexist ideology in Brazil.

The material produced in the course of my research reflects my own perspective about the use of the social sciences (through the lens of an activist), particularly in the field of anthropology. My research seeks to construct an engaged anthropological knowledge and practice; I use the conventional research in social science as my starting point, but I go through it and "take on responsibility to produce socially applicable research results", and I need be sure I am "involved in the application of their results" (Walker and Brown, 1997: 93), and finally, to build an innovative and useful perspective in science research. In conclusion, I hope this dissertation contributes to reveal, not only my personal experiences related to racism, sexism, classism and heterosexism, but, more importantly the deeply and dramatically lived situation of Black women regarding their life conditions and health, and also on the other side, how Black women have struggled against oppression in Brazil.

II. THE RESEARCH METHODS

> Eu era revoltada, não acreditava em ninguém. Odiava os políticos e os patrões, porque o meu sonho era escrever e o pobre não pode ter ideal nobre. Eu sabia que ia angariar inimigos, porque ninguém está habituado a esse tipo de literatura. Seja o que Deus quiser. Eu escrevi a realidade (Carolina de Jesus. Quarto de Despejo: Diário de uma Favelada, 2006: 173).
>
> [Translation]
> I was revolted, I didn't believe in anyone. I hated the politicians and the bosses, because my dream was to write and the poor cannot have noble ideals. I knew I would make enemies, because no one is used to this kind of literature. May it be whatever God wants. I wrote the truth (Carolina de Jesus. Quarto de Despejo: Diário de uma Favelada, 2006:173).

This dissertation examines Brazilian Black women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) centralizing their political activism in the area of Black women's sexual and reproductive. Therefore, this study addresses the following general questions: First, what has been the effectiveness of the political work of Black Women's NGOs in the areas of sexual and reproductive health in Brazil, particularly with respect to reducing the effects of racial, gender, and class discrimination? Second what are the contributions that these NGO's have made to the formation of Black women's agency and collective organizing in their communities? In order to answer these questions, I divided the methodology in two parts: (1**)** An anthropological approach that involved the investigation of the NGOs and some of the communities linked to them; (2**)** A socio-cultural, political-economic and historical approach to Brazilian Black women's organizations during the periods of 1950s-1960s, 1970s-1980s, and 1990s-2000s.

First, through the employment of an anthropological approach, the study aimed to examine the efficacy and the efficiency of the political work of the NGOs in the area of Black women's sexual and reproductive health. This investigation involved an evaluation of the NGOs' projects, programs, experiences and grassroot practices in this regard, and through their organizations, accessing Black women in local communities. In addition, I also investigated how the organizations formulated strategies and struggles, and engaged the State and the Brazilian society on the subject of Black women's health. Another important point in terms of political struggle was to understand Black women's strategies to "work" with the State and how it is related to their political practices.

The anthropological approach focused on the four Brazilian Black women's NGOs – Criola, ACMUN, Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa and Maria Mulher, and some of the communities with whom they worked or developed projects and activities. I concentrated on these groups' political projects, experiences and grassroot practices in general, and specifically on their projects and programs on Black women's sexual and reproductive health. I chose these Black women's NGOs because they provided an interesting perspective on the relationship between Black feminism and Black activism in national and international contexts. At first, I planned to carry out research in two Brazilian Black women organizations and in the communities, mostly Blacks, where they develop their projects: Criola in the city of Rio de Janeiro and the ACMUN – Associação Cultural de Mulheres Negras (Cultural Association of Black Women) in the city of Porto Alegre. However, I decided to include two other organizations: Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa founded in 2001 in Rio de Janeiro and Maria Mulher – Organização de Mulheres Negras founded in 1987 in Porto Alegre. I included these two new

organizations in order to examine the variety of Black women's organizing in the regions of my research. It is also important to emphasize that I did not have the opportunity to participate and observe these two last organizations with the same level of intensity as I did with Criola and ACMUN; thus I was not able to consider the issue of effectiveness regarding the political work of Maria Mulher and Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa, but employed the same methods, conducting interviews and my participant observation.

As I already stated in the previous paragraphs, this anthropological approach consisted of ethnographic research and analysis of Criola, ACMUN, Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa, and Maria Mulher. I observed these organizations' headquarters and the low-income, mostly Black communities where they have developed training and political programs and projects. I looked at two different groups: staff members of the four NGOs and individual related to them as collaborators and/or volunteers from the communities in which the NGOs have developed projects. Semi-structured interviews were employed in order to investigate the NGOs, social and political practices, and understandings related to the impact of racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, and State oppression on Black women's sexual and reproductive health. The Chapters that present contents related to this first methodological approach are: Chapter I, Black Women and Vulnerability, Chapter III, Four Black Women's Sisterhoods, Chapter IV, Black Women's NGOs in Brazil –[ONGs de Mulheres Negra], Chapter VI, The Activism of Black Women's NGOs on Sexual and Reproductive Health, and Chapter VII, Effectiveness, Agency and Collective Organizing among Black Women's NGOs in Brazil. Thus, this part of the study employed ethnography as the main research method; and the data and information

were collected throughout the following collective and individual methods: dialogue and consciousness-raising sessions, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews.

The dialogue and consciousness-raising session[3] allowed my collaborators to dialogue and share common experiences, knowledges, conceptions and politics regarding racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, State policies and healthcare services. I was able to employ this methodology in three of the NGOs: ACMUN, Criola and Maria Mulher. However, I made adjustments; for instance, in these three NGOs I had to utilize some of their own meetings to work through this methodological. Although the collaborators were willing to talk to me and participate in the research, it was hard to gather the women because the majority of them were always busy and overwhelmed with work. They often had participate in several meetings and activities, and found it methodologically problematic to force them to accommodate my dialogue and consciousness-raising session . At times, I attempted to simply schedule my session, but in the end I ended up adjusting my research needs to their work routines.

In those meetings, I was able to introduce myself to the groups, as well as the objective of my study. The discussion groups enabled me to bring up the major issues of my investigation, and in many instances I was able to ask some of the questions of my research. During my time with Criola I accompanied three meetings (on November 22, 2006 and January 1st and 9th, 2007) and then, two major events (a Seminar on 11/28/06, and a Forum *Mulheres Negras Enfrentando a Violência* [Black Women's Confronting the Violence] on 06/02/07) organized by the coordinators of the centers for Violence

[3] Vaz 1997; Denton, Maroussia. et al 1999; O'Connor, Denton et al 1999

Awareness and Criola. There were six centers, each one headed by a *mãe de santo* or *yalorixá* (Afro-Brazilian religious high priestess). These six high priestesses and Criola formed a network in the state of Rio de Janeiro named *Iyá Agba* – Rede de Mulheres Negras Frente à Violência Contra a Mulher (Black Women's Network to Confront Violence against Women).

In working with ACMUN in the city of Porto Alegre, I chose to have the dialogue and conscious-raising sessions with the group that participated in the course organized by the NGO called Social Control on Black Population Health (Curso Controle Social em Saúde da População Negra) occurred in the period of April 24, 25, 26 e 27 and May 2 and 3 of 2007. In the other ACMUN's branch in the city of Passo Fundo I utilized the meeting that the organization realized with a Catholic priest and younger seminarians of the Pastoral do Negro (Black Grassroot Ecclesiastical Community). Finally, in the case of the organization Maria Mulher I participated in a morning workshop that the psychologists offer to provide advice for women, including seeking for help due to a variety of reasons, sexual and domestic violence, HIV/Aids, unemployment. I had insufficient time to organize or participate in any meeting with the Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa. I visited the group's office in the final weeks of my fieldwork and focused on interviewing four of its members, and collecting materials and information.

I conducted participant observation inside the NGOs' offices, in some of their events and activities, and in the communities I visited to interview my collaborators. I conducted semi-structured interviews with women and men, mostly Black, with the staff members, the NGOs' collaborators and volunteers. The semi-structured interviews were comprised of socio-demographic questions to collect social and economic information

regarding the collaborators, as well as, their history and experiences related to sexual and reproductive health, race, gender, class, sexuality, violence, and vulnerability.

The socio-cultural, political-economic and historical approach of Brazilian Black women's organizations during the periods of 1950s-1960s, 1970s-1980s, and 1990s-2000s explore these organizations' political expressions and practices in Brazil, and therefore how these groups have situated themselves in such eras. The main period of research in the study refers to the 1990s and 2000s, however in order to understand Black women's NGOs' dynamics and circumstances in these two periods, it was necessary to consider periods as early as the 1950s, when the context for Black women's contemporary organizations was forged. In my study the 1990s represents the emergence and consolidation of a diversity of Black women's NGOs throughout the country, such as ACMUN (1990) and Criola (1992) and the 2000s the period in which Black women's NGOs gain space and independence in terms of their political actions also appear to be more powerful in the local, national and international contexts. The socio-cultural, political-economic and historical approach also explored the history of the struggles of the Black women's movement in relation to health policies, such as the Integrated Women's Health Care Program – PAISM, female sterilization, and family planning program. The Chapters that refer to this second methodological approach are: Chapter II, The Female Sterilization as a Starting Point, and Chapter V, Feminismo Negro (Black Feminism) in Brazil.

The ethnography and semi-structured interviews developed in the first anthropological approach of the research methodology also contribute to the examination

of this second approach. Employing this second methodological set I conducted historical and sociological/ demographic research investigations that constituted three methods: historical research, sociological/demographic research, and newspaper collecting. The historical research focused on the periods of 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. In order to compose this material I did archival work: collecting and analyzing documents, books, projects/programs materials, policies, agendas, files, educational materials, pictures, and other sources in order to contextualize the NGOs and their socio-cultural and political-economic surroundings and dynamics. In addition, this research approach examined the history of Black women's NGOs as a whole, and the specific historical scenario of their activism in the area of black women's sexual and reproductive health. The sociological-demographic research included the analysis of health and demographic data regarding race, gender, and class disparities on Black women's and population's health and life conditions. From this information, I intended to produce data to support the analysis and understanding of the proposed study topic. Lastly, I also collected daily newspapers throughout the period of fieldwork (November 2006 to August 2007) in popular newspapers per each city: the *Jornal O Dia* and *Jornal O Globo* in Rio de Janeiro/RJ, and the *Jornal Correio do Povo* and *Jornal Zero Hora* in Porto Alegre/ Rio Grande do Sul. I include the newspaper in my research approach because they function as a complementary resources in the comprehension of how racist, sexist, classist and heterosexist practices operates in the cities; in addition, although it is not made in a critical and analytical way, the newspapers have this potential to display the several and distinct social actors/actress and elements involved in the production and

maintenance of such forms of discrimination, while it is itself an instrument that reproduce such systems of domination.

The methods chosen for this study can be explained through three aspects. First, I wanted to engage the three major bodies of scholarship in which my work is situated. Thus, the ethnography and participant observation relates to the anthropological field. The organization of the demographic, socio-economic, historical and political data was influenced by African Diaspora studies and the emergence of political economy data in this field. Finally, the methods of dialogue and consciousness raising sessions are related to feminist studies, particularly Black Feminism.

A second aspect of my choice in methodologies is that my research questions and the way I structured this essay were shaped by my positionality as a member of Criola. Both inquiries and methodological approach employed were designed to accomplish a common demand in Criola concerning the effectiveness and impact of their political actions (projects of action, training activities) on the women in their communities. Therefore the proposed questions were: what has been the effectiveness of the political work of Black Women's NGOs in the areas of sexual and reproductive health in Brazil, particularly with respect to reducing the effects of racial, gender, and class discrimination? How has the political work of these NGOs impacted Black women's lives in the communities where they organize? And, what are the contributions that these NGO's have made to the formation of Black women's agency and collective organizing in their communities? I will further develop a description of my main questions in the Chapter VII.

The third and last reason around methodology deals with my specific research on Black women's experiences and organizing in relation to conditions such as marginalization, invisibility, violence, vulnerability, institutionalized racism, sexism, and heterosexism. To investigate such structural constraints historically faced by Black women on a daily basis are not an easy task, and thus, I needed to combine and complement the methods I listed previously. Moreover, I attempted to utilize my research tools to look at Brazilian Black women's NGOs experiences, and their social and political practices on Black women's health, particularly sexual and reproductive health in two distinctive, but complementary levels: on one hand, at the institutional level (these organizations' relations to State politics, and healthcare system and policies, and regulations); and one the other hand, at the everyday level (socio-cultural and political-economic contexts) that provides insight into the conceptualizations of Black women's health, body, sexuality and reproduction, as well as, identity.

Many scholars of color (Harrison 1991, Bolles 2001, Hale 2002, among others) have criticized the discipline of anthropology as a tool of Colonialism and other related forms of oppression, pointing to the emergency of re-structuring and the decolonization of the discipline. These critiques also have challenged young generations of scholars in the field to build an anthropology that can help to understand and analyze the complexities and paradigms of major systems of dominance, such as racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, religious intolerance, globalization, capitalism, neoliberalism, among many other issues related to the production of oppression around the world.

An example of such a perspective in anthropological studies, is the activist research field, which is both critiqued and marginalized within the discipline, but also is raising particular interest among scholars of color, and other researchers who focus on topics related to systems and realities of oppression. I consider myself an activist research scholar, as stated in the beginning of this chapter. My methodology was organized in a way to contribute to the understanding and recognition of Brazilian Black women's organizing experiences, knowledges, and practices as valid anthropological sources of knowledge for the assessment of reality regarding systems of oppression. The great challenge to Black (diasporic) feminist scholarship has been lack of acknowledgment of Black women's authority as intellectuals who can speak for themselves and of Black women's traditions, perceptions and experiences as valid and deserving of scholarly documentation and analysis as any other site or source of knowledge (Harrison 1999:77). Bolles (2001) argues that early Black women in academia, especially in anthropology, such as Caroline Day, and Zora Neale Hurston dealt with marginalization. Most of the academic institutions were predominantly racist and classist. Being black and female determined their status and place in the academy. Even in periods of large advancement in anthropology, black women remained (and remain) invisible and silenced, which are identified by Bolles as two powerful racist tools. However, Bolles (2001) affirms that although the exclusion of Black American feminist anthropologists was (and is) a reality, they have made a way for themselves in anthropology since the 1960s (28).

I expect my research will contribute to the production of a theory and methodology concerning the social and political practices and experiences of black women's NGOs and the ways in which they have challenged institutional and everyday

inequalities in the area of sexual and reproductive health, and in the Brazilian society as a whole. In this sense, I intended to use my scholarship to support these groups' political agenda search and political agenda for equal opportunity and social justice in the area of sexual and reproductive health, as well as in all levels of Brazilian society (Harrison 1991, hooks 1994 and 1995c, Vaz 1997a, Sandoval 2000, Smith 2002, and Hale 2002).

As an Afro-Brazilian Feminist Anthropologist from Latin America, I have committed myself to help build a non-oppressive discipline. In the beginning of my career in anthropology, the discipline was presented to me as a science that looks at the origins, cultural development, social customs and beliefs of humankind. What the guidelines and information I read did not inform me were the potential and risks of the discipline to produce biased views about groups and societies that dramatically could contribute to marginalization and segregation, among other serious conditions. Furthermore, the invention of the so called "Others" has until present days produced human rights violations, exploitation, extinction, and genocide. In my earlier aspirations to be an anthropologist, I envisioned the discipline as an opportunity to realize my scholarly and political project because in my perspective these two dimensions completed and informed each other. I also believed in the possibilities anthropology offered for interdisciplinary approach, and in this sense, the discipline could fulfill my scholarship needs concerning its political attempt to understand and analyze racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism discrimination and their effects in Black women. As a case in point, anthropological methods, if ethically employed, can give voice to oppressed groups and individuals, particularly, through ethnography and the collection of oral narratives. Both methods allow us to synthesize accounts of both collective and personal experiences

(Amanda Coffey 2002 and Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995). In addition, these methods seem to be appropriate for dealing with everyday life during fieldwork, because it is a process that involves practical, intellectual and emotional accomplishments; and therefore, ethnography and oral narratives in anthropology fit very well in translating such dynamics. Such methods can also have an influence in keep the research in a critical dialogue with her/his consciousness and practice during fieldwork.

A last important aspect in the development of my study, I found in the perspective developed by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) that points out the existence of distinct organizational and descriptive ways in the ethnographical performance, for example as evocation of sensory detail, synthesis of complete scenes, the value of partial versus omniscient perspectives, and of first person versus third person accounts. They argue that it is possible that a researcher may transform direct observations into vivid descriptions results, using not simply good memory, but more crucially from learning to envision scenes as written. According to these authors good ethnographers should perform as actors (like learning to remember dialogue and movement), as painters (to see colors and shapes), and as poets (to sense moods and rhythms). The authors also highlight the ethnographer's interest in presenting the perceptions and meanings, which the people studied, attach to their own actions. The authors demonstrate the subtle ways that writers can make audible the voices of people researched in the texts they produce. For me these are the most important aspects of academic and research work as a Black feminist.

In conclusion, I think the ethnographic and oral narrative methods have helped me to translate feelings, images, unspoken sensations, passionate behavior, subjectivities,

consciousness and unconsciousness, inhabited place – all produced by the racial, sexist, classist, and heterosexist dynamics I have tried to analyze in the study.

III. EVALUATING MY METHODS' CHOICES

Why did you choose these methods and why are they effective in answering your questions? How do they help to assess the effectiveness of the black women's NGO's?

I anticipated that the chosen methods would effectively allow me to research the effectiveness of the political work of Black Women's NGOs in the areas of sexual and reproductive health in Brazil, particularly with respect to reducing the effects of racial, gender, and class discrimination, and the contributions that these NGO's have made to the formation of Black women's agency and collective organizing in their communities. I elaborated on these methods because I understood that they would function as lens through which I could look at Black women's realities around their health and life conditions and measure improvements and absence of change. Therefore, I understood and expected that the ethnographic description, the participant observation, the dialogues-consciousness raising sessions, and newspapers, would allowed me to observe and register details, practices with certain accurateness; more importantly I understood and expected that this set of approaches would help me to see and understand how the results of Black women's political work and actions are materialized in the lives of the women and communities these organizations worked

with; also what are the forms, contours of such materializations. For example, after the realization of a project about violence against women in the community, are the women getting more respect from the male populations in their communities (like partners, husbands, neighbors, police, etc), and if so, could such male behavior changes with decreasing violence against women in their communities? Another question: are the women reached by the NGOs' political work improving their lives in terms of schooling, health, access to appropriate treatment in curing and/or preventing health problems and diseases?

In addition, employing the socio-cultural, political-economic and historical approach I expected to verify whether or not, how, and in what circumstances, Black women's situations of oppression regarding health and life conditions have changed, and what structures of oppression have persisted? And why, and what are the signs or elements of change in their status if there were improvements?

However, the methodology I employed still was not sufficient in helping me to answer the questions I raised regarding effectiveness. I was able to identify at least two major reasons for that challenge. First, there was limited time and financial resources. I realized that ten months of research (which was the time I had to do my fieldwork in Brazil) was not enough to investigate the effectiveness of the political work of Black NGOs in the area of sexual and reproductive health. I had a tight budget which limited the time I could spend in the fieldwork. I have spent more time in the state of Rio de Janeiro, because my family home was located there. Nonetheless, it is expensive to stay in the city and to travel throughout the state. Very

often Black scholars from Latin American have limited access to financial resources and have to be creative in order to conduct their studies. Thus, the ideal conditions for the realization of the research would be at least two, to three years. In addition, it is important to develop three phases during the research fieldwork. In phase one, the researcher should collect all the material and information she/he needs, such as fieldnotes through participant observation, perform interviews, and employ any other method proposed in the study. Subsequently, in phase two, the researcher should be able to literally stop and organize and examine all (or part of it) the information, data and material she/he gathered, and then after this second moment, returns to the field to complete the study. This second stage in the field is really important because very often we deal with complexities in social reality that cannot be understood through first contact and investigation. In addition, there are unpredictable issues that emerge during and/or after the fieldwork that need to be addressed; there are questions that the researcher needs to re-structure, among many other challenges that proposed research strategy cannot always anticipate. Thus, in this sense, the third phase of the research emerges as an important step and moment to address unforeseen issues, reframe questions for clarification, correct mistakes, and verify unclear points.

The second issue was connected to the difficulties I found in organizing specific information, such as the NGOs assessments of their own work and projects regarding the communities they have worked with which would have helped me to evaluate issues regarding the effectiveness of their political work in relation to the women they try to reach, empower, raise consciousness. The NGOs are able to produce goods and fine reports about their activities, but such techniques do not

necessarily occur in a way that allows us to get information by which their efficiency could be evaluated. In this regard, I observed that these NGOs did not have specific methodological instruments to produce reports and accurate information to provide them with feedback on how well (or not) their work was performed, and the impacts of their projects and activities on the women and in the communities they act.

If a person asks me whether or not there were impacts and improvements in the lives and health conditions of Black women during over these historical periods I looked at in Brazil, I would say yes, there were; but not how it should be or how we expected to be. It is a very hard and complex reality quite difficult to describe. In the Chapter VII, Effectiveness, Agency and Collective Organizing among Black Women's NGOs in Brazil, I will specifically try to address these issues.

Fieldwork: Walking through My Networks

In one of Criola's staff meetings, Julia told some of us that we were living between two universes – the world of Black poverty and the world of the White middle class. In other words, some of us were in a better socioeconomic position than most of the Black population. Julia said that the possibility of moving between these two worlds placed us in a unique position that gave us an advantage, a kind of capital Pierre Bourdieu calls social capital[4]. "Social capital" constitutes the accumulation of resources, which are acquired through a 'durable' networks (or affiliations) 'of more or less institutionalized relationships' based on reciprocal companionship or closeness and recognition (Bourdieu, 1986). Gloria Anzaldúa[5] uses the term "border culture" to express this double condition described by Julia. Anzaldúa (1986) defined "border culture" as the "the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country (3)"; "the author also stated that "borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them; a constant state of transition (3)." It is from this confusing position that I initiated my fieldwork, as an insider-outsider, walking in between my 'safe' membership as working class Black woman, and my 'unsafe' position as someone that has gained a certain social mobility due to higher education. Particularly regarding this last positionality, I struggle everyday to not fall under the illusion that I have surpassed my status as a Black working-class woman. Indeed, I continue to have this identity run through my veins, shaping my consciousness and the way I look at the

[4] Bourdieu, Pierre (1986). The Forms of Capital.

world; on the other hand, I cannot deny the privileges and benefits that being a university-educated Black women has brought to my life, although it also makes me vulnerable. Thus, I feel I that am condemned to simultaneously walk in the dangerous road that higher education has lain in front of me (in my present and future), and always, eternally look back to my roots as a way to not follow temptation and live under the illusion that my educational status has liberated me. Finally, my return to Brazil to initiate my fieldwork in 2006 , undeniably, demonstrated that my status as a Black working-class woman continue to inform and mediate the way Brazilians see and relate to me

I. THE RETURNING

On the morning of October 29, 2006, after two years and three months living in the United States in Austin, Texas, I returned to Rio de Janeiro to start my fieldwork. I was calm and excited to see my friends and family who I knew were on the other side waiting for me to arrive. In my mind, nothing could go wrong my first day back in my city, but I was wrong. I was wrong because my first "welcome home" (or rather unwelcome home so to speak) was handed to me by a white male customs agent that did not want to believe that I was living and studying in the United States, and so could own a laptop. Instead this customs agent prefer to believe that I was lying and want to trick him, and get away without paying the proper fees to the computer. I showed him the sales receipt for the laptop with the purchase date and price clearly marked to confirm

[5] Anzaldúa, Gloria (1987). Borderlands, La Frontera: the new mestiza.

that I had purchased the computer in the United States after April 2004, after I had already begun my studies at The University of Texas. Since it was October 2006 at the time, I believe that the receipt would verify that I had been living in the U.S. for a long time and therefore could not possibly be a "tourist" trying to sneak a laptop into the country to resell it required fees. However, instead of taking into account the dates on the receipt, he looked at me and said: "I'm sorry; you have to pay taxes on this, no excuses." I was tired, but determined to make him show some respect. So I stared at him intently and said: "you are not listing to what I am saying, please I know the customs law ; I am living in U.S. while completing my PhD at the University of Texas at Austin, I am a professor and a researcher and this laptop contains my academic work. I cannot leave it behind. I came back to Brazil to do my research, this has nothing to do with trying to transgress the law; It is within my rights to not have to pay a fee to bring my laptop into the country, I know this for a fact. If you cannot resolve this problem, I want to talk with the person in charge of customer service at the airport because something is wrong!" (by this time a large crowd had gathered to watch the row). Then I said to him, "look, I know you are doing your job, but look carefully at my receipt"! And so he did and to my delight he was irritated and embarrassed when he read it. His response was the following: "Oh! You have proof. This is a receipt from 2004! Why didn't you tell me that in the first place?" I responded, "Yes. I tried to show you the receipt before, but you refused, and started arguing with me!" He was embarrassed and furious about losing the battle and I was delighted to see him in that position. He could not look in me in the eye. In a final attempt to wield his authority he asked me to turn on the computer so he could look inside. So I turned on the laptop, he looked at my files and although still uncontent with

not being able to catch me in the wrong, he signed the papers and let me go. He mumbled something like, "but if it would be a purchase from 2006 you would had to pay that." A very well dressed white man that was watching the argument from the beginning told me: "now you should go to customer service in the lower level of the airport to register your laptop so they won't bother you anymore." I thanked him for his advice and left. All I wanted to do was leave, I could not bear staying there with everyone watching me. I was shaking, furious, but not afraid. I was surprised that I was able to face up to the man, argue with him, resolve the situation, , and make him look like the loser (smile) all I knew I was alive.

I finally left the custom's area and ran outside. I found my sister, nephew and friends anxiously waiting for me. The first thing one of my very good white male friends said when I arrived was, "why did you take so long, tell me the truth you had some '*muamba*' (illegal products) in your bag and they had to stop you right?" I was too tired to start another battle so I smiled and said: "stop that nonsense, because the airport security agents can believe on you". With that we left Galeão International Airport. Two year away from home, I had forgotten that it was impossible for a Black person, especially a Black woman, to live one day in Brazil without being mistreated and discriminated against among strangers and even among friends.

I.1. Landing in Rio de Janeiro during the Presidential Elections

I arrived in Rio de Janeiro during the 2006 general elections' second round. I missed the first round in October 1, because I was still in Austin. In this first round, Brazilian voters were tasked with choosing the president of the country, the governors of the twenty six states and the Federal District and the members of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Legislative Assemblies in the twenty six states and in the Federal District. The second round on October 29th was necessary because no majority was secured by either presidential candidate, and so the two candidates that received the greatest percentage of the votes – Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (of the leftist Worker Party - PT) and Geraldo Alckmin (of the rightist party PSDB) were in a run-off. In the second round, President Lula won the election with over 60% of the votes and guarantied another four-year term in office. In the state of Rio de Janeiro there was also a second round in October 29 in the governor's race. Sérgio de Oliveira Cabral Santos Filho from the rightist Party – PMDB, was elected with 68% of the votes.

I voted in the second round in favor of President Lula but I withheld my vote for governor because I was not in favor of either candidate. During the elections the city was in chaos, covered with candidate advertisements (papers, people) everywhere.

I remember that on my flight back to Rio de Janeiro, there was a group of friends on the plane very upset about the elections. They were hoping that President Lula would not win this time because "it would be horrible" for the country. In their minds, they could not take it anymore, "the Brazilian people were dummies and deserved an equally dumb leader". I was offended by their conversation and put my headphones on to relax

and drown out their conversation with music. The working class and social movement activists that still believe in Lula's government were really concerned about the threat that candidate Geraldo Alckmin of the PSDB could win. The government of Lula from 2002-2006 was surrounded by scandals of corruption and the possibilities for him to be reelected for another four-year term was criticized by many Brazilians, including those that believed in his administration in the first mandate. An episode that impacted me and one that contradicted Brazilian society's investment in the invisibilization and segregation of the Afro-Brazilian population, especially women, was expressed in the presidential elections of 2006. As said by Afro-Brazilian activist Edson Cardoso, the election of President Lula was unique because he was elected by a sector of the population seen by the State and society as a "subgroup", a "sub-race, a group of Blacks and the Indigenous population. The national magazine Veja (Edition 1969, August 16, 2006) published on its cover the prospective representative of Brazilian voters that would decide the elections in October: a young, 27 years old Black woman, secondary education, and low income (minimum wage: R$ 450,00 about US$ 220.00). The Northeast, the most underdeveloped region of the country with the highest concentration of Afro-Brazilians is traditionally linked to the past of slavery plantation, especially sugar-cane. Moreover, in 2006 the number of Brazilians eligible to vote was 125,913.479, 51.53% of whom were women, 48.33% men, and 0,14% not identified (Veja, Edition 1969, August 16, 2006).

Illustration 1: Veja Magazine's cover (Edition 1969, August 16, 2006)

This remarkable episode demonstrates the contradictory nature of Black women's status and living conditions in Brazil. We must believe that the exclusion of the Afro-descendant (and indigenous) population is not an irreversible, although complex, phenomenon. It can be reversed. Specialist confirmed that this subset of the population called a "sub-race" elected President Lula to secure social benefits from the government such as family, food and educational aid. It seems, that consciousness and collective organizing are the key elements in the political mobilization of this population. Nevertheless, my fieldwork experience in Brazil demonstrated that there still much work to be done to confront the segregation and invisibilization faced by Blacks in Brazil.

Such circumstances became evident when I conducted my fieldwork in some locations in the districts of the state of Rio de Janeiro and in the state of Rio Grande do Sul in the cities of Porto Alegre (downtown) and Passo Fundo (downtown).

II. THE RESEARCH FIELD

II. 1. Research Collaborators

I named my research interviewees collaborators because of the nature of my relationship with them. My collaborators are not people that I knew due to the circumstances of my fieldwork, rather we are all a part of the same Black women's sisterhood network. Many of my collaborators are people that I have known throughout my journey to become a Black feminist and a member of a Black women's organization – Criola. In addition, I understand my relationship to my collaborators as a partnership, which involves sharing, exchanges and collaborative work. It is important to clarify that I am using pseudonyms to refer to my research collaborators. However, I decided to employ the real names of some of the NGOs coordinators when they address crucial issues that I considered significant to this study; also I used testimonies that did not compromise any aspect of the personal life of these women. In addition, I have one case in which a collaborator asked me to not keep her name confidential because she said that she did not have anything to hide. She wanted everyone to know what she thought about the issues we were discussing. Thus, in this particular case she refused to receive a

pseudonym. Although other collaborators said that they also did not have a problem if I used their real names in this study, given their consent with the use of pseudonyms as well, I decided to use pseudonyms for the purpose of this dissertation.

I conducted my first interview in the city of Rio de Janeiro in January 2007. I interviewed a total of 65 people: 58 Black women, 1 woman with undeclared racial/ethnic identity[6], and 6 Black men in several districts across the state of Rio de Janeiro, and in the cities of Porto Alegre and Passo Fundo that are located in the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Specifically I interviewed and collected life histories from 37 Black women, 1 woman with undeclared racial/ethnic identity, and 1 Black man in the State of Rio de Janeiro; 10 Black women and 3 Black men in the city of Porto Alegre, and 12 Black women and 1 Black man in the city of Passo Fundo. My main goal was to interview Black women, but, I decided to also interview five Black men because of their political work in collaboration with some of these women. I wanted to use this information to help me in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the political work of the NGOs, particular in the area of health. For example, Miguel, a Black man from Rio de Janeiro, is currently working with the NGO Criola as part of its administrative staff. He represents an exception in this primarily women's organization, although he has a long history of working with the NGO. In 2006 he joined Criola's team because of his leadership in the health field, particularly around Black community's struggle against the

[6] This woman did not self-classify as either Black or white, because she said that her father wasn't nor Black or white, so she said he was like pardo, and her mother was white. So she preferred to be classified as 'Others' in the racial/ethnic group category I gave to her. According Brazil's racial classification she is interpellated as white, but I kept her undeclared because it was her option. Since I specifically focused on Black women, I will not consider her information in terms of socioeconomic and demographic data, but I interviewed this woman because she was an administrator of one of the NGOs I researched and I thought

HIV/AIDS epidemic and other sexually-transmitted diseases. He has also been one of the main coordinators of the National Afro-Brazilian Religion and Health Network. Through this leadership he has played a central role in both the public health arena in Brazil and the mobilization of the Black community and society in general. The other three men - Marcelo, Roberto and Vitor were from the city of Porto Alegre; they did not work inside ACMUN, but like Miguel, they have worked with ACMUN in certain political issues such as the mobilization and debates about the Black population 's health issues, which make them both leaders in the city and within the Black community. Marcelo and Vitor worked with drug users, a large number of whom were Black, and HIV/AIDS prevention in the streets of Porto Alegre. Roberto, like Miguel, is a leader in the National Afro-Brazilian Religion and Health Network as well and works with health issues in the Black population through his Afro-Brazilian religious group in the community the group is settled, which is one of the largest low income Black community in Porto Alegre. I met these three men during a course on health issues that ACMUN offered to activists in Porto Alegre in May 2007. They came to the course to talk about their experiences and the work they were developing in their communities. The fifth man I interviewed was Seu Pedro, the husband of the main coordinator, Laura, of the branch of ACMUN in the city of Porto Alegre. I found his participation intriguing because as a retiree, he served as one of the organization's collaborators. Also, Seu Pedro was a militant in his own right, especially in his early years in the city of Julio de Castilhos in the southern part of the

her testimony was relevant in terms of my evaluation about the effectiveness of the this particular NGO's political work.

state of Rio Grande do Sul where he worked with the main Black Social Club[7] in this city. The last man was Moisés who worked as a trash collector in trash depositories. He and his wife, Anida, who I wanted to interview, worked in one of the landfill in the district of Magé where the state of Rio de Janeiro dispose the trash collected from several regions. I was motivated to talk with Anida by one of my collaborators who has developed a project in the area of health with Criola, Joana. Joana wanted to show me more about the horrible and risky life conditions of women that worked in garbage damps because she had also done this in the past. So, in order to understand such this reality, she took me to one of the largest landfills were all kinds of trash, including toxic trash, is disposed of everyday from several places in the state of Rio de Janeiro. As I got close to the landfill, the strong smell was overwhelming. I decided that the trip was too risky for my health and well-being. I also did not have the courage to confront the detrimental conditions that those people, especially the children, women and elderly, most of whom were Black, have to suffer through to survive every day. Those who lived there did not only collect the trash to sell and recycle, but they would also eat the food they found there and use others items in their homes. I personally had no problem with the concept of living off of recycling, but it has to be done in a safe and clean environment and not under the precarious and harmful conditions I observed. So since I was not able to go to the landfills to talk to the women (like my collaborator Joana wanted), Joana took me to visit two of her friends Anida and Moisés, so I could talk with Anida about her experiences. However, Moisés would not let us talk alone, he was very opinionated and

[7] The Black Social Clubs were social and recreational institutions created by Black people with the objective of create places of socialization within the Black community, since they could not participate in

vocal, so I had to do the entire interview with both. Everybody in Anida's family (the kids, the brother in law) worked in the landfill. The two were also activists in their community. They were responsible for organizing other trash collectors in the region in order to fight for their rights and negotiate with the companies that bought the material they collected in the garbage damps. In addition, I took the opportunity to examine how these men relate with Black women activists in the community and in the political arena in general. However, as I have emphasized throughout the dissertation, my main goal was to take a closer look at the life experiences of Black women activists and it will be my approach throughout the chapter, so I will just use the interviews of the six Black men and the woman that identified herself as non-white and non-Black for general analysis in terms of my assessment of the political work of the NGOs, as I stated in the beginning. The most significant aspect of listening to these women's responses to my questions was to observe and learn about how Black women in Brazil comprise a diverse group. At the same time, they share common experiences of oppression that have transformed their lives collectively, for example the situation of discrimination, violence and injustice they have faced in the healthcare services.

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the city clubs that were organized by and for whites. These clubs were created through all over the country.

II. 2. The State of Rio de Janeiro

The State of Rio de Janeiro is located in the southeast region of Brazil, one of the most socially and economically developed areas of the country. The estimated population is 15,420.375 habitants. The state a territory is 43,696.054 km², and consists of 92 districts (Source: IBGE, Contagem da População, 2007). In 2007, 69.86% of the population was economically active and 30.14% was not economically active. Of the total economically active population, 65.41% were employed (Source: PNAD - Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios – 2006). In order to interview the majority of my collaborators, I had to meet them in the places they lived, thus I basically needed to navigate in distinct locations of the state. I visited places distributed through seven districts of the state of Rio de Janeiro: Rio de Janeiro (neighborhoods of Downtown, Méier, Bangú, Água Santa, Lins de Vasconcelos, Morro Dona Marta, Água Santa, Vicente de Carvalho, Coelho Neto and Campo Grande); places located in three Districts located in the region called Baixada Fluminense: Nova Iguaçú, São João de Meriti, and Belford Roxo; two places in the District of Magé (and Piabetá that is a sub-region of Magé) located in the Região Serrana of the state; and the District of São Gonçalo. I also interviewed one collaborator that lived in the District of Duque de Caxias that is part of the Baixada Fluminense region, but she prefer do the meeting in the downtown instead in her home. According to IBGE/ Cidades, 2007[8] the population distribution in these seven Districts are:

Rio de Janeiro: 232,171 habitants (39.5% of the state population)

Nova Iguaçu: 830, 672 habitants (5.4%)

[8] Source: IBGE, Contagem da População, 2007

São João de Meriti: 464,282 habitants (3%)

Belford Roxo: 480, 555 habitants (3%)

Duque de Caxias: 842,686 habitants (5.46%)

Magé: 232, 171 habitants (1.5%)

São Gonçalo: 960, 631 habitants (6.2%)

Together these populations constitute about 64% of the state of Rio de Janeiro . All these communities have a high low income and Black population. These communities are very marginalized and segregated, continually victimized by police brutality and other hazardous life conditions, such as violence, crime, the conflicts between police, drug traffickers, and other forms of organized crime groups. In addition, inhabitants of these places also have to face many obstacles to access to healthcare services (clinics, hospitals, treatments, etc), as well discrimination. Such situations put make these populations vulnerable and put them under great stress. In Chapter I, Black Women and Vulnerability, I explore these risky circumstances, particular as they relate to women.

II. 2.1. Visiting Criola

On Monday, October 30, 2006, my second day in the city of Rio de Janeiro, I went to Criola. Criola's office is located in the heart of downtown, in an underground room of a large building in the Presidente Vargas Avenue, a long and vital avenue that cut part of the city. Criola owns its office. The organization was able to buy the room

with the support of the Heinrich Boll Foundation[9] which wanted to help Criola buy a permanent headquarters. I was interested in seeing what had changed in the two years I had been away from the organization. First change I noticed in the office was the absence of the 6' 3" Black doll that had been at the only front door we had. This doll was always dressed up with beautiful and colorful African clothes; it was substituted by a very smaller doll, about 1' tall. I asked Lorena, one of my peers, why the doll was not there anymore and they told me that they got tired of that and decided to change for the small one. The office comprises of a large room, to small room (one for the administration and other for the staff member), it also has small bathroom and kitchen and a storage room, like a walk-in closet, where all office materials a kept. In the right side of the large room there are several cabinets where Criola keeps its library composed by more than 3,500 titles, among books, texts, reports, and manuals; it also had a video archive with over 100 video tapes and 100 films and documentaries. On the left side of the large room there is a glass door shop window with sample of the products and Afro-Brazilian art created by the handcraft women and men that were part of the project ART Criola, a type of co-op project; through the glass doors we can see different types of home and dressing accessory, clothes, musical instrumentals, orixás statues, toys, among many other work of art; it is also in this large room that the ONG have a long table with chairs for guests; this is the communitarian area where everybody can circulate. Except for these two arrangements I described in the large room, Criola's office is similar to other offices; in the other two rooms the circulation is limited, specially the

[9] The Heinrich Böll Foundation is an independent, non-profit organization that has worked around gender justice, democracy, civil society, environmental protection and sustainable trade and economic development. It is affiliated with the German Green Party, and its headquartered is located in Berlin; in addition the foundation has 25 offices worldwide and develops work in 60 countries.

administrative one, and only staff members or invited guests can move freely because of the confidentiality of files, documents, computers and other electronic equipment.

When I entered the door I found everything quiet. I entered in the administration room and hugged the secretary, then went to hug the other women in the staff's room. There were two new staff members, Livia and Edna, whom I had met through emails but not in person. They introduced them to me. They were both coordinator assistants. That day I spent my day in Criola getting to know what was new and what continued to be the same since I left Criola in August 2003, like activities, projects, relationship with other groups, among other issues.

In 2006/2007 the organization presented a great distribution concerning staff members. There were two directors and an honor director that did not receive any salary. The paid members are: two general coordinators, three coordinator assistants, one secretary, one administrator, three collaborators working as consultants (one in the development of the project *Iyá Agba* Black Women's Network to Confront Violence against Women, one in the development of the projects related to Black population health, and the third one responsible to register and organize some of the seminars and conference reports organized by Criola). There were also a large group of women collaborators from different communities working in two major projects the Núcleos de Violência (Centers for Violence Awareness) and the Núcleos de Saúde (Centers for Health Awareness); some of these women were receiving small remunerations to develop such projects in their communities, but other were working for free because these projects had smaller amount of money to pay staff expensive most of the funds were required to be employed on the development of the project in the community, i.e. to buy material, and food to support the local activities; usually the decision about who will receive a wage or not is based on aspects such as: Black women that have been developing

collaborative work (and built a trustable relationship) with Criola for a long time, those women that have demonstrated commitment with the work the NGO believe, and the socio-economic conditions of the women can also have some influence in these kind of choices. Criola used to have as part of its staff structure the function of program coordinator.

Taking a Journey to the Centers for Violence and Health Awareness

Take the subway until the *Pavuna* station, once there take the bus *tomazinho* (N*ilópolis*), be careful to not drop in the first train line, because you have to drop in the second one after the *Sendas* Grocery store! After *Sendas* Grocery store the bus will cross the train line, and so you can drop in the next stop. Then, go up to the bakery store's street, and then enter in the street that has a big almond tree, there is also a small liquor store and bar on the corner of it street; then when you get to the top, turn to the right, there is a yellow liquor store and bar in the corner and then you will end up in our street, so just ask for Mãe Lana, everybody knows where her house (temple) is; and here is the phone, you can call if you get lost (Center for violence awareness in the district of São João de Meriti, Nizia's explanation).

Take the bus route number 800 (*Nova Aurora*) in the quarter of *Madureira* until the *Pavuna* subway station, there you should cross the station and go to its other side; in this side take the van *Lote 15* through *Roseiral*, and ask the driver to let you off at the *Vale do Ipê*. The van will drop you off in the corner of Manuel Street; my house is located on the first street at your left side, thus go up to this street until the end, when the pavement part of the street finishes, you should continue a little bit and them you will see a couple of houses, I lived in the firth one that has a *Jaqueira* tree (Center for health awareness in the district of Belford Roxo, Carmen's explanation).

Go all the way down until the *Bangú* station and cross to the other side; once there take the van named *Carobinha* in front of the Intercontinental supermarket; you will spend like 40 minutes in the van, but when you enter the van immediately ask the driver to drop you in the *cano furado* (stuck pipe); and I said: what? Drop close to a stuck pipe!?-- I was concerned if I would be able to see the stuck pipe in the street, and asked people in the van about it, but they said to me to not worry about that because I would see the pipe and they also would tell me when the van gets there, so I relaxed a little bit. I was particular concerned to go to this center because Soraia told me about the conflicts between drug traffickers in her community. So, she told me that she would wait for me in the main entrance of her street, close to the stuck pipe, that was why I was concerned to make sure

I could get to the right place, I did not want to get lost by myself, as an stranger in a place surrounded by drug traffic conflicts-- (Center for health awareness in Campo Grande, city of Rio de Janeiro, Soraia's explanation).

In February 2007, I initiated my fieldwork in the communities that Criola was developing its projects, more specifically in the Centers for Violence Awareness and Health Awareness, and in March 2007 I started visits and interviews with the Centers for Health Awareness. The majority of the centers functioned in the own women's houses. To visit the centers was an incredible experience that led me to deeply witness the levels of exclusion and segregation to which Black population are exposed in the state of Rio de Janeiro. To climb streets, walk on non official roads, and look for unconventional sights to identify addresses became a daily practice in my fieldwork. In addition to the complex conditions in terms of the access to these places, I was astonished by how expensive on a daily basis to navigate from those places to any part of the capital, city of Rio de Janeiro. For example, I usually spend around US$ 10.00 (R$ 20,00) per day in transportation (bus, train, subway) or in unofficial (gypsy) vans because there were many places that depended on illegal system of transportation, since they were out of the state and districts maps. Another important aspect is that the districts I am referring to here are very close one to another, only divided by a street, a road, a train line or station, and a bridge.

Thus, every day I would leave my home in the quarter of Jacarepaguá, located in the west zone of the city of Rio de Janeiro to visit the Centers. Jacarepaguá had grown fast in terms of socio-demographic and economic development, and had a large working class population, but in the last twenty years the region has received an increasing number of middle class folks searching for a more peaceful and healthy lifestyle since Jacarepaguá is surrounded by nature, a mixture between mountain and sea climate (forests, trees, rivers, lakes, beaches, wild animals, among many others). I interrupted my

fieldwork in Brazil and traveled to the State of Porto Alegre to start my fieldwork in the NGO ACMUN, more specifically I went to the cities of Porto Alegre and Passo Fundo and stayed there until May 31st when I returned to Rio de Janeiro. Therefore, I continued my fieldwork in Criola in June 1st and worked there until I returned to the University of Texas at Austin, in August 22nd, 2007. While I was interviewing and researching in Criola, I decided to visit and interview members of the Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa, during the month of July. I knew this NGO for a long time and had participated in some events and activities with them in the city. In addition, Felipa de Sousa is a member of the Brazilian Black Women's Network like Criola, ACMUN and Maria Mulher.

II.2.2. Visiting Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa

I visited the office of the Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa in July 16, 2007 to interview Felicia. This is a lesbian organization with a majority of Black women. It was the only time I went to visit their office; and my contact with this organization was very short. Moreover, I did not have the opportunity to participate in any event organized by them. The organization's office was located in the downtown area of the city of Rio de Janeiro, in the building called Palácio das ONGs (NGOs' Palace). The office was a large room, no kitchen or bathroom. The bathroom was located in the hall of the floor. The room had many tables, chairs and boxes. What called my attention was a big pink and green poster in the wall with drawings of lesbian couples and the slogan: Lésbicas, Saúde e Direitos Humanos (Lesbians, Health and Human Rights); the poster is the first thing we

saw when entering in the place. This sign is expressing clearly: “we are a lesbian organization.” Another symbol demonstrating we are entering a lesbian organization is a rainbow color mandala hanging in the center of the room. Felicia wanted to make sure I looked and register it. Besides Felicia, I also interviewed three more members - Rosangela, Ruth, and Rejane.

ACMUN: the rainbow color mandala and the poster about Lesbians, Health and Human Rights

II.3. The State of Rio Grande do Sul

The state of Rio Grande do Sul is located in the south region of the country, which also constitutes another socially and economically developed area in Brazil. The population estimated and included in the census is 10,582.840 habitants. The state has a territory of 281,748.538 km², and congregates 496 districts (Source: IBGE, Contagem da

População, 2007). In 2007 the state had 78.94% of economically active population, against the 21.05% non-economically active; and from the total population economically active, 76.04% of these individuals were employed (Source: PNAD - Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios – 2006). In this state I focused my research in the cities of Porto Alegre (downtown), and Passo Fundo (downtown). In contrast to Rio de Janeiro, in Porto Alegre and Passo Fundo the dynamics of interviews and contact with collaborators were performed in a distinct way. I had difficulties in visiting the majority of collaborators in their own communities because they preferred to do the interview in the offices of ACMUN or Maria Mulher. Due to these requests, I interviewed four collaborators in their houses, one in the hospital because a collaborator was facing health issues and wanted to do the meeting in her private hospital room. I also did an interview in the office of one of the collaborators (she is a psychologist). In my evaluation, the difficulties to get invited to houses had to do with my status as an outsider of the cities, and because the majority of them did not know me. The houses that I was able to visit were the ones in which the collaborators knew me previously, so I believe there was a greater basis for trust. I also think many of them want to be kind with me and preferred to come to me instead of having travel to places far from the NGO's office. In this regard, my politics were not to force the collaborators to drive me to their home preferring to let them decide where and when it would be most comfortable and adequate for them to meet and conduct the interview.

Porto Alegre is the capital of the state of Porto Alegre and according to the data of the IBGE/ Cidades, in 2007 it had 1,420.667 habitants. It is a large city that presents major urban problems such as violence, crime, indigence, among others. In contrast,

Passo Fundo is small city with 183,300 habitants, and although many collaborators did not like to refer to the city being located in the countryside, the city presented many of the associated characteristics. In addition, the incidence of serious urban problems like violence and crime were small when compared with big cities such as Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre. During the time I spent in both Porto Alegre and Passo Fundo I did not observe the same kind of violent conflicts between police and drug traffickers or other groups that commit crimes. In spite of this, some of the collaborators assured me that those problems even with fewer incidences, in comparison to cities such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo where urban violence and crimes are enormous problems, did exist in Porto Alegre and Passo Fundo. Given this reality, in this sense, I thought it was interesting that in these two, Blacks in general were not portrayed in the newspapers on a regular basis and situations of violence involving these populations were usually not documented by the newspapers. As stated by a member of the NGO Maria Mulher, in Porto Alegre, the quasi nonappearance of Black folks in the newspapers of the South is due to an attempt to deconstruct the idea that the Black population exists in Porto Alegre, as well as, in other cities of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. This state is identified as the region in Brazil where the presence of the African descendent population is uncommon or nonexistent, since this is an area associated with its large population of white descendents of European immigrants. As a result, the state has forged an official discourse and imaginary that its territory is preponderantly inhabited by white population and characterized by the white European traditions and culture. In spite of these attempts to remove the Black population from the history and daily realm of the state of Rio

Grande do Sul, these groups exist throughout the state, as demonstrated in the cities of Porto Alegre and Passo Fundo.

African descendent people have been exploited in the region since slavery . Their labor was employed in the farms in the creation of bovine animals (like cattle farming) and agriculture. The construction and investment in the invisibility and erasing of Blacks in the state are indeed powerful manifestation of racism and of social exclusion, which have jeopardized the citizenship and rights of this group. As a case in point, since this population is often treated not officially included or under represented, it has faced disadvantages in terms of government social policies that frequently have left them out of city and state planning around benefits such as healthcare, education, housing, employment, among others opportunities that would improve living conditions.

As observed, to research in such diverse contexts was a complicated task. Ethnography and participant observation were fundamental methods in my study, but the semi-structured interviews, along with the examination of socio-demographic data were fundamental to understanding the situation these groups have undergone and the complex reality in which they are immersed.

II.3.1. Visiting ACMUN

I landed in the city of Porto Alegre, state of Rio Grande do Sul in the evening of April 3, 2007. However, on Friday night April 6, 2007 I traveled by bus to the city of Passo Fundo to meet with the other group of ACMUN and stayed there until the morning of April 22, 2007, when I come back to the city of Porto Alegre in order to start my field work over there. Therefore, I settled in Porto Alegre from April 22 until May 31, 2007; and finally returned to the city of Rio de Janeiro to continue my fieldwork in Criola,

where I stayed until my trip back to the United States, to organize my findings and to write my dissertation.

I landed first in Porto Alegre to spend about three days with the staff members of ACMUN in this city to plan my research there, and to plan some collaborative work they wanted me to do for them, which basically was to serve as lecturer for the two courses they were organizing. Two members of ACMUN went to the airport to welcome me, Beta, one of the program's coordinator and Maria, the financial and administrative assistant. Beta came first, and so we decided to go have some coffee while we waited for Maria. Beta arranged for me to stay with Maria during the time I would stay in Porto Alegre. Maria lived in an apartment in downtown, about 3.5 miles from ACMUN's office, which was great because I could either walk or catch a bus to the office. ACMUN's office was located in the 4th floor of a building situated in the *João Pessoa* Avenue, *Cidade Baixa* of the city of Porto Alegre, very close to downtown.

In April 4, 2007 I woke up early to leave with Maria for the office. The office had only a small room, a minuscule kitchen and bathroom. It would become really tiny when there were more than six women inside it. ACMUN had a very large office, located in a public city building, but they were robbed and the thieves took all equipments, most of the furniture they had, and they burned and ripped the majority of their documents, books, archival materials, and belongings they did not want to take with them. According to the staff members I interviewed, it was more than an act of stealing, for them it was also a retaliation from the street residents that used to live in that place. Before the NGO moved in to the building, it was abandoned, and so the homeless used to use the place as shelter. It was a city historical public building that was granted to ACMUN by the city; the organization was really happy with the gift, because it was a 2nd floor building with large space for its office, to organize events, to perform the

craftswomen workshops and for co-op activities, to build an Afro-Brazilian art gallery, and many other projects they wanted to put in practice. However, they told me the building was an object of political conflicts within the district cultural department, and also among state sectors, and many people over there were not satisfied with the fact that the building had been given to ACMUN. ACMUN argued that this department was creating many problems to give them the final and official authorization to administrate the building. In addition, the disputes for the edifice were so complex that the NGOs did not know to what department they belonged to, or who to ask for help to solve any issue. As a case in point the problem of security of the building, as indicated, was a dramatic result of such an intricate indistinctness, because according to the ACMUN's staff members they were many times concerned about the safekeeping of the edifice, and many times they called the police to protect the place, but the police department would say they could do nothing in this regard since the building was not registered as state property, and the district representatives would use the same excuse arguing that the state should be responsible for protecting the construction; as consequence they were robbed and nothing could be done.

Thus, all the organization had left was inside that small office; they had to buy new equipment and received material support from other NGOs such as Criola in order to re-build the organization. The staff was traumatized by the situation, but step by step they gained the strength they needed to run the organization and put it back on its feet. This situation left the group fragile, and they were having a hard time to re-organize their activities, to restructure their projects, and also an increased financial crisis that already existed. More specifically, I observed that this problem was affecting ACMUN for a long time, before I arrived and during the period I stayed with them; when I left their situation was a little better because they organized three important events in the city that

were really successful and thus they were happy with the results. They organized two courses, one about Black Population's Health and Policies, and other about Education and Afro-Brazilian Culture and History.

During the period I stayed with ACMUN in 2007 the organization in Porto Alegre had as staff members: an executive coordinator, several program coordinators, an administrative and financial assistant, and several collaborators working as consultants or health educators; except for the health educators, two coordinator members, and the executive coordinator all the rest of the team received salaries or a kind of remuneration. However, in the city of Passo Fundo only one program coordinator was paid, and the rest of the staff was employed in a variety of professional fields, such as education, health, housekeeping, some were housewives, among others.

The period I stayed in ACMUN was divided in between the city of Porto Alegre and the city of Passo Fundo, where the second branch of the NGO operated. As I indicated before, I left Porto Alegre in April 6 at night, and arrived in the city of Passo Fundo in a Saturday morning, April 7. Laura and her husband, seu Pedro went to pick me up at the bus station. I was very tired because I could not sleep during the trip, I do not like to travel at night; I often feel uncomfortable and afraid that an accident can happen while I am sleeping. Laura's house was located in the downtown area, close to the bus station, the major business and other essential services provided by the city. On the way to Laura's house the car was stopped by one of the ACMUN's members that I could not interview; she wanted to see me and welcome me to the city; we then continued the journey to her house. Laura wanted me to stay with her and family; when I arrived at her house there was a bedroom waiting for me. During that weekend we didn't do much; we just talked and planned a little what we want to do about my research, and she also

wanted me to participate in a couple of activities with her and the other members. That short conversation was important because I only had about fifteen days to conduct the research in Passo Fundo. I needed to return to Porto Alegre by Monday April 22nd in order to prepare myself for the courses' lectures that would start in April 24th.

On Sunday, April 8, 2007, one day after my arrival, Laura's family prepared a South style barbecue for me, so I had the opportunity to get to know part of her huge family. It was great to be surrounded by a Black family because I missed my own family. Since I arrived in Brazil, I actually did not have a nice time like that with my own family because I was working every day, including some weekends either in research or in Criola (of which I am a member). The ACMUN section in Passo Fundo did not have an office like in Porto Alegre. The meetings were organized in the houses of the members, particularly in Laura's and Nadia's houses because they were the main leaders of the group. In my first week in Passo Fundo, Laura took me to many places that she considered important for me to know and introduced me to some of the ACMUN's members; and since I did not had much time, I started the interviews and visits immediately; some of the women wanted to do the interview in Laura's home, and others agreed to receive me in their homes. I interviewed Black women among staff members and collaborators.

In terms of the city structure, I observed that Black folks rarely transited in the downtown area, and even in the only major shopping center of the city, which I considered a very strange situation. Every morning I would walk through the streets to downtown and even when I could see a Black person I could count how many they were just using my hand's fingers; it was amazing. This might explain why people would look at me in the streets like they were seeing something very unusual happening. The only way I would be in contact with Black folks was when I would visit the collaborators, so I

could look at them and their families. However, I also observed as I walked to their neighborhoods that the presence of Blacks were exceptional. I thus, started to ask my collaborators, where the Blacks were, and they would look at me as I was asking an odd and nonsense question. Many of them told me that they never or rarely thought about that, that Blacks do not circulated very often around downtown, the shopping area and in the neighborhoods near downtown. Some others told me that there were Blacks in the city, but they were concentrated in a specific region, and they did not come to much to the location of downtown and adjacent areas. However, I was thinking that such areas would not be so distant because Paso Fundo was a small city. One day Laura and seu Pedro took me to a party in the house of Laura's sister, which is also a member of ACMUN, and they promised me that I would see more Black people in that region because it was far from downtown, and it was an area that concentrated the low income population. In fact, they were right, yes I could observe more African-descendants in that neighborhood, and in addition the majority of people in the party were Black. Nevertheless, I was still intrigued by the fact that those people would not circulate in the downtown area, even if just to cross the city, because the major transportation lines and services (public and private business) are located in the city's center; many people have to stop by the center area go to work. In my opinion, there was a huge process of segregation in the city, but my research collaborators naturalized that situation, and did not question it. Another day Laura invited me to go with her to the public school she worked; it was an elementary and middle school; and again I was stunned by the fact that Laura and I were the only Black person in the entire school: the staff, the professors, the principal, and the students were all white. I just saw one Black family (one male and two kids) walking in the school street, and the rest surrounding us were all whites. "The

Black population in the city is not big", my collaborators would tell me, but it should not mean that this group should disappear from the street on a daily basis.

Seu Pedro admitted that Passo Fundo was a racist city and that all icons and remnants that Blacks existed in the city has disappeared through the years, like the Black clubs he was proud to remember, as the glorious golden days of the Black community in this city, and in particular in the city of Julio de Castilhos. Moreover, as another sign of racial exclusion I observed in the city, there were no Black representatives in the Chamber of Deputies and on the Legislative Assemblies, neither any woman; there seemed to be a gender and racial exclusion in these places.

My days in Passo Fundo were fast and intensive, but I was satisfied with the results; I conducted satisfactory interviews and collected enough fieldwork materials. Therefore, I left the city in April 22, 2007 with a deepest sense of how the Black population was segregated in that region. In fact I found the same type of segregation system in the city of Porto Alegre, although masked by the fact that it was a much bigger city in comparison to Passo Fundo. I noticed many more Black folks walking down Porto Alegre streets, but as I already indicated in my analysis about the presence of African descendants in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, there were irrefutable indications of attempts to keep the Black population invisible and segregated in both cities.

After I returned to Porto Alegre, I immediately engaged in my fieldwork. For the period that I was in Porto Alegre I was not able to visit any of the communities that the organization worked with, particular the community they called Restinga, where ACMUN - Porto Alegre concentrated many of its projects and activities. None of the staff members could take me there, it was very far from downtown, and with no references from the NGO or the community it was complicated to get there by myself,

although sometimes I thought I should visit the community by myself and take the risks. In addition, the staff could not find any woman that lived in the Restinga that wanted to received me there for a visit. In fact, I interviewed two Black female collaborators from this region but they preferred come to me and do the interview in the ACMUN's office, instead of meeting me in their community. Thus, from nine interviews I conducted five occurred in ACMUN's office and four were outside in the research collaborators` houses. I also credited the difficulty that ACMUN presented to take me to the Restinga as associated to the fact that the organization was not realizing any activity or project in the community at the moment I stayed with them, although it maintained links with the community. I remember the organization was recruiting women from the Restinga to participate in their craftswomen workshop in the downtown.

I learned that the Restinga constituted the city region with the largest low income population, where a huge population of African descent is concentrated. It is also identified as the most impoverish region of the city, with higher rates of violence and crime; it presents precarious access to public services such as schools, healthcare services, precarious infrastructure such as piped water and sewer structure, city transportation, no police protection against crime, among other problems. Although we will not find official information about this account, all the research collaborators I interviewed referred to the Restinga as a marginalized and segregated place from the rest of the city of Porto Alegre. The collaborators told me that the Restinga was created by the city and state to set apart the poor and Black population that used to live in slums and other precarious housing system in the downtown area (precisely what they called *Bairro da Ilhota*, the *Vilas* throughout the *Azenha* Avenue). It was also in this area that an African colony used to be located, which was created by African enslaved people. In 1965, the District Housing Department created a Law (of December 30, 19?965) that

relocated all the habitants of those areas to the remote region of Restinga, located 22 km of downtown of the city of Porto Alegre. According to some of the collaborators the transfer and gentrification of the downtown occurred because of many Jewish and other immigrants (white Europeans) wanted to establish their business in these areas, so they began at first to buy the houses and lands in the location. Since many residents did not wanted to move, these businessmen somehow persuaded the city mayor to take some action in this regard, and the city interested in develop economically, created the necessary mechanisms to force the opposing residents to move out even against their will. Moreover, the transfer and destruction of those areas represented the destruction of a significant part of the history of African descended communities in the city of Porto Alegre. Black activists claimed that it was an act of racism and an attempt to segregate the Black population from the rest of the city, a project that worked successfully. Even the traditional cultural activities and events performed by Afro-Brazilian communities have been transferred to distant and isolated places by the city Mayor's representatives, for example, the carnival, and Afro-Brazilian cultural celebrations, as well as many of the famous Black clubs. One of such clubs I went to visit was the Floresta Aurora, that was not located in downtown, but as some other places of socialization for Black folks in the city, it continue to survive in the present, but still constantly threatened by the possibility of closure because the city has no interest in supporting it as a historical patrimony. In addition to conducting fieldwork in ACMUN-Porto Alegre, I actively participated in two courses organized during the periods of April 24th to 27th, and of May 2nd and 3rd. The first course was Controle Social em Saúde da População Negra (Social Control on Black Population's Health) aimed to build awareness in the city about the situation of Black women's and Black population's health, and reflect on healthcare policies and services. My lectures' topics were: Racism and Health, and Black Women's Sexual and

Reproductive Rights. The second course was Educação, Cultura e História Afro-Brasileira (Education and Afro-Brazilian Culture and History), in which I gave the lectures: Memory and Identity: The Black Family and The Black Culture and Racism as a Fundamental Element in the Maintenance and Construction of the Society and Nation-State. I was also pleased with my fieldwork in ACUMN – Porto Alegre, and decided to interview some of the members of another Black women's organization in the city, Maria Mulher. When I finished my interviews and gathered the information available, I returned to Rio de Janeiro to complete my research with Criola.

II.3.2. Visiting Maria Mulher

I visited Maria Mulher in May 9, 2007 for the first time. My decision to visit and interview some of its members was due to the fact that I met two of them – Celi and Grace – the course Social Control on Black Population's Health promoted by ACMUN. Celi and Grace were also invited to give a lecture about the work Maria Mulher do on domestic violence and HIV/Aids epidemic among Black women. Very often, both ACMUN and Maria Mulher work together in events and activities to confront Black women's discrimination in Porto Alegre, and in the State of Rio Grande do Sul. Maria Mulher had two offices one located in downtown that functions as the main headquarter, and a second one located in the Vila Cruzeiro do Sul, one of the largest low income Black community in the city of Porto Alegre. Because the central office was closed for reforms, I went to visit this second one in Vila Cruzeiro do Sul. It was a big facility, a two floor building established in the Moab Caldas Avenue, far from downtown. In the first floor the organization had a big patio and a room for communal meetings, and a

kitchen; in the second floor of the building there were some classrooms, a computer lab - with internet open to the community-, and some other small rooms where the staff members worked. The day of my visit there were a group of Black girls and teenagers participating in a workshop. Maria Mulher had a huge staff composed by a technical coordinator, an adjunct coordinator, and a financial coordinator, a team project of 25 members, 17 collaborators distributed through its several projects, and an advisory council composed by 46 members. I was able to interview three members of Maria Mulher: Iara one of the coordinator, and Celi and Grace who were psychologists. My visit to Maria Mulher was short; its office is located right in the middle of the Vila do Cruzeiro. There, I had the opportunity to know in person the community where the organization mostly developed its projects. Its population, composed by a significant number of Afro-Brazilians, lived in conditions of poverty and misery.

The employment of fieldwork, ethnography and oral narratives in the elaboration of this dissertation has being a significant and delightful experience in my scholarly and political projects. I expect this dissertation to contribute to documentation of Black women's life conditions and status in Brazilian society, as well as, part of their histories, struggles, political and intellectual traditions, and genealogies. Finally, I must emphasize that to walk and navigate throughout Brazilian Black women's networks and sisterhoods brought me back to my roots.

PART I: LIVING IN BETWEEN THE EXTREMES OF OPPRESSION AND RESISTANCE: THE EXPERIENCES OF AFRO-BRAZILIAN WOMEN

Part I examines the conditions and struggles of Black women in Brazil in relation to vulnerability and female sterilization. It explores why there is a need for Black women's organizing. It is also an attempt to focus on some of the material effects of continued structural and historical conditions of oppression in Black women's lives.

Chapter I, *Black Women and Vulnerability* examines the socio-cultural elements in Brazil that have generated and maintained Black women's vulnerability in the health care system and in the broader society. Chapter II, *Female Sterilization as a Starting Point* addresses female sterilization in Brazil and the struggle of Black women's organizing around this issue.

In order to understand the reality of oppression and vulnerability concerning Black women's health and life conditions, this section relies on these Black women's experiences. The "experience" of oppression represents an important analytical focus for the foundation of Black diasporic feminist theory (do you have any citations here? Sudbury 1998, Scott 1991, etc). Experience, as a concept of analysis and knowledge production, has challenged both the social sciences and social movements.[10] Black

[10] (see Agnew 1996; Barr 2003, 2005a and 2005b; Bolles 1996; Brewer 1993; Collins 2000; Christian 1985 and 2000; Combahee River Collective 1983; Crenshaw 1995, 2000 and 2002; George 2001; Curiel 2003a and 2003b; hooks 1981 and 1984; James 1997, 1999 and 2000; King 1988; Lorde 1990; McClaurin 2001; Mikell 1997; Mirza 1997a, 1997b, 1997c; Nnaemeka 1998, 2003 and 2005; Oyèrónké Oyewùmí 2003; Parmar 1997; Reddock 1998; Rufino 2002; Sant'anna 1998; Shakur 1987; Smith 1983; Sudbury 1998; Terborg-Penn 1996a and 1996b; Xavier 2003 and 2004; Walker 1983; Werneck 2000, 2003a, 2003b and 2005b; among others).

feminists and other scholars have theorized and conceptualized Black women's experiences in relation to the multifaceted forms of oppression, particularly racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism, which shape their lives. They also have criticized the historical lack of epistemological and theoretical approaches that focus on the "multiple social locations" of Black women in mainstream feminisms, Black Studies, and established disciplines in the academy (Brewer 1993; Collins 2000). In Brazil, "experience" remains undervalued and marginalized, in feminist theory and other disciplines in the academy and is considered a non-source for scientific knowledge. Afro-Brazilian feminist scholars and other marginal intellectuals have struggled against these disciplinary constraints in their attempts to foreground experience as a crucial component for producing more accurate analyses in their studies of race, gender, class, and sexuality. These challenges reveal the invisibility of Black women in the academy, as well as, the degree to which institutional racism and sexism pervades academe (Bobo 2001, Bolles 2001, Christian 1985 and 1998, 2000 and 2001, and McClaurin, 2001). In my own research, I have drawn heavily from the work of four specific theorists/activists who have centered the importance of experience in social and collective knowledge in order to explore and document Black women's experience in Brazil: Satya Mohanty (1997), Patricia Collins (2000), Combahee River Collective (1983), and Barbara Smith (1998).

Mohanty's (1997) analysis has contributed much to the uses of experiences in the academy by validating it as a source of relevant knowledge. Mohanty argues that in order to differentiate whether an experience is a description of a reality, we have to identify if the experience plays an epistemological role, i.e., when it helps us to identify our place in society and the world. For example, in order to prove and validate that

racism and sexism are real experiences in the everyday lives of Black women we have to consider structural and historical processes, political economy, statistical data, and knowledge which sustain and shape experience. Thus, Mohanty affirms that experience is valid, but by itself it is not sufficient if it is not contextualized within a larger structural analysis. Mohanty's assessment of experience brings to our attention the limitations of experience. Studies produced by scholars such as Molefi Kete Asante (1990), G. Lewis (1996), Julia Sudbury (1998), Barbara Smith (1998), Patricia Collins (2000), make considerable contributions to understanding how a researcher should employ experience in social science research. For instance, in her study of Black women's organizations in England, Sudbury (1998) questioned "how we can retain both a grounded understanding of the political necessity for the knowledge of subjugated groups to be validated and an appreciation that experience is not in fact 'the final empirical authority' [Asante 1990:25] (32)?" Sudbury's question leads to related questions about the employment of experiences that need be accounted for in our ethnographic work: how much can we use experience to legitimize our study's analytical claims? When and where is experience a key source of critical knowledge insight and when should we depart from experiential knowledge to produce critical thought? Drawing upon the analysis of Lewis (1996), Sudbury stated that it is not possible to "speak 'innocently' of Black women's experience(s)," rather, "we must look at how the location of specific women within multiple systems of subordination shapes the ways in which Black women represent themselves as individuals and as a group" (32). As Sudbury further explains, experience constitutes a "'politics of location,'" that provides insight into the specific 'historical, geographical, cultural, psychic and imaginative boundaries' which shape our definitions

of self and other (32)." Therefore, Sudbury makes it clear that "it is not enough to speak of Black women," (32), and that, as researchers, we must be attentive to Black women's specific historic, geographic, cultural location. Lastly, she affirmed that centering on the specificity of location gives us "insight on the standpoint of its speakers, yet it does not essentialize (32)."

African-American feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins (2000) has also theorized extensively about how to build knowledge from experience, particularly black women's experiences. According to Collins (2000), "lived experience as a criterion for credibility frequently is invoked by U.S. Black women when making knowledge claims (257)." In her analysis Collins demonstrates the values of personal experiences for Black people, and how many of them, as an example of Ruth Shays, utilize their own "lived experiences to challenge the idea that formal education is the only route to knowledge (258)." The author argued that experience "as a criterion of meaning with practical images as its symbolic vehicles is a fundamental epistemological tenet in African-American thought system (258)." Thus, by introducing Black women's experiences as a powerful site of knowledge production, Collins' analysis challenged conventional academic knowledge and validated black feminist thought as a critical theoretical and methodological framework for the study of oppression, resistance, and domination. Finally, she affirms that "clarifying Black women's experiences and ideas lies at the core of Black feminist thought, interpreting them requires collaborative leadership among those who participate in the diverse forms that Black women's communities now take (16)." The Combahee River Collective (1983) and Barbara Smith (1998) are important in

the discussion of Black women's experiences because they added the insights from their experiences as Black lesbians. Both works brought to the field of Black feminist studies the deep process of marginalization of lesbians inside and outside of the Black feminist movement and the Black community. These analyses call our attention to the existence of levels of exclusions that usually cannot be perceived because of the hegemonic nature of heterosexism Both works called our attention not only to the marginalization, subjugation, silencing and invisibility of black women's experiences, but also they speak to the position of black lesbians as submerged voices among black women.

The idea of experience as part of other complex structures of mobilization constitutes a key starting point in the organization of Black diasporic feminist thought and practice. Consequently, my work draws from and contributes to this African diasporic feminist literature by acknowledging the centrality of experience in the development of my research project. For this reason, I have deployed Satya Mohanty's (1997) conceptualization of the "epistemic role" of the experiences of Brazilian Black women's NGOs in their struggles against oppression and discrimination in the area of sexual and reproductive health. In doing so, my research has focused on demonstrating how life experiences inform Black women's realities and social conditions, and what these experiences reveal in terms of the structural and historical processes that produce their oppression.

Chapter I: Black Women and Vulnerability

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the social mechanisms in Brazil that have produced and sustained Black women's vulnerability, particularly those that have created the conditions of discrimination, injustice and violence that permeates every aspect of their lives. The chapter is divided into three parts. Part I develops a narrative about the concept of vulnerability. I begin with my own analysis of the concept and utilize the experiences of my research collaborators to strengthen my analysis. My fieldwork revealed two major structural elements in which vulnerability affected in the lives of my collaborators: (1) violence in the community generated by the confrontation between the police and drug traffickers (, and (2) the difficulties these women confronted when dealing with the public healthcare system (lack of access, discriminatory services, etc.). Segregation and marginalization also causes vulnerability, because these processes prevent the community from having access to infrastructural services; I provide cases from the newspapers to illustrate how Black women are vulnerable to violence in their communities.

Part II presents and analyzes the research collaborators' responses to my research questions. It addresses issues how Black women have been treated on the basis of racism (as well as sexism, classism, and heterosexism). There is particular attention paid to Black women's bodies and images as sites of discrimination. Part III explores this link between the Black female body, representations, and racial discrimination. My study

demonstrates the existence of three major gendered-racialized categories of representations of Black women in Brazil: sexually promiscuous, domestic workers, and bad or unfit mothers. In order to explore these three stereotypes of Black women I employ the concepts of controlling images (2000) that categorized African-American women representations as: the "mammy", the "matriarch", the "welfare queen", and the "jezebel". Moreover, I argue that these stereotypical figures of Black women play a vital role in the Brazilian racial hierarchy, which has been used to justify socio-economic and political hierarchies. I suggest that the production of socio-economic and political structures of power are maintained by the discursive construction of Black women's inferiority, and such processes create these women's experiences of vulnerability.

I.1. FEELING VULNERABILITY

During my ten months of fieldwork in Brazil, I experienced a profound sense of vulnerability. I felt that I was in danger, afraid and uncomfortable, fragile, and insecure during the time I spent there. In fact, assessing my entire life as an Afro-Brazilian, working-class, single woman living in a low-income area of the city of Rio de Janeiro I have always felt this way, but in the course of my fieldwork this feeling of vulnerability increased and sometimes became overwhelming. Part of the explanation for these feelings of extreme vulnerability lie in the fact that I have been living in the U.S. since 2003, when I came to obtain my PhD. Even when I went back to Brazil in 2004, it was just for three weeks. Thus, I had lived in U.S. for almost three years when I returned to Brazil to start my fieldwork.

Although, the sense of vulnerability never went away, these three years in Austin, distant from Brazil, particularly Rio de Janeiro, were more 'peaceful' because I was not confronting the same everyday challenges and violent environment that my research collaborators and I tended to experience in the communities we live in and where we often go to develop the NGOs' work. Such communities are characterized by a predominately low-income, Black population, politically marginalized, and continually victimized by police brutality and other hazardous life conditions. During the development of my fieldwork two stressful situations appeared as central realities in the lives of my research collaborators: on the one hand, violence in the community as a result of conflicts between the police and drug traffickers, and on the other hand, the difficulties these women had to access healthcare services, as well the discrimination they have undergone in the public hospitals and clinics.

My levels of insecurity and heightened sense of risk concerning those kind of issues diminished while I was in the U.S., but when I returned to Brazil those feelings significantly increased. I want to clarify that I am not stating that there is no such circumstance of vulnerability and stress in the Unite States. In fact I think there are very similar issues between both countries concerning Blacks' and women's conditions of oppression; but the point I am trying to make is that here in the U.S. I was 'only' a graduate student and even though I indeed faced discrimination in the country, at the same time, I was not living among people that lived under extremes circumstances of police brutality and crime and health discrimination and inequality. My life basically unfolded between my home and the university. I lived close to the university in a quiet

and upper-middle class neighborhood, where the risk factors for violence and crime were very uncommon.

One of the issues that mostly impacted me during fieldwork was the exposure of the majority of my research collaborators to extreme levels of violence in their communities, precisely male and police violence, generated by drug-related conflicts. The situation of the metropolitan regions of the state of Rio de Janeiro was very serious. As I discussed in Chapter I, many of my research collaborators had to face daily confrontations between the drug traffickers and the police in their community, which put them at great risk. I remember their advice concerning when and how I should approach their communities to do interviews; some of them would escort me as I entered and left the community to ensure my safety. I was afraid but also excited to visit them, and bear witness to their histories and testimonies. Their courage to continue working in the community even through such hard and risk times gave me the strength to visit them.

Very often the situation of Black women in the face of such violence is rarely discussed, because in many ways they are not centrally involved in the conflicts though the men in their communities – husbands, partners, brothers, fathers, sons, and neighbors – are. Additionally, these women are also understood in public opinion and police to be primary responsible for this violence, since in official discourse they produce this violence by having children who are doomed to later become delinquents. According to Amnesty International's report *Por Trás do Silêncio: Experiências de Mulheres com a Violência Urbana no Brasil*, 2008.

> In socially excluded communities, women conduct their lives in an environment of constant criminal and police violence. The impact of such violence in their life

is complex and profound. However, their stories are rarely heard. In a debate traditionally focused on the issue of gun violence, the focus has remained constantly on the young men - who form the majority of the individuals involved with the gun crime, both as victims and as perpetrators (5).

This report focused on the unheard stories of women struggling to live their lives within communities extremely affected by the violence generated by crime and police brutality. Not surprisingly, the majority of the women showed by the report are African-descendent, a reality that reflected and confirmed my own findings. On the following pages I provide some concrete examples of the reality of violence that circumscribes Black women's lives and their families that I collected from newspapers and other sources during my fieldwork.

Case 1: Forty-three days after the death of her 13 year-old daughter, who was murdered by stray bullets due to a fight between drug traffickers and police in her community, the woman lost her brother, murdered in the community when he was home. Source and photos: *Folha de São Paulo*, SP, April 14, 2007, p. C4.

A morte aos 13 anos

Menina fica no meio do fogo cruzado e é vítima de bala perdida em acesso a favela de Vila Isabel

Cristiane de Cássia

Uma menina de 13 anos morreu ontem de manhã, depois de ser baleada num acesso ao Morro dos Macacos, em Vila Isabel. Como fazia todos os dias, Alana Ezequiel deixou a irmã caçula, de 2 anos, numa creche e voltava para casa, quando foi atingida. Policiais num veículo blindado ("cavalinho") que vasculhavam as imediações da favela após uma incursão foram recebidos a tiros por traficantes, e a menina ficou no meio do fogo cruzado. Baleada na região lombar, ela só teve força para gritar por socorro.

— Quiz os tiros e bastei me protegir. Mas vi a menina caindo do outro lado da rua. Ela levantou o braço, pediu ajuda. Mesmo no meio dos tiros, saí para socorrê-la — contou o ajudante de eletricista Jorge Souto, ainda com a calça manchada de sangue.

Não foram os primeiros tiros ouvidos ontem na favela. Logo ao amanhecer, às 6h, policiais do 6º BPM (Tijuca) entraram no Morro dos Macacos em busca de bandidos que vêm praticando assaltos na região.

— Temos recebido muitas queixas de roubos de carros e assaltos a pedestres nas ruas Torres Homem e Visconde de Santa Isabel. Os criminosos saem da comunidade nas primeiras horas do dia, mudam e voltam — diz-se o comandante do 6º BPM, tenente-coronel Roberto Alves de Lima.

Dois menores do tráfico são mortos

• Segundo o oficial, o horário da

Marcos Tosta

Violência já atingiu crianças outras vezes

• A infância tem sido uma das principais vítimas de balas perdidas no Rio. Um dos casos mais recentes aconteceu em novembro passado, quando Adriele Medeiros Nobre, de 9 anos, foi morta num dia acessos da Favela do Jacarezinho. Ela brincava ao lado do trailer de seu pai, na Travessa Lino Teixeira, quando foi atingida nas costas. No mesmo mês, outra criança foi morta: Jesse Verbanino Arévalo, de 6 anos, foi baleado quando andava de bicicleta em Vigário Geral. Em 1º de outubro do ano passado, Reinaan da Costa Ribeiro, de 5 anos, foi morto nos braços da avó, durante um tiroteio entre PMs e traficantes na Favela Nova Holanda, no Complexo da Maré. Um levantamento feito pelo "Fantástico", da Rede Globo, revelou que, a cada dois dias, um carioca é atingido por bala perdida. Das vítimas, 20% têm menos de 13 anos.

No Dia da Criança (12 de outubro) do ano passado, uma passeata percorreu a Favela Nova Holanda, pedindo justiça pela morte de cinco menores — um deles de apenas 3 anos, em 30 dias, em

Crying after she lost her 13 year old daughter.

policial que deixa em dúvida a atuação como parlamentar", afirmou Prud.

Todo mundo fala isso. Todo mundo tem vontade que alhar comigo em Brasília, rindo. Ele é todo debochado."

1 mês após perder a filha, mulher tem irmão morto

ÍTALO NOGUEIRA
DA SUCURSAL DO RIO

Um mês depois da morte da menina Alana Ezequiel, 12, vítima de uma bala perdida no morro dos Macacos, Hélio José da Silva, 25, tio da menina, foi morto ontem, também vítima da violência no Rio.

Irmão de Edna Ezequiel, mãe de Alana, o office-boy Hélio não tinha antecedentes criminais.

Ele foi baleado na favela, a caminho de casa na tarde de ontem, em mais um episódio da guerra do tráfico na cidade.

Traficantes do morro do São João tentaram invadir o morro dos Macacos, em Vila Isabel, zona norte da cidade, enquanto Hélio voltava da maternidade onde sua mulher havia acabado de ter um filho.

A polícia não sabe as circunstâncias em que Hélio foi baleado e investiga um possível assassinato por parte dos traficantes que invadiram a favela.

A família encontrou o corpo de Hélio dentro na favela e o carregou até uma rua de acesso à comunidade, em frente à antiga sede da Delegacia de Repressão a Entorpecentes. Junto ao corpo foi achada uma mochila com o uniforme de trabalho. O corpo só foi removido às 19h30.

"Edna estava chegando quando viu o corpo", contou Edméia Ezequiel, 32, uma das irmãs. "É um terror. O Sérgio Cabral e o Lula têm que tomar uma providência", disse ela.

A estudante Alana Ezequiel morreu no começo do mês passado, atingida por uma bala perdida durante operação da Polícia Militar. A polícia ainda investiga se a bala que atingiu a menina partiu dos traficantes ou da polícia. Durante a reconstituição do crime no morro dos Macacos, policiais e bandidos trocaram tiros novamente.

Alana estudava na escola Assis Chateaubriand. Queria ser advogada. Sem recursos para pagar o enterro da menina, a família velou o corpo graças à doação da Santa Casa.

Hélio da Silva com Edna Ezequiel, mãe de Alana, em 5 de março

Edna, ao reconhecer o corpo do irmão morto em favela do Rio

Crying when she lost her brother (man in the picture below supporting her because of her daughter's loss).

Case 2: Police Attacks and Violence in the Morro do Alemão, in the city of Rio de Janeiro. (O Dia, RJ, June 28, 2007, front page).

"A 'war' where only poor people die."

Uma "guerra" em que só os pobres morrem

Após a megaoperação que deixou um saldo de **21 mortos em um único dia** no Complexo do Alemão, o governador do Rio de Janeiro se despiu de pudores para anunciar: "Estamos em guerra e vamos ganhá-la". A julgar pelos números, para Sérgio Cabral (PMDB), **"ganhar a guerra" significa aumentar o número de mortos.** Pobres, de preferência. Na prática, a instituição da pena de morte de classe no Brasil. Somente no primeiro trimestre de 2007, 318 pessoas morreram em supostos confrontos com a polícia em todo o Estado – contra 228 no mesmo período do ano passado. Para organizações de Direitos Humanos, é um erro assumir que só há criminosos em comunidades pobres. **Págs. 2 e 4**

"Scenes of a Civil War" (O Dia, RJ, June 28, 2007).

AGLOMERAÇÃO DE POLICIAIS num dos acessos ao Complexo do Alemão: cerca de 1.350 agentes participaram da operação de ontem, a maior já realizada no Rio de Janeiro

Cenas de uma guerra civil

As tristes fotos que ilustram esta página lembram Bagdá, mas revelam a cara da violência do Rio

■ Corpos espalhados pelas ruas ou carregados em meio a tiroteios. Crianças encurraladas, aos prantos, diante de policiais e traficantes em confronto. Soldados com roupas camufladas e coletes à prova de bala, usando fuzis e explosivos. Jovens feridos, desesperados à espera de socorro. Se alguém duvidava que a violência no Rio havia chegado a uma situação-limite, teve ontem motivos de sobra para mudar de idéia. É mesmo duro de aceitar, mas tais cenas não foram vistas em Bagdá, e sim na cidade badalada em prosa e verso como maravilhosa. Uma cidade que ficou mundialmente conhecida por ter um povo alegre, que sabe dar a volta por cima. E é isso que nos resta fazer agora. Que a ação policial no Alemão marque o início de uma nova fase, que coloque um fim no sofrimento de tanta gente de bem, pessoas que só querem ter a chance de mostrar seu valor.

"We cannot make a cake without breaking the eggs" (Police chief response for police conduct in the Morro do Alemão). (*O Estado de São Paulo*, SP, June 28, 2007).

'Não se faz bolo sem quebrar os ovos'

Secretário Beltrame, que considera confronto inevitável, diz não ter pressa

Alexandre Rodrigues
RIO

Não há previsão para o fim da ocupação no Alemão. "Não temos pressa", admitiu o secretário de Segurança Pública do Rio, José Mariano Beltrame. Segundo ele, os 58 dias em que a polícia permanece no Alemão estão sendo usados pelos órgãos de segurança para levantar dados que permitam novas ações cirúrgicas como a de ontem. "Vamos esperar o tempo que for preciso para reunir informações que levem a operações com objetivos definidos e riscos mínimos para a população local.

... " A ação da polícia não é violenta. Mas cada vez que entramos nessas áreas somos

entrantos somos rechaçados", observa.

Questionado diretamente sobre a estratégia a ser adotada na ocupação, o secretário ressaltou que a busca se concentra nas reservas de armas e drogas, mas deve alcançar principalmente líderes do tráfico e a logística de contabilidade do CV, que tem sua base no Alemão. Para ele, mais da metade dos crimes ocorridos no Rio, principalmente os roubos de carro, tentativa com o tráfico do Alemão. "Temos que optar e seguir em frente."

Durante o primeiro mês de ocupação, a secretaria monitorou a entrada de munição na Vila Cruzeiro e a movimentação de traficantes e resolveu ampliar a atuação para todo o Complexo do Alemão. Desde o dia 14, homens da Força Nacional de Segurança ajudam a PM no cerco aos acessos do conjunto de favelas, de onde a polícia acredita vir o reforço para os bandidos.

GERAL

2ª EDIÇÃO • Quinta-feira 28 de junho de 2007 • EXTRA

GUERRA DO RIO

CRYSTAL BAR DO MALUCO CRYSTAL

VAI FUNDO, BRASIL!

MORADORES CORREM PARA FUGIR da área de conflito, onde 1.350 policiais trocaram tiros com traficantes. A guerra contra os bandidos durou todo o dia e deixou pelo menos 19 mortos

Polícia arrasa tráfico no Alemão

Ao todo, 1.200 policiais e 150 agentes da Força Nacional de Segurança ocuparam o complexo de favelas

O CRIME ram apreendidos pela polícia. Além disso, até o fim da noi- nhã, no Caju. Agentes de di- versas delegacias seguiram pais acessos da favela. Pouco depois de chega- inicial era cumprir manda- dos de prisão e apreender Caminhão

Jornal Extra, RJ, June 28, 2007, 14

Woman in the Morro do Alemão neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro shot by stray bullets (Extra, RJ, June 28, 2007, p. 15)

GERAL

Moradores atingidos por balas perdidas

Hospitais da região atenderam nove feridos, entre eles um policial e sete pessoas inocentes

O CRIME NO ALVO

In 2003, domestic worker Maria Silva (below) was shot in the chest by a stray bullet inside her home in the Morro do Alemão. The same bullet hit her 2 year-old daughter in her left hand. Four years after the incident with her and her daughter, her 17 year-old son was hit by a bullet in the June 2007 conflicts in the community.

Drama repetido em família

Há quatro anos, a empregada doméstica Maria Helena Souza Silva viveu o drama de ser atingida por uma bala perdida dentro de casa, no Complexo do Alemão. Na ocasião, o mesmo tiro que acertou seu peito pegou também na mão esquerda da filha caçula, então com 2 anos. Ontem, com os pés descalços e o corpo coberto de sangue, ela chorava a dor de ver o mais velho dos quatro filhos, Wesley Glauco Vicente Silva, de 17 anos, repetir a saga de sofrimento da família. O adolescente estava limpando um chiqueiro, na casa do tio, quando foi atingido por um tiro nas costas.

Vinda de Minas Gerais, Maria Helena tem 40 anos e ainda traz no corpo a marca do drama vivido há quatro anos, já que a bala nunca foi retirada do local em que se alojou, próximo ao coração. Já acostumada às cenas de violência na favela, a mulher construiu um abrigo contra tiroteios no terreno em que mora, na Rua da Lagoinha, no Canitá. Mas ontem, não deu tempo de ninguém chegar até lá.

— O tiro que atingiu meu sobrinho pegou também nos meus dois filhos, de 3 e 7 anos. Foi tudo muito rápido, não conseguimos nos esconder. Mas o ferimento do Wesley era muito mais grave, ele perdeu bastante sangue — disse Ademar da Souza Silva, de 35 anos, tio do adolescente.

Segundo ele, os policiais impediram a família de socorrer o garoto e demoraram a levá-lo ao hospital.

MARIA HELENA chora pelo filho, ferido por uma bala perdida

Quem são esses policiais para falarem que meu filho é bandido?

Maria Helena Silva
40 anos, doméstica

Os policiais chamaram meu filho de bandido, quem são eles para falarem isso? Sou mãe e pai dos meus filhos e se estou na favela é por falta de oportunidade, não porque eu gosto.

Participaram da cobertura: Carlos Brito, Fábio Guimão, Isabel Boechat, Marcelo Gomes, Marco Antônio Martins, Marcus Alencar, Natalia von Korsch e Sérgio Meireles

It is also important to emphasize that I included newspaper clippings primarily from Rio de Janeiro, because in this city and state these violent incidents in Black communities are widely reported in the media. Conversely, in the cities of Porto Alegre and Passo Fundo, Blacks in general do not appear in the newspapers regularly and scenes of violence involving them generally go unreported. According to one of the research collaborators of the NGO Maria Mulher, in Porto Alegre and many other cities of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Blacks do not appear in the news even in the pages that address crime issues because there is an attempt to demonstrate that there is no significant Black population in these cities. The state of Rio Grande do Sul is generally referred to as the region where the presence of an African descendent population is nonexistent because historically it is the part of the country that received the most European immigrants that now comprise a large white population. For that reason, the state tends to represent itself as a predominately white region and rich in European tradition and culture. Despite this erasure of the Black population, many black communities exist throughout the state where many have worked on farms since slavery. As enslaved and underpaid free workers, Black people historically provided major the labor for raising livestock, doing plantation work, as well as agricultural production. Such invisibility has made Black women and the Black population vulnerable because it simultaneously erases and excludes them from the society and prevents them from benefiting from public policies and program as citizens in the region. Since they are supposedly nonexistent, government actions often leave them out of city and state planning concerning healthcare, education, housing, employment and many other social services. The images I showed in

this section require little explanation in the sense that they narrate the everyday and routine nature of the violence and abuse that Black women have confronted not only in Rio de Janeiro, but also throughout Brazil. As these images and stories demonstrate, there is a contradiction between what the newspapers show and the official discourses of the Brazilian state and society that continue to deny the existence of racial and gender discrimination against Black women in the country and to believe that the nation is racially democratic. It is also revealing that the Brazilian media often works against the Black population with its representations of the violence in these communities; thus, the presentation of these dramatic images mainly representing Blacks and low-income populations are accompanied by racist and other discriminatory assumptions, rather than providing an understanding of the root causes of the violence.

The vulnerability I observed in my research collaborators' lives was not only the result of police brutality and criminal violence, but also segregation and the marginalization of their communities. Their communities are places without basic services such as piped water, schools, healthcare units; places where even certain social justice organizations do not go because they are afraid of the violence and of to being hurt by stray bullets, the drug traffickers. As Jurema Werneck, general coordinator of Criola, points out these are "places where only Black women's groups challenge the risky circumstances and continue to go to support the women in the community." Several studies in Brazil have demonstrated that the effects of racial inequality and racist practices have contributed to the formation of a social environment that structures processes of exclusion, illness, and even, death. A complex understanding of the Black population's living conditions and health globally, especially in the so-called

underdeveloped countries, explains the circumstances that place Blacks in Brazil in a condition of vulnerability. Several dimensions permeate the concept of vulnerability: social, economic, political, institutional, constitutional, and even individual behaviors and factors. Several studies point to the fact that Black women and young people are at the front lines of this complex reality (Barbosa 1998, Cunha 2001, Werneck 2001).

The concept of vulnerability has been used in the health field studies since the 1990s as a strategic theoretical tool for developing strategies to combat the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Lopes, 2004:6). Fernanda Lopes (2004) defines vulnerability as a "set of individual and collective elements related to the degree and mode of exposure to a given situation and, which is inseparable, to the greatest or least access to adequate resources to protect oneself from unwanted consequences of that situation (Lopes, 2004: 7)". I employed this concept of vulnerability to analyze Black women's struggle confronting racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism in Brazil. Jurema Werneck and Solange Dacach (2002) demonstrated that we can use the concept of intersectionality to "determine the degree of vulnerability of women and men, blacks or non-blacks, in Brazilian society (9)." According to the authors, intersectionality needs to be considered as a tool for examining different aspects of burden as it relates to "each individual, each group, in a way that will produce the material, cultural and symbolic conditions in which individuals live. Gender, race, sexual orientation, age, condition and place of residence (rural, urban, state, region, country and continent), economic situation, or many other factors influence in different ways the advantages and disadvantages in which people live" (9). The authors also argue that, as we examine the life conditions of black men and women, we must acknowledge the presence of factors that act in conjunction with racism,

and that as a result, amplify or reduce advantages and disadvantages, rights, or opportunities for healthy living. Hence, it is essential to point to the fact that there are other ideologies that are reproduced institutionally such as sexism, patriarchy, heterosexism and lesbophobia. As stated by Werneck and Dacach (2002), "on the side of racism, these other ideologies appear to put at risk the exercise of Black women's citizenship rights and prevent them from benefiting from public policies" (9).

The circumstances of vulnerability narrated in this section led me to think about specific questions that could grasp the 'degrees' and modes of exposure to such situations, which I knew were all associated with racism, as well sexism and classism. Based on that concern I formulated two questions that could provide me with useful information relating to Black women's experience with racism (intersected with sexism, classism, and heterosexism); I wanted to explore the ways in which Black women have been treated in society on the basis of racism. My starting point for exploring Black women's experiences of oppression was to ask my research collaborators to reflect on two questions: Have they in any circumstances of their lives been treated as if they were not Black? How does it feel to be treated as Black women?

My first answer to these questions came from my research collaborator Julia, 45 years old. She told me that she was never treated as if she was not Black, but she had an opinion about how she felt being treated as a Black woman. Thus she replied:

> Being a Black woman has two sides. A harsh side that is of being mistreated anywhere; everybody is discourteous, disrespectful with you; everybody feels the need to be discourteous with you, so this is the harsh side. In addition there is the

> other that is the side of agglutination[11]. In being a Black woman, it also means that I have a collective [group of women] that I can refer to. That is enormous by any means, here in Rio de Janeiro, or Salvador; in all these activities there is always somebody discourteous [insolent] that you have to (are obligated to) shake their hands (Julia, 45 year-old, dark-skinned Black feminist and coordinator of Black women's NGO).

The "harsh side of being a Black woman" that Julia pointed out represents the summary of the narratives and testimonies I collected during the study; it encapsulates in one expression the various forms in which Black women have been discriminated against in Brazil. In the following section, I present and analyze some of these responses that help us to understand the mechanisms that have produced Black women's circumstances of vulnerability in the country.

I.2. EXPERIENCING THE "HARSH SIDE" THROUGH THE BODY AND IMAGE

The life of Lorena, a 48 year-old, light-skinned Black woman, social worker, and general coordinator of a major Black women's organization, shows one of the key elements used against Black women to subjugate them – the body and beauty aesthetics. Since Black women are not considered to belong to the mainstream women's aesthetic model – body, hair, and face – they have been extremely suppressed and subjected to violence. Lorena's narrative provides several examples of the idea of the Black female body as a problem, as something rejected, undesirable, unacceptable to others, and in many cases by Black woman themselves. As she states:

[11] These other side, "the agglutination, which represents Black woman as a singular group" was discussed in Chapter II. I am employing the word agglutination to translate the expression used by my collaborator Julia, which is in Portuguese aglutinação. Agglutination means "the state of being thus united; adhesion of parts; that which is united; a mass or group cemented together (Random House Webster's Dictionary)".

> Although I have the '***pinxanhim*' hair (hard curly hair), this big lips** and so on, … **I have light skin**, and if I do not expose myself to sun, my skin will be even lighter, and so because of that there are some people who will say: 'no, she is not so Black [**negra**], like that'. But I think that this is an idea among whites or among '*mestiços*' [mestizos], and also among middle-class people and above, but for Blacks; this is not an issue. It is like the '*mulata;*'[12] it is not everybody who still uses that classification anymore. I really think that it is an aspect of racism. I learned very early, since my childhood that I was Black. First of all, in the past, I was the only light skinned [person] in my entirely family, actually … in fact my mother was the lightest, because she was a '*mestiça*' [female term for mixed race person]. She had **straight hair**, **very small lips**, she considered herself Black, but she did have the Negroid phenotype such as **the Black stereotype, the big nose**, etc. Now, we have other light skin members. However, in my family, besides me everybody was very dark, this idea of racial consciousness was strong and my grandmother prepared us to confront racism. She would tell us how to dress, how to walk, what we should say, to not marry whites,… this was my family.

Two other Black women, Telia, 46, and Livia, 27, also mention how they have experienced people's attempt to dismiss their black racial identity based on their skin color:

> Telia, 46:
>
> People treat me in both ways, as Black and non-Black. As non-Black, they consider me too light-skinned (*mais clarinha*), so people usually say that I am not Black (***negra*)** because I am not so dark (***preta*)**, and at the same time we [light-skinned women] are considered ***preta*** when we experience undesirable and detrimental situations. For example, these undesirable and detrimental situations occur when you tell people you are Black and they respond to you: "Ah! No, you are not Black (***negra***)!" Then, you have to explain that although you are a Brown (***parda***) woman, you are Black, you are still Black. You have to explain to those people that you may be ***parda***, but you belong to the Black race (***raça negra***). In addition, people think that if they call you ***negra***, they will insult you, so it is better for them to say "you are '***clarinha***' (very light skin)".

[12] The term *mulata* is the feminine of mulatto.

Livia, 27:

> Yes, I have been treated as though I were not a Black person, in school. In elementary and junior-high, I studied in a private school where I was always the Black minority, you know!? And I was always very shy, very quiet, excellent student. I had many friends over there, also the teacher, the school principal, so I passed through a process of whitening, but I always took for granted my Black identity. My family always worked very much on this issue…but you know… you know that thing about people around you telling racist jokes about Blacks in your face, without worry about that, but you don't know what to do…it was like they [students in the school] did not consider me as really Black, it was like they withdrew me from this position of being Black, so I think they thought that in this way I could not feel offended, because I was their friends, I was among them, therefore, they did not identify me with that situation [the joke], do you understand!? I was extremely upset. I studied in that school until I was twelve years old. Of course, I felt the embarrassment; I think in the beginning there was that thing of being ashamed, upset about how they talked about Blacks, because I identified myself with [being Black] … although I didn't know about consciousness, about racial disputes, I understood that such situation were about discrimination; and I said to them 'but I am Black! Yes I am!', I affirmed to myself, do you understand?! But nobody paid attention to what I was really saying, and so they would tell me: "but it is not about you! It's not you! Don't say this, you are [one of] us, you belong here, don't say that! So they tried to detach me from that situation [the jokes about Blacks].

The attempts to dismiss Black women racial identity also appear in terms of the 'attack' of their bodies and habits. For instance, Lorena's statement is also an indicative of the social attempts to manage how the Black body should be fixed and/or improved:

> (…) people want the good things about Blacks and do not want the bad ones. So, in this sense, I think that you are educated to talk in low manner, to not dress in order to call too much attention, to not shake your booty too much, to straighten your hair, to be polite, to avoid looking like the Black stereotype, to learn morals and good habits, [and] rules, [such as] do not steal, to belong to a religion, to be a good girl (*certinha*), to get a job, and so on.

These circumstances listed by my collaborators have a great impact in terms of Black women's self-making and interpellation. Lorena's observation seems to indicate a

clear critique of Black women's bodies. This critique lays at the core of not just racism, but also of sexism, classism, and heterosexism. The mainstream aesthetic of women's body in Brazil is shaped by White, Western, capitalist, middle-class, male, heterosexist, and nuclear family ideals, which do not include Black women. We can identify these patterns when Lorena pointed out the need for Black woman to be educated on how to talk, to be polite, to manage their attitudes, to dress, to hide their bodies and hair, and even their skin color if it is possible, as a way to imitate light-skinned and white women. Black women are also expected to integrate into acceptable religious norms, preferable Catholic or Protestant religions, and to submit themselves to norms of morality and discipline.

Another example of the attack on and devaluation of Black women's bodies was expressed in the music of the Brazilian singer Tiririca who was condemned by a group of Black women's NGOs[13] in the country because they considered his music to be racist and insulting to Black women. This conflict dominated the Brazilian media during the months of July and August 1996 because the charges that the singer received led to the confiscation of his compact discs produced by Sony Music Corporation and to the banning of the circulation of his song, "Veja os Cabelos Dela [Look at Her Hair] (see Caldwell, 2003)."

A LETRA POLÊMICA	THE CONTROVERSIAL MUSIC
Veja os Cabelos Dela	***Look at Her Hair***
Alô, gente, aqui quem fala é o Tiririca	Hello [hey] everybody, it's Tirica speaking
Eu também estou na onda do Axé Music	I am also in the *Axé Music* wave
Quero ver os meus colegas dançando	I want to see my friends dancing
Veja, veja, veja os cabelos dela!	Look, look, look at her hair!
Parece bombril de arear panela	It looks like *Brombril* [type of scrubber to shine pots]
Quando ela passa, me chama atenção	She calls my attention when she passes by
Mas seus cabelos não têm jeito, não	But there is nothing that can be done with her hair
A sua catinga quase me desmaiou	Her stench almost makes me faint
Olha, eu não agüento o seu grande fedor	See, I can't take her big odor
Veja, veja os cabelos dela!	Look, look at her hair!
Parece bombril de arear panela	It looks like *Brombril* [type of scrubber to shine pots]
Eu já mandei ela se lavar	I already asked her to wash herself
Mas ela teimou e não quis me escutar	But she is very stubborn and didn't want to listen
Essa nega fede! Fede de lascar	This *nega* (negro women) stinks! Stinks too much
Bicha fedorenta, fede mais que um gambá	Stinking animal, it stinks more than an opossum
Veja, veja, veja os cabelos dela	Look, look, look at her hair!
Como é que é? A galera toda aí	How is it? Everybody out there
Com as mãozinhas pra cima	With your hands up
Veja, veja, os cabelos dela	Look, look at her hair
Bonito, bonito!	Beautiful, beautiful!
Aí, morena, você, garotona	Ah *morena*, you, big girl
Veja, veja, veja os cabelos dela	Look, look, look at her hair!

The singer Tiririca is from the city of Florentina in the state of Ceará, (northeast of Brazil, known as the largest region of sugar cane plantation during the colonial period). His CD with the song "Veja os Cabelos Dela [Look at Her Hair]" sold three hundred thousand copies in July 1996 (source: *Folha de Sao Paulo*, 07/25/96). The collective of Black women's NGOs won the lawsuit in 2005, and Sony Music Corporation had to pay approximately $ 130,000.00 [R$ 300,000,00] for the National Fund of Diffuse Rights (*Fundo Nacional de Direitos Difusos*) to support educational

[13] The organizations that protested his music were Criola/ RJ, Caces/ RJ, Cedenpa/ PA, Maria Mulher/ RS, Nzinga/ BH, Geledés/ SP, Imena/ AP, Fala Preta/ SP, Casa de Cultura da Mulher Negra/ SP, Acmun/ RS e Ile Dudu/ ES.

actions against racial and gender discrimination. The singer and Sony Music recording company were convicted under the following penal code:

LEI Nº 7437 de 20 de dezembro de 1985 Inclui, entre as contravenções penais, a prática de atos resultantes de preconceito de raça, de cor, de sexo ou de estado civil. Dá nova redação à Lei nº 1390, de 03/07/51 - Lei Afonso Arinos O Presidente da República Faço saber que o Congresso Nacional decreta e eu sanciono a seguinte Lei: Art. 1º - Constitui contravenção, punida nos termos desta Lei, a prática de atos resultantes de preconceito de raça, de cor, de sexo ou de estado civil. Art. 2º - Será considerado agente de contravenção o diretor, gerente ou empregado do estabelecimento que incidir na prática referida no artigo 1º desta Lei.	LAW 7437 of December 20, 1985 It includes, in the penal code, the practice of acts as a result of prejudice based on race, color , sex, or marital status. A revision of the Law No. 1390, Of 07/03/51 –*Afonso Arinos* Law The President of the Republic I declare that the National Congress decrees and I sanction the following Law: Art. 1 - It constitutes a criminal infraction, punishable under the law, the practice of acts as a result of prejudice based on race, color , sex, or marital status. Art. 2 - The director, manager or employee of an establishment that commits the violation cited in article one of this Law will be considered a criminal.

Thus, this first type of oppression experienced by my collaborators has as the main objective the attack on their bodies and images, a reality expressed in the music of the singer Tiririca. The example also reveals that these women have to literally struggle everyday to be accepted as Black, to convince other people that it is not a problem for them to be Black and have Black bodies, which is usually characterized by big lips, big bottoms, and wide noses.

In order to confront this attack on Black women's bodies, hair and overall image, Black women's organizations have promoted workshops and other activities that valorize Black women, especially young girls and teenagers. As said by Black scholar Eliane

Santos (2002) in Brazil Black women's activists utilize their hair as an element of differentiation between them and white women.

This photo was taken in the offices of the NGO Maria Mulher, in the city of Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul. Two members of the organization were braiding the hair of this teenager who was chosen by the group to be the new model for their institutional posters and materials. May 2007. Photo by author.

A second type of oppression my collaborators reported to have experienced is the one related to the attack on their integrity, which Telia describes:

> Being treated as Black women is being treated with distrust. It is when you walk in the streets and people show that they are afraid of you because you are walking right behind them. Because of that sometimes I do it on purpose, I walk right behind them. If I note somebody is afraid of me I will try to walk behind them as close as I can. I will sit very close to them; of course I know that sometimes I myself can have the same feeling when a person is walking behind me; I can get scared too… but I try not to show it, so the person will not be upset or offended by my reaction, I try to control myself, but I don't like when it happens to me. This situation also happens in stores, in any other place.

In addition, Telia's account points out a third type of oppression experienced by Black women, related to respectability and authority; that is, the rejection or dismissal of Black women's authority.

> I think life illustrates for us all the time who is white and who is Black. It is very much demarcated (the boundaries are very clear), it is very distinct. For example, you can live in the same place where the Whites live but your life is different from the one where they live. Being Black is different, and being a Black woman takes us to a much worse situation; it is very different. You see, sometimes that person has a worse [material] condition than you do, but the way she/he looks at you, the way she/he comes to you as if "I will pass through you, I will destroy you, you are Black and I am white." Even the white person who works for you, as a domestic worker will treat you with disrespect if you are Black; they make sure to show you that there is a difference between you and her/him, that you are in that position above her/him by accident. So, everything is demarcated.

I.3. THINKING THE HARSH SIDE OF BEING A BLACK WOMEN IN RELATION TO INTERPELLATION, SELF-MAKING AND CONTROLLING IMAGES IN BRAZIL

My research collaborators' perceptions of being treated as Black women in Brazilian society whether in situations of affirming or denying their racial identity is fully informed by their everyday and historical experiences. Although these testimonies can lead many of us to think that their experiences are only associated with racism, this is not in fact the reality. African-American feminist Barbara Smith (1998) urges us to acknowledge that "racism and racist behavior are our white patriarchal legacy" (97), and as we have learned from many scholars, patriarchy is not just about racism, but also sexism, heterosexism and classism (see Alexander 1997, Cohen 1997, 2004 and 2005, Collins 2004, Ferguson 2000 and 2004, hooks 1981, Lorde 1984, Tamale 2005). Patriarchy is indeed a central issue in the construction of Black women's inferior status, in how they are perceived, portrayed, interpellated, as well as how they self-identify in

Brazilian society. Moreover, I suggest that this connection between the production of Black women's inferiority and the racial identification system that operates in Brazil work together in the production of these women's condition of vulnerability and discrimination, which are translated into their lives as violence, rape and other sexual abuse, labor exploitation, other kinds of harassments, poverty, social and political isolation, etc. I am particularly interested in examining self-making and interpellation in relation to the production of such conditions.

As defined by Stuart Hall (1994 and 1996) interpellation refers how people are identified by others, instead themselves; self-identification or self-making refers to how a person identifies herself/himself racially. In the Brazilian context of racial identification skin color, hair, lips and nose play a major role in the way these two categories operate in Brazil. These characteristics, which are part of the legacy of Brazilian slavery, are impregnated with negative connotations such as presumed inferiority, lack of intelligence, laziness, dirtiness, promiscuity, being untrustworthy, etc. These discourses which have their root in colonialism continue to travel and enjoy new life as markers of Blackness. Additionally, state discourses, policies and institutions are also largely responsible for the propagation of such stereotypes into society and makes it difficult for common individuals to understand that these negative notions are the product of white supremacist social and cultural constructions of reality. Edmund Gordon and Mark Anderson (1999) argues that "racial identities are not given in nature but are constructed, ascribed, affirmed, and denied" (294). It is in this context of social construction of racial identification and racialization that stereotyped representations of Black women have played a central role in the Brazilian racial hierarchy, which has been used to justify socio-economic and political hierarchies. Based on African-American feminist Patricia Hill Collins' (2000) conceptualization of controlling images, I suggest that the

construction of Black women's vulnerability is sustained by socio-economic and political structures of power that rely on notions of their presumed and inherent inferiority. These controlling images incorporate in their structures racialized stereotypical categories of Black women in order to construct them as inferior, as a subordinated group, and in terms of sexual and labor exploitation as lazy, promiscuous, dangerous, aggressive, and irresponsible.

The quotation and cartoon below illustrate the three major gendered-racialized categories of representations of Black women in the country: sexually promiscuous, domestic workers (as a legacy of slavery), and bad mothers. These stereotypes are part of the racist, sexist, heterosexist and classist discourses that historically have jeopardized these women's lives.

> *Sou negra e mulher! Isto não significa que eu sou a mulata gostosa, a doméstica escrava ou a mãe preta de bom coração! (*Lélia Gonzalez [cited in Sueli Carneiro]*)*[14]
>
> [I am Black and woman! But it does not mean that I am a sexually desirable mulatto woman, a domestic slave or a Black mammy with a good heart!]

[14] Lélia Gonzalez [Sueli Carneiro] (Heróis de Todo Mundo – DVD. A Cor da Cultura).

This cartoonist often illustrates sexualized images of Black women, and the figure of the old white man is always included in the scenes that he draws. In the image, he depicts a hypersexualized[15] black babysitter (*O Globo*, 6/6/2007, p. 19)

According to Collins (2000), "the dominant ideology of the slave era fostered the creation of several interrelated, socially constructed controlling images of Black womanhood, each reflecting the dominant group's interest in maintaining Black women's subordination" (72). Even though Collins was referring to African-American women's circumstances of oppression, her analysis contributes to my understanding of how the discourses of "true womanhood" and the "traditional ideal family" have constructed the figure of the deviant Black woman as the antithesis of white women, whose figure represents "piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity" (72). Collins revealed that unlike to white women, Black women are portrayed through four figures: the "mammy", the "matriarch", the welfare mother", and the "jezebel".

[15] unusually or excessively active in or concerned with sexual matters (taken from Random House Webster's Dictionary, 2004).

The “Mammy”

represents the faithful, obedient domestic servant. Created to justify the economic exploitation of hose slaves and sustained to explain Black women’s long-standing restriction to domestic service, the mammy image represents the normative yardstick used to evaluate all Black women’s behavior (72).

The “Matriarch”,

> symbolizes the mother figure in Black homes; unlike the mammy, it represents the ‘bad’ Black mother. It symbolizes Black women’s failure to fulfill their traditional ‘womanly’ duties’ at home, which contribute to social problems in Black civil society (75). The matriarch presents an inability to model appropriate gender behavior. The matriarch also evokes the image of Black women as dangerous [aggressive], deviant, castrating mothers (76-77).

The “Welfare Mother”,

> appears tied to working-class Black women’s increasing access to U.S. welfare state entitlements. It constitutes a class-specific, controlling mage developed for poor, working-class Black women who make use of social welfare benefits to which they are entitled by law. This image also justify the controlling of Black women’s fertility by labeling as unnecessary and even dangerous to the values of the country the fertility of women who are not White and middle class. Like the matriarch, welfare mother is labeled as bad mother, but not too aggressively as of the matriarch Black women’s representation (78-81).

The “Jezebel”,

> also know as whore, or ‘hoochie’; it represents a deviant Black female sexuality; its function is to relegate all Black women to the category of sexually aggressive women, thus providing a powerful rationale for the widespread sexual assaults by White men typically reported by Black slave women. This figure symbolizes the efforts to control Black women’s sexuality, which lie at the heart of Black

> women's oppression. In addition, the controlling image of jezebel, as well of the mammy, was tied to the economic exploitation inherent in the institution os slavery (81-82).

Drawing upon Collins' conceptualization I found that the archetype of the sexually promiscuous Black women corresponds to a combination of the jezebel and matriarch because it embodies representations of Black women as sexually aggressive, deviant whores; the domestic worker corresponds to the mammy figure; and the bad mother type constitutes a mixture of the matriarch, the welfare mother, and the jezebel. My study demonstrates that representations of Black women as sexually-promiscuous, domestic workers, and mammies have contributed to their experiences of systematic abuse and exclusion in their daily lives in Brazil. In her book, Kia Caldwell (2007) confirm this condition on how Black women are marginalized in terms of employment in Brazil.

Regarding representations of Black women's as sexually promiscuous, I want to recount the story of Sirly, a domestic worker who was attacked by middle class young men at the bus stop at 4 am when she was waiting to go home after work. According to the young men, they thought Sirley was a prostitute and decided to 'teach' her a lesson, and brutally beat her at the bus stop until they got tired of the 'game.' They left her there injured; luckily she managed to get up and return to the building where she worked and to ask for help. Although the incident demonstrates a case of racial, gender, class discrimination, the attack was not portrayed in these terms because many did not consider Sirley Black. According to one of my research collaborators, one newspaper, that does not receive wide circulation, addressed in a brief article the matter as an act of racism. Otherwise, few media sources mentioned that the case was a racial matter, although many of my collaborators claimed that the domestic worker was attacked because she was

Black. After the incident, I went to a meeting of Black women and the discussion was that at first Sirley did not think herself as Black, but only as time passed did she recognize that the violence she suffered was related to her racial identity as a Black woman. In addition, the sex worker union of the city of Rio the Janeiro led a campaign condemning the violent incident and argued that the crime involved discrimination against sex workers. The young men were put in jail while they waited for their final prison sentences.

Playboys espancam doméstica na rua

Cinco jovens de classe média alta fizeram uma empregada doméstica passar uma madrugada de terror. Sirley Dias de Carvalho Pinto, de 32 anos, estava num ponto de ônibus na Avenida Lúcio Costa, na Barra, onde trabalha, esperando a condução que a levaria a Duque de Caxias, onde tinha marcado um exame preventivo num posto de saúde. Mas, na mesma hora, passavam por ali os jovens num Gol preto. Eles desceram do carro e, sem mais nem menos, começaram a espancar a doméstica.

— Foi tudo muito rápido. Eles pegaram minha bolsa, e, quando eu me desequilibrei e caí no chão, começaram a chutar meu rosto. Pensei que ia morrer. Eles ainda agrediram outras duas senhoras antes de irem embora dando gargalhadas. Quero que eles paguem pelo que fizeram. São filhinhos de papai, não precisavam fazer isso — disse Sirley, que sente dores de cabeça pelas pancadas.

Machucada e sem grana, ela voltou ao condomínio onde trabalha para pedir ajuda. Graças a um taxista que anotou a placa do carro e deixou com um segurança do condomínio, foi possível chegar aos agressores, quase todos universitários. Felipe

Sirley levou pontapés no rosto enquanto estava caída no chão

Três agressores: Leonardo (de vermelho), Julio (de amarelo) e Felippe

CASO LEMBRA O DO ÍNDIO GALDINO

Indignado com a agressão, um dos policiais da 16ª DP disse: "Eles não tinham índio para queimar. Agora é prostituta". Ele lembrava o caso do índio pataxó Galdino Jesus dos Santos, que, na madrugada de 20 de abril de 1997, foi queimado vivo quando dormia num ponto de ônibus em Brasília. Galdino, de 44 anos, foi levado para o hospital, mas morreu horas depois. Os criminosos eram cinco jovens, um deles menor de idade, de classe média alta, que jogaram álcool sobre o corpo do índio e atearam fogo. Condenados pela Justiça, disseram ter feito "apenas uma brincadeira" achando que era um mendigo.

Expresso da Informação, RJ, June 25, 2007, p. 3

Sirley's story demonstrates how Black woman's image in Brazil is tied to the idea of the prostitute, which is considered by society as a kind of sexually promiscuous woman that responsible for the violence that is enacted against her. However, what

matters here is not the fact that Black women are attached to the figure of the prostitute per se, but the social and cultural meanings that are assigned to the prostitute and the ways in which these discourses are used by Brazilian society to devalue, exploit violate and inferiorize Black women. The fact is that even if the word 'prostitute' did not exist, Black women would continue to be threatened on the basis of a racialized sexual oppression that presents clear socio-economic purposes. It is also important to consider that the sex worker unions locally and worldwide have struggled to demystify the idea that sexual workers are sexually immoral and dangerous. Unfortunately, negative discourses on sexuality continue to use the terms prostitute and sexually promiscuous as synonymous with Black women in order to justify the violence committed against them, as demonstrated by the attack on Sirley.

The domestic worker is also another representation of Black women in Brazil that is full of negative connotations and implications. In Chapter III, I provided analyses and testimonies from my fieldwork about the oppressive conditions of this group in Brazil, thus I will not focus on the same issues here. Instead, I want to point to a paradoxical situation for Black women domestic workers. While domestic worker continues to be a figure that represents Black women's inferiority in Brazil, at the same time, as I demonstrated in Chapter I, this category of workers also have symbolized ways in which Black women resist and create positive models of leadership. To improve the lives of Black domestic workers has become an important political goal for Black feminists; in this sense, by claiming these workers' rights Black feminists have attempted to revert the dominant stereotypes that represent Black women as socially and economically subordinated, and jeopardize their lives. On the one hand, these political discourses have

encouraged people to not forget the legacy of slavery and to repudiate the harsh circumstances that define domestic work. On the other hand, politicizing the figure of domestic work recuperates Black women as human beings, as historical actors within Black struggles, and reminds new generations of Black men and women to be proud of their African descendents and embrace their historical legacy. In addition, this focus on the complexity of domestic worker's representation, points to the fact that enslaved Black women and present-day household workers have made significant contributions to the development of the Brazilian nation. Throughout history, Black women have cared for Brazilian families – Black and non-Black, maintained Afro-Brazilian culture and traditions. They also have worked in the factories and contributed to the prosperity of capitalism in the country and worldwide. Thus, bring into view these crucial contributions of Black women domestic workers has been important to their struggles for labor and human rights.

The bad mother represents the third type of controlling image of Black women that I found in Brazil. The case below demonstrates how Black mothers are often treated in Brazil, especially in the hospitals and clinics where they go to give birth to their children. As I discuss in Chapter V, Black women's sexuality and reproduction have been represented as abnormal, in need of medical intervention by the state, and as social threat that requires state regulation because of Black women's refusal to conform to the heteronormative[16] system that operates in the Brazilian state and society.

[16] Heteronormative derive from the concept of "heteronormativity," which conceives of heterosexuality as the "natural" and normal sexual identity.

impediram a adoção do modelo inovador ... do barateamento dos estudos de genética

Do "marrom-canela" ao "pêlo duro"

SÉRGIO RODRIGUES

Pergunte-se a um brasileiro qual é a cor de sua pele e tudo pode acontecer. O Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE) fez isso em julho de 1998. Ao contrário do que ocorre no censo, em que as respostas são digitadas para quatro categorias (branco, negro, pardo e amarelo/indígena), deixou que os entrevistados escolhessem sua autodeclaração. A idéia era colher subsídios para eventuais mudanças na pesquisa de cores do Censo 2000.

As mudanças acabaram descartadas por uma razão simples: o que a pesquisa de respostas em aberto apurou foi uma salada de mais de 300 respostas diferentes. Alguns brasileiros declararam se ver como "morenos mais para o amarelo". Outros, como "azuis-brancos". Outros, ainda, como "marrom-canela", "escuro cabo-verde", "encardido", "moreno café-com-leite", "mulato negro", "negro claro", "negão", "pêlo duro", "pouco moreno", "branco sarará", "rosadão", "vermelho", "miscigenado".

Diversidade – Até qualificativos que nada têm a ver com tonalidades cromáticas entraram na roda: é o caso de "baiano", "nordeste" e, curiosamente, "italiano" e "brasileiro". O que fazer com dados assim? Não muito. Segundo o presidente do IBGE, Sérgio Besserman, eles não poderam sequer ser tabulados. "Em cada região do país essas cores assumem significados diferentes", explica. Uma conclusão não-científica, porém, é clara: os brasileiros têm orgulho

Ofensas e maus-tratos

Médica chamou grávida de 'macaca' e negou anestesia

Aos cinco meses de idade, Igor de Oliveira é um bebê risonho e gorducho. Sua exuberância é quase um milagre: ele nasceu sem qualquer assistência médica, numa sala da Maternidade Municipal Herculano Pinheiro, em Madureira, na Zona Norte, enquanto a mãe, Claudia Conceição da Silva, de 33 anos, arriva pedindo ajuda. O caso aconteceu em março. Além de ter o filho sozinha dentro de um hospital, Claudia – mãe de três filhos e moradora de Acari – ainda teve de sofrer as dores de sua raça. "Macaca!", ouviu, segundo seu relato, da médica Patrícia da Cunha Carnaval.

Casada com o lutador de boxe Fernando de Oliveira, a Feia de Acari – campeão peso-pesado pela Liga Regional –, Claudia sentiu-se prestes em acionar os punhos do marido. Dirigiu-se a uma delegacia, onde registrou queixa contra a médica por injúria discriminatória. E, orientada pelo Disque-Racismo, vai entrar com uma ação cível por danos morais e materiais, contrária uma infecção pélvica e até hoje está sob tratamento. Eis o seu depoimento:

"Eu estava sentindo muitas dores e fui para a maternidade, onde tinha feito todo o pré-natal. Sabia que estava chegando a hora, mas um médico me examinou e disse que eu voltasse dali a dois dias. Foi o tempo de chegar em casa: a bolsa d'água estourou e tive de voltar correndo para o hospital. Me largaram sozinha na sala de admissão.

Quando senti que Igor ia nascer, ajeitei-me na mesa ginecológica para que ele não caísse. Foi aí que apareceu uma pediatra, cortou o cordão umbilical e levou Igor. A dra. Patrícia entrou e era como se eu não estivesse ali. Uma enfermeira chegou e perguntou se ela não ia me limpar e retirar o resto da placenta – e ela disse que não tinha luvas. Mas a enfermeira achou a caixa de luvas embaixo da bolsa da doutora e foi ela que me limpou e me levou para a sala de sutura.

A dra. Patrícia deu os pontos sem anestesia. Quando ela acabou, eu disse que nunca tinha sentido tanta dor, que eu ia me queixar à direção do hospital e à assistente social. Ela ficou como louca, disse que eu estava com

"A doutora Patrícia registrou queixa contra mim num dia, e eu contra ela no outro. Neste caso, eu vou até o fim"

tendo desacato à autoridade, que ia chamar a polícia. E me xingou: "Macaca!".

Eu xingaei de volta, sim, chamei a doutora de 'cavala'. Ela saiu dali para a delegacia e eu fiquei morrendo de vergonha, juntou gente no corredor. A polícia só não entrou porque a chefe da enfermagem trancou a porta. Então testemunhas de tudo isso. A dra. Patrícia registrou queixa contra mim num dia, e eu contra ela no outro.

Dez dias depois, voltei para a maternidade, com muitas dores e febre. Disseram que era apendicite e só não fui operada porque me mandaram para o Hospital Salgado Filho, onde o cirurgião disse que era infecção pélvica, causada pelas condições do meu parto. Fiquei oito dias internada e sem beber uma gota d'água. Só hoje estou bem, mas o parto de meu marido arruinou um ginecologista particular.

Eu nunca tinha sofrido discriminação racial. Quer dizer, em loja grande, os seguranças ficam de olho, mas, tudo bem. Neste caso, eu vou até o fim. Tive risco de vida, meu filho também. Agora não tenho nada a perder".

Procurada pelo **Jornal do Brasil**, a médica Patrícia da Cunha Carnaval não quis comentar o assunto.

Claudia, mãe de Igor, quer indenização por danos morais

Illustration 1: " Doctor called pregnant woman a 'monkey' and denied her anesthetic" (Source: Jornal do Brasil, 8/26/2001).

The effect of negative representations that depict Black females as sexually uncontrollable, helpless, and negligent mothers should be taken as a critical and serious concern when we evaluate the well-being of Black women during pregnancy and child-bearing. These images dehumanize Black women and render them more vulnerable to experiencing discrimination and violence in the healthcare system. In Brazil's cultural and social imaginary the figure of pregnant Black woman is very often associated to the images of Black women as sexually immoral and "bad" mothers and such association have put them at great risk. We can see these effects in the high rates of Black female morbidity and mortality in the country.

As we can see through the discussion presented in this section, the most troublesome aspect of racial domination in Black women's lives is the impact of poverty, violence and vulnerability, which have been difficult to dismantle. According to Patricia Hill Collins (2000) the dominant class has created Black women's "controlling images" as a means to exploit them and keep them "in their place" at the bottom of society. This

has dire consequences for their families, because without the material conditions necessary for survival, citizenship rights, access to social, economic and political benefits, and public policies that addresses their needs Black women have little or no opportunities for social mobility in the Brazilian's socio-economic strata. In other words, Black women are located at the bottom of the racial and socio-economic hierarchies in Brazilian society. We can observe Black women's low status in society through the issue of digital exclusion a very contemporary problem; as indicated in the table below,

Percentage of households that do not have microcomputers, internet and cell phone, by sex and race of the household head (Brazil, 2003)

	Microcomputers %	Internet %	Cell phone %
White man	77.1	82.4	52.1
Black man	**92.6**	**95.0**	**70.9**
White Woman	81.1	85.5	57.5
Black Woman	**94.0**	**96.0**	**72.2**

Source: Dossier of the Brazilian Black Women's Network – AMNB, 2007 (data from IBGE, PNAD 2003)

Finally, as we can see from the data above, living in conditions of oppression and labor exploitation, Black women and their families are not able to access and afford the advantages and benefits that technology has provided to white men and women. Though many feminist activists have worked to promote structural changes, transformation has been slow to come. Analyzing the various forms of Black women's resistance and activism becomes central to understanding the ways Black women have attempted to transform the oppression, exclusion and vulnerability that shapes their existence, and the challenges and limitations they have confronted.

II. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I examined the social mechanisms that have generated and maintained Black women's vulnerability, particular those responsible for generating the conditions of discrimination, injustice and violence that shapes their lives. I attempted to demonstrate that these women's condition of vulnerability is a result of the state and society's investment in the construction of their racial inferiority as a way to justify Black women's labor and sexual exploitation. The testimonies I provided in this chapter provide key examples of these power relations and reveal the constraints and disadvantages of being a Black woman in Brazil. Those realities have put Black women's organizations into an ongoing fight for recognition and treatment as human beings deserving of rights and basic material goods, such as food, employment, health care, housing and education in the country. It is imperative to invest in future scholarship and research that continues to explore how Black feminists and activists rupture these gendered racial socio-economic projects in Brazil. My research has provided many examples of how Black women have been organizing resistance movements and mobilizing black communities to reflect upon and challenge the negative effects of colonialism, racial dominance, patriarchy, and other forms of oppression. These women face numerous obstacles, but continue to struggle to develop gender and race-specific programs such as affirmative action and other policies aimed at empowering marginalized sectors of the Brazilian population, especially Black women. They have also provided important resources and generated new insights into how to engage in anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-heterosexist struggles in the 21st century. It is through such political commitments and engagement that Black women's NGOs and other feminist

organizations in Brazil have contributed to the elimination of sexual and racial violence, labor exploitation, and disparities within society to create social change for Black people.

Chapter II: The Female Sterilization as a Starting Point

Illustration 1: This cartoon was published by a Brazilian newspaper, *Correio Lageano*, in the district of Planalto Serrano de Santa Catarina, located in the south of Brazil. It is a racist attempt to stimulate the public opinion to support the reduction of the maximum penal age in the country to under 18 years- old in order to prevent the elevated numbers of crimes. However this caricature visibly suggests that Black women are responsible for the rise in criminal behavior because they are the ones that give birth to prospective delinquent children. The cartoon also reveals a biological determinism that indicates that Black males are criminals from birth.

The above caricature provides a dramatic means of understanding the kinds of structural violence that Brazilian culture and society produce impose on Black women. This is a continuing historical-structural and everyday process that Black women have confronted as individuals and as a collective. This drawing appeared on the national scene in 2006, more than 42 years after the massive sterilization of thousands of Brazilian women, particularly Black and poor ones, and also more than hundred years after the

sexual and reproductive exploitation of enslaved Black women. However, the distance of time and space is not able to erase the ways in which Brazil continues to portray and jeopardize Black women's status and life conditions. As one of the primary institutions that malign Black women by disseminating harmful stereotypes about them, the Brazilian media often reproduces information that labels black women as the root cause of a series of negative situations that occur in the country such as violence, disease epidemics, poverty, the country's underdevelopment, among other issues. This economic racial discourse of Black women explicitly suggests that the government should create programs and policies to prevent low-income women from having too many children, and also encourage people and institutions in general to be violent towards and to discriminate against them. It is significant that the images that appear in the media as representative of families in need of state control through public health policies and programs, such as female sterilization and Family Planning, target the black population, specifically, black women, young people, and children. As I will discuss here, such attempts are part of a historical strategy of containing Black women's sexuality and reproductive choices and practice that is characterized by treating these women not as human beings but as problematic subjects that represent the nation's need to "improve the race," a dangerous demographic boom, a threat to national (and international) security, and to the well-being of the world in terms of development.

II.1. FEMALE STERILIZATION: A STARTING POINT FOR BLACK WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE ORGANIZING

My research is concerned with Brazilian Black women's Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and their struggles in the area of sexual and reproductive health, as well their forms of experiences, resistance, and politics around these issues. When I went to do my fieldwork in Brazil, my research was grounded in the following questions: Which factors led to the emergence of contemporary Black women's NGOs? What social forces were involved in the construction of the political, ideological, and cultural context that make the coming out of these organizations possible? What kinds of political actors and organizations took part in the construction of this kind of organizing? Why did they come into existence during the 1980s and 1990s and not in another historical conjuncture? This chapter's narrative aims to address these issues.

I found my responses to those inquiries in demographic studies, and in the publications of the feminist and Black movements, which were attempting to explain interconnected phenomena that occurred from the 1960s to the 1980s such as the dramatic decline of the Brazilian population, the massive sterilization of women in the country, and the emergence of Family Planning and of several other policies and actions concerning the reproductive health. My first step in the study is to reconstruct this history, which is complex, non-linear, and composed by many other intertwined histories, some of them previously untold.

The publications and archival materials that I collected pointed to two frameworks through which the responses to my inquiries should be contextualized and analyzed. Therefore, all those analyses led me to understand that, first of all, the attempts of the Brazilian state to practice mass female sterilization, which have mainly targeted

underprivileged women and Black women, has been the primary catalyst for the emergence of Black women's activist organizing in the country; and second, that the processes of violence, injustice and discrimination that Black women have endured in the health arena, especially sexual and reproductive health, are directly related to Brazil's strategies to maintain its socioeconomic structures and fulfill international economic and political treaties with "developed" (Western) nations. The chapter's narrative will draw upon historical regional, national, and global context in order to illustrate the significance of these two axes concerning Black women's health and life conditions in Brazil. Such realities are not necessarily new issues; they have long been denounced by the Black women's movement in the course of Brazil's social history and by other social justice movements in Latin America.

As indicated by Sueli Carneiro (2003), a prominent Afro-Brazilian feminist scholar and member of the NGO Geledés, the massive sterilization of women in the country since the 1970s occupied a very singular and privileged space in Black women's movement agenda (8). In 1988 the public announcements about the outcomes of using particular contraceptive methods in Brazil generated a great controversy and left the country completely shocked, especially members of the women's movement and the Black movement. Data from the *Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios*, 1986 – PNAD/IBGE[17], revealed that 44.4 percent of the women of fertile age (15-54 years-old) that were married or had a live-in partner[18] were sterilized in the country. The following two charts demonstrate the impact of this phenomenon:

[17] IBGE – Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geographic and Statistics)
[18] Term that I employ to designate women that live with a partner (in this case male) in a established relationship, but are not legally married under the terms of the state.

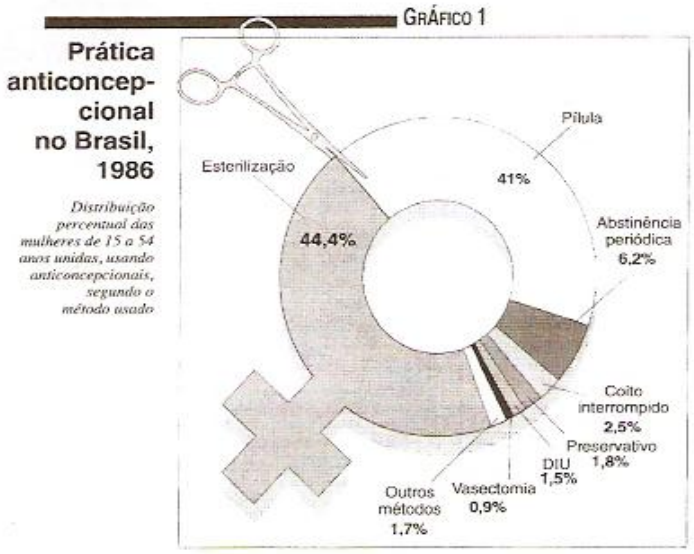

Figure 1: Chart: Contraceptive Practice in Brazil, 1986. Percentage of the of distribution of women of fertile age (15-54 years-old) that were married or had a live-in partner that utilize a type of contraceptive according to method. In: *Esterilização Feminina*. Volume 1. Série: saúde e direiros reprodutivos. Sempreviva Organização Feminista – SOF. São Paulo, 1994: 13.

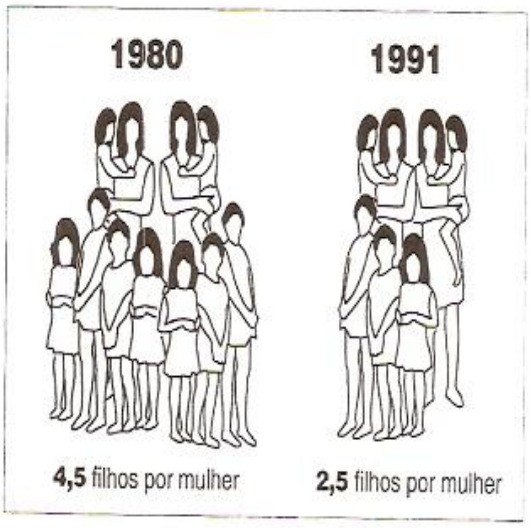

Figure 2: Chart: Demonstrates the average of the decreasing number of children per women from 1980 to 1991. In: *Esterilização Feminina*. Volume 1. Série: saúde e direiros reprodutivos. Sempreviva Organização Feminista – SOF. São Paulo, 1994: 12.

Sueli Carneiro (2003) argues that what female sterilization achieved in such a short time, was a massive phenomenon in the country that led Black women to promote campaigns and debates to confront it. According to Carneiro, most of the women that went through the process of sterilization made this decision because they could not find support in the healthcare system to provide them with alternative contraceptive methods that, unlike to female sterilization, would be reversible and would allow them to have children when they wanted to do so. The chart below demonstrates the role of the public healthcare system in perpetuating this process. The graphic representations below reveal the reality of a deliberate lack of support from the state to facilitate women's access to other contraceptive methods other than the sterilization.

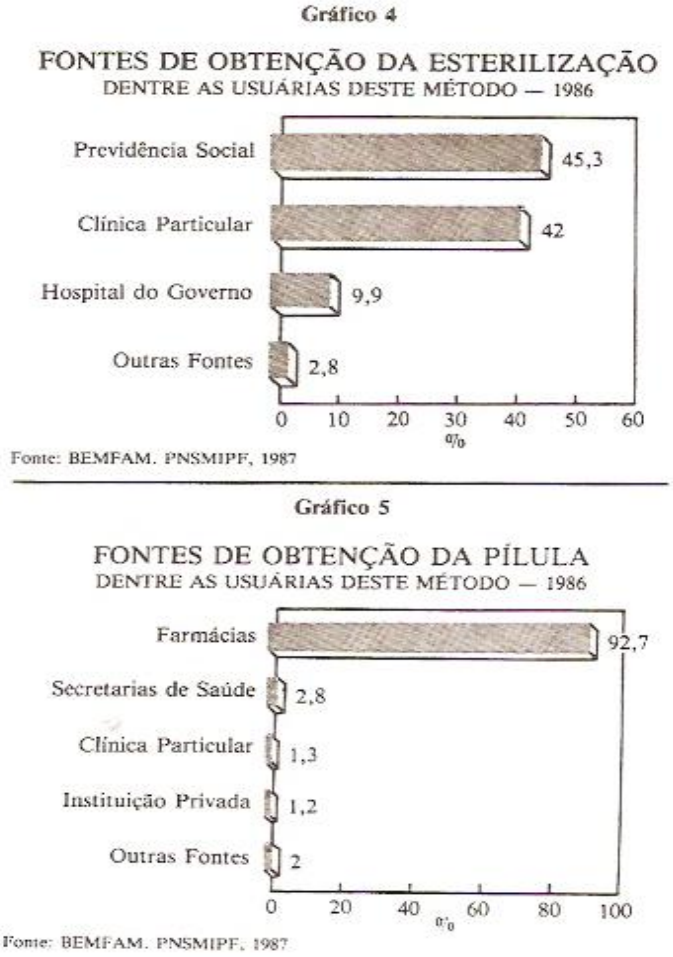

Figure 3: Chart: Data from 1986 that demonstrates the sources to obtain female sterilization in contrast to the sources to acquire birth control pills. Reproduced from *Estado e população: uma história do planejamento familiar no Brasil*. Délcio da Fonseca Sobrinho. Rio e Janeiro: Rosa dos Tempos: FNUAP, 1993: 26.

These charts show the contradictions between Brazilian women's widespread access to female sterilization and their limited access to birth control pills. Sterilization was widely available through the public healthcare network available in the country which included Social Welfare (*Previdência Social*) – 45.3 percent, Private Clinics

(*Clínica Particular*) – 42 percent, and Governmental Hospital (*Hospital do Governo*) – 9.9 percent (Source: BEMFAM. PNSMIPF, 1987. In: Fonseca Sobrinho 1993: 26). In contrast to the accessibility of female sterilization, the second chart shows that in the case of birth control pills – which would give women a certain amount of 'autonomy' to control their reproductive choices – access was not mediated by public healthcare services, but instead, by Pharmacies (*Farmácias*) – 92.7 percent; the Health Secretariat (*Secretaria de Saúde*) – 2.8 percent; Private Clinics (*Clínica Particular*) – 1.3 percent, and Private Institutions (*Instituição Privada*) – 1.2 percent (Source: BEMFAM. PNSMIPF, 1987 in Sobrinho 1993). This situation can be illustrated in Anne Dalsgaard's (2004) argument that:

> Sterilisation has become increasingly widespread since the late 1970s. At a time when women of all income groups were already practicing birth control, while better-off women relied on contraception methods such as tubal ligation, delivered by private health clinics, low income women were left with clandestine, precarious abortions and unsupervised use of contraception (mainly the pill) purchased from pharmacies or distributed by private internationally supported Family Planning organizations. The practice of tubal ligation for birth control was initially a privilege of the rich and associated with the growing of the caesarean sections. In Brazil (as in North America) caesarean sections in the 1970s became a consumer good for those who could afford the expense of a private hospital delivery, and sterilizations were routinely recommended after three consecutive caesarean sections (Mello e Souza 1994; Faundes and Cecatti 1991) (28).
>
> Public health units were not meant to deliver Family Planning services, sterilisations included, but a laissez faire attitude among legal and political authorities to the emerging unauthorised provision of sterilisation within the public health care system soon made the method available for a huge number of lower class women. However, though increasingly common up through the 1980s, sterilisation was surrounded by legal ambivalence and condemned by the Medical Ethical Code until November 1997 (Costa 1995:22). Tubal ligations were therefore often performed under cover of caesarean sections and the individual physician paid 'under the table'. This uncontrolled practice of sterilisation and its effects have been thoroughly criticized to be rampant among the poor nevertheless (28).

Both Fonseca Sobrinho (1993)[19] and Anne Dalsgaard (2004) offer significant insights into how the Brazilian state through its healthcare apparatuses and institutions promoted this process of the massive sterilization of women. To develop a female sterilization policy was so important to the State that this issue became the object of Brazilian legislation and an intense debate occurred among political representatives and feminists. This legislative dispute later turned into the law No. 209/91 that legalized the practice of sterilization in the country (Carneiro, 2003). Nevertheless, the state was not the only social force influencing this turn of events. In order to understand these circumstances surrounding the success of female sterilization policies we need to revisit the history of Family Planning in Brazil. There were three significant phases of this history, which I will discuss in the following section.

II.2. THE CONTEXT FOR THE FLOURISHING OF FEMALE STERILIZATION AND FAMILY PLANNING IN BRAZIL [20]

II.2.1. The First Period of Family Planning History in Brazil

The first period of the history of family planning in Brazil began in the 19th century and lasted until 1964, from the colonial period, continuing through the Imperial regime until the commencement of the era of the Republic. This moment was

[19] The work of Délcio da Fonseca Sobrinho, *Estado e população: uma história do planejamento familiar no Brasil*.. Rio e Janeiro: Rosa dos Tempos: FNUAP,1993, constitute the main publication used in this chapter because he is the only author to present this type of historical and broad analysis regarding the period in Brazil I am trying to cover; and even the other authors I used here, also utilized Sobrinho's analysis to structure their own work. This is a prominent work regarding Brazilian socioeconomic, political and demographic history.

[20] The periodization I employed in this section was elaborated by Délcio da Fonseca Sobrinho. *Estado e população: uma história do planejamento familiar no Brasil*. Rio e Janeiro: Rosa dos Tempos: FNUAP,1993.

characterized by two discourses: a Diffuse Pro-Birth position (*Pró-Natalismo Difuso*) and a Racist discourse that outlined the need to improve the Brazilian 'race' (see Roland, n.d.; Sobrinho 1993; and Costa n.d.). Sobrinho argues that "under the Pro-Birth position's umbrella it was possible to identify the marks of 19th century's medical hygienic, racist eugenics, Comtist Positivism, and 'instrumental authoritarianism'; and in the Brazilian context all these ideologies were influenced by the idea that the country's evolution was implicated in the enhancement of the population in terms of 'quality' and quantity" (79). According to Sobrinho, this phase was characterized by a diffused pro-birth sentiment (*pró-natalismo*), which was deeply rooted in the Brazilian culture. Edna Roland (n.d.), a well-known Black feminist and a former member of the NGO Geledés, argued that "Brazil was the first country in Latin America that had a well-organized eugenics movement, which to a great extent influenced science, social thought, and public policies" (1). According to Roland, during the two World Wars several meetings on eugenics occurred in the country and they also organized courses and debates about genetics and legal medicine. In addition, this movement played a major role in key political issues such as "social legislation regarding childhood and maternal health, family legislation, control of infectious-contagious diseases, immigration laws, and legislative proposals created to give the state the power to regulate marriage relations" (see also Ana Costa n.d.). During the two first decades of the 20th century, the eugenics movement emphasized education, social reform, and sanitation as ways to improve the 'race' and solve this 'national issue.' The eugenists believed that the extensive process of miscegenation that was happening in the country would result in the whitening of the Brazilian population because of the 'natural superiority' of white people. The eugenicists also believed in Neo-Lamarckism's ideas, which argued that the acquired characteristics of individuals may be inherited by their descendants (Roland n.d.). However, Roland

argued that the kind of thought presented in this first period did not result in a clear Pro-Birth policy (*política Pró-Natalista)*. Thus, the improvement of the 'race' can be considered as the first key aspect that created the conditions to justify regulatory policies regarding reproductive health, especially in the case of Black women.

Ana Costa (n.d.) affirmed that during the 1930s the Government of Getúlio Vargas sustained a clear Pro-birth stance. This tendency was clear in many of the policies the state implemented during that period such as the family-wage (salário-família), birth financial aid, and the post-World War development. While Brazil was experiencing these internal changes, the Malthusian thesis (1766-1834) reemerged in the international scenario, warning people about the risks of the disproportionate relationship between the excessive outgrowth of the human population and the escalation of food production. Those changes related to the socioeconomic and political development of the country formed the second key aspect that facilitated the development of reproductive health policies designed to regulate women's reproductive health in the country. But this time instead of the regulation being based on a pro-birth tendency (*tendência pró-natalista*), it was sustained by a focus on birth control. According to Ana Costa (n.d.), as a result of the concerns that arose from the Malthusian argument, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) was created in London in 1952, and was financially supported by several countries that wanted the establishment of family planning programs and envisioned a form of demographic control that would result in increased restrictions on the freedom of women and couples to procreate. The International Planned Parenthood Federation arrived in Brazil in the 1970s, and provided financial support to institutions and organizations that offered Family Planning Programs to the population (Costa, n.d.).

II.2.2. The Second Period of Family Planning History in Brazil

The second period of the history of Family Planning in Brazil occurred from 1964 to 1974. It was characterized by the antagonism between anti-birth position (*posição antinatalista*) *versus* anti-birth control position (*posição anticontrolista*). The Anti-Birth cluster (*Antinatalistas*) was composed by diverse sectors: " the military from the Superior War School (*Escola Superior de Guerra*) that considered the population's growth a threat to the 'national security'; the major businessmen that looked at the rates of demographic growth as an obstacle to national development; the doctors that were interested in putting into practice Family Planning services in the country; and the North American government that justified its intervention arguing that they wanted to prevent what was called the *'cubanização' do Nordeste brasileiro* (the *'cubanization'* of the Brazilian northeast region)[21] (Fonseca Sobrinho, 1993: 80)."

The Anti-Birth Control Alliance (A*nticontrolistas*) organized against the Anti-Birth group (*Antinatalistas*). It was composed by: "the Catholic Church that by moral reasons opposed the utilization of contraceptive methods; the 'leftists' representatives that considered the anti-birth discourse (a combination of 'Neo-Malthusianism' and population control) a sign of antinationalism, imperialism, and capitalism; some of the Rightist sectors of the army force also took part on this coalition, because, based on geopolitical assumptions, they defended the enlargement of the population as a way to occupy the unpopulated regions of the country in the name of the 'national security' (Fonseca Sobrinho, 1993: 80)."

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[21] According to Fonseca Sobrinho (1993) this idea concerning to the *'cubanização' do Nordeste brasileiro* (the *'cubanization'* of the Brazilian northeast region) came from the fear the United States developed in relation to the Northeast of Brazil due to it was a region that held more than twenty millions of habitants living in what they called explosive political, economical and social conditions, i.e. the region represented a risk for insurgencies, conflicts that reminded them Cuba's Revolution; so did not want the imminent risk of a second Cuba, materializing in Brazil (p.84).

Afro-Brazilian feminist Edna Roland (n.d.) pointed out that the controversies raised by the anti-birth position (*posição antinatalista*) versus anti-birth control position (*posição anticontrolista*) emerged in 1964 when the United States began to argue that Brazilian development would only be possible with a decrease in the growth of the population. Costa (n.d.) argues that, in that period, the United States was implementing a policy of economic aid to Latin American countries in which the requirement to receive funds was that the country would adopt programs and strategies designed to reduce the population. Costa (n.d.) emphasizes that it is still possible today to locate in international treaties and other agreements, clauses that explicitly require commitments related to the regulation of population growth. Costa affirmed that there were strong reactions in Brazil against the United States' economic aid policy for example, sectors such as social movements, clandestine political parties, other progressive sectors in civil society, and the military forces who argued that the discourse of the Pro-Birth Control policy was part of an imperialist expansion plan over the national territory and understood it to be an issue concerning Brazilian autonomy and national sovereignty.

According to Sobrinho (1993), post-1964 in Brazil was a period of intense socioeconomic and political change. In detriment of incalculable social and political loss, at least to the social movement, the Brazilian economic structure altered the investments in agriculture settings to a configuration that placed the country among of one of the main industrial economies of the 'Third World' in that period (79). The political scenery also was transformed. Sobrinho argued that the Government of João Goulart, classified as nationalist and reformist, became ineffective to control the popular, working class, and campesino movement. Thus, due to such circumstances, representatives of the transnational businessman cooperation joined forces in 1964 and generated a series of political, ideological and military schemes in order to reverse such situation and

guarantee their interests. A new form of authoritarian state power was established in 1964 which sought to bring the nation's social policies into alignment with the economic interests of the state (1993). In addition, Sobrinho points out that the demographic terrain of Brazil changed radically from 1964 to 1974 as the country underwent a huge decline in fertility levels; his chart below clearly demonstrates this shift (80):

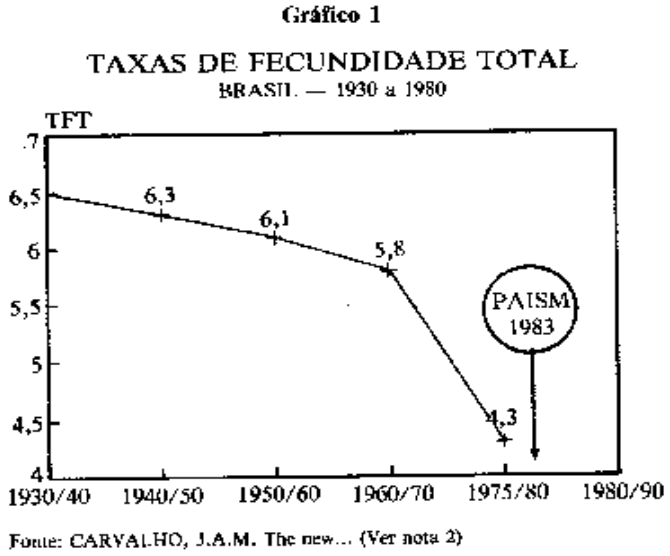

Figure 5: Chart: Data demonstrates the total rate of fertility (*TFT – taxas de fecundidade total*) in Brazil from 1930-1980. Reproduced from *Estado e população: uma história do planejamento familiar no Brasil*. Délcio da Fonseca Sobrinho. Rio e Janeiro: Rosa dos Tempos: FNUAP, 1993, p. 23.

As indicated by Fonseca Sobrinho (1993) it was through this economic, political and demographic panorama that new approaches to population control emerged in Brazil. These approaches would be translated into attempts to regulate reproductive health and rights matters through the practice of sterilization and family planning policies.

A final significant fact that we must take into account that 1964 was the year when the government of General Castelo Branco was established in the country. Sobrinho (1993) notes that Branco's main "slogan was *'Security and Development,'* which was almost the same of the idea of *"Order and Progress'"* (97). Thus, during his government, Castelo Branco chose to confront internal conflicts (mostly ideological); for instance, he argued that it was necessary to invest in "economic and social development because military power depended on the country's industrial and technological basis" (Fonseca Sobrinho, 1993: 97).

1965 was a significant year concerning this history of reproductive health regulation. Globally, this is the period when international support for birth control strategies intensified. According to Sobrinho (1993) the United States was concerned about "The world demographic boom as a threat to the well-being of the globe, which led them to create schemes to prevent such risks" (92). Thus, moved by such "alarm" the United States decided to heavily invest in a series of strategies, such as mobilizing public funds to support those actions in regions of the globe they considered to be at imminent risk of a 'demographic boom', and also to persuade the governments in those regions to take action and adopt the policy recommendations of "developed" nations. Furthermore, through its agencies the United Nations (UN) began to create strategies to reinforce the actions already in course. In the beginning of 1965 the UN General-Secretary, U. Thant, delegated a technical workforce to specifically focus on the subject of restraining population expansion. In July 1965, the UN Social and Economic Council endorsed a large program organized by the UN Population Commission, whose activities were destined to intensify the Family Planning policy throughout the so-called "Third World" (Sobrinho 1993). In September 1965 the World Conference on Population took place in

Belgrade and the main discussion and decisions can be summarized in the report that North American General Drapper made to the U.S. Senate:

> This week I participated in the Population Growth Conference in the Western Hemisphere, in the Aspen Institute, in Colorado. Among the participants were: STEWART UDALL, Secretary for Internal Affairs; Dr. LEONA BAUMGHARTHER, Assistant of the Secretary of State; LINCOLN GORDON, our Ambassador from Brazil; FRANK NETTESTERN, President of the Population Council; JOHN HILLIARD, of the Ford Foundation, and delegates from Chile, Mexico and Brazil (93).
>
> Secretary Udall summarized the general conclusions of the participants in the Congress: 'The current efforts to prevent the demographic boom in this hemisphere must be now placed in high priority by public and private organizations. As soon as possible, this combined and massive attack on the demographic problems should reach the same causes and objectives of the extensive programs launched by national and international health organizations, regarding to the victorious combat to the diseases in this hemisphere (93).

As indicated by Fonseca Sobrinho (1993) the control of the population birth (*natalidade*) as a way to prevent the 'demographic boom', were dressed up as an effort to combat diseases (93). Hence, in 1965 the changes engendered by the United States fostered the emergence of various worldwide agencies and organizations devoted to supporting demographic control practices, academic research and the distribution of contraceptive methods. The efforts to provide financial support for these activities were led by the USAID[22], but other social institutions also contributed this endeavor including other European nations; private donors, like the Rockefeller Foundation; intergovernmental agencies, as an example of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)[23] – United Nations Population Funds; and by non-governmental international agencies, the most important of which was the International Planned Parenthood

[22] USAID – United States Agency for International Development – a government agency found in 1961 that provide United States economic and humanitarian assistance globally for more than 40 years.
[23] An international development agency that promotes women's, man's, and child's right concerning health issues.

Federation (IPPF)[24] sponsored by the activities of organizations such as the Family Well-Being Civil Society (BEMFAM)[25] in Brazil founded in 1965[26] (Fonseca Sobrinho, 1993: 95-96).

In the national panorama, 1965 and the following years also brought many transformations. The BEMFAM Civil Society was founded in November 1965 in Brazil, and officially registered in 1966 with the full support of the medical association in that period (the AMEG – Associação Médica do Estado da Guanabara), and of the Regional Medical Council (the CREMERGE – Conselho Regional de Medicina do Estado da Guanabara). Regarding BEMFAM, it is important to highlight this international organization's attempts to infiltrate countries considered to be 'underdeveloped' and once there to become institutionalized and be converted into a national organization. Many Brazilians, especially women thought BEMFAM Civil Society was a regular public healthcare service provided by the government. Moreover, for many women this organization functioned as an alternative to the chaotic public health services offered in the country.

As demonstrated earlier in the chapter, the main goal of BEMFAM was to encourage the creation of a government family planning program (Sobrinho 1993: 105). In the beginning of 1967 this organization had already contacted several institutions in other states, expanding its ideas through the entire country including Bahia, Pernambuco, Uberaba (in Minas Gerais), Paraná, Campinas (in São Paulo), Rio Grande do Sul, São

[24] A international organization that has provided reproductive health and Family Planning services in over 180 countries.

[25] A organization founded in 1965 to encourage the creation of a government Family Planning program, mainly in the countries of the so called 'Third World'.

[26] There were more than fifty non-governmental organization that offered assistance and would help to redistribute the resources designated to the population control; most of them were found in the 1970s, had their main office in the United States, and were subsidized by this same country throughout the USAID; finally they all established as priority to develop activities in the 'Undeveloped countries' (Fonseca Sobrinho, 1993: 95-96).

Paulo, Rio Grande do Norte, and Ceará (Fonseca Sobrinho, 1993: 105). According to Sobrinho (1993) the performance of BEMFAM in Brazil was extremely crucial to national and international efforts to reduce the rates of fertility in the country, and it immediately incited reactions from diverse sectors of the general public, especially the Black and feminist movements, and within each one of them Black women activists. However, even the Brazilian government became suspicious of BEMFAM's activities in the country. As a consequence of such suspicions, the newspaper *Última Hora* stated in 1967 that this organization was behind the "sterilization" of women in Amazônia performed by North American missionaries based in the Evangelical Church of Brazil.[27] Thus, such claims generated a national debate regarding the issue of sterilization, and general matters concerning birth control in the country. A Parliamentary Inquiry Commission (CPI – Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito) was created to investigate the accusations; following this initial denunciation, many others came forward. The Inquiry Commission heard twenty-five people, held thirty-one meetings and collected hundreds of documents regarding the issue of sterilization. However, the Inquiry Commission was not able to deliver a verdict. The testimonies collected by the Inquiry Commission were representative of all kind of opinions and/or positions concerning sterilization; as described by Sobrinho it was "a plethora of information, citations, and arguments for all tastes" (Fonseca Sobrinho, 1993: 109).

A final critical issue identified by Sobrinho (1993) is the parallel history of the family planning in Brazil. According to Sobrinho before and during the time that

[27] The denunciation was divulgated by the newspaper Última Hora, made by the journalist Waldemar Pacheco de Oliveira in April 21, 1967. This journalist affirmed that there was a 'massive sterilization' of women in the Amazonian region, principally in the Araguaína, Tocantinópolis, Porto Franco, Estreito Goiano, Estreito Maranhense, Mosquito, Imperatriz e Açailândia; and that the responsible for such practice of sterilization were the North American missionaries from the Evangelical Church of Brazil; and the method utilized by them were the implant of the IUD – Intrauterine Dispositive in the women (Fonseca Sobrinho, 1993: 109).

BEMFAM was performing its activities mainly in urban areas of the country, a North American nurse, theologian and Seventh-day Adventist Church priest named Leslie Charles Scofield Jr. was also working in the country, but in the rural and semi-urban regions. He came with his wife and their mission was to provide medical and religious assistance to the population of Vale do Rio São Francisco, in the north of Minas Gerais; utilizing boats they worked with a small team assisting the communities located in that region. Scofield performed his work through an organization called the Society in Defense of Health (*Sociedade em Defesa da Saúde - SODESA*), which was associated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church (Fonseca Sobrinho, 1993: 115). In 1968, Scofield organized Family Planning Inc. International Program with a professor named Joseph Beasley that could be developed through Brazil and other countries of Latin American, Asia and Africa. Fosenca Sobrinho (1993) confirms that Beasley was actually a politician seeking funds to establish his electoral campaign and was manipulating the program for personal gain. The Program was officially organized in Brazil in 1970; many important institutions participated in its inauguration, like the Ministry of Health, the Health Secretariat of the State of Minas Gerais, the USAID, the Colleges of Medicine of the Federal University of Minas Gerais and of the Norte Mineira University Foundation, among others. In 1971, Leslie Scofield also attempted to develop the Research Institute for the Development of Rural Sanitary Assistance (*Instituto de Preparo e Pesquisa para o Desenvolvimento da Assistência Sanitária Rural - IPPEDASAR*). This institute was founded in the city of Montes Claros, in the northern part of the state of Minas Gerais; this region was considered an example of the socioeconomic and health problems that the country was facing in rural and semi-urban communities. Although this program produced a lot of material, documents, projects, and plans, and mobilized a team of more than thirty people, including technicians that came from United States, it only operated

for two years and closed. Joseph Beasley was later arrested in the United States under the accusation of illegally using funds he gained from the project.

II.2.2.1. The Norplant and Depo-Provera Campaign

Parallel to the history of female sterilization in the 1970s emerged a campaign to use the contraceptive Norplant and Depo-Provera, a hormonal contraceptive implanted or injected into women's skin, and that would prevent them from getting pregnant for 5 years. However, Norplant and Depo-Provera was an experimental contraceptive that caused many serious side effects to the women that used it, such as premature menopause, excessive bleeding, depression, headache, increased risk of high blood pressure and circulatory diseases, among other symptoms. It was part of the efforts to control women's reproductive health, and its targets were mainly poor and non-white women in order to reduce the risks of a demographic boom. The Norplant and Depo-Provera policy involved the "volunteer recruitment"[28] of women was implemented in eight countries: Brazil, Chile, Dominican Republic, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Sweden, Thailand, and the United States. The campaign and attempts to implement Norplant and Depo-Provera ran from the 1970s to the 1980s, and ended in the early 1990s because of the protests and denunciations of the women's movement in all regions where it was implemented (see Israel and Dacach 1994) .

[28] The local and global Women's movements reject the expression volunteer recruitment arguing that the women, mainly low income and unschooled, who accepted to inject the Norplant and Depo-Provera were manipulated and 'seduced' by the idea of not have to expend money with contraceptive and worry about pregnancy anymore by using the contraceptives.

II.2.3. The Third Period of Family Planning History in Brazil

The intense political debates that took place during 1964 until 1974 did not persist in the third period of the history of Family Planning in Brazil, which encompass the 1974 until 1983. According to Sobrinho (1993) this phase gave birth to a new discourse that would end up in the emergence of family planning as an official policy. Many factors contributed to the development of this new stage. The Catholic Church demonstrated an open mind posture, accepting the idea of 'procreation' as a component detached from the main role of sexual life, and even declared itself in favor of 'natural contraceptive methods'. The Superior School of War (*Escola Superior de Guerra*) contested and triumphed over the geopolitical theory[29] of the "nationalist rightist" military. In opposition to their ideas, the Superior School of War argued that the "demographic boom" and the "internal threat" that it represented were far more important than such "external threats." Furthermore, BEMFAM's Family Planning discourse was also overcome by a new one labeled as CPAIMC – *Centro de Pesquisas de Assistência Integrada à Mulher e à Criança* (Research Center for Integrated Assistence for Woman and Child). This new prototype of Family Planning emerged in 1974 and was privately funded by a nonprofit organization that provided Family Planning and maternal and child health information and services to women in Rio de Janeiro; it claimed to focus on women's health as its first and highest priority. Sobrinho (1993) affirms that the women's movement participated in the debates regarding this project since its establishment; at first as integrators of the "Conventional Leftist Party", then in a more demanding way, they started to vindicate for themselves the right to exercise what they called "democratic control of reproduction" (135).

[29] It stated that Brazil should be against birth control practice since there was a need to populate the vacant regions in the national territory to prevent the invasions of the neighboring countries, so it was a matter of national security.

However, CPAIMC was merely another scheme to control women through sterilization, and was not the kind of organization that would respect women's reproductive rights and health. Some of the parts of the document below extracted from the National Center for Biotechnology Information's site demonstrate such inconsistencies:

Evaluation removes obstacles to sterilization in Brazil.

[No authors listed]

PIP: **In 1978, Centro de Pesquisas de Assistência Integrada a Mulher e a Criança (CPAIMC) in Rio de Janeiro began to offer interval sterilizations in an attempt to increase the access of poor women to sterilization services. By the end of 1984, the program had provided in excess of 19,000 sterilizations, making CPAIMC Brazil's largest single source of voluntary interval sterilization. Despite the program's success, CPAIMC was concerned that obstacles still existed in the poor woman's path to sterilization access.** A study was conducted by Family Health International (FHI) in collaboration with the Pathfinder Fund and CPAIMC's Department of Information, Evaluation and Research to locate possible barriers. The study indicated that less than half of the women who requested sterilization between June 1 and August 31, 1983 actually had the procedure. During that period, 1256 women requested sterilization at the CPAIMC clinic. Of these, 925 were approved, and 639 were scheduled for surgery. Only 559 were actually sterilized within 3 months of receiving approval. (…) Age and number of children were the most important criteria used by the clinic to determine a woman's eligibility for sterilization. Women who were at least 30 years old and who had 3 or more living children usually were approved for surgery. During the study period, a woman who did not use oral contraceptives, an IUD, or injectables was required to receive a Depo-Provera injection on the 5th to 8th day of her menstrual cycle before surgery was scheduled. This requirement was aimed at reducing the incidence of pregnancies among sterilized women. (…) As a result of the CPAIMC study, the clinic has changes its procedure for scheduling sterilization surgery. It is likely that even relatively small changes in service provision may yield significant increases in Family Planning prevalence and thus increase the coverage and quality of health care in Brazil.

Illustration 2: Text extracted from the National Center for Biotechnology Information and PubMed (www.pubmed.gov)[30].

According to Sobrinho (1993) these transformations came with the organization of the CPAIMC which formed the basis utilized later by the Brazilian government to formulate and implement in 1983 PAISM – Programa de Assistência Integral à Saúde da Mulher (Integrated Assistence for Women's Health Program) (Fonseca Sobrinho, 1993: 136). Sobrinho (1993) affirmed that the trajectory all the way through the establishment

[30] Site: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez?db =pubmed&uid=12314001&cmd= showdetailview&indexed=google.

of the PAISM was complex and full of controversies. In 1974, he World Population Conference held in Bucharest, Romania, the Brazilian government argued that Brazil should not be included among the countries that were labeled as regions that contained an "excessive population," because the country held a "vast unfilled territory" that needed to be occupied. On the other hand, the government acknowledged the responsibility of the state to offer information and contraceptive methods to families (Fonseca Sobrinho, 1993: 136). There were two more other important investments concerning the birth control in the county: the creation of the Programa de Saúde Materno Infantil (Maternal-Infant Health Program) in 1975 and of the Programa Nacional de Paternidade Responsável (Responsible Fatherhood National Program) in 1979.

In 1975 the Health Ministry implemented the Programa de Saúde Materno Infantil (Maternal-Infant Health Program) that operated as a Family Planning service (see Fonseca Sobrinho 1993, Edna Roland, n.d.). In addition, in 1977 the Program to prevent and assist high risk pregnancy *(Programa de Prevenção da Gravidez de Alto Risco - PPGAR)* was created in the country, but it was criticized by various social movements under the allegation that it was a birth control program. Ana Costa (n.d.) argues the program employed a biased approach and, as a consequence, mainly targeted the poor, Blacks, and other populations considered "disposable." It was also interesting to observe that in order to elaborate this Program, the Health Ministry hired college professors (mostly physicians) specialized on reproductive health; however the protests against this Program led the federal government to terminate its activities. The closing of the Program caused political problems between the professors involved in the program – gynecologist-obstetrics - and the Health Ministry, which according to Ana Costa (n.d.) would be re-negotiated later, and this compromise represents the current reproductive health policies that operate in the country today.

In 1978, the final year of the President Ernesto Geisel's administration, he gave his approval Family Planning, admitting that the 'demographic boom' was a serious problem. In 1979, the new president, João Batista de Oliveira Figueiredo, implemented the Programa Nacional de Paternidade Responsável (National Responsible Fatherhood Program) that was based on a BEMFAM study.

In 1980 Pope John Paul II visited Brazil, which made the government slow down with debates around birth control, Family Planning, and any other correlated issues to minimize any possible conflict with the Catholic Church. Meanwhile in this same period, the Health minister Waldyr Arcoverde announced that the Family Planning would not be a special program, but instead one of the activities related to assistance offered in the maternal-infant program; in addition these activities were part of a broader Health plan named PREVSAÚDE – Programa de Ações Básicas de Saúde (Program for Basic Actions on Health). However, this program as well as the National Responsible Fatherhood program were abandoned, and their activities brought to an end (Sobrinho, 1993: 158).

1983 represented the end of this third period of the history of Family Planning in Brazil. Sobrinho (1993) highlights that, "under pressure because of the agreements made with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government of João Figueiredo was forced to re-initiate the discussion regarding Family Planning policy in the country, which he officially did in March 1983 through a presidential message in the National Congress. This official message led to the creation of another Parliamentary Inquiry Commission.[31] The Inquiry Commission collected eighteen testimonies, six of which were from women in social movements" (1993: 169). According to Sobrinho all testimonies corroborated the idea that the government should implement a Family

[31] CPI – Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito.

Planning program in the country (136). The final report of this Parliamentary Inquiry Commission, which clearly stated a favorable position to the implementation of a Family Planning policy, was considered a fraud because it was a copy of the written contents of a conference led by the president of BEMFAM, Walter Rodrigues (Fonseca Sobrinho, 1993: 136).

In the meantime, João Figueiredo's message also motivated the Health Ministry to create the PAISM – Programa de Assistência Integral à Saúde da Mulher (Women's Integrated Health Assistance Program). The program incorporated the suggestions and claims from the Women's Movement, and "represented the first official discourse of the Brazilian government concerning Family Planning, and in addition it triumphed over the long debate between the anti-birth position (*posição antinatalista*) and the anti-birth control stance (*posição anticontrolistas*)" (Sobrinho, 1993: 136)."

I want to emphasize two crucial elements that profoundly marked the trajectory of more than 20 years of Brazil's family planning history – concerning women's sterilization, the pro-birth tendency (*pró-natalismo)*), the polemical debate on birth control, and the population growth's regulation – that I tried to summarize in this narrative. The first element refers to the discourse in Brazil to improve 'race' in the first and second period of the history of Family Planning in the country, although such a conception would continue into the third period. There has been a perception of Brazil as a country threatened by the amalgamation of Blacks, whites and indigenous people and also condemned to degradation and underdevelopment because of what they called "a 'race' of degenerated mestizos, sometimes considered sterile and sometimes extremely fertile (Roland n.d.)." Such assumptions led the country to embrace a pro-birth position (*pró-natalismo*) in order to guarantee the racial 'quality' of the population, but as we can observe this endeavor was premised on the erasure of the African-descendent population;

it was an investment in whitening[32] the country, and indeed represented an attempt to annihilate such groups. The second element constitutes the birth control ideology, justified by the need to regulate the population growth that was even more disseminated and effective in the country after the United States economical and political statements regarding the 'demographic boom' (Costa, n.d.). I want to highlight that both the first and second discourses – presented in the Family Planning history in Brazil – need be understood as part of a set of policies that have exerted a disproportionate pressure upon black women's reproductive rights and betrays intrinsic racist and sexist views about black women's sexuality. Such policies in Brazil are quite similar to and have the same impacts documented by Dorothy Roberts (1997) in the case of African-American women. Roberts argues that "Regulating black women's reproductive decisions has been a central aspect of racial oppression" (4). Roberts also calls attention to the importance of black women's autonomy in relation to their bodies and sexuality. Roberts argues that "Reproduction is an important topic, especially to Black people. It is important not only because policies keep Black women from having children but also because these policies persuade people that racial inequality is perpetuated by Black people themselves (5)." As in the U.S, in Brazil there is "a belief that Black procreation is the problem and remains a major barrier to radical change (5)." Thus, confronting oppression in sexual and reproductive health and rights is indeed essential to anti-racist struggle, and this has been one of the great contributions of Black women activists in Brazil.

[32] This discourse regarding whiting the population did not only occur in Brazil, but throughout Latin America and Caribbean.

II.3. When The Black Women's Movement Came Into View

Although I focus on the activism of Black Women's Movement in this entire process of female sterilization and reproductive health control in general, I must recognize that women in general, particularly the ones located in the women's movement, were one of the major forces in the struggle against those issues. Even though Black women have struggled, resisted and organized since slavery, a distinct kind of Black women's organizing emerged in 1974 from the political debates during the third period of the history of family planning in Brazil. As a great expression of this Movement for reproductive health and rights, many Black Women's NGOs came into view during the 1980s and 1990s. This particular emergence is related to the circumstances and demands imposed by the conjuncture that had been unfolding since the 1970s and that profoundly impacted Black women's lives. In the preceding sections I outlined what took place until the 1980s from a historical perspective. The main goal in this section is focused on the activism of Black Women's Movement during that historical period, drawing upon their struggles on reproductive health, and their confrontations in the political scene in relation to state representatives and apparatuses, the Black movement, the mainstream feminist movement, and other social institutions.

According to Roland (n.d.) demographic studies played a significant role in unifying the studies of racial relations and of the population's reproductive health in the 1980s; and such arrangement benefited the studies of health of the Black population. Roland emphasized in this period that the Núcleo de Estudos de População – NEPO (the Population Center Studies) in the University of Campinas published a set of research with reference to topics that advanced the studies of reproductive health among Blacks such as marriage relations, fertility, and infant mortality. These specific studies disclosed key

information regarding disparities among Blacks (*negros*) and Whites, as well, *pretas* (dark-skinned Blacks), *pardas* (light-skinned Blacks) and white women. The data research collected was from 1940-1980 and revealed significant information, such as:

> **(1)** "There were higher rates of celibacy among (pretos) dark-skinned Black women and men; **(2)** There were lower occurrences of legal unions regarding (pretos) dark-skinned Black women and men; **(3)** Amalgamation occurred more frequently between (pretos) dark-skinned Black men and White women than among other groups; **(4)** Among the dark- skinned Black (preta) population the unions between old women and young men were more likely to occur; **(5)** The fertility of dark-skinned Blacks (preta) was very low in the 1940s and 1960s; **(6)** The White women's fertility has continuously decreased since the 40s, and became the lowest one in the 1980s; **(7)**. Parda women have always presented the most elevated rates of fertility; **(8)** The low fertility of dark-skinned Black women (pretas) was related to a higher number of women without children, which in turn, was associated to a much reduced number of dark-skinned Black women (pretas) living with partners, and possibly, under deteriorated health conditions; **(9)** In the 1960s White mothers' children were subjected to infant mortality 44 percent lower than the pardo mother's children, and 33 percent lower than the dark-skinned Black mother's children (Roland, n.d.: 2).

Edna Roland (n.d.) argues that it was from these data generated by the demographic studies, that by "the end of the 1980s the emergent Black Brazilian women's movement [initiated] its political activities, and since that period this movement has in the course of more than one decade defined or re-defined crucial issues such as human rights, public policies concerning education, health, employment, among others matters in partnership with other groups (3)." During the 1970s Black women were inside the mainstream feminist movement, struggling against other feminists to include their specific agenda concerning Black women's reproductive health and sterilization; nevertheless when they realized that their specific needs and demands would not be embraced by the feminist movement, they decided to emancipate themselves and create their own organizing spaces.

In 1988, after the data research from the National Household Survey (PNAD – Pesquisa Nacional de Amostragem Domiciliar) revealed the extremely higher rates of female sterilization in the country Black women's activists initiated a more aggressive activism to confront it. In the 1990s the debates and actions became more concentrated. In 1991 the NGO Geledés (founded in 1988) created the Programa de Saúde do Geledés (Geledés' Health Program) that promoted debate under the topic of "*A Esterilização de Mulheres no Brasil"* (Women's Sterilization in Brazil). The political position defended by this Health Program was criticized both by the members of Geledés, by the Black movement, and by sectors of the mainstream feminist movement.

While the Black movement only discussed and focused on women's sterilization as an instrument of genocide against the Black population and as a case of bodily injury considered a crime by the Penal Code, some groups from the feminist movement claimed and stressed that the sterilization represented a rebel act and a radical refusal of motherhood and that no law should regulate woman's body, because it was the woman's exclusive decision (Roland, n.d.: 3). The most interesting aspects in these arguments is the position occupied by Black women activists in relation to the Black movement's and the feminist movement's perspective. Both movements – Black and feminist – recognized female sterilization as a serious problem, but the first one comprehended this situation as just a matter of race, while the second one only recognized it as a matter of gender. Black women active in both movements, however, looked at female sterilization simultaneously as an issue of race and gender; and so they were equally inside those movements fighting for them to acknowledge this duality regarding female sterilization. Frustrated by the refusal to embrace their agenda – which focused on specific processes that affected Black women – Black feminists had no other alternative than to create their own movement. Thus, the 1980s and the 1990s witnessed a great coming out of Black

women's groups and organizations.[33] A more detailed history of the emergence of the Black women's movement, particularly concerning their organizations will be addressed in Chapter two.

According to Edna Roland (n.d.) the NGO Geledés's Health Program refused the political position of Black militants that having children was a political task of Black women. Geledés argued that such a view did not incorporate the discussion concerned to the reproductive health rights, granting their arguments just in the demographic results of the contraceptive practices. The Black feminists in Geledés that advocated on behalf of the Health Program considered female sterilization a complex phenomenon that originated from multiple circumstances; and they also argued that this situation required the formulation of public policies, an adequate healthcare system, women's education, media campaigns, etc.. Moreover, these feminists argued that in the case of Black and low-income women, sterilization represented much more than an absence of freedom and choice. In contrast to the sectors that wanted to freely allow the practice of sterilization, the Geledés' Health Program supported the regularization of this practice as a way to prevent abuses and to persuade the state and society to seek contraceptive alternatives (Roland, n.d.: 3).

In 1990 the Conselho Estadual da Condição Feminina (The Feminine Condition Council) revisited the debates around the normalization of the female sterilization and created a committee comprised by representatives of distinct sectors of society that would contribute to this issue. The committee elaborated a document with a series of recommendations to be incorporated in the project of normalization. In March 1991 the

[33] It is important also to acknowledge the existence of two distinguishing Black women's organizing that emerged in the city of Rio de Janeiro before 1980s: the Conselho Nacional da Mulher Negra (National Council of Black Women), organized in May 18, 1950, and the organization in 1978 of the REUNIMA – Reunião de Mulheres Aquatume (Aquatume Women's Meeting).

district representative Eduardo Jorge, after finding out about this project proposed and organized a panel to debate this issue in Brazil's Federal House of Representatives. It was from this debate that emerged the first version of the legal project 209/91 (*projeto de lei 209/91*) subscribed by the district representatives such as Eduardo Jorge and Benedita da Silva. After six years of debate in the National Congress, this project became the law that regulated the Family Planning Program. This first version was based in the recommendations of the Conselho Estadual da Condição Feminina of the city of São Paulo (The Feminine Condition Council of the City of São Paulo), and also introduced new suggestions such requiring that the minimum age of applicants be 30 years-old instead of 25 years-old (Roland, n.d.: 4). According to Edna Roland (n.d.), once more a great controversy emerged around the female sterilization issue, the presentation of the project created a big dispute between the distinct sectors that were discussing and following the issue. In addition, the reasons for the disagreements were also distinct from one to another. Segments of the Black Movement, especially in Rio de Janeiro, criticized the district representative Benedita da Silva, sustaining the idea that female sterilization was being used as a practice of genocide to exterminate Blacks. On November 20, 1991 (Black Consciousness Day), in order to confront these political pressures, Benedita da Silva and Senator Eduardo Suplicy proposed the organization of a Parliamentary Inquiry Commission comprised by diverse representatives. This committee initiated its activities in 1992 aiming to investigate the elevated incidence of female sterilization in the country, to verify the existence of eugenic or racist policies and their employment in the reproductive health's sector in the country. The committee collected twenty-seven testimonies, six of which were from the women's movement, and three of which were Black women's activists. Among those collected information I want draw attention to some of the Black women's statements:

1. The accusation that the female sterilization was a genocidal practice against Black population (representative of the CEAP – Centro de Articulação de Populações Marginalizadas [Center of Articulation of Marginalized Population]).
2. The representative of the *Movimento Negro Unificado – MNU* presented significant evidence that pinpointed the existence of racial discrimination related to female sterilization: the first one was concerned with the existence of a document from a Group named *Assessoria e Participação (GAP)* created in the Paulo Maluf government, whose stated goal was to reduce the Black population in Brazil; and the second one referred to a Human Reproduction Research and Assistance Center (*Centro de Pesquisa e Assistência em Reprodução Humana*) that produced campaigns advertisements using racist theatrical pieces in order to justify the need for the existence and support of a birth control policy. This center was administrated by a doctor named Elsimar Coutinho;
3. The third Black woman was from the NGO Geledés. She argued that it was impossible to approach the issue of birth control without considering the consequences of this practice on women; she also emphasized that the demographic policies in the country should consider and respect women's right to determine how they want to live. She argued that in order to comprehend the issue of the elevated sterilization of women in Brazil it was necessary to analyze the relations between rich and poor countries, since the perspective of the Northern Hemisphere was that the Brazilian population was constituted mostly of Blacks, "Third World" and second-class citizens (Roland n.d.: 4).

Edna Roland (n.d.) affirmed that these testimonies reflected the kinds of debates that took place during 1992 in Brazil. Parallel to Black women's mobilization led by the

NGO Gelédes in São Paulo, Black feminists in Rio de Janeiro were also organizing around this issue. In 1990, the Project *Mulher Esterilizada* emerged in the city and was coordinated by the doctor Jurema Werneck (currently a member of the NGO Criola); this project was promoted by the Black organization CEAP – Centro de Articulação de Populações Marginalizadas (Center of Articulation of Marginalized Population) also based in Rio de Janeiro. In 1991, Werneck created the *Campanha Contra a Esterilização em Massa de Mulheres (*The Campaign Against the Massive Sterilization of Women), which denounced the existence of a genocidal plan against the Brazilian Black population. This campaign mobilized the federal and state parliaments, and provoked the appearance of more Parliamentary Inquiry Commissions throughout the country to investigate the accusations. The Commissions were implemented in Rio de Janeiro, Goiás, Pernambuco, Salvador and in the National Congress (Brasília). According to Fátima Oliveira (1998) although this campaign accomplished its objectives in terms of building awareness among the Black Movement's sectors concerning the strategic relevance of "health issues" in relation to the anti-racist struggle, the campaign did not establish alliances on the national level with traditional sectors of the popular movement that have struggled in the health arena (p. 46). In addition, Oliveira points out that the campaign was not able to persuade healthcare professionals and the feminist movement in general to embrace and engage in the issue of racial/ethnic bias that played an important role in the sterilization of women in Brazil (47). In Oliveira's (1998) overview this point was crucial because she affirmed that the nonexistence of racial/ethnic data (*"quesito cor"*) in the customers' records in the healthcare services (such as clinics and hospitals) constituted a barrier to the Black movement's ability to provide the necessary evidence that would validate the campaign's accusation of state-sponsored genocide (47).

In spite of the limitations presented in the type of activities and alliances Black feminists chose to engage in and the results they achieved, the burden produced by female sterilization and correlated issues fostered the development of contemporary Afro-Brazilian women's feminist thought. For instance, several publications appeared in that time and some of the most important ones were*: Esterilização: do controle de natalidade ao genocídio do povo negro* (1990)*; Cadernos Geledés 1: Mulher Negra e Saúde* (1991)*; Cadernos Geledés 2: Esterilization: Impunidade ou Regulamentação?* (1991)*; A Mulher Negra e a esterilização no Brasil: a vivência, o olhar pessoal e o enxergar político* (1991); and *Saúde da Mulher Negra nos E.U.A.* (1988).

Edna Roland (n.d.) affirmed that 1994 represented the establishment of Black feminists in Brazil as a political entity (*sujeito político*). Roland identified the process of preparation to the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, as the period in which the Black Women's Movement emerged with an autonomous political position; and this became even more clear at the National meeting and Declaration of Itapecirica da Serra (Declaração de Itapecirica da Serra). It is important to recognize from the perspective of the African Diaspora, the similarities between the Declaration of Itapecirica da Serra and the Combahee River Collective Statement that was produced by a group of African-American feminists in 1983. This document articulated the unique perspective of the Brazilian Black women's movement. The document was written by the major political forces that were part of the movement in that period and strongly defined the position of this new political entity; it stated, among other things, the following points:

> Brazilian Black women refuse the patriarchal position of the Neo-Malthusians who blame the population growth as the reasons for poverty, hunger, and environmental imbalance; and instead identify the perverse income distribution and land concentration as the real [culprit] responsible for the circumstances of misery in the country.

Black women sustained their critical position regarding surgical sterilization, where the reflexes of massive sterilization of Black women in the country could be perceived in the reduction of the percentage of the Black population in comparison to the previous decade [1980];

Black women also state that reproductive freedom is essential to discriminated ethnicities, claiming that the State should provide them with the necessary conditions for them to exercise their sexuality and reproductive rights, and control their own fertility;

Besides demanding global public policies in terms of employment, food supply, health, sanitation, education and housing, which they consider a prerequisite for the exercise of full citizenship rights, Black women also vindicated the implementation of the Programa de Assistência Integral à Saúde da Mulher – PAISM (Integrated Assistance for Women's Health Program); they also demanded that the health public system implemented programs to prevent and treat high incidence diseases among the Black population that have serious impact on their reproductive health, such as hypertension, sickle cell anemia and myomas;

In addition to the concerns in relation to contraception, the Declaration of Itapecerica put much emphasis the AIDS issue, in the uses of the intravenous drugs, and in the conditions of birth assistance in terms of the well-being of women and child. They also emphasized that the health system should offer and facilitate the access to epidemiological information by racial identification data, for instance they vindicated that the system should employ the mandatory completion of the racial identity's data in the healthcare system's sheet forms (in hospitals, clinics, and any other services); and finally resources to finance the public health in general;

In reference to the decline of fertility, which many times constituted the objective of the government and international institutions, the Brazilian Black women confront to such attempts the right to life and happiness not only as individuals but as members of the same community of destiny (5).[34]

[34] (1). As mulheres negras brasileiras recusaram a posição patriarcal dos neo-malthusianos que responsabilizam o crescimento da população pela pobreza, a fome e o desequilíbrio ambiental, e identificaram a perversa distribuição de renda e a concentração da terra como os verdadeiros responsáveis pelo quadro de miséria no país. (2). As mulheres negras mantiveram sua posição crítica em relação à esterilização cirúrgica, considerando que os reflexos da esterilização em massa de mulheres negras no país se fizeram sentir na redução percentual da população negra em comparação com a década anterior. (3). Todavia, neste documento fundamental, as mulheres negras declararam também que liberdade reprodutiva é essencial para as etnias discriminadas, reivindicando do Estado as condições necessárias para que possam exercer a sua sexualidade e os seus direitos reprodutivos, controlando a sua própria fecundidade. (4). Além de reivindicar políticas públicas globais de emprego, abastecimento, saúde, saneamento básico, educação e habitação, que consideram como pressuposto para o exercício de direitos amplos de cidadania, as mulheres negras reivindicaram também a implantação do Programa de Assistência Integral à Saúde da Mulher

(Excerpts of the Manifest of the Itapecirica da Serra taken from Roland (n.d.): 5)

Finally, according to Roland (n.d.) it was not an accident that the most important political document ever elaborated by the Brazilian Black women's movement, ratified by all the political forces that composed the movement, had been produced in the reproductive health and rights field because of the relevance of that theme within this movement. As a case in point, Roland affirms that in that particular moment of these women's history, the thirteen organizations that were part of the movement were developing activism with regard to reproductive health (5). Despite of the political and communication constrains, the national Campaign Against the Massive Sterilization of Women and all the other activities organized by Black feminists around this issue, was part of an insurrectionary period in the history of Brazilian social movements – the popular, women's, Black, Black women's, health, working class, rural working class movements – throughout the country. Nevertheless it is also important to highlight that in a broader context, similar struggles were occurring throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Such synchronized occurrences lead us to tie such regional circumstances to the international strategies on behalf of worldwide economic development commonly known as neoliberalism and globalization, all structures of domination from the same 'father', colonialism. Such strategies were restructuring the social and political relations, generating tactics to reshape geographically and demographically the so-called "Third

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(PAISM), bem como a implementação no sistema público de saúde de programas de prevenção e tratamento de doenças de alta incidência na população negra que têm sérias repercussões na saúde reprodutiva, tais como a hipertensão, a anemia falciforme e as miomatoses. (5). Além das preocupações com a contracepção, a Declaração de Itapecerica focaliza com bastante ênfase a AIDS, as drogas endovenosas e as condições de atendimento ao parto, motivo de preocupação tanto do ponto de vista da mulher, quanto dos prejuízos para a criança. Grande importância também é dada à democratização da informação epidemiológica, com a introdução do quesito cor nos sistemas de informação em saúde, bem como aos recursos necessários para financiar a saúde pública (Edna Roland, 1993: 5).

World" regions, in order to adjust the locals to the particular needs of this multifaceted global system of domination.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in this chapter I discussed how the process of female sterilization (and the attempts to establish a Family Planning policy) in the country played a major role in the emergence of the Black women's movement, as a strong political entity, particularly the contemporary expression of Black women's NGOs. It also identified the social forces and influential elements – nationally and globally – that took part in the construction of the political, ideological, and cultural circumstances that contributed to the emergence of this Movement. In addition, my research pointed to the existence of two key elements in the attempts to control women's reproduction, especially Black women. On the one hand, there were the attempts to improve the 'race', in order to prevent the racial degradation of the country, which stimulate a Pro-Birth politics in order to assure the racial 'quality' of the population. The Pro-Birth politics endorsed racial mixing, and simultaneously created mechanisms to prevent or diminish the unions, marriage, and sexual relations between men and women of African descent. On the other hand, there were the birth control policies, established to control population growth. Although distinctive, both ideas were about regulating the Black population's reproductive health as a way to exterminate or diminish it; these endeavors were in essence deeply rooted in Brazilian racial common sense. As Roland (n.d.) argues the political discussions around female sterilization formed an opening for the Black women's Movement to produce their own perspectives in the reproductive health field – which was distinguished from the theoretical and political overviews both of the Black

movement as well as the feminist movement; and thus, Black feminism in Brazil was elaborated through this debate (3). Finally, drawing this socio-historical narrative through regional, national and worldwide contexts, I aimed to demonstrate the complexity of Black women's struggles and how these contexts intersect and overlap creating simultaneously local and global structures that oppress, exploit and generate Black women's collective vulnerability while also creating the conditions that prompt Black women's resistance to such oppression.

PART II – BLACK SISTERHOODS AND FEMINISMOS NEGROS [BLACK FEMINISMS] IN BRASIL

The Politics of Sisterhood

> We realize that the only people who care enough about us to work consistently for our liberation are us. Our politics evolve from a healthy love for ourselves, our sisters and our community which allows us to continue our struggle and work (Combahee River Collective, 1982:16).

Part II of this dissertation is comprised by *Chapter III: Four Black Women's Sisterhoods*; *Chapter IV: Black Women's NGOs in Brazil*; and *Chapter V: Feminismo Negro [Black Feminism] in Brazil*. I understand Black women's NGOs and their activism in Brazil as an expression of contemporary Black sisterhood. In this sense, Part II is an attempt to explore the idea of sisterhood or gendered racial solidarity in relation to these NGOs, and through this theoretical framework to examine the commonalities and differences between these organizations I found within this Afro-Brazilian women's sisterhood. Sisterhood speaks to gender solidarity as well as a history of women's organizing within Black communities. Sisterhood has been defined in many ways and explored by women scholars (such as hooks 1981 and 1984, Combahee River Collective 1983, Barbara Smith 1983, Obioma Nnaemeka 1988, Oyèrónké Oyewùmí 2003, among others) across racial identity, economic status and sexual orientation, but my attempt in this chapter is to use this concept in relation to Black women struggles in Brazil in order to demonstrate the emergence of a specific kind of Black feminist practice rooted in

Black women's sense of sisterhood. I utilize bell hooks' (1986) conceptualization of sisterhood who defines it as "an expression of political solidarity" (127) that is rooted in women "[bonding] with other women on the basis of shared strengths and resources (…) such bonding is the essence of Sisterhood" (128). In terms of the elements that characterize these shared strengths and resources that hooks emphasized we can identify at least four major issues concerning Black women's struggles – racism, sexism, classism and heterosexism.

It is also crucial to emphasize the potential of Black sisterhood – theoretically, methodologically, and epistemologically – for comparative analysis across the Diaspora that have enabled Black feminist scholars to produce shared knowledge and build political coalitions through commonalities and across differences in both local and global sites. The 2001 UN World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa, in which organizations and members of the Brazilian Black feminist movement were active participants and leaders at the conference, provides an example of these efforts to build sisterhood among diverse women of African descent. What enabled Black women from across the globe to collectively express and successfully achieve their goals as a group was the result of their high levels of organization, efficiency, and the articulation of Black sisterhood composed by a wide range of Black women's organizations, groups, and Diasporic political networks. A more specific example can be drawn from way that Kimberle Crenshaw (U.S.) and other feminists inserted the concept of intersectionality into the 2001 Durban Conference with the objective of helping Black women to understand the nature of the oppression they have faced. This intervention was critical because it allowed women from Africa and the African Diaspora to simultaneously

identify similarities and particularities in the realities of oppression they have confronted historically, structurally, and in everyday life; it established a common ground for Black women to work together during the conference. The conference became a site where the complex and multiple possibilities of the intersections of race and gender became visible.

Particularly, Afro-Brazilian Feminist Luiza Bairros (2002) argued that the Durban Conference represented a reflexive moment where the world stopped to analyze how racism has historically operated in the world, and Black women played a central role in this moment. Bairros pointed out that it was in this conference that "racism could emerge in its global dimension, as a historical construction that has influenced the way in which wealth and power are distributed, both within the societies as well between nations" (1). I argue that Black sisterhood or gender solidarity lays at the core of African Diaspora struggles for surviving among Black women. Many scholars have written as Black women of the Diaspora, and their own experiences – of racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, racial and gender solidarity – deeply and explicitly inform their analysis. Like many other African-descendent women's movements throughout the globe, Afro-Brazilian women's organizing has emerged from and forged through the articulation of the political categories of race, gender, class, and sexuality in response to the dominant system that has marginalized black women. According to the Afro-Dominican feminist Ochy Curiel (2003),

> The Black women's movement began articulating "race," gender, class, and sexuality as political categories in order to explain the realities of Black women confronting racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism. Identity politics have been one of the primary strategies for groups and collectivities that are dedicated to combating these systems of domination. It consists of a series of acts that seek to reaffirm a subjectivity grounded in the effects of historical facts such colonization and the slavery that made "being black" a devalued, underappreciated, and negated situation (1)[35].

[35] El movimiento de mujeres negras nace articulando "raza" , género, clase y sexualidad como categorías políticas para explicar las realidades de las mujeres negras frente al racismo, sexismo, clasismo y el

Afro-Brazilian feminist Lucia Xavier (2004) defines racism "as an element that sustains vulnerability because it deprives the individual of his/her dignity, power, and citizenship rights (36)." Racism is also defined by Black feminist Barbara Smith (1998) as "our white patriarchal legacy (97)." Sexism is "most often expressed in the form of male domination which leads to discrimination, exploitation, or oppression (hooks 1986:127)." It is important to understand the connection between racism and sexism, which is critical to creating the circumstances that produce Black women's marginalization in the society. As pointed out by Epsy Campbell (2003), an Afro-Costa Rican activist, "Racism and the economic racist model are constructed through sexism, in which the power and resources are under male dominance, as well as women, the household, and the land (2)." In addition, Campbell argues that racism reaffirms sexism and incorporates in its structures sexual distinctions and the idea of men's inherent and natural superiority over women; at the same time, "sexism incorporates racial distinction as a category of stratification, generating a pyramid that is marked by both sexual differentiation and racial distinction (2) (see also Collins 2000 and Smith 1998). African-American Patricia Collins (2000) stated that "heterosexism is a system of power; and similar to oppressions of race or gender that mark bodies with social meanings, heterosexism marks bodies with sexual meanings; and within this logic, heterosexism can be identified as the belief in the inherent superiority of one form of sexual expression over another and thereby the right to dominate (128)."

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heterosexismo . La política de identidad ha sido una de las estrategias prioritarias de los grupos y colectivos que se dedican a combatir estos sistemas de dominacion. Consiste en una serie de acciones que buscan reafirmar una subjetividad contextualizada en los efectos de hechos historicos tales como la colonización y la esclavitud que hacen que el "ser negra" sea una situacion desvalorizada, despreciada y muchas veces negada (1).

Regarding class discrimination among Black women, Barbara Smith (1998) points out that "almost none of us have class privilege" (18). While I agree with Smith's argument, it is also important to take into consideration that within the limited socio-economic status Black women have had in contemporary society on a global scale, there has been differentiation among this group concerning educational background that need be taken into consideration. For example, an increasing number of Black women have acquired secondary education or post-secondary education including earning a college degree and attending graduate school; compared with the levels of education Black women achieved five generations ago this is a new condition. Although racism continues to place Black women in many of the same circumstances of discrimination and inequality, we cannot deny that such increased access to educational opportunities has resulted in some benefits for those women whose families had little or no formal education. In my own family, my grandmothers, mother and aunts were illiterate or just have an elementary school level of education; but my sisters, cousins and I, corresponding to one generation ahead, all pursued college degrees. I am the first woman of my family to hold master and doctoral degrees. U.S. Black feminist bell hooks (1986) argued that "class is a serious political division between women (135)". According to hooks (1984) "it is only by analyzing racism and its function in capitalist society that a thorough understanding of class relationships can emerge. Class struggle is inextricably bound to the struggle to end racism (3)."

Racism, sexism, classism and heterosexism have been maintained by institutional and social structures; they produce both privilege and exclusion in terms of gender and sexuality (see hooks 1984 and 1986, Lorde 1996, Carneiro 2000, Werneck 2001, and Xavier 2004). This discussion is crucial because these four forms of oppression have simultaneously served to unify, and also, to divide Black women's struggles; and it has

been more common to address Black women's similarities than their very real differences. Thus, the narratives in Part I are also part of my efforts to bring out Black women's differences within Brazilian Black women's NGOs.

Divergences among Black Women

Black feminist scholars and activists such as bell hooks (1986), the Combahee River Collective (1982), Barbara Smith (1998), and Audre Lorde (1996) among others pointed out that sexism, racism, classism, and heterosexism can function as barriers to building up and achieving political solidarity between women, feminists and activists. Thus, although it is important to emphasize the solidarity among Black women's organizing, it is also crucial to understand that working in solidarity does not mean there is an absence of conflict and disagreement, a crucial aspect that needs be taken seriously within the Black women's movement. Thus, within the Black feminist movement racial, class, gender/sexuality-based, and age conflicts generated by diverse distinctions such as skin color and phenotypical differences (dark and light skinned, curly and straight hair, etc), sexual orientation, religious affiliations, regional origin, socio-economic status and educational backgrounds, point of view concerning controversial topics such as abortion, lesbian and gay civil rights, single mothers, sex workers, among others continue to be a critical area of struggle. In many cases, these conflicts are so devastating that they can affect the possibilities of Black women activists living and working together in social spaces. Black feminist bell hooks (1986) argued that

> Women of colour must confront our absorption of white supremacist beliefs, 'internalized racism', which may lead us to feel self-hate, to vent anger and rage at injustice at one another rather than at oppressive forces, to hurt and abuse one another, or to lead one ethnic group to make no effort to communicate with another (..) to resent and hate one another, or to be competitive with one another (134).

I want to employ hooks' ideas to focus specifically on Black women and sisterhood because I have observed that the problems listed by the author do not appear only within an environment of diverse groups of women of color, but these difficulties arise within Black or African descendent women's groups. By considering this perspective, it is not my intent to deny or diminish the relevance of hooks' point and her critique the situation of discrimination Black women have suffered in broad sisterhoods often composed by other women of color and/or white women; but here I really want to encourage Black feminist scholars and activists to also look in our own backyard, work through our differences, and strengthen our communities to face the discrimination of the feminist movement in general. Finally, hooks (1986) calls our attention to the fact that,

> Division between women of colour will not be eliminated until we assume responsibility for uniting (not solely on the basis of resisting racism) to learn about our cultures, to share our knowledge and skills, and to gain strength from our diversity. We need to do more research and writing about the barriers that separate us and the ways we can overcome such separation (134).

A key aspect to address in this discussion is that two main issues need be demystified when we analyze Black women's struggles against system of domination: "the idea of common oppression" and "victim identity" (hooks, 1986:127-128). In her work, hooks problematizes both ideas and criticizes "the vision of sisterhood evoked by bourgeois women's liberationists (127)," but I want to employ her critiques in an exercise

to examine the position of Black women in relation to these two ideas. Although there is no question that Black women have been simultaneously impacted by sexism, racism, classism, and heterosexism, there has been an "unintended consequence"[36] concerning to such communalities, which I suggest is a kind of color-blind understanding about the way forms of domination impact Black women's lives and status, whereby Black women's oppression is understood through a frame that ignores existing exposure and vulnerability to oppression that are related to these women's identities and position in society. This color-blind understanding has been reproduced by Brazilians as a whole. The notions of common oppression and/or victims by the same system of subjugation have been misunderstood in terms of Black women's oppression. The notion of "common oppression" can mislead Black activists in terms of being able to recognize the multiple forms of discrimination that affect Black women's lives; and it will only be from developing an understanding of such complexities and working collectively to overcome such misunderstanding will Black women be able to create political solidarity as a powerful tool for social changes. The unified view of Black women as "victims" also represents a risk because it can also trap Black women in a discourse and practice that immobilizes them from taking action or responsibility to confront the mechanisms and constrains that have suppressed them. More importantly, the idea of perpetual victimization disregards and neutralizes Black women's ability of take control of their lives or make their own decisions. I am not ignoring the reality that Black women are

[36] Although the author is addressing a distinct issue related to education, this concept, as well as the paragraph ideas, were taken and inspired from Kevin Foster's (2005: 490) conceptualization. Foster, Kevin M. "Diet of disparagement: the racial experiences of black students in a predominantly white university. International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, Vol. 18, No. 4, July-August 2005, 489-505.

victims of racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination, and of course there is a need to bring that up because these women's suffering is not a delusion; but keeping Black women within the box of victimization box and looking at them only through such lens is often a consequence of racist, sexist, classist and heterosexist discourses about them. Thus, we must acknowledge Black women's conditions of oppression and the problems they face, provide the resources to improve their well-being, and empower them to be in charge of the decision make about their lives and family. Therefore, as an unintended consequence of this view many scholars, activists and Black women's organizations have walked in the dangerous road of embrace a "myopic ideology that leaves us ill-equipped to identify[37]" differences (demands, perspectives and politics) within the Black feminist movement. We need to recognize these women as political actors, subjects of their lives and not merely passive objects of victimization (Freire, Ransby).

We must acknowledge such internal major constraints amongst ourselves in order to sustain our commitment to political resistance and build up our solidarity. Coming from an extremely conservative, apolitical, Black working-class background in southern Brazil, I initially had a hard time and still struggle in many circumstances, to overcome my own limits to build solidarity with this broad and diverse group of Black women in Brazil. Criola, a non- governmental organization (NGO/ONG) was the first site where I confronted these enduring, but productive, divergent realities. This feeling will never go away, the feeling of being constantly challenged and insecure of doing everything in my power to avoid being racist, sexist, classist and heterosexist, or reproducing other forms

[37] See Kevin Foster (2005:490).

of discrimination. In other words, being a Black feminist is a 7 days a week, 24-hour, full-time job, an exercise that made me conscious about the power that lays inside me to turn enact the oppression of another person. It is also an exercise to produce inside of me a self-struggle to prevent me to use the discourse of victim as an excuse to not give my commitment and skills to fighting against oppression.

My goal in these four chapters are to approach the commonalities and divergences of Black women's organizations as privileged sites to strengthen their struggles against "politics of domination as manifest in imperialist, capitalist, racist, sexist (hooks 1986:126)," classist and heterosexist oppression.

Some of the issues and projects that Brazilian Black women organizations have worked on are female sterilization exploitation, abortion rights, gender, sexual and domestic violence, healthcare, education, housing and living wage. They have also done many workshops and educational activities on Black feminism in Black communities, social movement conferences and public institutions (such as hospitals, schools, and Brazilian federal, state and district House of Representatives).

My ethnographic study reveals that Afro-Brazilian feminists who work in NGOs had invested deeply in two main practices: the empowerment of Black women within their own communities, and the development of local, national and transnational advocacy networks, and coalition-building. In general, Black women's NGOs have been raising awareness about: racism, sexism, lesbophobia,[38] homophobia, gender, domestic

[38] Lesbophobia is a concept that has been used to characterize the kind of prejudice, discrimination, harassment, abuse that target lesbian woman.

and sexual violence against women; health inequality, among other issues within the Black community and the society as whole. My analysis and narratives regarding Black women's organization are based on my fieldwork and research in four Black Women's NGOs – Criola, ACMUN, Maria Mulher and Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa. These four NGOs represent a sample of the varied and diverse Black women's organizations founded in Brazil. In the next pages I will present two tables that map (1) the emergence of Black women's organizing from the 1950s through the 2000s, and (2) the most important gatherings and meetings that Brazilian Black women activists have participated in since the 1950s.

Chapter III: Four Black Women's NGOs, Four Sisterhoods

INTRODUCTION

This Chapter explores the social and organizational context of the four Black Women's Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) that I researched in Brazil – Criola, ACMUN (Associação Cultural de Mulheres Negras), Maria Mulher and Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa. As indicated in the Methodology part of this study, I interviewed 65 collaborators between women and men, of whom 58 were Black women. The collaborators were from several locations and districts of the state of Rio de Janeiro, and from the cities of Porto Alegre and Passo Fundo, both located in the state of Rio Grande do Sul; and each collaborator was linked to one of these four NGOs. My research and fieldwork revealed that the socio-organizational structure and political work of these organizations are mainly based on two dimensions: identity and resistance, which will be explored through the ethnographic description.

This Chapter is divided in two sections. Section I addresses the five common elements that I found as components of my collaborators' identity, which are age, racial identity, socio-economic background, sexual orientation, and ancestry. For each of these elements I present a brief explanation and respective socio-demographic data organized in tables. Regarding age the research data demonstrated that most of the women involved with Black women's NGOs are between the ages of 20 and 69 years old, comprising 86% of the Black women I interviewed. The racial identity data among these women revealed

some of the aspects concerning the complex system of racial identification in Brazil that has been influenced by two major system of classification: the IBGE[39] – Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics classification that divide the population in Branco (white), Pardo (light skinned or browns), Preto (dark skinned Black or Black); and the Black Movement classification that utilize: Branco (white) and Negro – pardos (light skinned or browns) and pretos (dark skinned or blacks). One relevant aspect of such classification is the relevance of the testimony of light skinned Blacks, refusing to be classified in the category of pardo that is seen for many activists as a form of dis-indentification that challenges their claims concerning that Black population are ones most affected by racial and social inequalities in the country. The socio-economic background data also brings interesting issues regarding the identity of the women that work directly and indirectly in the NGOs, mainly characterized by domestic workers, Afro-Brazilian high priestesses, informal workers, activists and intellectuals. Particularly, this essay attempts to demonstrate how domestic workers and Afro-Brazilian high priestesses emerge as central social actors in the social and political formation of Black women's NGOs. In addition, the data regarding schooling revealed that the majority of these Black women have college degrees (41.4%), followed by secondary school (38%). On the topic of sexual orientation the group constitutes 84.5% of heterosexual women, 1.7% of heterosexual (with bisexual experiences) and 13.8% of lesbians. Another interesting aspect that I found out later in my research is that, although it was significant to the study, the low number of Black lesbians I interviewed was not

[39] IBGE – Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) an agency responsible to the national census.

enough to elaborate and analyze crucial information regarding distinction among the politics of Black women's organizations; thus this issue calls for a re-organization of my research strategies and a return to fieldwork to collect such information. Finally, although the data about ancestry will not be analyzed here at length, my research revealed that it is an important component of Black women NGOs' identities. Ancestry appears in the women histories and testimonies linked to religion and their everyday lives. It is also in this subsection that I highlight the role of Afro-Brazilian high priestess (mainly from *Candomblé* and *Umbanda*), called in Brazil Mães de Santo or Yalorixás. These women have contributed to the reproduction and maintenance of Afro-Brazilian religions, tradition and culture. Nonetheless, the research also shows the existence of other groups of Black women, associated to the Catholic and Protestant Churches who have also occupied major positions in their religious groups and have also engaged with Afro-Brazilian tradition and culture as a legacy in their communities. Religion seems to occupy a central role in the lives of my research collaborators and such influence has been brought into the work they develop in the organizations. Basically the majority of the women I interviewed are affiliated to Afro-Brazilian religion (38%) and Catholicism (29%), and there is an interesting group that embraces both religious practices (8.6%).

Section II, the last one, discusses the second dimension of the socio-organizational structure and political work of Black women's NGOs, which is resistance. First, I examine these contemporary organizations' specific strategies and theories of social organization and justice and how they are translated into examples of resistance in the Brazilian society. My study shows that these specific strategies and theories are based on two major poles: (1) they focus on the formation of Black women's collective

racial and political identity, which aim to empower and support women in their communities; and (2) these NGOs' forms of resistance have worked on the basis of solidarity through networks; forming alliances with other marginalized groups they have constructed more effective strategies and discourses that impact public policy. It seems that through this scheme they have been more successful in confronting Brazilian State power and call society's attention concerning the negative effects of racial and gender inequality. Lastly, the section presents the brief histories and organizational structures of the four Black women's NGOs I researched, such as particular aspects of their history and social identity, how they structured their missions, goals, projects and programs. In addition, the section presents the portraits[40] of each activist I interviewed.

How the Personal Turn into Political and Public Action

In the beginning of the afternoon of November 9, 2007, a group of Afro-Brazilian women begin arriving at Criola's office located in the downtown. They came from distinct and distant places from the city of Rio de Janeiro and also from the district of São João de Meriti. I noticed that some of the women dressed different from others. A particular group was dressed up with colorful Afro-clothing attire such as embroidered blouses, blouses with flared? sleeves, wrap-skirts, dashiki, head ties, and head-wraps; gold, silver and colorful sparkled shoes and sandals, colorful collars, rings and bracelets. I quickly discovered that they were the *yalorixás* or *mães de santo* (the Afro-Brazilian religious higher priestesses). I was incredible amazed by their presence in the room , and

[40] Each photo appearing in this essay were legally consented and authorized by the women represented.

could not take my eyes off them. They had a body language and attitude that exuded authority and power, which forced us to immediately pay respect to them. They were Afro-Brazilian religious leaders, representatives of the Candomblé and/or Umbanda traditions. On the other hand, the other women that also came to the meeting were the *yalorixás* supporters (the *apoiadoras*); they were *yalorixás*' daughters and worked with these high priestesses in their temples (*Casas de Santos* or *Barracões*). The women supporters were dressed with regular and simple clothes; they had collars and bracelets but they were simple apparels, nothing compared to the ones the *yalorixás* exhibited. This entire group of Afro-Brazilian women constituted the *Iyá Agba* – Rede de Mulheres Negras Frente à Violência Contra a Mulher (Black Women's Network to Confront Violence against Women), in the state of Rio de Janeiro. The *Iyá Agba* network was composed by seven groups:

Ilê Axé Oyá Topé e Xangô Alafim -Iyá Amélia da Oxum Ilê Axé Iyá Mangele Ô - Mãe Tânia de Iemanjá

Ilê Axé Ala Koro Wo - Mãe Torodi
Ilê Axé Ôpó Afonjá - Mãe Regina Lúcia de Iemanjá
Ilê Omulu e Oxum - Mãe Meninazinha da Oxum
Ilê Axé Yá Bory Mesa - Mãe Vânia de Oyá
CRIOLA.

The meeting for that afternoon was to plan what and how they wanted to do to raise awareness among the population concerning violence against Black women, and women in general, in the state. We spent the entire afternoon discussing strategies to accomplish these goals. As a result the group decided to organize a seminar *Mulheres Negras Enfrentando a Violência* (Black Women Confronting Violence) on November 28, 2006 from 9am -5pm at Casa da Cultura da Baixada Fluminense, Rua Machado de Assis, in Vilar dos Teles, São João de Meriti. Each higher priestess was responsible to lecture in the seminar about a specific topic regarding violence against Black women and discuss

how they have addressed this issue in their community. They were to explain the work they have realized in their communities through religious services, and also what have been the challenges and the strategies. The group also organized a list of state and district authorities that should be invited to the seminar to respond about what they have done and what they could do to confront violence against women in the state. Among the invited authorities were the chief police woman of the special police department to confront violence against women, law representatives (such as public defectors, judges, and lawyers), representatives of human rights and women councils, center for women security and protection, members of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Legislative Assemblies, among others. In addition, the higher priestesses invited a great number of community leaders to participate and speak out.

The official invitation and program of the Seminar:

Iyá Agba
Rede de Mulheres Negras frente à Violência contra a Mulher

É com satisfação que convidamos V. Sr.ª para participar do Seminário **Mulheres Negras Enfrentando a Violência**, promovido pela *Iyá Agba – Rede de Mulheres Negras frente à Violência contra a Mulher,* no dia:

28 de novembro de 2006 de 9h às 17h
Casa da Cultura da Baixada Fluminense
Rua Machado de Assis, L. 12, Qd. 84.
Vilar dos Teles, São João de Meriti.

Iyá Agba – Rede de Mulheres Negras frente à Violência contra a Mulher é formada por sete organizações de mulheres da região metropolitana do Rio de Janeiro e conta com o apoio de UNIFEM -Fundo das Nações Unidas para as Mulheres. O seu principal objetivo é fortalecer as mulheres e promover o controle social das políticas públicas para o enfrentamento da violência, a partir dos saberes e da tradição afro-brasileira. Fazem parte desta Rede:

Ilê Axé Oyá Topé e Xangô Alafim -Iyá Amélia da Oxum

Ilê Axé Iyá Mangele Ô - Mãe Tânia de Iemanjá
Ilê Axé Ala Koro Wo - Mãe Torodi
Ilê Axé Ôpó Afonjá - Mãe Regina Lúcia de Iemanjá
Ilê Omulu e Oxum - Mãe Meninazinha da Oxum
Ilê Axé Yá Bory Mesa - Mãe Vânia de Oyá
CRIOLA, organização de mulheres negras.

A presença de V. Sr.ª é fundamental para conhecer a experiência desenvolvida pela Rede, bem como para construção de parcerias contra a violência. Neste sentido, o Seminário está organizado em dois momentos: o primeiro voltado para a apresentação da análise do impacto do racismo e outras formas de violências contra a mulher e das ações desenvolvidas pela Rede frente a esta situação. Já o segundo momento está voltado para o diálogo com organizações governamentais e não governamentais envolvidas com o tema.

Certas de contar com o apoio de V.S.ª solicitamos a sua confirmação pelo telefone 2518-6194 ou e-mail criola@criola.org.br aos cuidados de Aline Gonçalves.

Atenciosamente,

Iyá Agba - Rede de Mulheres Negras frente à Violência contra a Mulher.

PROGRAMAÇÃO

28 de novembro de 2006 de 9h às 17h

9h - Abertura

Boas Vindas

Apresentação do esquete teatral "Navio Negreiro".

Alunos e alunas do Projeto Aprendendo a Aprender da instituição AMALYRA.

Canto para os Orixás

Iyá Amélia da Oxum e Iyá Regina Lúcia de Iyemanjá

9h45min - Iyá Agba - Experiências e Saberes das Mulheres Negras na Promoção da Autonomia e da Cidadania.

Expositoras:

Iyá Amélia da Oxum - Ilê Axé Oyá Topé e Xangô Alafim

Iyá Tânia de Iemanjá - Ilê Axé Iyá Mangele Ô
Iyá Torodi de Ogum - Ilê Axé Ala Koro Wo
Iyá Regina Lúcia de Iemanjá - Ilê Axé Ôpó Afonjá
Mãe Meninazinha da Oxum - Ilê Omulu e Oxum
Iyá Vânia de Oyá - Ilê Axé Yá Bory Mesa

Coordenadora: Sonia Beatriz dos Santos
12h – Performance – Companhia dos Comuns

12h30min - Almoço

14h - Racismo e Violência contra a Mulher: Buscando Parcerias e Construindo Políticas Públicas para as Mulheres.

Expositora e Expositores: Representantes das esferas federal, estadual e da região metropolitana do Rio de Janeiro.

Coordenadora: Iyás Torodi e Tânia de Iemanjá

17h – Encerramento

III.1. IDENTITY (IDENTIDADE)

Identity issues have always been attached to the activism and strategies of Black women's NGOs and there were many ways in which I could approach it in my study. In this Chapter I chose to examine the aspects of identity that I consider the most relevant ones in order to reveal the social, demographical, economical and cultural formation of the women who are part of and/or circulate around contemporary Black women organizations, particular NGOs, in Brazil. In addition I also want to offer a view that maps these women identity concerning their struggles to secure their own future and that of their families.

III.1.1. Age

Table 1: Age Groups

Age	%
Under 18	1.7
18-19	1.7
20-29	**15.5**
30-39	12
40-49	**27.5**
50-59	**19**
60-69	12
70-79	5.2

The data shows that the majority of the women involved with Black women's NGOs concentrated between the ages of 20 and 69 years old, which corresponds with 86% of the women I interviewed; particular I want to highlight the age group of 40-49

that concentrates the majority of women that is 27.5%, followed by the group of 50-59 with 19%. Such data demonstrate that NGOs are more likely to have mature adult women instead of youngest ones. In this regard, I recall one of my younger collaborators, Grace, 32 years old, telling me that the more experienced women in her NGOs are the oldest and that it is difficult to compete with them in terms of promoting ideas and projects in the organization. She said: "they just don't retire, Sonia, they stay forever! And I respect them, but my peers and I want some space to work on our ideas in the organization, so it would be great if they let us do it" (passage taken from Grace's interview, May 2007). I observed an interesting distinction in terms of political references between my collaborators under 40 years old that is the participation in student political movements. Unlike my collaborators under 40 years old, most of the women in their mid-40s and above claimed to have participated in some kind of student organization while in school, illustrating the importance of student organizations as political sites in Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s, though the 21 years of military dictatorship (1964-1985) destroyed most students groups. For example, I was born in 1969[41] at the peak of anti-democratic political sentiments, and during my high school years at the end of the 1980s, I did not participated in any student movement because I believed they focused on organizing parties and did not have anything to do with the struggles to help people that lived in poverty. My political engagement occurred within the Presbyterian Church I attended which developed projects in low income communities located near the church's building. My own political experiences indicate how some of these young activists might have a dis-indentification with both student groups that ignore black and poor peoples' needs, and black women's organizations that have been unable to incorporate youth leadership and interests.

[41] It was the anti-democratic period of the Military dictatorship in Brazil that ran in the country from 1964-1984.

III.1.2. Racial Identity

Fabiana, a 49 years old, dark skinned Black woman with very straight hair (in some context hair texture can serve as a biological/aesthetic feature of whitening a person[42]) told me: "we should stop asking those questions about if you are Black, or white, etc, because racism does not matter anymore, this brings division, conflict." I did not force her to self-identify, as I observed that she was very uncomfortable in saying, "I am Black and *preta,*" and I told her, "you don't have to answer this question, let's skip it." She insisted, "no, I want to answer…," which she did and identified as Black. Since I arrived at her home for the interview I realized that I would face resistance to racial classification from her, because, when I came to her front door I was astonished when she said: "Oh! You are literally a '*Crioula!,*'" a term that in Brazil historically have been used to define *very* dark-skinned Black people like myself, with strong African phenotypes such as curly hair, thick lips, big hips, etc. Although Fabiana did not want to use the IBGE categories that were the classification system I was employing in my research, her attitude was very interesting because her identification of me as *Crioula* shows that she adheres to these very racial categories, contrary to her testimony in which she affirmed "racism did not matter anymore." She thought she was making a joke, because she knew I was a member of the NGO Criola, and I was really a *crioula*. Fabiana also started our conversation with a speech about why issues of racism were "a total waste of time," and then she called her friend who lived across the street to testify

that she had married a white man, has a biracial daughter that has very light skin and straight hair, had how she has been discriminated against by her professor --that had my skin complexion and type-- and how much she also disapproved of these conversations about racism. As Fabiana's friend stated that Black people could be racist too, she claimed that she believed it was better if people lived in harmony, because we were all the same, all equal. It was a very tense but rich conversation as Fabiana (and her friend) relaxed, they stopped to intimidate me and I managed to finish the interview in good spirits and with confidence; I did not interviewed Fabiana's friend, but I could not avoid her opinion about some of the issues I asked Fabiana because she wanted her friend to stay in the room and participate of our conversation.

My experience with Fabiana displayed in the previous paragraph, reflect the polemics around racial identity's classification in Brazil. An interesting aspect of the group of collaborators I researched concerns the fact that they mostly identified themselves with the category preta *(o)*, which means a dark-skinned Black person. I used two types of racial identification in my interview and asked the participants to indicate their racial identity according to their understanding:

- The IBGE[43] – Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) classification: Branco (white), Pardo (light skinned), Preto (dark skinned Black or Black);
- The Black Movement classification: Branco (white) and Negro - pardos and pretos (Blacks and browns).

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[42] See Kia Lilly Caldwell. (2007). Negras in Brazil: Re-envisioning Black Women, Citizenship, and the Politics of Identity. Rutgers University Press.

[43] IBGE – Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) an agency responsible to the national census.

In Brazil, the system of racial classification is based on the criterion of race/color (raça/cor), which has led people to identify themselves and others by skin color and other phenotypic characteristics such as hair, as reflected in official demographic statistics of the IBGE that created a system of classification that divides the Black population into *pardos* (light-skinned Blacks) and *pretos* (dark-skinned Blacks). However, the Black Movement has unified these two categories and has maintained that *pardos* and *pretos* are Black people, which in Portuguese is the term *Negros*. However, in many contexts, to identify as *pardo* has been a way to not identify as Black or *Negro*, but it is still a complex issue and depending on how light-skinned a person is, he/she can be interpellated or even self-identify as white. During my fieldwork, I observed that the majority of light-skinned Black collaborators (that could be considered as *pardos*) self-identified as *pretos* when I gave them the option of locating themselves within the IBGE racial classification system. Most of them explained that they would not choose *pardo* because of two reasons: it was not a type of race/color identification, that the term had no meaning for them, and also that if they choose to be *pardo,* it would be a way of claiming that they were not Blacks. Such testimony reveals that many of the Black collaborators I interviewed are rejecting the category of pardo (a) as a form of racial identification. They want to be considered Black (*Negro*) and not something else, or in the worst case scenario, being considered white: "it would not be right, we need to stand up for ourselves! We need to show that the Black population does exist!" many of them said. Thus, I observed this form of political consciousness among the majority of my light-skinned Black collaborators who resisted the attempt of the State to whiten them or deny their Blackness. In the case of other light-skinned Black participants who did not choose the *preto* category I observed a sort of embarrassment to choose the item *pardo*. They provided explanations for their uneasiness with the category with comments such as:

"Ah! You know this thing about color is not right," "this does not matter because above all we are all human beings," "we are all equal individuals," or "we have the same opportunities, these things do not matter anymore." To observe light-skinned activists identify as Black is not a surprise. What is important here is their testimony to Brazilian society, concerning that these people have no doubts that they are part of the Black population. The most important question here is, why it matters that light-skinned people in my research have identified as Blacks. These people's testimonies debunk common sense and academic racial discourses in the country that state that it is a contradiction to consider the so called *pardos* and/or *mulatos* as part of the Black population because of their raced-mixed origin. The identification of the participants as Blacks in Brazil is very important issues in terms of identify process given the inequalities among Blacks and whites. There have been political and economic attempt in Brazil to disqualify Black activists claim that Afro-Brazilians have been the ones among the total Brazilian population that live to experience the worse levels of exclusion, disparities, poverty, indigence, violence and injustice. One of the main strategies to do such a disqualification is through light skinned Blacks self-identifying as white. Such position directly impact studies based on racial disparities. Most important it affects and disqualifies affirmative action's policies and programs created to diminish and/or eliminate the inequalities within the Black population. For example, when studies separate light skinned Blacks from the dark skinned ones, they use to do so representing the light skinned as non-Blacks, which will impact the number of Black population. From this perspective, i.e. take the light skinned from the Black group automatically debunk the claims and analysis that state that the higher rates of inequality are located among Black people.

III.1.3. Socio-Economic Background

My research demonstrated that the Black women linked to the NGOs as staff, collaborators or volunteers comprise (or comprised) the following categories: domestic workers, Afro-Brazilian high priestess, informal workers, activists and intellectuals. I argue that the ways domestic workers, religious women and informal workers have managed to transform their own lives and that of their children, particularly their daughters, granddaughters and nieces into intellectuals (college degree black women) is indeed very revolutionary. Being a domestic worker and/or informal worker (such as craft woman, dressmaker, among other) are considered inferior status among the professional ranks, especially because these activities are linked to slavery, and carry assumptions concerning low intellectual skills and education. Working for white, middle and upper middle class families in their homes, factories or stores these women endured a hard life, but many of them were smart enough to create strategies for surviving that guarantee that their daughters and granddaughters could have a different future. As an example we can look at Iara's case, a 59 years old dark-skinned Black woman. She told me that her mother and grandmother worked hard to guarantee that her sister and her had a better life and could study without need to worry about work, they went to school all the way until college:

> My family, both my mother's and father's family, have a history of struggle against racism. Of course I know they incorporated that influence of racism that states the idea that 'Blacks need to be the bests, you have to study because if not, nobody will believe that you are important, you have to be among the top ten in your class or above it, because if not nobody will believe in your potential, they will not give you an opportunity;' they would say that to my sister and I. Then, there was this idea (influenced by racism) to say that it would be the White people that would give us a chance, but my family was always very humble, hard

> workers, and were clear that they belong to the Black group. For example, my mother and grandmother perceived that they worked in families' houses where there was discrimination; they would say: 'they would treat us well, but like servants, they were Jewish; then we got a promotion and were hired to work in their clothes factory'; my mother and grandmother were also dressmakers; this was a promotion, but the Jewish family would call us all their black women's pet (as negrinhas de estimação).
>
> Another experience regarding Black women's treatment that I cannot forget was my mother accounts of how she was always impressed with my great-grandmother's back, who was a slave that had so many huge and deep scars because of the strong way she was whipped. However, when the abolition came and she was free to leave the master's house, she had to stay there because she had nowhere to go, and she continued to work for them, being exploited by them. Even when she got her own home they were still close to her, interfering in her life; for example, every furniture and object that this family did not wanted anymore, they would send to my great-grandmother's house, without asking if she wanted them or not; they never asked her opinion about it. It was before the 1913s, she died when she was 120 years-old.

This treatment that Iara's mother and grandmother received from the family they worked for as domestic workers leads me to other of my interviewers' experiences. In many cases these Black women reported that they would be sent very early, between their 9-12 years old to work for a family and live with them. In many cases the family they went to work for was a distant relative, their godmother or godfather, a close friend of the family, which did not prevent them from being abused by them. Some of my interviewers would state at first that the family would respect and like them, that they would be treated as a members of the family; but then as the conversation went more deeply to explore such relationship these women started to report and remember experiences of mistreatment, and in many cases recognized for the first time (during the interview with me) that they were treated unfairly, exploited, abused. What I observed in many of the women's report is that they were alone, afraid and vulnerable, that they had

been abandoned by their real family; and that the new family that they had to coexist with and work for became the only kind of link of 'affection' they had to feel safe.

The table below demonstrates the professional background and/or occupation of the collaborators:

Table 2: Professional background and/or occupation

Professional background and/or occupation	Total	%
Accounting	**1**	**1.7**
Afro-Brazilian high priestess	**10**	**17.2**
Assistant of Project (NGO)	**3**	**5.2**
Coordinator (organization)	**1**	**1.7**
Doctor	**2**	**3.4**
Domestic worker	**4**	**6.9**
Educational assistant	1	1.7
Cleaning worker (public school)	**1**	**1.7**
Hairdresser +nail polish professional	1	1.7
Health educator (NGO)	**2**	**3.4**
Housewife	3	5.2
Informal worker	**4**	**6.9**
Librarian	**1**	**1.7**
Nurse	**2**	**3.4**
Project coordinator (governmental agency)	1	1.7
Project coordinator (community)	**1**	**1.7**
Psychologist	**3**	**5.2**
Retired (Domestic worker)	**1**	**1.7**
Retired (Public school cooker and health assistant)	1	1.7
Retired (Administrator)	1	1.7
Retired (Health administrative assistant in public hospital)	1	1.7
Public school caretaker	**1**	**1.7**
Social worker	**1**	**1.7**
Student	**2**	**3.4**
Teacher	**7**	**12**
Trash collector	1	1.7
No occupation at all (no income)	1	1.7
All collaborators	58	100

Among my Black women collaborators their salaries ranged from R$ 8.000,00 (approximately US$4,000/month) to having no income at all. High family income is directly correlated to years of schooling among the women and their husbands and

partners, or other family members in the household. The women who held college degrees and/or a graduate degree had family incomes that ranged from R$1,000 (US$500.00) to R$ 8.000 (US$4,000). Among the 58 Black women collaborators, two had elementary school level education (3.4%); nine had middle school (15,5%); twenty-two had secondary school (38%); twenty-four had college degrees (41,4%); five had graduate school degree (8.6%); and five had post-college degree/specialization (8.6%); one undeclared. See table below.

Table 3: Years of School

Years of School	Total	(%)
Elementary School	Complete:1 Incomplete: 1 Total: 2	3.4
Middle School	Complete: 1 Incomplete: 8 Total: 9	**15.5**
Secondary School	Complete: 17 Incomplete: 5 Total: 22	**38**
College Degree[44]	Complete: 10 Incomplete: 4 ***women classified in Graduate School (5) and Post-College degree (5)*** Total: 24	**41.4**
Graduate School (M.A., PhD)	Complete: 3 Incomplete: 2 Total: 5	8.6
Post-College Degree (Specialization)	Complete: 4 Incomplete: 1 Total: 5	8.6
Undeclared	1 Total: 1	1.7

The predominance of Black women with at least secondary education and college degrees is a very good indicator of Black women's organizations' role in encouraging the population to improve their education. Many of these women returned to school after

[44] I also included here all the women that hold a graduate school degree (5) and a post-college (5) degree specialization.

many years, and they have encouraged younger generations to continue their education beyond secondary school. Black women's NGOs have created many projects to promote these efforts and to build partnerships with institutions that support Black women's education across generations such as the IBEU – Instituto Brasil - Estados Unidos (Brazil and United States Institute) that has provided English courses. These NGOs have also been able to secure some private university scholarships as well as scholarships for children and teenagers that provide school supplies, money for transportation, and college preparatory courses.

III.1.4. Sexual Orientation

To ask my collaborators about their sexual orientation sometimes presented a challenge because some of them felt offended and/or felt uncomfortable, and I also had to face my own insecurity and discomfort with their reactions. I struggled to ask the question without appearing to be homophobic or lesbophobic, because for many people to declare as lesbian or gay is still considered problematic, a risk, and so many of them want to keep their sexual orientation as a private matter. I told people that this was an optional question, so I would say to them: "would you allow me to ask questions about your sexual orientation? This is optional, you can refuse to answer." The more people I interviewed, the more comfortable I felt with asking the question, but there always existed a bit of tension between my desire to know their sexual orientation and how it related to their life experiences and activism and their unwillingness to focus on sexual orientation as an important aspect of their identities. All the collaborators agreed to

disclose their sexual identities, and some of their responses reflected that their sexuality was not a problematic issue for them; for example some of them would say: "Oh! Yes, I have nothing to hide," "Yes, I am lesbian, and I am not ashamed," "I don't think about that or I don't need to think about that in my daily routine," "Yes, of course I am heterosexual," "Yes, I am heterosexual, I do like men very much." Among the 58 Black women I interviewed, 49 (84.5%) identified as heterosexual, and 1 (1.7%) heterosexual that had bisexual experiences versus 8 (13.8%) who identified as lesbian.

Table 4: Sexual Orientation

Sexual orientation	**Total**	**%**
Heterosexual	49	84.5
Heterosexual (but had bisexual experiences)	1	1.7
Lesbian	8	13.8

Black women's efforts to include the anti-lesbophobia agenda into their anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-classist action appeared as a crucial element attached to Black women's political identity in my study. Particularly I want to focus on the case of Black lesbians; because these women situation of oppression not just speak about the kind of discrimination Black women in general are subjected to, but their experiences give us also the possibility to understand the effects of lesbophobia, and the harmful impact of heterosexism in Black women's lives and status. An aspect that have created disagreement in terms of alliances and relationship between Black women's groups are the issues related to heterosexism that brings to the table polemic topics such

homophobia, lesbophobia, abortion, teenage pregnancy, single mothers, sex workers, same sex marriage, among others. Although many people have not seen the connection these topics have to the production and maintenance of Black women's oppression and exploitation, to acknowledge the impact of heterosexism is a very crucial issue among Black women's organizing in terms of possibilities to unify struggles. Today many of us can assure without contestation the need to struggle against race, gender and class discrimination and inequality, but, there is no the same harmonic effort about joining forces to confront the list of topics I named above that concern heterosexism. Some scholars have already worked through these contradictions, which helped me to explore the relevance and emergence of this discussion on behalf of a more efficient Black feminist political agenda and struggle against mechanisms that have generated Black population inequality and discrimination, particular for women. Therefore, drawing upon the literature I argue that two major interconnected reasons have prevented many Black women activists and organizations to engage on the fight against heterosexist such as the ones I pinpointed above.

On the one hand, the investment of Brazilian state and society argue, propagate, and sustain that issues such as homophobia and lesbophobia, abortion, and teenagers pregnancy, single mother, and sex workers, among others are all morally wrong, illicit and subject to prohibition, and if possible should be banished. In the particular case of women, the State has always managed to intensify its repressive mechanisms and vigilance. In this sense, Jacqui Alexander's (1997) analysis become key for understanding the State's constant control of women, especially of women of color, lesbians and even women who may be heterosexual but not living in conformity to the

heteronormative model, such as single mothers and sexual workers as demonstrated by Cathy Cohen (2005: 26). According to Jacqui Alexander, "women's sexual agency and erotic autonomy have always been troublesome for the state" because such behaviors are in direct confrontation to the nation and its most greatest value, the nuclear (heterosexual) family, which represents "a source of legitimation for the state, which perpetuates the fiction that the family is the cornerstone of society (64)." Therefore, state is constantly producing and reproducing mechanisms to oppress women.

Despite of Brazilian State oppression, Black women's movement activists have been relatively successful in challenging policy making in the last fifty years in Brazil as I will address in the Chapters II and III. Representation of Black women in the policy process, particularly through the Work Party (PT) and the occupation of major positions in governmental agencies and departments, has made possible the inclusion of a number of issues concerning Black women conditions of oppression in the public arena and agenda. Particularly, Black women's activists in those political positions have been successful in mediating political processes of integrating Black population and women's demands into policymaking concerning issues such as employment, sexual and reproductive health and rights - health in general-, and education. (see Articulação de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras 2001, 2003a and 2003b, Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras 2006).

As I will demonstrate in the two next chapters, because of their engagement and involvement in public policy as a strategic of struggle against racial and gender inequalities, Black women's movement activists developed a 'closer' relationship with the Brazilian State. More specifically, they became more integrated with formal

institutions in parties and governments. As a result, Black women's activists and their organizations have been in a position to influence decision makers to consider race and gender as basic elements for the formulation of policies in key areas of the socio-economic development of the country. In other words this group of women has worked to persuade governmental authorities and its representatives to consider the peculiarities of Blacks and women in the elaboration of social policies, in special regarding housing, employment, healthcare, and education.

Black women empowerment through political organization and public action, is however considered dangerous. Thus, any sign of sexual and erotic autonomy are considered as threatening to the nation, and a risky movement towards losing respectability and citizenship (64). Audre Lorde (1984) has conceptualized the erotic as power, which has been misnamed by men and used against women. Lorde argued that women have been suppressed and discouraged to access and use the erotic as a resource of knowledge and power in their lives. Lorde defines erotic as "an internal sense of satisfaction and completion (54)", a "deep and irreplaceable knowledge that such satisfaction of a person capacity for joy (57)", and such "erotic knowledge empowers us, becomes a lens through which we scrutinize all aspects of our existence, forcing us to evaluate those aspects honestly in terms of their relative meaning within our lives (57)".

Based on my fieldwork and activist work experience, I identify this erotic power and knowledge as the achievements of political consciousness. In other words, it can be related to the feelings and awareness that the women in the communities acquire, when they become empowered and conscious of the suppressive and unequal realities they confronted historically and everyday; also when they understand why and how such

circumstances take place, and thus, comprehend that they need to take action in order to change such realities. Therefore erotic power is the strength that make us see the world in a new way. There is also a desire for freedom – women's liberation, Black liberation, lesbian and gay liberation, the claims for sexual and reproductive health and rights, the claim for sexual liberation, and many other struggles to free individuals and groups from oppression. That is why I suggest that when Black women's NGOs in Brazil are confronting State and society to advocate such issues, they are moved by this erotic power pointed by Audre Lorde. Lorde's arguments lead us to understand that the truly erotic experience that brings satisfaction and joy are disconnected from social institutions that have 'imprisoned' and oppressed women, such as "marriage, god, and afterlife (57)." Therefore, experiencing the erotic is at first an individual experience, a self-discovery of freedom, and it has been kept away from women to prevent them to have power and use it in their favor. The activism of Black women's NGOs in Brazil seems to be an example of efforts to claim this power.

On the other hand, the second reason for the difficult Black woman's organizing face to engage heterosexist polemic topics can be identified with Alexander's argument on how such forms of sexual liberation represents a risk to the "respectability of Black middle-class families, but, most significantly, to Black middle-class womanhood", due to the corruptive potential of sexual freedom (Alexander 1997: 64-65). According to Alexander, in this prevailing condition postulated by the neocolonial state, prostitutes and lesbians have personified such eroticism and have throughout the course of history been utilized as representations of this danger (64-65). Black lesbians and even straight Black

women are impacted by these negative assumptions because they are very often seen and portrayed as prostitutes, as having a degraded and promiscuous sexuality, body and image. This fear of being confused as promiscuous, loose, or immoral and to have their image, as well their family, jeopardized have stop many Black women from engaging such issues in their projects and writings, and even to talk about issues concerning heterosexism. Many organizations have discussed and try to confront this situation, but it continues to be a serious issue among them. In addition, Alexander (1997) affirmed that "sex and gender lie, for the state, at the juncture of the disciplining of the body and control of the population and are, therefore, constitutive of those very practices (65)". Regulating women's body and sexuality lay at the core of state practices, and in the particular case of black women, we can also add race, which means that the state apparatus racialize, sexualize and engender disciplining practices.

In spite of these challenges regarding Black women activists 'commitment to confront heterosexism, as part of a demand for a more inclusive feminist agenda (during the periods of 1990s and 2000s) many Black women's organizations started to develop an intersectional approach to identify their organizational mission and goals to struggle against racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia and/or lesbophobia. Such changes occurred because many Black lesbians began to denounce their status of oppression inside their own organizations and groups and demanded changes in this regard; this shift was also linked to the increased militancy of the lesbian and gay movement in the 1990s and 2000s. This is a significant issue because many women's organizations are willing to fight against sexism, but such attempts did not necessarily translate into a commitment to include the needs of Black lesbians, single mothers, and sex workers in their

organizational agendas. In this sense it represents a struggle against a sexist system while taking for granted a heterosexual and heteronormative framework, which immediately excluded those whose sexuality, sexual identity and practices did not conform to the heterosexual ideal.

The Combahee River Collective (1983) and Barbara Smith (1998) addressed a similar reality in the US; African-American perspective located the particular view of Black lesbians' experiences as distinguished from other Black women. Both works brought to the field of Black feminist studies the profound marginalization of lesbians inside and outside the Black feminist movement, as well as the black community and its social and cultural institutions. These analyses call our attention to the various levels of exclusions that usually cannot be perceived because of the hegemonic dominance of heterosexism, which these Black feminist analyses demonstrate to be a powerful system of oppression. Both works call our attention not just to the marginalization, subjugation, and silencing of Black women's experiences, but they also illustrate the disappearance of Black lesbians' voices as a marginalized community. This discussion continues to be a major issue inside the majority of Black women's organizations and is at the center of intense debates and disagreements. This tension has led some Black feminists to separate from their groups due to the inability to openly engage and resolve this matter. Thus, Black women's organizations must be ready to discuss in their agenda the effects of heterosexism and heteronormativity for both lesbian and straight Black women.

The problem of heterosexism inside Black militancy was a recurring theme in my fieldwork brought by the collaborators' testimony. One of my fieldwork collaborators, Rosangela Castro, a Black lesbian feminist and member the Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de

Sousa, pointed out the reality experienced by many Black lesbians in different social movements:

> I tried to be a member of the Black movement, but they would not accept me because I was light skinned and so they constantly dismissed my blackness and there was also discrimination against lesbians. Then I tried the Feminist movement, but I continue to be discriminated against because I was lesbian. In addition, I also tried to engage in the Gay and Lesbian movement, but again there was discrimination from the men in the group, because even among non-heterosexual groups the environment continues to be sexist and play against lesbians. I was rejected in all these movements, and so I decided to organize a group of lesbians – Grupo the Mulheres Felipa de Souza (Rosangela Castro, 2006)

This tension regarding lesbophobia in social movements is not an issue that is present only in the NGOs I interviewed in my fieldwork, rather, this is an issue that pervades Brazilian society. In her interview for the on-line website "Mulheres Negras: Do Umbigo pra o Mundo", Black feminist Neuza Pereira, member of the COLERJ – Coletivo de Lésbicas do Rio de Janeiro (Lesbian Collective of Rio de Janeiro) founded in 1994, argues that:

> The Lesbian Collective (COLERJ) started to be organized in Rio de Janeiro. The lesbian women were stuck in the [different] social movements, either living in silence about their sexuality or talking a little bit about it within the feminist movement. In the other movements, they kept their mouths shut.
>
> [Mulheres Negras Site's Interviewer: But even in the Black women's movement?]
>
> Even there! In the Black women's movement there were still some issues. In the first meeting some women had this weird look at us; the second meeting has been more open, but in general it is an issue that few groups in Brazil address. I know that CRIOLA is addressing this discussion as a Black lesbian group itself, but, although a great number of leaders of women's NGOs are lesbians, I don't know about other groups that are struggling regarding this issue. Even when the lesbians participate with men in mixed movements of gays and lesbians there are difficulties. The men are considered the ones who know everything, the men are

> the ones who lead everything, and the money is in their bank account. If there is a meeting in Canada, a man will be assigned to go, but if there is a meeting in Nova Iguaçú (a peripheral low income District in the State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), a woman will receive no money to go there, she will get nothing. The gays do not cease to be men!
> (Neuza Pereira, Site: http://www.mulheresnegras.org/neuza.html#)

Neuza Pereira's testimony is so crucial because it brought out the intersection between patriarchy, homophobia and lesbophobia as forms of oppression. As she was criticizing women and, Black women movements, and gay and lesbian mixed movements, Neuza' discourse showed that there is still a serious lack of understanding and/or commitment from these movements to look at homophobia and lesbophobia as systems of domination of patriarchy, as much as racism, sexism, and classism. A significant contribution of my research investigation refers to the discussion of sexuality and heterosexism and their implications for Black women's lives and the black community as potential sites of additional oppression (Lorde 1984; Alexander 1997; Cohen 1997, 2004, 2005; Collins 2004; Ferguson 2000, 2004; Tamale 2005). Jacqui Alexander's (1997) and Cathy Cohen's (2005) analysis are key in helping us to recognize this form of marginalization; both authors state that women of color, lesbians, and women such as single mothers and sex workers who may be heterosexual but whose sexual practices do not conform to the heteronormative[45] model have been severely victimized and marginalized by society. Hence, it seems crucial to promote debates and analyses that point out an avoidance to address heterosexism issues within Black women's organizing as a big mistake that have contributed to generate and sustain Black women's conditions of vulnerability, discrimination, inequality, injustice, and violence.

[45] Heteronormative derives from the concept of "heteronormativity", which define heterosexuality as the norm .

Finally, as said by Combahee River Collective (1982) it is not easy "to organize around Black feminist issues (277)", an argument that apply either in terms of Black women's organizations internal work, or in terms of networks and collaborative work with other groups. In this sense Combahee River Collective words pinpointed a reality that expresses Black women's status and conditions in Brazil:

> The major source of difficulty in our political work is that we are not just trying to fight oppression on one front or even two, but instead to address a whole range of oppressions. We do not have racial, sexual, heterosexual, or class privilege to rely upon, nor do we have even the minimal access to resources and power that groups who posses any one of these types of privilege have (277).

To be able to understand this reality and to work through these issues it is really important because it shows Black women's limitations and advantages to bring more collaborative work across social and cultural differences. More than that, when Combahee River Collective pinpointed that Black women have absolutely no privilege to relay on, it demystify many Black women's notions of safety based on any socio-economic conquest or belonging, through a supposed secure position (such as to be heterosexual, married, have a family, have an acceptable religion, etc) and urges them to struggle as a collective as a way to liberation.

I would like to highlight that to me it was very important to research organizations that were composed by women with different sexual orientation, and more specifically it was important to look at and compare the Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa (composed just by lesbians whose majority are Blacks) with Criola (composed by lesbian and straight women), and also to compare these two organizations with the NGOs Maria Mulher and ACMUN that are apparently composed just by heterosexual women (among

the women I was able to interview in this last two organizations there were no self-identified? lesbians). Although the research has not enough fieldwork material to explore the issue of Black lesbian organizations at length, in the next chapter, I attempted to provide some general characteristics of these organizations in relation to the ones composed by straight Black women's activists.

Moreover, in spite of Criola, ACMUN and Maria Mulher affirming their commitment to struggling against lesbophobia and homophobia, only Criola made this explicitly written in its mission and goals. However, confronting homophobia and lesbophobia remained for Criola, and I would include the other groups, a serious problem. In fact, during my fieldwork I found that Criola was the only organization with both heterosexual and homosexual members that was actively creating spaces to discuss and confront homophobia and lesbophobia both within and outside of the organization, but such task was not an easy one among the staff that needed many times to deal with their own discriminatory tendencies.

Throughout my fieldwork experience it became clear to me the existence of differences between Black women's organizations headed only by lesbians, in contrast to the ones that have lesbians as staff members but are a mixed group, and also from those ones that are composed by straight Black women. For instance I could observe that the Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa, in which all women are lesbian that presents a very specific focus on lesbian issues, is more isolated if compared with the other three organizations, even in terms of Criola that is a mixed sexuality oriented group. Felipa de Sousa has alliances with other social movement groups and networks for sure, but not as many in relation to the other. What I could understand was that the Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa was more likely to bond with individual lesbian women that come to participate in the activities the organization promote inside and outside the office. For

example, they organized football among the women, distribution of condom and information regarding HIV/Aids and other STDs in outdoor spaces, night clubs were they can find concentration of lesbian groups. They also work with school groups, but in relation to the other three NGOs it seems to have less resources and access to social groups and place. Why such isolation? Does lesbophobia function as a barrier to bond with other groups? In one hand, I think that such reality is also due to the organization's choice to focus on lesbian issues and needs, but at the same time I observed certain limitations and advantages imposed by their status as Black lesbians. On the other hand, I know Felipa de Sousa bond with other lesbian and gays groups (Black or non-Black ones), but through the interview I had with the four members of the organization I found they had not developed deep links inside communities with women like Criola, ACMUN and Maria Mulher. In addition I identified these three last NGOs as major sisterhoods that support small grassroot sisterhoods, while Felipa de Sousa a medium size sisterhood supports and is supported by individual lesbian women and has link with lesbian networks that exist in the country.

III. 1.5. Ancestry/Ancestralidade[46]

Even though ancestry appeared in my study as a key element to identity, I will not explore it at length in this essay. Ancestry in my fieldwork came into sight very much connected with religion, both in the case of the research collaborators that are affiliated to Afro-Brazilian religious as well as those that were Catholics, and in some cases even Protestants. The reason to such affiliations seems to be due to the strong diffusion of

African culture and tradition in Brazilian society. Thus, ancestry that is usually represented through religion, tradition and culture is another crucial element of identity that has been used by Black women's NGOs to reinforce their strategies and struggles to confront oppression in Brazil. For example, the Mães de Santo or Yalorixás (High Priestess) have functioned as guardians of Afro-Brazilian religions, tradition and culture. However, my research demonstrated that there are other groups of Black women, affiliated to the Catholic and Protestant Churches who have also employed and teach Afro-Brazilian tradition and culture as a legacy in their Black communities. This group of Black women (ages between 50 to 77 years old) is part of a set of mature generations of Black activists in Brazil whose anti-racist actions have fostered and forged contemporary Black activists and organizations. Particularly, I observed that religion occupy a central role in the lives of my research collaborators; even in the few cases that the women were agnostic religion appeared to mark their experiences within activism. It is also through religion that many of my collaborators experienced and expressed Afro-Brazilian traditions and culture. According to Theodoro (1994),

> In relation to the cultural process, the black religion is a dynamic and energetic source of ethos, a model that teaches behavior, habits, finally a way of being. Establishing and providing its own ethic, it has shaping forms of social relations, stating its own forms of organization and hierarchies, stimulating communal life and establishing its own aesthetic standards and specific forms of communication or access to a rich symbolic system - full of knowledge and wisdom - that characterize an initiatory African-Brazilian pedagogy (175).

Regarding this Afro-Brazilian religious anti-racist action– Candomblé, Umbanda, Batuque, among others – a good example can be observed in terms of the Centers for

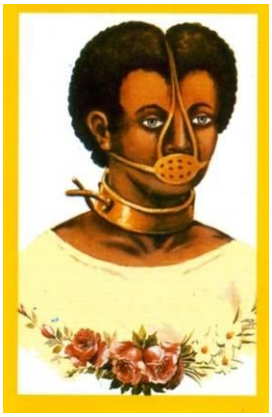
Violence Awareness organized by the NGO Criola with seven mães de santo or yalorixás (Afro-Brazilian religious high priestesses). The alliance between Criola and these seven centers formed a network in the state of Rio de Janeiro named Iyá Agba – Rede de Mulheres Negras Frente à Violência Contra a Mulher (Black Women's Network to Confront Violence against Women).

Iyá Agba – Black Women's Network to Confront Violence against Women. Criola, 2008.

Regarding the Catholic Church there is the case of the NGO ACMUN, which has a strong root in the Pastoral do Negro, a grassroots ecclesiastical community. It is also interesting to highlight that many of the members of ACMUN are catholic but participate syncretically in Afro-Brazilian religion activities and meetings, which they call Batuque.

Members of the Pastoral do Negro (Black Grassroot Ecclesiastical Community). Black women members of ACMUN – Associação Cultural de Mulheres Negras and Catholic Seminarians in their monthly meeting.

Xyka is ACMUN's executive coordinator in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul. Laura is devoted to the escrava Anastácia (Slave Anastácia), who is considered a Black saint. Laura utilized escrava Anastácia as a symbol of her struggle as a Black woman in Brazilian society.



Escrava Anastácia

The history tells that Anastasia was a Bantu princess (there are also accounts that tells that she was *nagô* from Nigeria or an Angolana), that came from Africa to be a slave for a farmer named Abaete, in Bahia, northeast of Brazil. Because she refused to be the Master's lover, and also in order to avoid that she continued to speak against slavery, her

master built a mask from a type of leaf (folha-de-flandres) and also an iron bracelet to silence her. She started to communicate through her eyes. She died in 1838, victim of gangrene as consequence of torture and ill-treatment.

Joana, a collaborator of Criola, is a representative of the Pastoral da Criança, another type of grassroot ecclesiastical community (catholic), which main function is to offer health food and information concerning nutrition and infant health care in order to avoid infant mortality. It is also during these meetings that Joana has trained the women regarding topics such as women's rights, health, and violence among other issues.

Photo: Jorgina

Fezinha, another collaborator of Criola, is a specialist in Theology, focusing on Afro-Brazilian religion and Protestantism. Marília is a member of the Methodist church, there she is a Pastoral da Terceira Idade's agent (Pastoral for Elder People) and coordinate the Pastoral de Combate ao Racismo (Pastoral of Struggle against Racism) both are a types of Methodist grassroots ecclesiastical community departments. The table below demonstrates how religious affiliation is distributed through the 58 Black women I interview in the NGOs:

Table 5: Religion Affiliation

Religious Affiliation	**Total**	**%**
Afro-Brazilian Religion (Candomblé or Umbanda)	**22**	**38**
Allan Kardec – Spiritist Society	2	3.4
Catholic (12 practicing, 5 not practicing)	**17**	**29**
Protestant	1	1.7
New Protestant (Evangelic)	3	5.1
Catholic + Afro-Brazilian Religion	**5**	**8.6**
Catholic + Afro-Brazilian Religion + Spiritism	1	1.7
Catholic + Seichonoir Philosophy	1	1.7
Catholic + Protestant + Afro-Brazilian Religion	1	1.7
Catholic + Protestant	1	1.7
No Religion Affiliation, but was baptized in the Catholic Church	1	1.7
No Religion Affiliation, but participated in Afro-Brazilian Religion during Childhood	1	1.7
No Religion Affiliation at all	1	1.7
Undeclared	1	1.7

The NGO Criola has members from different church affiliations, such as Catholic and Protestant, and also Afro-Brazilian religions' members. Afro-Brazilian religious tradition and culture, particularly Candomblé, is at the roots of the organization's identity. Afro-Brazilian religion appears also in the formation of the Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa. Paradoxically, the NGO ACMUN's identity is based on both Catholicism and Afro-Brazilian religions. In the NGO Maria Mulher, despite of the employment of Afro-Brazilian tradition and culture as basic guidelines in the organization, the identification with Afro-Brazilian religion was not so clear to me, and such situation might be explained by the type of affiliation of the members. For example, the first woman I interview did not have any religious affiliation, the second one belonged to the Umbanda -considered an Afro-Brazilian religion-, and the third woman practiced Spiritism -from Allan Kardec Spiritist Society-, a spiritualist philosophical

doctrine that has many followers in Brazil. Thus, none of these four women had any relation to churches at all; but I must emphasize that Maria Mulher is a major organization with extensive staff members, so there is the possibility that more of them would be affiliated to an Afro-Brazilian religion.

Religion appeared in the lives of my collaborators as an important component of their identity and ancestry values. Moreover, I brought religion into my fieldwork work analysis because it seems to be a central domain of women, in which they play a fundamental role as leaders; they also have used religion as an instrument to build networks, to reach and demand authority in their community and society as a whole. It seems that, be it through fear or admiration, almost everybody will acknowledge the religious authority of these women in their neighborhoods, and I am not just referring to *Mães de Santo*, but also to the women leaders based in the Catholic and Protestant churches.

The Mães de Santo (or Yalorixás) of the Iyá Agba –Black Women's Network to Confront Violence against Women. Criola, Rio de Janeiro, 2008.

Particularly, regarding Afro-Brazilian religions, Black scholar Helena Theodoro (1996) argued that,

> The role of women in Black African religion and in Afro-religions in the Americas is related to the maintenance and transmission of religious and cultural traditions, which represent the link that connect the Sacred to the communitarian life (59). (…) The author also pointed out that, the faith in religion is the great support of Black women; her *axé*. Her action in the community is completed throughout her spiritual force developed in the *comunidades-terreiros* (communitarian spaces and group where the ritual life is performed) that are based on the *nagô*[47] tradition's conception about the universe and the people. The African myths sacredly legitimate and characterize her [black woman] (61, my translation)."

Many Black scholars (Theodoro 1994, Carneiro and Cury 1994, Sodré 2005, among others) have analyzed the roles and meanings of the religions originated from the African tradition in Brazil. These scholars are in consensus in their affirmation that Afro-Brazilian religions have played a central role in the development of Black population's life and social relations in the country. In this sense Helena Theodoro's analysis (1994) is even more fundamental about the key function of Afro-Brazilian religion in the country as she argued that,

> the traditional Black-African religion, relocate , in the *terreiros*[48], within a society like the Brazilian one that is regulate by a Western modern ideology, made possible the multisecular coexistence and interpenetration of two cultural orders: the white (*branca*) and the Black (*negra*). Therefore, we understand that the Black culture has functioned as a permanent source of resistance against dispositives of domination and, also, as maintainer of emotional balance for blacks in Brazil (61, my translation).

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[47] According to Helena Theodoro (1994) the Nagô religious tradition "came from Nigeria, and was implemented by the *iorubás* and their descendents; it is an iorubá language tradition and it names the nature forces as *orixás (62)*."

[48] Physical and symbolic place where the religious rituals are performed.

ACMUN's first staff members

As said by the Afro-Brazilian feminist and general coordinator of Criola, Lúcia Xavier,

> The anti-racist political action in Brazil trace back into the centuries, it begins since the revolts of the quilombos (maroons). Black organization's struggles in the past have made possible the establishment of economic ways to freedom, and the institutionalization of Afro-Brazilian culture and religion, and sustained a set of values and principles until today. These organizations also guaranteed the rooting and a way to think about Black women and men in Brazil until today, independently of their socioeconomic conditions. They also inform a trajectory, a past, an ancestry that guarantee us a present and future perspective; these are organizations with a profound complexity, and part of their actions were always structured toward the return to Africa, the integration into a society, or in the transformation of this society to perceive these values and traditions (…) (Lucia Xavier, Brazil Symposium, Austin, TX, 2008).

Helena Theodoro (1994) argued that even within the black diaspora in the Americas, the African religion has represented an instrument of resistance in terms of the Black population's struggles for freedom and for integration into social reality. Jose

Maria Pereira Nunes (2003) also argued that the Afro-Brazilian culture is a culture of resistance, focusing on religion (119). Sueli Carneiro and Cristiane Cury (1994) also examined Afro-Brazilian religion, especially Candomblé, as an element of strength that challenges systems of oppression that affect the Black population. According to the authors Candomblé "arises as a form of resistance to the fragmentation of the existence of the Brazilian man (?)[49], be it in the concrete or in the ideal levels of ontological explanation (176)." Moreover, the authors affirmed that in the diaspora, religious practice was a key element in the constitution of Africans and their descendants as an institutionalized collectivity or group; religion was an element of cohesion, contributing to the formation of the Black communities. Thus, Candomblé emerged "as the possible field of resistance, and cultural and ethnic survival of the black slave, as well as the possibility of maintaining an identity and solidarity that the process of slavery, freedom, and marginalization of the black managed to destroy them (181)." Finally, the discussions above demonstrate that religion has undoubtedly constituted a key element of connection between Afro-Brazilian culture and the African Diaspora, where the black population has found collective ways to foster and perpetuate the African traditions and cultures in the country.

The last section of this Chapter, will focus on the third dimension that has represented a crucial mark of Black women's NGOs, which is resistance; a form of resistance informed by the identities and commitment of the NGOs with African and Afro-Brazilian ancestries.

[49] The authors use the expression "Brazilian man" as a general term to refer to Brazilian individuals.

The various facets of identity I explore in this essay are important because they inform us about who are the groups in the country fighting for rights, social justice and liberation – Black women, that belonged to the generations from 1930s, 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s (especially with a predominantly leadership role are 40 and 50 years old women), low income or low-middle class statuses, lesbians and straight women that support lesbian's and gay's rights, and people that live in social marginalized communities. These facets of identity become politicized when they turn out to be objects of social movement groups' claims, like the NGOs, to demand rights and other needs from State and society; i.e., when they become issues of struggles incorporated into social movement groups' agendas, such as the one of the Black women's organizations. In addition, these identity's components seems to develop into politicized categories when they are used by State to generate process of discrimination and inequality, particularly on the basis of race, gender, class and sexuality. For example, Black women's movement and other groups such as LGBT and Afro-Brazilian religious movements have used race, gender, and sexual identity to claim reparation, citizenship rights, and affirmative action in terms of healthcare, education and employment. In the next section I describe and explore the major forms of political organization, as well as the goals, missions, programs and projects carried out for each of the four organizations.

III.2. RESISTANCE (RESISTÊNCIA)[50]

My fieldwork research demonstrate that the specific strategies and theories of social organization and justice of contemporary Black women's NGOs in Brazil are based on two major poles. On the one hand, they focus on the formation of Black women's collective racial and political identity. Through grassroot initiatives that involve work with Black women in the communities, the NGOs promote dialogues, workshops, training, and other activities to raise awareness concerning gender and racial discrimination, violence and inequality. In addition, these organizations offer institutional and financial (when available) support for Black women's grassroot groups located inside the communities as a way to reinforce their local and outside activities. On the other hand, these NGOs' forms of resistance have operated on the basis of solidarity through networks. Working through alliances these organizations elaborate strategies and discourses, particularly advocacy tactics – to impact public policy, and so directly challenge Brazilian State to take responsibility in the eradication of the mechanisms that have caused socio-economic disparities and marginalization among women and Blacks in the country. This is a very interesting way of constructing social projects to resist State dominance, because the alliance with other marginalized groups allow for each one of them to contribute with their specific and distinct knowledge concerning what oppression means, and how it manifest for each group in terms of gender, race, class and sexuality.

For example, when Black women participate in networks not just with other peers, but also with LGBT (or GLBT)[51] movement, rural and urban working class movements, labor unions, land movements, Black men's movement, Afro-Brazilian religious movement, among others, the sum of each of these knowledges tends to be a more efficient political action to confront State power and to impact society as well. As said by Barbara Smith (1998) "if gay [I say any] movement wants to make a real difference, as opposed to settling for handouts, it must consider creating a multi-issue revolutionary agenda (184);" in addition, she stated: "We don't simply need gay rights. We need social, political, and economic justice, which means at the very least that we need to work with those who have been and continue to be 'actively' committed to eradicating racism, sexism, and class oppression as well as homophobia (186)."

Another vital advantage of building resistance through coalitions is that this system seems to favor the possibilities for building new social processes in which power and resources can be equally accessed and distributed. Thus, the networks and other forms of alliances seem to be crucial for any social movement group in confronting State power.

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[50] The citations employed in this analysis are all my translations.

[51] LGBT (also GLBT) are terms used to define the collective organization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender/transsexual people.

Furthermore, in order to guarantee the effectiveness of their strategic poles Black women's organizations, especially the NGOs, have invested in the production of technical knowledge ,which consist in information about crucial issues such as health, education, housing, employment, among others. I will continue this discussion further in the conclusion, in which I address the effectiveness of the activism of Black women's NGOs in Brazil.

These political efforts and strategies pointed out in this discussion constitute the elements that make the four sisterhoods I will describe in the rest of this section, as examples of resistance or resistência in Brazilian society. Employing their own identities and experiences as Blacks, women, mostly working class and low middle class, mainly constituted by a generation from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, these groups of Black women's activists have contributed to human rights and health care advocacy for Black women and for the Black population in general. Criola and Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Souza, are located in the southeastern region of Brazil, and ACMUN – Associação Cultural de Mulheres Negras and Maria Mulher – Organização de Mulheres Negras are located in the Southern region. These NGOs are located in the two most socially and economically-developed regions of the country. Chapters II, III and conclusion are also dedicated to analyze and understand the emergence and organization of these groups in Brazil.

III.2.1. Four Sisterhoods

According to Lúcia Xavier, one of Criola's general coordinator,

The foundation of the organization was established in part by a group of Black women who worked in the Women's Program of the Black organization CEAP – Centro de Articulações de Populações Marginalizadas (Center for the Mobilization of Marginalized Peoples). Through the work these women were developing in the CEAP Women's Program against the process of massive sterilization of Black women in the state of Rio de Janeiro and country as a whole, they decided to build their own organization, 'a space of Black women and for Black women', affirmed Lúcia. "Before being named Criola, it was a smaller group of 5 or 6 women, which invited me to participate in it and in discussions, and later on we were 10 Black women. It occurred around the end of 1991 or beginning of 1992, because Criola was founded in September of 1992. (Lúcia Xavier, piece taken from primary fieldwork resources, June-July 2007).

Criola's Members

Mãe Beata de Iemanjá is Criola's honor director

Criola's Main Staff Members

Criola's Main Staff Members

Criola defines itself as a non-profit civil society institution, founded in September 2, 1992. It is administered by Black women from distinctive educational backgrounds that are committed to working with Black women, teenagers and girls in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Throughout the past 16 years of work, it has reached more than 5,000 women directly. Criola's mission seeks to confront racism, sexism and homophobia present in Brazilian society. Its main goal is to empower Black women of all ages, through training and community-based social agents, to develop social actions that can confront multiple forms of discrimination and improve their livelihoods. Criola works through six lines of action: (1) Workshops - courses and training sessions; (2) Economics - work and a living wage; (3) Black Women's Health; (4) Advocacy - defense and guarantee of human rights; (5) Political action and alliances with institutions and social movements; (6) Publications - dissemination of information and documentation. During my fieldwork period (2006-2007), Criola had a paid staff of eight people – 7 women and 1 man, and a team of more than thirty collaborators and volunteers.

Criola as a Black women's NGO has proved to be a political protagonist in advocacy around Black women's and Black population's health in the country. On October 27, 2006, Criola organized and supported several events: in coalition with other

Black groups and organizations, Criola has mobilized a considerable number of Brazilians to raise awareness about Black healthcare and the quality of health services throughout the country. For example, this alliance organized and promoted a National Mobilization (*Mobilização Pró Saúde da População Negra*) to promote awareness about Black population health conditions. Criola also organized two courses on health issues in partnership with other groups during the second semester of 2006: one called the Training on Health Policies in Brazil (Treinamento em Políticas de Saúde), and other Social Control on Black Population Health (Controle Social em Saúde da População Negra). Both courses provided training directly to more than 150 Black activists (of both genders, of different ages, sexual orientation, and regions of the country). There is also an expectation that the courses will reach hundreds more Brazilians who should receive the information passed on by those who were trained in the courses. A sign of the effectiveness of this entire movement was the approval in 2006 of the Política Nacional de Saúde Integral da População Negra – PSPN (the National Integrated Health Policy for Black People) by the National Health Council (CNS – Conselho Nacional de Saúde), a big step towards establishing a specific public policy that represents the struggle against health disparities negatively affecting the Black population.

Furthermore, Criola is one of the main protagonists in the elaboration of and advocacy for the implementation of a National Policy for Black Health (Política Nacional de Saúde da População Negra). These actions and national mobilizations achieved by the Black women's movement and the Black social movements in general demonstrated how anti-racist struggles have occurred in Brazil. In the particular case of Black women's NGOs, anti-racism activism has operated in connection with the anti-sexism, anti-homophobia, anti-classism, anti-Afro-Brazilian religious intolerance movements.

Regarding its activism inside the Black community Criola has utilized Afro-Brazilian cultures and traditions to struggle against Black women's oppression. Criola and many others Black women's NGOs have utilized Afro-Brazilian culture and traditions as a way to foster and strengthen Black women's identity in society and Black community. It is also part of the strategies against racial ideologies in the country that have invested in constructing Blacks as a population without references from the past. Moreover, such strategies go beyond cultural reasons, it is a political attempt to force Brazilian State and society to acknowledge the Black population, its contributions, history, culture, and tradition.

Since the organization was engaged in many kinds of political projects, I decided to focus on two main ones which are representative of the major types of activism the NGO has developed: the Núcleos de Violência (Centers for Violence Awareness), and the Núcleos de Saúde (Centers for Health Awareness). These two major projects also reflected a third type of political project developed by Criola that is alliances between LGBT community and National Afro-Brazilian Religions and Health Network; thus there were representatives of these two groups in both Centers. In addition, it is important to emphasize that both Centers for Health and Violence Awareness are located in low-income Black communities (in many cases, with the majority of families living below the poverty line, with a monthly income above the minimum wage of R$ 380,00 = US?$ 231.23 or no wage at all) in which the Afro-Brazilian population face great risk and social vulnerability, particular in those areas where people are constantly brutalized by drug trafficking and police violence.

As I indicated when describing my fieldwork journey, I began visiting and interviews in the Centers for Violence Awareness. Criola has organized this centers with

six *mães de santo* or *yalorixás* (Afro-Brazilian religious priestesses); precisely these centers constituted a network in the state of Rio de Janeiro named *Iyá Agba* – Rede de Mulheres Negras Frente à Violência Contra a Mulher (Black Women's Network to Confront Violence against Women). Thus the network was comprised of Criola and the six Afro-Brazilian religious grassroot groups located in the state of Rio de Janeiro. The six groups were located: in the district of São João de Meriti, and in the neighborhoods of Venda Velha (which has two centers), Água Santa, Vicente de Carvalho, and Coelho Neto.

The Centers for Violence Awareness' members

The Mães de Santo (Yalorixás) – the Centers' coordinators

The Mães de Santo (Yalorixás) – the Centers' coordinators

Some of the Centers' collaborators

The Iyá Agba has received financial support from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)[52] and its main objectives are to strengthen women's struggle against violence, and to promote women's knowledge and capacity to propose public policies that confront violence in all aspects of Afro-Brazilian communities and traditions. Based on these two political objectives, the network has worked in two ways: First, the network develops projects aimed at transforming the communities where each of the six Afro-Brazilian religious leaders of Candomblé (*mães de santo* or *yalorixás*) has her organization, which is inside their *terreiros* (Afro-Brazilian religious houses). In these *terreiros*, the *yalorixás* have organized community centers that provide activities, workshops and training on gender and domestic violence against Black women, Black women's health, advocacy, and public policy. Each center also develops activities that assist women in improving family income as well as promoting courses on cooking, sewing, serigraphy, among others.

The Centers for Health Awareness constituted another of Criola's strategy to reach the community and build health awareness. The centers have received financial support from different resources such as the Avon Cosmetic Corporation, Brazilian Health Ministry, American Jewish World Service (AJWS), among others. There are 10 centers located in the State of Rio de Janeiro in the following locations: Five centers located in the city of Rio de Janeiro: Bangú, Água Santa, Lins de Vasconcelos, Morro Dona Marta, and Campo Grande. Three centers located in other cities of the state of Rio de Janeiro, named as *Baixada Fluminense*: Disctict of São João de Meriti, Miguel Couto,

[52] UNIFEM constitutes the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to programs and projects and that promote women's empowerment and gender equality.

in the District of Nova Iguaçú, and Vale do Ipê, in the District of Belford Roxo; one center in the District of Magé; one center in the District of São Gonçalo.

In these centers, Criola has worked with Black women who are deeply-rooted in local urban neighborhoods in order to discuss health issues that affect black women, their families and communities. These centers promote community debates, awareness campaigns, workshops and courses related to health and gender violence. The Centers for Health Awareness operate independent from Criola and each one represents local characteristics according to the area and region where it is located in the state of Rio de Janeiro.

Basically the Centers are utilized to train and build awareness among women in low income and predominantly Black communities. The main activities the centers perform are very similar, such as promotes activities and debates to address topics such as HIV/Aids epidemics, and other SDTs (sexual transmitted diseases), gender and race discrimination, violence against women, homophobia and lesbophobia, public policy debates, among others. Despite of these similarities in terms of how these centers operate, they also present differences. In the following paragraphs I will provide some examples of the kinds of work they develop on their own in the communities.

The Centers for Health Awareness

The Coordinators

The Coordinators

Some of the Centers for Health Awareness' collaborators

Some of the Centers for Health Awareness' collaborators

The centers of Água Santa (in the city of Rio de Janeiro) and Miguel Couto (in the District of Nova Iguaçú) are organized within the space of the *terreiros* and are led by *yalorixás*, *Mãe Sofia* and *Mãe Serena* respectively. Although they organize separate activities around health with the women from the communities, both priestesses have also used moments of religious celebrations and ceremonies to build awareness about Black women's health. For instance, they often separate a moment during the celebrations to address women's and Black's population issues, to raise awareness; in addition they also organize a particular place within the religious house where they put material about the topics they want the community to learn about, for example, HIV/Aids epidemic: they offer condoms and other educational information to support the campaign to reduce the impact of the epidemic among Blacks and women. In the Água Santa center, I interviewed three women, *Bruna*, *Iris* and *Catarina,* who work closely with *Mãe Sofia*'s in these activities; and in the Miguel Couto center I only interviewed *Serena.*

The Center for Health Awareness in the District of Magé is located in a fishing colony where many community members collect material to sell in the district's major garbage deposits as a way to make a living. The Center is located inside the house of the main leader *Joana* and develops activities and projects in partnership with sectors of the Catholic Church, more specifically with the Pastoral da Criança, a program that assists children during their early years and where mothers and their children receive basic health assistance, nutritional support and supplies to avoid infant mortality. Joana has used the meetings of her grassroots ecclesiastical community's group (Pastoral da Criança or Children's Pastoral) to build awareness about health and rights among the women, mainly Blacks, who come to the meetings to receive the donated supplies and information. It is during these meetings when her backyard becomes full of women and children from the entire Magé neighborhood that Joana addresses issues such as disease prevention and violence.

The Centers of the District of São João de Meriti located in the Baixada Fluminense are coordinated by *Marília*, *Gabriela* and a third Black woman (who could not meet me when I went to visit their project). *Marília* is another outstanding example of Black women's activism in both Black and women movement, outside and inside her community. She links her duties as project coordinator inside the community with the Methodist Church Women Department (*Pastoral da Mulher*) and the activities of the Center for Health Awareness. One of the major strategies she uses to gather women for their meetings is to promote hair braiding and beauty workshops. *Gabriela* is a professional hairstylist and beauty expert who specializes on Black women. While they trained the women to braid hair and other forms of beauty treatments *Marília* and *Gabriela* talked about issues such as Afro-Brazilian women's self-esteem, Afro-Brazilian

culture and tradition, and throughout such talks with the women they give them information regarding women's health and related issues.

The Center for Health Awareness of Bangú is located in the Western zone of the city of Rio de Janeiro, functioning inside a community center that has been the political reference for the entire neighborhood through the struggle against police violence, for improved infrastructure, and for access to healthcare and other basic rights. This Center for Health Awareness is led by *Dona Sueli*, a prominent Black woman activist in both the Black and women's movement in Rio de Janeiro. The community center develops a wide range of activities, especially for teenagers and children, like a boys and girls club. The Center for Health Awareness has been an active sector inside this community center. When I visited the Center for Health Awareness of Bangú, it was a very unstable period for them because of the confrontations between the drug traffickers and the police that were daily occurrences in the life of that community. I remember that I went to visit *Dona Sueli* during the day all was fine, but when I left in the evening she escorted me to the bus stop and waited until I got into the bus. I faced similar situations when I visited some of the other centers where many of my collaborators always protected me when I went to visit them, taking care to tell me how and what time to enter into the community. I think that their courage in dealing with daily violence while engaged in grassroots organizing encouraged me to go to see them, and to register their struggles. In Chapter VI: Black Women and Vulnerability, I will address in more details this context of violence Black women face in their communities.

The Center of Lins de Vasconcelos, in the north zone of the city of Rio de Janeiro is coordinated by *Janaina*, who likes to write short stories and poetry. When I went to visit her, she was writing a book about her life story, and during our conversation I asked

her to read one poem to me, which addresses the experiences a woman who has an abortion. *Janaina* develops projects in her community that involve education and prevention of HIV/AIDS and other STDS. They gather women to distribute condoms and build awareness among each other about those diseases and preventing risks. As in the case of Bangú neighborhood that I described previously, I observed during my visit that *Janaina* has also faced problems of drug trafficking and police violence while organizing women. On many occasions, she and her collaborators could not hold their meetings because it was too dangerous for them; anyone could get killed or wounded by lost bullets during daily confrontations.

Soraia, coordinator of the Center for Health Awareness in Campo Grande, also faces the same problems of *Janaina* in the Lins de Vasconcelos and *Dona Sueli* in Bangú. Soraia's entire community, particularly the women, were threatened by the conflicts between drug traffickers and the police. Due to this situation, the center has had to suspend their normal activities, but found ways to distribute condoms and promote HIV/AIDS education informally. To organize and work in the center was a way for *Soraia*, a very bright and independent woman, to diminish domestic conflicts, because her husband did not like to see her go outside the house too much; but because she was the leader of the women's group in the center he agreed to let her go to its activities without creating obstacles.

The Center for Health Awareness in Morro Dona Marta em Botafogo, the southern zone of the city of Rio de Janeiro takes place inside the neighborhood association building. It represents one of several projects to support women in the community. This center differs from the others in that it is coordinated by younger women one of whom is *Mariana*. She is a very intelligent young woman whose leadership impressed me when we walked through the community. Everybody in the

community knows and respects her. In this sense, it has been a goal for Criola to empower young women and teenager to act inside their own community and groups. Many times in the past the Morro Dona Marta's inhabitants confronted serious situations concerning fights between drug traffickers and police, but in spite of such turbulent period in several other low income communities of the city of Rio de Janeiro the Morro Dona Marta was peaceful when I went there to interview *Mariana,* and so I could walk everywhere without feeling tensions. *Carmen* is the coordinator of the Center in the Vale do Ipê, in the District of Belford Roxo. She is a well-known activist in her community where she has organized meetings and prevention campaigns to discuss HIV/AIDS and breast cancer awareness, and environmental racism as well as to distribute condoms in the community. *Carmen* has also been an environmentalist, and one of her major struggles has been to denounce water contamination in the community caused by big companies that throw chemical products in the rivers of the region. The contaminated water was responsible for making many people in the community sick including some who developed breast cancer. In addition to creating awareness in the community, she denounced this form of environmental racism to the district government and fought with them to investigate local conditions

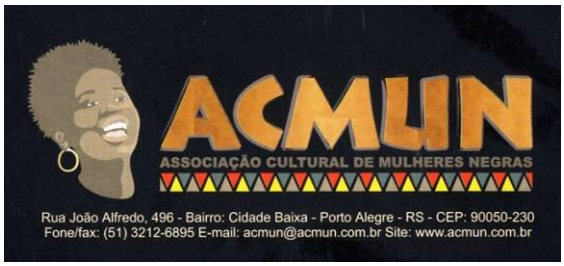
Helena and her collaborator *Eloisa* coordinate the Center of the District of São Gonçalo. *Helena*, in particular, is an outstanding Black activist both in the Black and women movements. In order to work on health awareness, *Helena* and *Eloisa* organized women's meetings in their own homes. A major problem addressed by both women when I visited them in the community was the precarious situation of health programs in the district, especially in the area of women's health.

In coalition with other Black groups and organizations, Criola has undertaken national-level mobilization to promote awareness about the health status of the Black

population and the quality of healthcare services throughout the country. This has been done through organizing courses, workshops, and public awareness campaigns. For example through this alliance Criola has supported the GLBT community and organizations by developing proposals implementing public policies as well as a state and national plan to promote gays, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender citizenship and human rights.

The alliance between Criola and the National Network of Afro-Brazilian Religious and Health Network has been another major form of Criola's activism to confront the discrimination Black people experience in the health care system. National Network of Afro-Brazilian Religions and Health have twenty-four centers located in several regions of the country. The network's perspective is to construct public policies on behalf of the Afro-Brazilian religious community, and its mission is to fight for human rights in the health system, taking in consideration gender and racial issues.

The work of this network --and of Criola more generally--can be understood as forms of claim for cultural rights and religious freedom. For instance, the Brazilian Black Women's Network (Articulação de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras - AMNB) produced a Dossier on Brazilian Black Women's Conditions, in which they addressed the issue of racism and religious intolerance. In this particular section the AMNB argues that religious intolerance is a crime described by the 5th articles, Incise VI, of the Constitution, in the chapter about individual and collective rights and obligations. The AMNB also pointed out that "Black women are the main target of religious intolerance and that they correspond to 90% of the practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religion occupying leading position (35)."



ACMUN was founded in 1990 with a unique history. A History of Solidarity:

In the Morro of Maria Conceição, in Porto Alegre, a group of black women decided to transform their condition of social exclusion into actions of citizenship and solidarity. From the meetings to pray to the Rosary in the Mother's Club, to the walk [marches] and participation in the Church (Catholic) and in the Afro-Brazilian religious houses [terreiros], they went to promote discussions that deal with the situation of the people in the villa, initiating a series of interventions that transformed their lives.

Nelma Soares[53] (who passed away in October 10, 2001) was one of the organizers of the weekly Rosary prayer sessions in the Santo Antônio Church (Igreja de Santo Antônio). 'We began the meetings as black women. Women from the Vila (villa) Maria Conceição and the Cruzeiro do Sul came to participate. It was in the year of 1989 and then we organized the group Oduduwa with Nelma, Maria do Carmo, Zoraida, Maria Luiza, Sueli Farias, Maria Jurema, Sara, Tia Rosa e Mãe Marlene with the objective of studying black culture,' informed Sueli Ramos (well-known as Tia Sueli).

From that meeting the group became well known in the sites of debate and decision making in the villa and in the city. It was the beginning of the formation of [black women] community leadership as social agents - between 15 to 60 years old-. Taking advantage of their skills and talents, they decided to generate work and resources to guarantee their family's income. They organized a sewing cooperative that produced pillows and Afro-Brazilian clothes in partnership with the Aso Dúdú. "All the work of the community came from women's actions. We were able to create demands and politics through our own understanding as black women and through the acquisition of political consciousness," emphasized Maria Luiza Santos.

[53] Nelma Soares de Oliveira was the major founder of the NGO ACMUN.

With knowledge about black culture, these women suggested the church to organize a Afro-Mass in the parish, created the dance group São Francisco and the Festa do Vermelhão (The Red Party) – an annual celebration in the community on November 20th, the National Day of Black Consciousness, date nationally launched by the Palmares Group, of Porto Alegre in 1971.

The attempts to preserve Afro-Brazilian culture, the entrepreneurship, and solidarity influenced the lives of dozens of women: "We learned and took advantage of the lifetime of our group. I remember that Nelma worked constantly in the villa, she brought culture, knowledge, love and too much axé", said Tia Sueli (piece taken from Revista Lai- Lai Apejo – Mulheres Negras: DST, HIV e Aids. ACMUN, Porto Alegre, 2003; my translation)

Part of ACMUN's staff in the city of Porto Alegre, RS

Photo: ACMUN

Some of the ACMUN's collaborators

Some of the ACMUN's collaborators

ACMUN's mission is to develop actions against racial/ethnic and gender discrimination in the cities of Porto Alegre and Passo Fundo[54], and to promote the valorization and recognition of Black women. ACMUN has implemented programs

[54] And for a period of time the NGO developed work in the city of Júlio de Castilho, also in the state of Rio Grande do Sul.

aimed at fighting the spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Black communities. The NGO has organized projects that identify female community leaders and train them to disseminate information on STDs, especially HIV/AIDS disease where they live. NGO leaders have also demanded that public health administrators include issues of gender and race in their policies. The organization has two offices one in the city of Porto Alegre that is the first location, and an office in the city of Passo Fundo. In Porto Alegre the NGO has around ten people as staff and several collaborators and volunteers. According to the executive coordinator of ACMUN, Laura, it is important to them that all of the organization's leaders incorporate the values of its founders which are based on Afro-Brazilian ancestry.

Part of ACMUN's staff in the city of Passo Fundo, RS

Part of ACMUN's staff in the city of Passo Fundo, RS

Part of ACMUN's collaborators

ACMUN's volunteer

ACMUN has organized several projects for the community, such as courses in literacy, writing, computer training, and serigraphy. In all these courses, they approach topics such as citizenship, affirmative action policies, reparations, and gender-based legislation on Black women's health and violence against Black women. Another common project of this group is realized during the carnival period (usually February) when they promote activities that raise the communities' awareness about HIV/AIDS epidemic and other STDs, and they have distributed condoms and information on prevention to people inside the Escolas de Samba (Samba Schools) of Porto Alegre. Specifically, they also have worked with the female condom, training women on how to use it and how to negotiate its use with their partners.

ACMUN has worked with communities in the city of Porto Alegre that have the largest concentrations of Afro-Brazilians such as Bom Jesus, Restinga, and Cidade Baixa. In the city of Passo Fundo, they have focused their community work in Vila Santa Luzia. In addition, the organization developed projects in the district of Júlio de Castilho. Both Júlio de Castilho and Passo Fundo are smaller cities, far away from the major urban centers in the southern region, which illustrates ACMUN's attempts to support black women's political views and actions in rural areas.

Their activism through coalition-building and advocacy on a broad scale has allowed ACMUN to build alliances with other Black women's organizations and Black women's networks. Activists have participated in public forums and in government agencies in order to defend the need for better social conditions for Black people in Porto Alegre, Passo Fundo, as well as throughout the southern regions of the country. A major project led by ACMUN at the national and international levels is the Lai-Lai Apejo (Rede

de mulheres negras, direitos sexuais e reprodutivos, DST, HIV e AIDS, na América Latina, E.U.A[55]).

The ACMUN has played an important role in national and international discussions on the HIV/AIDS epidemic among Black women in Brazil and throughout the African Diaspora. In 2003, 2004 and 2007 this NGO was responsible for the organization of three international conferences that brought together young and adult Black women from different countries and regions – Latin America, United States and Africa – to discuss the impact of the epidemic among these groups. The conference brought together African and African-descendent women from distinct backgrounds such as scholars, activists, people who are HIV positive, and health professionals from different countries. Its main goal was to provide participants with an international forum to share thoughts, practices, politics and strategies to confront HIV/AIDS epidemic in black communities worldwide. ACMUN is also one of Criola's main partners in the National Mobilization (Mobilização Pró-Saúde da População Negra) on behalf of Black people's health, especially of Black women.

[55] Lai Lai Apejo – Afrodiasporic Network of Black Women for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, STD, HIV and AIDS, in Latin America, U.S. and Africa.

According to Iara, the current coordinator of Maria Mulher,

The organization was founded in 1987 by a group of Black women militants who used to participate in meetings of the Black Movement of Porto Alegre. These women started to become upset and frustrated in those meetings because no one talked about Black women, about their needs and their conditions. For example, there was a demand in the meetings for volunteers to organize workshops, seminars, and activities in order to give visibility to the impact of racism on Black people; and so, the women accepted the tasks and worked very hard at organizing all events. But then on the day of the events the men would take the leadership, and the women would stay behind them doing secretary's duties, such as registering the participants, cleaning up the place, etc, invisible and without voice. They got tired and upset with that, and started to question. One of the prominent Black women activists that founded Maria Mulher was Conceição and she kept asking: 'Hey everybody, how about the Black women, we are not going to discuss anything about them?! How about the Black women?!!!', and so Conceição told me: 'the men were angry with me' but she continued asking, 'what about Black women?!!!' According to Conceição because of this, the men started to say that the women were trying to divide the group, to divide the fight. Thus, this particular group of women decided to create a women's group inside the broader Black movement group and named it As Marias that represented all the women. The separation from the main group occurred because the women began to study and read, and as a result to make comparisons and so the conflicts emerged. Then they decided to leave the main group and create their own organization, where they could discuss their issues, like the feminists did, i.e. they wanted a individualized space that men could not participate in. Maria Mulher had 20 founders, and I came to participate in the organization in 1990, three years after its establishment in 1987 (passage taken from Iara's interview).

Maria Mulher's Staff Members

Maria Mulher, also based in the city of Porto Alegre, defines itself as a feminist organization, coordinated by black women with different backgrounds and experiences, which allows the organization to engage in various forms of activism. It was founded in March 8, 1987 and since then it has struggled for women's rights and for improving the life conditions of Afro-descendents in the region and throughout Brazil. Particular, since its foundation the organization has played an important role in developing a specific agenda that reflected Black women's issues inside both the Black movement and the feminist movement in the city of Porto Alegre, as well as the state of Rio Grande do Sul. Its mission has been to defend the human rights of all marginalized --though they focus on black people and black women--, and to combat sexism, racism, and class discrimination has been a key political focus. Maria Mulher participated in the creation of a Black women's Collective in the city aiming to unify Black women that were part of other social movement groups such as labor unions and political parties.

The organization has a large staff of about twenty-eight Black women ranging from 18 to 60 years old; they also has an advisory council of more than twenty members

and a team of seventeen collaborators (both women and men). Maria Mulher's objectives also include creating policies that promote women's citizenship rights and empowering black women in order for them to effectively act as agents of their own histories. Maria Mulher works through five lines of action: SOS Racism, Girls/teenagers, Women, Political Intervention, and Documentation and Information. More specifically: SOS Racism: offers juridical, social and psychological assistance to victims of ethnic and racial discrimination; Girls/teenagers: promotes the valorization of Afro-Brazilian women's beauty, identity and culture among young girls and teenagers by working on topics of citizenship and self-esteem; Women: also focuses on the valorization of Afro-Brazilian women's beauty, identity and culture, but also offers adult women a wide range of projects and activities that include literacy courses, social and psychological assistance to victims of domestic violence, workshops on self-esteem, sexual and reproductive health, professional training on food production, sewing, and paper recycling; Political Intervention: trains teachers and other professional educators on human rights issues as well as builds coalitions with other organizations - feminists, women in general, Black movement, and social movement organizations in general; Documentation and information: organizes publications and other informational materials on domestic violence and sexual abuses.

Maria Mulher's primary political project has been to build awareness around the relation between violence against women and the growth of HIV/AIDS epidemic, particularly among Black women. The NGO created the Building the Citizenship of Women Victims of Domestic Violence Program (Programa Construindo a Cidadania de Mulheres Vítimas de Violência Doméstica) to work with the population of one of the

largest low-income black communities in the city of Porto Alegre – the Vila do Cruzeiro do Sul. The organization has worked in this community since March 1998 assisting women victimized by domestic violence and Girls and teenagers at risk and social vulnerability. Maria Mulher offered to these adult and young Black women a structured psycho-social support and follow-up services, such as workshops and meeting to discuss issues such as self-esteem, violence against women, women's health and rights, and topics on how to develop and perform activities to support household income and women financial independence (for example, health cooking for themselves and for sale and paper recycle hand craft). Such activities and services were run by a staff composed of psychologists, social workers, nurses, educators and nutritionists who meet weekly with the community in order to develop the activities.

In this sense the organization aims to invest in the strengthening of the citizenship of women that live with domestic violence situations. In the area of health, Maria Mulher opted for an educational and preventive approach on SDTs /Aids inside the community of Cruzeiro do Sul in the Porto Alegre. In the area of information and continuing education, Maria Mulher offered to the women in the community workshop on literacy, new information technologies and media, political and community engagement and advocacy.

Maria Mulher also developed a work to assist girls and adolescents victims of sexual violence. This service was divided into two complementary parts. The first one is concerned to assist these young Black women through a psycho-therapeutic care specialist. The second part, consists in providing these girls and teenagers with information and tools on the proper procedures for initiating complaint concerning sexual violence, on how to monitor such kind of processes, on routing medical examinations,

and advising for teachers and educators so that they can identify and support the child and adolescent victims of sexual violence.

Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa

Current General coordinator

Former General coordinator. She is currently out of the organization due to her new job duties in the CEDIM – Conselho Estadual dos Direitos da Mulher

Staff Member (Health educator)

According to Rosangela Castro – one of the prominent founders of the Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa, member of the Rede Nacional de Lésbicas Negras (Black Lesbians National Network), Rede Afro LGBT (Afro LGBT Network), and Liga Brasileira de Lésbicas, RJ (Lesbians Brazilian League) – the name of the NGO was inspired by the Portuguese woman, Felipa de Souza. Rosangela summarized Felipa de Souza's history:

> Felipa de Souza was born in 1556, in Tavira, Portugal, and came to Brazil, but there is no register of when she arrived in the country. She was a widow, the history tells that she remarried in Salvador, Bahia. She was an educated woman. At 35 years of age she had to respond to the Court of the Holy Office that inquired about her practices considered immoral. In December 18, 1591, Felipa de Souza was arrested, accused of promiscuous practices. According to history, she confessed to have had several relationships with other women, which involved six women. Because of that Felipa de Souza was severely punished by the Inquisition, and was sentenced with penalty of being publically whipped and banished forever from the Bahian Colony [Because Felipa de Souza was considered the most humiliated and punished woman of the Colony, she was chosen for the International Homosexuals Human Rights Prize and received?? the Felipa de Souza Award]

In addition to the historical identification with the Portuguese woman Felipa de Souza, Rosangela Castro also said that she was motivated to found the organization because she was tired of being rejected by black, feminist, and gay and lesbian organizations. She wanted to participate in a group that she felt welcomed and accepted her as a light-skinned Black lesbian woman, facing triple discrimination - among some Black militants, because of her skin color and sexism, and among some feminists because of her lesbianism, and among mixed gay and lesbian groups, because of sexism.

Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Souza is based in the city of Rio de Janeiro, and is comprised of Lesbian women, most of whom are Black. It defines itself as a non-profit organization, founded in July 29, 2001, by women committed to the struggles of lesbians. They claim to be a group organized by and for lesbian women to discuss, propose strategies of social intervention, and to meet other women. The organization was composed around 6 members and a group of collaborators and volunteers. Its goals have been to improve the life quality of lesbians, to promote political actions such as educational programs that guarantee women rights and value lesbian culture.

Staff Member (Health educator)

T-shirt: 3rd GLBT Rally in the city of Niterói, RJ.

Grupo Felipa de Sousa also gives support to women who feel isolated and marginalized by discrimination, and they have also worked to guarantee the rights of lesbians in governmental agencies and in civil society. The organization has developed projects and activities with women who live on the urban periphery, in schools, among union workers, and in neighborhood associations, and creates special training programs aimed at empowering community-based lesbian groups. They have organized the following projects: Espelho de Mim (Mirror of Myself), Saúde no Futebol (Health at the Football), O que eles levam no peito (What they carry on the Chest) and Severina. The Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa has also worked with the lesbian community in nightclubs, pubs and bars distributing condoms and bringing information about HIV/Aids epidemics.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I explored the most relevant social and organizational aspects of Black women's non-governmental organizations in Porto Alegre and in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I described and analyzed Black women's NGOs and their activists throughout three dimensions – Identity, Ancestry and Resistance – which I identified as a sort of organizational foundation for these types or organizations.

In recent decades, the political actions of Black women's NGOs have intensified in terms of number and capability. Black women's NGOs have formed a particular subset within the broader collective of Black NGOs and Black social movement organizations. As political organizers, these NGOs have helped Black communities to demand services such as the opening of specialized clinics and units dealing with diseases that require advanced medical attention (i.e. HIV/AIDS), the improvement of public health programs targeting diseases which occur more frequently among the Black population (i.e. sickle-cell anemia), and the advancement of existing health promotion initiatives that contribute to the adoption of healthy lifestyles (i.e. condom distribution programs). These actions, in some cases take place inside the *terreiros*, rooted in Afro-Brazilian culture and tradition; in this regard, Black women's NGOs action on health represents an irrefutable African diasporic feminist practice. Another important aspect is to understand that these NGOs are not a homogenous group as they present limitations, contradictions and ambiguities. However, regardless of their present and future limitations, these Black women have provided important resources and support and generated fresh insights about how to engage in anti-racist, ant-sexist, anti-heterosexist, homophobic and lesbophobic struggles in these troubled times. It is in this regard that I expect that the political practices, experiences and reality of Afro-descendent Brazilian

women can be useful to advance comparative scholarship and to produce key insights into African Diaspora and Black Feminist Studies.

Chapter IV: Black Women's NGOs in Brazil[56]– [ONGs de Mulheres Negras]

INTRODUCTION

This Chapter is an effort to analyze what precisely are Black women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Brazil. The chapter is divided in two major parts. The first part examines the socio- political and organizational aspects of Brazilian Black women's NGOs as civil society. Following this discussion I will analyze the role of these organizations in relation to civil society's definition, since there have been some critiques concerned to the fact that NGOs are in direct confrontation with civil society's principles, due to their relationship to State and internationals agencies responsible to spread neoliberalist policies in the world . In this sense, I suggest that Black NGOs are part of the civil society movement, but they have distinguished themselves from other groups through gendered racial perspectives due to their particular conditions and experiences of oppression. In addition, as part of the characterization of Black women's NGOs, I briefly address their relation with traditional social forces such as university, churches and other religious groups, and left party; and outline their major organizational structures. Next, I develop an explanation regarding the legitimacy of Brazilian Black women's NGOs as civil society representatives. Finally, I focus on the elements that seems to explain the nature of the relationship between the State and Black women's NGOs; this discussion is based on Leilah Landim's (1988) four arguments that are: (1)

[56] Unless otherwise noticed all translations in this chapter are by the authors.

the autonomy as the mediator of the relationship of the NGOs to State in Brazil; (2) the vision of NGOs that there is a need to consider emergent issues in terms of inequalities that requires their immediate intervention and dialogue with State agencies, particular in the elaboration of more efficient public policies, since the State is per excellence the major responsible of such circumstances; (3) the beliefs that Brazilian state can change in a positive way; (4) and finally the fact that as civil society representatives the NGOs are automatically placed in confrontation to State, regardless the relationship these organizations establish with it.

The second part of this chapter discusses what I called African-diasporic feminist practice. In this part I examine the attempts and investments of Black women's NGOs in the elaboration of gendered racial public policies in Brazil. I utilize health and co-related issues to understand these organizations' activisms. I also explore what these various forms of activisms inform us about the politics of Black women's NGOs, and how they have developed in recent decades.

I want to clarify that I acknowledge the existence of other types of Black women's collective organizing in Brazil that are distinct of NGOs; Black women's NGOs are not the only way in which black women have engaged in political struggles against the state and major forms of oppression in the country. For instance, there is the organized resistance of Black women in neighborhood unions (see Perry 2004, 2007 and 2008). However, I also think that Black women's NGOs have represented crucial forces and contemporary expressions of these women's struggles that need to be researched and documented.

Below I present a scheme that mapped the Black women's organizing in Brazil by regions from 1950s-2000s, and the Black women's participation in national and international gatherings and meetings from the same period. Both scheme demonstrate how many of Black women's organizations emerged in Brazil over the last five decades. As I showed in Chapter IV about female sterilization, many of the first Black women's NGOs came out in Brazil at the peak of Black women's struggles against the State and society's political attempts to control Black women's reproductive health and rights through mechanisms such as forced female sterilization and family planning policies, along with other human rights violation and inequality that were impacting this group of women.

Table 6: Mapping Black Women's organizing in Brazil by Regions, 1950s-2000s[57]

	North	Northeast	Central-West	Southeast	South
1950s				**1950** – Conselho Nacional de Mulheres Negras/Rio de Janeiro – RJ	
1960s					
1970s				**1978** – REUNIMA – Reunião de Mulheres Negras Aquatume/ RJ – Rio de Janeiro	
1980s		**1986** – Grupo de Mulheres Negras Mãe Andresa/ MA - Maranhão **1986** – SACI – Sociedade Afrosergipana de estudos e Cidadania/ Aracaju, Sergipe – SE **1988** – Grupo de Mulheres do Alto das Pombas de Salvador/ Bahia – BA		**1980** – Luiza Mahin/RJ – Rio de Janeiro (the feminine cluster of the Movimento Negro Unificado – MNU). **1980** – GMN – Grupo de Mulheres Negras do Rio de Janeiro/ RJ **1982** – Coletivo de Mulheres Negras de São Paulo/São Paulo **1983** – Nzinga – Coletivo de Mulheres Negras/Rio de Janeiro **1983** – Fala Mulher Meriti/Rio de Janeiro **1985** – Centro de Mulheres de Favela e Periferia do Rio de Janeiro/RJ **1986** – Coletivo de Mulheres da Baixada Santista – Santos/ São Paulo **1986** – Coletivo de Mulheres Negras/ MG – Minas Gerais **1988** – Geledés – Instituto da Mulher Negra/ SP – São Paulo **1989** – Comissão de Mulheres Negras de Campinas/ São Paulo – SP	**1987 – Maria Mulher – Organização de Mulheres / RS – Rio Grande do Sul**

[57] These tables were reconstructed from my fieldwork primary sources, such as collaborators and NGOs archival materials and documents, and secondary sources: Lemos, Rosalia de O. (1997). Feminismo Negro em Construção: a organização do Movimento de Mulheres Negras no Rio de Janeiro. Dissertação de Mestrado. Rio de Janeiro: UFRJ;Chumaher, Schuma and Vital Brazil, Érico. Mulheres Negras do Brasil. Rio de Janeiro: Senac Nacional, 2007.

	North	Northeast	Central-West	Southeast	South
1990s	**1999** – Imena – Instituto de Mulheres Negras do Amapá/Amapá – AP	**1992** – Coletivo de Mulheres Negras de Salvador/ Bahia – BA **1994** – Coletivo de Mulheres Negras Esperança Garcia/ Piauí – PI	**1990** – Coletivo de Mulheres Negras do Distrito Federal/ DF **1999** – Grupo de Mulheres Negras Malunga/ Gôiania, Goias – GO	**1990** – Comissão de Mulheres Negras de Campinas/ São Paulo – SP **1990** – Casa de Cultura da Mulher Negra/ Santos, São Paulo – SP **1991** – Bloco Afro Oriashé/ São Paulo – SP **1992 - Criola/Rio de Janeiro – RJ** **1994** – Cedoicom – Centro de Documentação Coisa de Mulher/ Rio de Janeiro – RJ **1994** – E'léékò Gênero Desenvolvimento e Cidadania/Rio de Janeiro – RJ **1995** – Associação de Mulheres Negras Oborin Dudu/Espírito Santo – ES **1997** – Fala Preta! Organização de Mulheres Negras/ São Paulo – SP Caces – Centro de Atividades Culturais, econômicas e Sociais/Rio de Janeiro – RJ	**1990 – ACMUN – Associação Cultural de Mulheres Negras/Rio Grande do Sul – RS** **1992** – Grupo Oduduwa/ Rio Grande do Sul – RS **1995** – Coletivo de Mulheres Negras/Mato Grosso do Sul – MS Casa da Mulher Catarina/Florianópolis, Santa Catarina – SC

	North	Northeast	Central-West	Southeast	South
2000s	CEDENPA – Centro de Estudos e Defesa do Negro do Pará/Belém, Pará – PA **2005** – Imune – Instituto da Mulher Negra/ Pará – PA	**2001** – Bamidelé – Organização de Mulheres Negras/Paraíba – PB **2003** – Institutos Negras do Ceará/Ceará – CE **2003** – Uiala Mukaji – Sociedade de Mulheres Negras/Pernambuco – PE **2003** - OMIN Grupo de Mulheres Negras Maria do Egito/Sergipe-SE	**2002** – Grupo de Mulheres Negras Dandara do Cerrado/ Goiais – GO (the group emerged in 1991, but organized as an NGO in 2002)	**2001 – Grupo de Mulheres Negras Felipa de Sousa/Rio de Janeiro – RJ** **2003** – Minas da Cor/São Paulo – SP **2004** – Mulheres de Kêto – Sociedade Lésbica Feminista/São Paulo – SP **2005** – Instituto Kuanza/São Paulo – SP AMMA Psique e Negritude/ São Paulo – SP	

Table 7: Black Women's participation in national and international gatherings and meetings, 1950s-2000s

1950s	First Black Women's National Meeting was held in the city of Rio de Janeiro		
1960s	Movimento Internacional Mulher e Saúde (MIMS)		
1970s	**1975** – México (Ano Internacional da Mulher; Década da Mulher: 1976 a 1985) e (Fóruns Paralelos de ONGS) 1**975** – Seminário da ABI – Asociação Brasileira deImprensa/Rio de Janeiro – RJ	**1979** - I Encontro Feministas Brasileiras, Ceará, Fortaleza*	

*Because of the military regime that took place in the country from the 1964 until 1984 all Brazilian feminist meetings were held parallel to the SBPC Conference – Sociedade Brasileira para o Progresso da Ciência because it was considered a privileged space to promote democratic debates and resistance in the period of the dictatorship.

1980s	**1980** Copenhague (incorporação de 3 subtemas à agenda: educação, emprego e saúde) e (Fóruns Paralelos de ONGS) II Encontros Feministas Brasileiras, Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro* II Congresso da Mulher Paulista/ São Paulo - SP **1981** Projeto Nacional de Saúde da Mulher Negra (PNSMN) Grupos de Auto-ajuda, Atlanta, Geórgia, EUA III Encontro Feministas Brasileiras, Salvador, Bahia* I Encontros Feministas Latino-americanos e do Caribe, Colômbia, Bogotá (200 participantes) **1982 -** IV Encontro Feministas Brasileiras, São Paulo, Campinas **1983** I Encontro Estadual de Mulheres Negras do Rio de Janeiro/RJ I Congresso Nacional sobre Questões de Saúded da Mulher Negra (em Spelman College, Atlanta, Geórgia) II Encontros Feministas Latino-americanos e do Caribe, Peru, Lima (600 participantes)	**1983 –1985** : PAISM – Programa de Assistência Integral à Saúde da Mulher (não foi incluído como um direito na constituição de 1988, e não consta no Programa de ação do SUS – Sistema Único de Saúde, referências ver Fátima Oliveira: Manual Oficinas Mulher Negra e Saúde) **1984 -** V Encontro Feministas Brasileiras, São Paulo, São Paulo* **1985** Nairobi (Fóruns Paralelos de ONGS) VI Encontro Feministas Brasileiras, Minas Gearias, Belo Horizonte** III Encontros Feministas Latino-americanos e do Caribe, Brasil, Bertióga/SP (900 participantes) **1986** I Encontro Estadual de Mulheres Negras de São Paulo/SP I Congresso das mulheres Trabalhadoras/ São Paulo – SP VII Encontro Feministas Brasileiras, Rio de Janeiro, Nogueira** VIII Encontro Nacional Feminista	**1987** Encontro de Mulheres em GARANHUNS/ Pernambuco Fórum de Mulheres Negras/RJ I Encontro Estadual de Mulheres Negras/RJ VIII Encontro Feministas Brasileiras, Pernambuco, Garanhuns** IX Encontro Nacional Feminista, Garanhuns - Pernambuco/PE IV Encontros Feministas Latino-americanos e do Caribe, México, Taxco (mais de 1.500) participantes) Iª Reunião Nacional Preparatória para organização do Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras/Rio de Janeiro – RJ **1988 -** I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras/ Valença, Rio de Janeiro - RJ **1989 -** IX Encontro Feministas Brasileiras São Paulo, Bertioga**

1990s	**1990** ▪ Surge o Programa de Mulheres do CEAP-RJ (Centro de Apoio às Populações Marginalizadas) ▪ Fórum Contra a Esterilização em Massas de Mulheres) ▪ Criação do Comitê Impulsor para a realização do Encontro Latino Americano e do Caribe de Mulheres Negras/ Argentina ▪ V Encontros Feministas Latino-americanos e do Caribe, Argentina, San Bernardo (3.000 participantes) **1991** ▪ II Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras/ Salvador, Bahia - BA ▪ Surge o Programa de Saúde da ONG de Mulheres Negras Geledés ▪ Campanha Nacional contra a Esterilização de Mulheres (CEAP/RJ, coordenação de Jurema Werneck – Projeto Mulher Esterilizada) ▪ X Encontro Feministas Brasileiras Caldas Novas/ GO** **1992** ▪ Fórum a Global das ONGs – ECO/92 – RJ (Intensiva participação das Mulheres Negras) ▪ Programa Saúde Reprodutiva da Mulher Negra (Cebrap) ▪ I Encontro Latino Americano e do Caribe de Mulheres Negras/República Dominicana	**1993** ▪ II Encontro Estadual em Miguel Pereira/ RJ (5 a 7 de novembro) ▪ I Seminário Nacional de Mulheres Negras, em Atibaia/ SP (12 a 15 de novembro) ▪ VI Encontros Feministas Latino-americanos e do Caribe, San Salvador, Costa do Sol (1.300 participantes) ▪ I Seminário Nacional de Mulheres Negras,Atibaia, São Paulo – SP ▪ Seminário Nacional de Políticas e Direitos Reprodutivos das Mulheres Negras, Itapecirica da Serra/ São Paulo – SP **1994** ▪ Seminário Nacional Políticas e Direitos Reprodutivos das Mulheres Negras [onde surgiu a Declaração de Itapecerica da Serra das Mulheres Negras Brasileiras]. ▪ Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence Against Women, in Belém do Pará, Brazil ▪ II Seminário Nacional de Mulheres Negras, Salvador, Bahia – BA ▪ Painel Mulheres Negras Latinoamericanas e Caribenhas – Balanço e Perspectivas para o 3º Milênio – Mar Del Plata, Argentina **1995** ▪ Encontro de BEJING ▪ Pequim (Fóruns Paralelos de ONGS) ▪ Conferência de Mulheres Brasileiras Rumo A Beining, Rio de Janeiro – RJ	**1996** ▪ Rede Latino Americana e do Caribe de Mulheres Negras ▪ Grupo de Trabalho Interministerial para Valorização da População Negra (GTI) e ▪ Decreto do Ministério da Saúde, de Março de 1996 que dispõe sobre a padronização de informações sobre raça e cor dos cidadãos brasileiros e estrangeiros residentes no país (ver Art. 3o). (ref. Fatima Oliveira) ▪ Projeto ARAYÊ – Programa de Prevenção de HIV/ Aids para a Comunidade Afro-brasileira/ ABIA ▪ VII Encontros Feministas Latino-americanos e do Caribe, Chile, Cartagena (cerca de 1000 participantes) ▪ XII Encontro Nacional Feminista, Salvador, Bahia - BA **1997** ▪ XI Encontro Feministas Brasileiras, Bahia ▪ XII Encontro Nacional Feminsta, Salvador, Bahia ▪ Reunião Nacional de Mulheres, Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais – MG ▪ I Jornada Cultural Lélia Gonzalez, São Luís, Maranhão – MA **1998** ▪ I Encontro Internacional de Mulheres da Floresta Amazônica ▪ Seminário Nacional sobre Mulher Negra e Comunicação, São Paulo - SP **1999** ▪ VIII Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounter, Dominican Republic

2000s	**2000** Pré-Conferência Cultura & Saúde da População Negra Brasília, 13 a 15 de setembro de 2000 Confência Regional das Américas Contra o Racismo, realizada em dezembro, Santiago do Chile. Encontro Nacional Feminista/ Paraíba – PB Marcha Mundial das Mulheres 2000 Contra a Pobreza e a Violência, Rio de Janeiro - RJ **2001** III Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras, Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais - MG III Conferência Mundial Contra o Racismo, Discriminação Racial, Xenofobia e Outras Formas de Intolerância, África do Sul, 31 de agosto a 7 de setembro Marcha Mundial de Mulheres, Fórum Social Mundial, Porto Alegre	**2002** Conferência Nacional de Mulheres Brasileiras: "Nosso Olhar Transforma o Mundo!" / Brasília, Dstrito Federal – DF IX Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounter, held in the Playa Tambor, Costa Rica **2004** Seminário Nacional de Mulheres Negras/São Paulo - SP I Seminário Nacional de Saúde da População Negra/ Brasília (de 18 – 20 de agosto) – promovido: Ministério da Saúde e Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial [Portaria n . 1.678/ GM. Cria Comitê Técnico para subsidiar o avanço da eqüidade na Atenção à Sáude da População Negra]	**2005** X Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounter, held in the city of Serra Negra, São Paulo Marcha Zumbi + 10, Brasília, Distrito Federal – DF

VI.1. THE "AGGLUTINATION": BLACK WOMEN'S NGOS AS CIVIL SOCIETY

> Being a Black woman has two sides. A harsh side that is one of being mistreated anywhere; everybody is discourteous, disrespectful with you; everybody feels the need to be discourteous with you, so this is the harsh side. And there is the other one that is the side of agglutination: In being a Black woman, this also means that I have a collective that I can refer to; that is enormous in any part, here in Rio de Janeiro, or Salvador, or in São Luis do Maranhão, in Belém do Pará, in any place that I go, or in most of the places that I go, there is a collective of militants, a collective of other Black women, a collective of Black women that present themselves as Black women; such history exists throughout the Diaspora! In all these meetings there is always somebody discourteous [insolent] that you are obligated to shake his/her hand (Interview with Jurema Werneck, a prominent Black Brazilian feminist and general coordinator of the NGO Criola located in Rio de Janeiro). [58]

The quotation above belongs to Jurema Werneck, a Black feminist and general coordinator of the NGO Criola, located in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In this part we will explore what Werneck indicated as the second side of "*being a Black woman – the agglutination, which represents Black woman as a collective"*.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) constitute key contemporary sites through which women have struggled against forms of oppression. Today, more than three decades have passed since the emergence of these organizations in Latin America, but they still play essential roles within nation-states – local and globally – in terms of the development of strategies to confront social, racial, and gender inequalities (Sudbury 1998, Ramos 2004). In Brazil NGOs emerged in mid-1980s[59] yet to this day, there have been no specific studies regarding Brazilian Black women's NGOs. These organizing

[58] Jurema Werneck is a generalist physician and doctor in communication studies.
[59] (see Fernandes 1988, Landim 1988, and Ramos 2004).

have represented a space from where Black women have developed the infrastructure to build national and transnational[60] coalitions, to create and exchange knowledges, experiences, and information in order to generate strategies of survival and resistance to oppression (Werneck 2003a, 2005b and Santos 2006). The lack of analysis regarding this group of NGOs reinforces the significance of my research proposal in terms of examining what precisely defines the identity of Black women's NGOs, and what aspects distinguish them from other forms of organization and socio-political participation in Brazilian society. Particularly, my study focuses on the contributions of Brazilian black women's NGOs to the struggles against race, gender, class and sexual discrimination in the area of sexual and reproductive health. An examination of the set of Black women's NGOs presented in the tables I systematized in the beginning of this chapter, reveals that these NGOs are composed of a broad-base and diverse body of activists which inevitably leads to internal and external tensions, such as regional origin, sex orientation, educational background, feminist ideologies, and based on how the Black feminists frame their work in terms of gender, race, class and sexuality, among others.

These tensions among Black women's NGOs are part of an important dynamic of negotiation and debate. It is through such dialectic of agreement and disagreement that those organizations constitute themselves and have shaped contemporary Black womanhood in Brazil. Moreover, as I have tried to demonstrate in the introduction of Part I, those tensions have illuminated how race/racism, gender/sexism, class/classism, sexuality/heterosexism, and state oppression have impacted Black women, and Afro-Brazilian population in general.

[60] Basu 2003, Mato 1997 and 1998, Mond 2003

In the 1990s civil society emerged as a key element for re-democratization after a long period of dictatorship in Latin American. Andrew Arato (1995) defines civil society as a concept that,

> Expresses the new dualist, radical, reformist, or revolutionary strategies of transformation of dictatorship, observed first in Eastern Europe and later in Latin America, for which it provided a new theoretical understanding. These strategies were based on the autonomous organization of society and the reconstruction of social ties outside the authoritarian state and the conceptualization of a public sphere independent and separate from every form of official, state, or party-controlled communication (19)[61].

Sílvia Ramos (2004) argued that "the civil society is a sphere of social integration between the economy and the State (2)." Other attempts to conceptualize civil society have identified it as

> a significant player in the democratization process, an oppositional force to state's neoliberalism, an entity that have become 'international', 'transnational', 'global', and 'planetary'; and yet, that civil society was pointed out as the only available or most important domain for organizing cultural and political contestation (My translation, Alvarez et al 1998: 17).

At the same time, in opposition to this 'harmonious' role indicated by the concept of civil society, Sonia Alvarez et al (1998) identified it as

> A terrain of struggle mined by sometimes undemocratic power relations and the enduring problems of racism, hetero/sexism, environmental destruction, and other form of exclusion (17).

> A terrain mined by unequal relations of power wherein some actors can gain greater access to power, as well as differential access to material, cultural, and political resources, than others. Because democratizing cultural and social relations – whether at the micro level of the household, the neighborhood, and the community association or the macro level of relation between women and men, blacks and whites, rich and poor – is an express goal of Latin American social movements, civil society must be understood as both their "terrain" and one of their privileged "target" (18).

[61] In Alvarez et al (1998: 16-17).

I want to explore the social and political characteristics of Black women's NGOs in relation to these definitions of civil society. These definitions directed my attention to the NGOs, particular the Black ones, as they are primarily identified as a type of (organized) civil society.

According to Leilah Landim (1988) the organization that eventually would be called NGOs in the 1980s were born in the end of the 1960s in Brazil, a difficult period in the Brazilian history because of the dictatorship, which influenced their choice of organization (30) (see Fernandes 1988 and Ramos 2004). Looking at the history of the emergence of Black women's NGOs in the country, we can observe that most of them were founded during the 1980s and 1990s and comprise a particular subset within the broader collective of Black NGOs and Black social movements. Yet there have been no specific studies regarding Brazilian Black women's NGOs. Nowadays, these organizations' activities are engaged with assorted fields concerning the social experiences of the Black population: from violence in the community to the Black population control of public policy in the country.

In relation to other civil society movements, Black women's NGOs, have distinguish themselves through a gendered racial perspective that is associated to their emergence and development; such perspective have demarcated a peculiar field for the construction of their identities, and also have distinguished them from other forms of associations in Brazil, such as labor unions, neighborhood association, and other groups organized through religious or political reasons. This gendered racial perspective will appear in any aspects of these organizations social and political structures. The African diasporic feminist practice that I will address in the last part of this Chapter has been forged through such perspective. This perspective is materialized in these organizations

everyday and historical struggle, more than that it constitutes their identities. I want to utilize Ramos (2004) definition to examine how such identities appear. According to the author, one of the characteristics of NGOs in general is that "they have the distinctive mark of being alternatives to the institutional practices, for example, universities, churches and left-wing parties, while at the same time have these three institutions as major references (3)". However, regarding this last aspect about references, in the case of Black women's NGOs there is some variations to this definition. In terms of the universities as reference, at least half of the NGOs' teams have college degree, but they have engaged in strong arguments criticizing the academy because of its pervasive position contributing to perpetuate gender and racial inequalities and sustain a minority's privileges.

In relation to Churches, for example, the NGO Criola has members from different religious affiliations, but the church (Catholic, Protestant, etc) is definitely not in which the NGO lay in terms of their political identity, but instead the Afro-Brazilian religions is at the roots of the organization's identity; this is also the position of the organization Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa; moreover both organizations are in favor of abortion legalization and of freedom and rights for lesbians and gays, all these characteristic place them in direct confrontation to Catholic and Protestant churches. Paradoxically, the NGO ACMUN's identity is based on a syncretism between Catholicism and Afro-Brazilian religions, and this is very interesting because it is probably the reason why I could not find a explicit claim regarding abortion and lesbophobia and homophobia, although when I asked their members about their institution politics regarding these issues, they told me the NGO fights for abortion legalization and human rights for LGBT groups. In the NGO Maria Mulher, I just interviewed three women, but the first one did not have any religious affiliation, the second belongs to *Umbanda* considered an Afro-Brazilian religion, and the

third woman practiced Spiritism, the spiritualist philosophical doctrine of Alan Kardec that has many followers in Brazil. So none of them had any relation to organized religions at all. They also had strong opinions about women's sexual liberation.

Regarding the relationship of Black women's NGOs with left-wing parties, I did not explored specific discussions about such issues. I observed that it is not the organization per se that is institutionally affiliated to the parties, but some of their members; most of them are affiliated to the Worker's Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores). Despite the fact that Black women's NGOs are alternative institutions in relation to left-wing parties, they also have established dialogues with politicians and other parties' representatives in the government in order to transform and advance public policy in favor of the Black population, particularly concerning education, health, employment, and women's rights, among others. In addition, the gendered racial perspective can be observed in the kind of groups inside the left-wing parties that Black women's NGOs will dialogue with and offer support to, which are mainly constituted by women and Blacks, for example, former ministries Benedita da Silva and Marina Silva, former district representatives such as Edson Santos and Jurema Batista, senator Paulo Paim, former minister Matilde Ribeiro, among others.

Black women's NGOs may differ in their organization and thematic focus, but in general they are characterized by a structure that involves an office or headquarters, support from national and international donors and philanthropic organizations, and a paid staff that is usually in charge of managing the resources they receive and running the projects and programs in the organization. It is important to mention these institutional apparatuses because such funding has precisely transformed many of the Black women's grassroot groups into Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs or ONGs). This

institutionalization was integrated with older strategies that these collectives of women had developed to struggle against oppression in the country, such as street and community mobilizations, grassroots work with Black women in the community, lobbying government agencies, etc. In addition, these kinds of organizations have been identified as one of the contemporary sites through which Black women have struggled against social, racial, and gender inequalities and developed the infrastructure to build national and transnational coalitions (Mato 1997; Sudbury 1998; Basu 2003; Mond 2003; Ramos 2004; Perry 2004, 2005; Werneck 2005; Caldwell 2007). Black women's NGOs cover a wide range of areas and activities and are organized in a national network, in addition to participating in international coalitions. These political alliances have reinforced local and regional struggles and provided support for emerging Black women activists, feminists and leaders.

Thus, the 'sophistication' of their organization in terms of the acquisition of offices, paid staff members, and increased access to funding from national and international donor agencies can be indicated as a major issue that have distinguished Black Women's organizations from other grassroot and based community groups; and such phenomenon started to happen in 1980s, increasing during the 1990s and 2000s. I am particularly emphasizing these social-organizational characteristics of Black women's NGOs because they have been used to criticize the nature of these organizations as civil society entities, mainly based on the definitions of the term civil society I pointed in the previous paragraphs. In other words, this 'sophistication' and their negotiation with the Brazilian State and international organizations to acquire public and private funds (used to develop their project and programs in order to support Black women's struggle against racial, gender inequalities and discrimination, and to empower Black women in the communities) has been seen as suspicious and object of critique by other activist groups

that do not accept State or international agencies funds, and also some scholars. This critique assumes that as part of civil society forces, these organizations should perform their activities and construct their political work without any link to state and its governmental agencies. However, the focus on the social-organizational forms that Black women's NGOs have taken is used to inquire what it means in terms of political issues, and how it impacts Black women's representation as political groups that aim to contest social order, and to contribute to social change through the way they are structured and the choices they made in term of political alliances and other forms of political relationship. In this sense, Black women's NGOs in Brazil seem to go against what was previously pointed out in this discussion as main characteristics of actions within civil society – being "radically oppositional and autonomous to state, being committed to the reconstruction of social ties outside the authoritarian state, the conceptualization of a public sphere independent and separate from every official, state, or party-controlled communication" (Arato 1995: 19). Nevertheless besides identify this reality that seems to be a fact according civil society definitions, my question is: does the politics of Black women's NGOs point to a new political understanding regarding the state and civil society relationships? Which are the basic principles of civil society concerning the oppositional standpoint to state that did not worked (or is not working) for them? Are they proposing and/or experimenting with, alternative domains for organizing political contestation?

Therefore, it was through these many challenging points and questions that it became crucial to me to look at Brazilian Black women's NGOs concerning their legitimacy in terms of what type of civil society representatives they are, why they

choose to represent themselves in this particular way, how and why they chose their partners and alliance.

Since I decided to study Black women's NGOs I have been challenged and confronted with questions concerning: the legitimacy of NGOs to act as community representatives, and whether they are trustworthy in terms of the funds they receive and how they spend the money. I was even challenged by the idea that since NGOs are institutionalized groups this immediately precludes any possibility of them being revolutionary or capable of promoting meaningful social change. Since then, I have observed people's discourses about the efficacy of NGOs, from scholars, individuals working inside of these institutions as well as from those who are outsiders. In the next paragraphies I present and discuss some of these critical discourses.

A first main discourse has critically pointed to the transformation of grassroots groups into NGOs, and questioned their legitimacy in terms of representing their communities. Moreover, they suggest that institutionalization jeopardizes the ordinary and spontaneous nature of grassroots movements. For example, for many people the idea of receiving funds takes away the possibility for spontaneity and voluntary practices and participation. Many NGOs have been questioned in terms of their legitimacy to be considered an entity composed by constituents of a community. The other discourse that has been used to challenge the institutional nature of Black NGOs is the idea that the grassroots is attached to movements on the local level and to voluntary activities; since NGOs tend to work on the national and international level, developing work with policy-makers, and hiring paid staff, these have been identified as a way of diminishing this grassroots role.

During my fieldwork I encountered some Black women who questioned the authority of Black women's NGOs as community representatives; such testimonies

appeared among some of the lowest income Black women. I want to narrate two of these critiques that caught my attention because they go along with the two discourses I pinpointed above. The first critique involved Helena[62], a former Black women's collaborator who is 60 years old; she worked with one of the four NGOs I researched. The dilemma centered around a misunderstanding that developed around funding to support a project in her community: the NGO asked Helena to write and organize a communitarian project concerning women's health because there was a possibility to get funds in that area. A problem arose when the NGO received a smaller fund in relation to the amount it asked for, so as a consequence, some of the communities could not receive any money. However, before receiving the money Helena had already spread the news and ran inside the community making lots of promises that she would receive a fund as a representative of the women in the community and it would bring lots of benefits to them. Helena also claimed that when the NGO sought her help in the community it brought a lot of hope in terms of improving awareness concerning health issues, especially among the women, and so she was very frustrated. Additionally, many women in the community and other neighborhoods were very angry with her, were calling her a liar, and in some extreme cases were threatening her so she was scared and angry too. Helena said that it was not enough for the NGO to say that there was no money because it would not help her or the other women. Moreover, she did not believe the explanation that there was not enough money for everybody and to this day she is still telling this story to everybody and accusing the NGO of withholding money from the community that really needs it.

The second critique was made by two Black women, Noemi (30 years old) and Rubia[63] (20 years old): both women indicated that they missed the times when the NGO

[62] Helena is a pseudonym for my collaborator.
[63] Noemi and Rubia were my collaborators and these are pseudonyms.

would work more inside the communities, when it was closer to them. They indicated that there were lots of activities promoted by the NGO but they were not inside the community anymore and so many women from the community could not participate, because it was far away from them, because [the activities] were held during a period of the day when they did not have time to participate in the events. Particularly, Noemi raised a concern that the members of the NGO were acquiring more and more higher education (such as college and graduate school degrees) and because of that they were becoming more and more absent from the communitarian project, from the grassroots. Noemi revealed that this was such an issue that some members of the NGO that felt marginalized by the others that held a college degree decided to leave the NGOs. According to Noemi, the Black women who had higher education would often dismiss the opinions and ideas of the other Black women that were below them or that have no schooling at all.

In addition, Sonia Alvarez also problematized the partnership network NGOs have constructed around them:

> The growing predominance of NGOs within Latin American Movements and their complex relation to local grassroots movements and constituencies, on the one hand, and to bilateral, multilateral, and private agencies, foundations, and transnational NGOs based in North America, on the other hand, are also signaled as especial political and theoretical issues for the region's movements today (Alvarez et al 1998: 17)

This socio-economic and political context of this "growing predominance" of NGOs in Latin America, and their multiple relations and dialogues to national and international social actors, has been considered a controversial issue among many feminists because its relation to neoliberalism and globalization politics. The strong

critiques that has been made is that the so called radical feminist movement from the 1970s has became institutionalized due to many feminists were organized during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s into NGOs, and as consequence, reliant of national and international agencies; participating in alliances with governments and agencies, for example, the World Bank and other North American agencies that support and spread neoliberalist politics in Latin America (see Castro & Hallewell, 2001; James, 1999; Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, 2007, among others).

From such critiques I want to focus on the elements that could possibly lead us to understand the nature of the relationship between the State and Black women's NGOs, and its supposed risk of abandonment of the basis of the social movement. There is no easy answer or justification for this situation, nevertheless I will spend the rest of this chapter pointing to some possible explanations.

IV.1.1. Black Women's NGOs and the State

In terms of the socioeconomic and political context that circumscribed the formation of the Non-Governmental Organizations in Brazil, my investigation demonstrated that Black women's NGOs were influenced by the same major structural constructions that shaped NGOs in general. In this regard, Leilah Landim's (1988) work has represented an important contribution in terms of efforts to comprehend Non-Government Organizations' (NGOs) structures and roles in Brazil. The author produced key analyses regarding the NGOs in the 1980s that I believe are fundamental to understand the reasons why NGOs in the country adopted the kind of relationship with

the state that has been so criticized. According to Landim, in the early periods of the emergence of NGOs in Brazil, and even in Latin America, there was a feeling of mistrust in relation to the State that led these organizations to take up a vigilant position in this regard (see Ladim 1988: 45). In addition, Landim indicated that in that moment "the 'non-governmental' seemed to be translated as 'anti-governmental'; and such standpoint is what characterized the foundation of the Brazilian NGOs. Thus, the author indicated that it was under such circumstances of political authoritarianism and distrust in the State that the NGOs in Brazil built their own structure characterized by a distant posture in relation to the State (see Landim 1988: 45).

Nevertheless, Landim argued that the time changed and so the relationship with the State became an important issue in the debates throughout the country.

> If during the authoritarian regimes that relation appeared - for the NGOs – to make no sense, with the democratizing waves, even if weak, the problem was forcedly placed in the agenda on a daily basis. The line that separated two opposing fields [the NGOs and the State] lost its sharpness and its previous contours, and so the NGOs are forced to re-position themselves in that site of undefined boundaries. Therefore, as a consequence, this issue has to be addressed, even if it is a matter of the organization to maintain and justify former standpoints through new bases, as frequently occurs (My translation, Landim, 1988: 45).

As indicated by Landim in the 1980s the confrontational relation between the State and the NGOs shifted to a conciliatory or less conflictive one. The country witnessed in this period an escalation in the number of collaborative work between the NGOs and governmental agencies, such as secretariats, district houses, ministries, among others. Such cooperative work involved communitarian levels to political programs. It was also in this period that the governmental agencies began to offer financial recourses to NGOs' programs (see Landim, 1988). Landim affirmed that this new relationship of cooperation did not occur on the basis of a more elaborated governmental policy; but

rather the collaborative work was developed through individualized relationships between State agencies and the NGOs that were interested in cooperate and receive State financial support. The emergence of these cooperative relationships generated many controversial debates within the NGOs movement, a problem that continue to be debated until today. In the subsequently paragraphies I will employ Landim's conceptualization of the relationship between NGOs and Brazilian State to explain why these organizations have developed such connections and why it is so important for them.

Landim's work is crucial for this analysis because in the late 1980s she made efforts to examine such phenomenon, and in this sense she came up with two possible ways to look at such situation: the first one pointed to the existence of an "incongruence between the NGOs' discourses and their practices", and the alternative way to look at such incongruence, was "to conclude that there was an ongoing effective practice that was not properly and theoretically evaluated (Landim 1988: 46)."

Landim highlighted that even though the relationship to the State shifted to a more cooperative one, the NGOs continued to have doubts about the State. In the face of such issues Ladim pointed to the need to question this relationship between NGOs and the State, and proposed as main approach to such inquiry an analysis of the political conjuncture: "if there were changes concerning the opening of democratic sites, what type are they? How profound are those changes and in what directions they point to in the Brazilian context? And what is the State's role in these transformations?(46)." According Ladim these inquiries were part of the NGOs skepticism in relation to the changes; also many groups looked at such changes as "the establishment of 'new forms of domination', through 'more sophisticated forms of cooptation and disarticulation of the popular movements' (46)." According to Landim, it was precisely because of such questionable circumstances that the NGOs elected the autonomy as the element that

guides their relationship to the State. In other words, the author affirmed that, the autonomy became the element employed by NGOs to regulate their relationship and cooperative work with the State; thus, "the idea is to accept cooperative work with the State, as long the autonomy of the organization and its communitarian-based work could be guaranteed (46)." Landim's (1988) argument concerning the centrality of the autonomy as the mediator of the relationship of the NGOs to State in Brazil constituted my first element to understand and frame my explanation about the position of Afro-Brazilian women NGOs in my study.

A second crucial element pointed by the author, and that I believe reflects the kind of explanations I found among my collaborators in the Black women's NGOs, is that "the State is considered the place par excellence of resistance and authoritarianism, it is also inefficient, and characterized by a traditionally stuck (*emperrada*) machine, which turn the relationship established with its agencies unpredictable (Ladim 1988: 46)." In this regarding, my research collaborators that were directed in charge for the NGOs, declared to be aware about this condition of Brazilian State as an incompetent entity. Moreover, these women argued that they were not in a blind and naïve relationship to the State in terms of its role as oppressor and as vehicle of sexism, racism, classism, and heterosexism, and other forms of intolerance. However, for these women to stop to develop a critical relationship and dialogue with State because of the circumstances presented above, is an equivocal and effortless argument, because in their opinion if the Brazilian State is the major responsible to produce and maintain mechanisms that produce women's and Blacks' conditions of discrimination and inequality, it is equally fair that the State should be entirely responsible to revert these situations through the development of social policies, such as affirmative action (education, healthcare, employment), reparation and access to justice, and other benefits to improve women's

and Blacks' live conditions (housing, access to basic food supplies, among others). Thus, although I am not dismissing how contradictory and ambiguous are the relationships between Brazilian NGOs rand State agencies, it seem that there is a need to consider the emergency of certain issues such as those ones presented above. Below I present some of the recommendations made by the Brazilian Black Women's Network – AMNB concerning the movement agenda; they were published in the *Dossiê Sobre a Situação das Mulheres Negras Brasileiras, 2007* (Dossier about Brazilian Black Women's Conditions). These recommendations exemplify how Black women's NGOs see the role of State in terms of the confrontation of discrimination and inequality in the country. Some of them are:

> 2. We must demand that the Brazilian State take responsibility in the development of a public policy model that incorporate race and gender dimensions concerning the planning, implementation and evaluation of actions; in addition such actions must be accompanied of indicators that can identify the reduction of racial inequalities in the country. The State should also enable the participation of Black women in the creation of mechanisms of evaluation. We also recommend the elaboration of strategies and methodologies to raise awareness and train managers and government officials about the problem of institutional racism, as well as, gender and race issue (45).
>
> 4. We must urge the Brazilian State to develop affirmative action policies that guarantee access to full employment, college education and knowledge production; as well as to expand the political representation of black community, especially women black (45). We must demand that the Brazilian State provide better quality regarding public services, such as basic sanitation infra-structure, transportation, healthcare and educational units; and also full time child daycare and elementary school, space for recreation and sport practice, and social services that can improve the quality of life of women and men in the rural and urban regions (45).
>
> 8. We recommend the immediate distribution of land property certifications for maroon communities' descendents (*quilombolas*) that are currently in the process of analysis by INCRA (governmental department responsible to administrate indigenous and maroon groups' issues . In addition, the State should provide the resources to strengthening these groups' capacity for financial sustainability and

> increase their access to material goods crucial to their surviving in the areas they live (45).
>
> 10. We must urge the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to request that the Brazilian State implement policies to effectively reduce the impacts of racism and sexism on Black women's lives (…) with special emphasis on the reduction of mortality and unemployment, incentives to raise their income and access to education (at all levels), land and housing (45).

A third element, very related to the previous one, indicated by Landim (1988) has to do with the way many of these NGOs saw the State, in order to explain such vision the author used the argument of a NGOs director:

> "if we can think about the State as an institution that is not impermeable to the transformations that occur in the correlation of forces in the society, thus to work with it become a possible reality. Our work is not only dedicated to future changes, but aims to give answers here and now, whenever this is possible; there are immediate issues to be addressed. Hence, we do not a priori exclude the possibilities to work in cooperation with the State, in projects supported by the state, in agreements (46).

In many of my collaborators' vision there is still room to work with the Brazilian State because they still believe in this possibility of changing it in a positive way; moreover, they also justify the need of develop some level of work with the State in order to solve Black women's and population's immediate need, while at the same time they fight for future and permanent changes in the social structures.

A fourth and final element about the relation NGO/State's debate brought by Landim, and that according to her is constructed independently of any conjuncture, refers to the notion that as civil society's groups, NGOs are thought of in "contexts of irreducible poles" in relation to State, for instance: "civil society versus State; micro versus macro (My tranlation-46)." Thus, Landim argued that it has been a "radical choice of the NGOs to opt for the civil society, which puts them in a place of autonomy

and of permanent inquisition of the State"; and finally she said, "the NGOs' role is of multi-mediators of power, in the civil society, permanently, outside of the State (47)." Therefore, despite the ambiguities, my study of Black women's NGOs in Brazil, has demonstrated that these organizations have strong positionality in opposition to State, but paradoxically it is also such standpoint that has drove these organizations to establish a certain relationship to this same State, in order to confront discrimination and inequality. For instance, the investment of Black women's NGOs in public policy arena has been the place where such resistance has been developed, in many ways with certain success. Finally, I believe that like other NGOs, Black women's NGOs inherited their formation through these four structural elements identified by Ladim (1988) in her examination of the contours of the relationship between NGOs and State in Brazil.

Hence, taking in consideration Landim's four arguments regarding the relation NGO/State, I suggest that what have justify the development of a link between Black women's NGOs and State in Brazil is their vision in terms of the role of public policy as crucial tool in their struggle against women's and Blacks' conditions of oppression. In Brazil one of the branches of the liberation politics of Black women's NGOs have focused on public policy concerning gender, race, and health, i.e. in order to confront racial, gender and health inequalities they have engaged with proposals for new public policies and/or restructuring. As examples we can observe the NGO Maria Mulher that have proposed specific public policy concerning domestic and gender violence that focus on Black women and the HIV/Aids epidemic based on the reality they have observed on the community of Vila do Cruzeiro where they develop their project on domestic violence. The efforts of the organization Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa have challenge the district and state health secretariat to implement specific services and practices in the healthcare services to assist lesbian women, and to confront the

discrimination against them. The NGO Criola have promoted courses, workshops, and debates to write the National Health Policy for Black population that carried out Black feminist perspectives and Afro-Brazilian cultural practices and traditions; and finally the NGO ACMUN's investments in proposing new approaches for HIV/Aids programs that focus on the needs of Black women in the city of Porto Alegre. It is precisely this position in terms of investment in public policy that has led Black feminists inside and outside NGOs to seek for a sort of dialogue with government, yet at the same time criticize it and demand its engagement in politics and efforts that will produce change in women's and Black population's life conditions; and playing in such position brings out the contradictions posed by civil society principles (see Alvarez et al 1998).

Based on the conceptualization of the nature of civil society as radically constituted in opposition to state institutions, there is no doubt that Black women's NGOs have presented a contradictory politics and practice since it should perform under civil society's principles. Another contradictory aspect has been in terms of why these organizations have maintained and developed a dialogue with the state if they recognize that the Brazilian state have managed to keep Black women's social status and conditions invisible, denying their citizenship rights, that the state has used the healthcare system and its policies to regulate their bodies, sexualities, and reproduction, and dehumanize them to such a degree that it creates unbearable conditions of vulnerability, discrimination and violence in the healthcare system and in the society as a whole. Thus, based on these challenging points I decided to ask the collaborators that participated in my fieldwork if they would see the relationship between Black women NGOs and state institutions and agents as a contradiction. The responses pointed in two directions. There was a group of collaborators (the majority of them) that were unable to engage in a critical way in this discussion regarding the state and so they limited themselves to

answers such as yes or no, and disregarded the discussion moving on to talk about something else. In my opinion their attitudes indicated an absence of political interest in these particular issues, or that they still needed more understanding about it, or even that they were not interested in the topic at all. When I did not get a satisfactory answer about the interview questions, based on my politics of fieldwork, I make sure the person understood the question, but did not press the person when they did not want to talk further. In such cases I just accepted their answers; but the confrontation with the State institutions, in fact were very present in their testimonies; through the police violence, the mistreatment in the educational and health institutions, among others.

On the other hand, there were some of the collaborators that argued more about the question, and the answer pointed to the idea that yes they understood that the state oppressed Black women, and population, but, they argued that there was a need to develop a relationship with the state in order to demand the changes and fight against the situation of inequality in the country. What I observed throughout the conversations with my collaborators is that, to develop and establish conversations with state (and in many cases to work inside its agencies, and taking up jobs in the government) is due to the political alliance as necessary strategies to force the government and the state as a whole to change the way they have treated Blacks in the country. These conjunctural strategies reveal also that to be in those positions is not a sign of harmony between state and Black women's NGOs, but rather very conflictive and stressful circumstances. For these women the Brazilian state and its institutions is in debt to Afro-Brazilians and in this sense the country has to take responsibility to change and repair that situation, and as I will try to demonstrate in the next and last part of this chapter, these women have invested in public policy as the way to change the process of inequalities that have affected Black women, and the Black population as a whole. It seems that the State by

itself cannot erase inequalities, and thus, in this sense the civil society through its several representatives need to intervene to make State apparatuses it work in favor of those sectors of the population that have been marginalized and excluded in the society.

IV.2. BLACK WOMEN'S NGOS AND PUBLIC POLICY: LOOKING AT AFRICAN DIASPORIC FEMINIST PRACTICE

In this part I analyze the attempts and investments of Black women's NGOs in the elaboration of gendered racial public policies in Brazil, I will particularly utilize health and co-related issues that have been my lens to understand these organizations. The activism of non-governmental organizations have had a significant role in the last three decades in terms of advancing public health in the country (Ramos 2004); and Black women's NGOs have been among those organizations that have led such process, in order to improve Black women's and Black population health as a whole.

Black women in Brazil have a long tradition in terms of intervention and elaboration of public policy in the area of health. In the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s they played key roles in the debates with major forces in Brazilian society such as state, church, and the military in order to stop the abusive control over Brazilian women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. Specifically in relation to the process of birth control through massive female sterilization, utilization of the contraceptive Norplant, and family planning strategies, issues that will be addressed in Part II, Chapter IV. Black women were very active in the creation of the PAISM - Programa de Assistência Integral

à Saúde da Mulher (Integrated Health Assistance for Women), that although never fully implemented by the government, constitutes the basis for public policies and programs in the area of health in Brazil in current days.

In my fieldwork and testimony of the collaborators I observed that the Black population has a horrible relationship with public health services and institutions, and the health legislature information needed to fight for their rights is practically unknown, which make them even more vulnerable and objects of health disparities in the country. Therefore, one of the main tasks of Black women's NGOs has been to diminish this gap between public health policy and Black population, especially in the case of women, and as consequence create possibilities to revert the distance between Black population and healthcare system. I observed that more than 90% of the collaborators utilized the public health services as their main source of health care. All of them narrated at least one example of an extremely negative experience when they or a family member used the public healthcare system. More than 50% also had some form of health insurance, mostly as part of their own employment package, or of their husbands or other family members. In these cases, they used the health insurance for services it covers and is inexpensive, and sought public health services when they had to complete expensive or unaffordable services. In general, my main concern was the lack of knowledge about how the public health system (SUS - Sistema Único de Saúde - Integrated Health System) operates, and most importantly, about the patient's rights to use certain services in this public system. Many of the collaborators justified that such lack of interest and alienation to understand how the public healthcare operates is due to the overwhelming bureaucracy in the system that requires an enormous and complex set of technical

information that, most of them, even the most educated ones, feel discouraged when having to provide such detailed information about them. Another aspect of this alienation that appeared in the collaborators' testimonies concerns the Black population's mistrust of the public health system; thus, they do not see why they should waste their time to understand a system that could not help them in any way. On the other hand, I observed that many people still choose to take the risk and use the system, and hope that nothing wrong happens to them or a family member. In this sense, Black women's organizations in the past several years have worked to change these assumptions and behaviors, and to encourage the Brazilian population to engage in discussions about healthcare issues in public policy debates. This political focus aims to promote critical thinking about the State's role in providing adequate health care and to encourage the Black population in particular to engage with what activists have identified as social control on health (*controle social*), which means that the population should be the one controlling how the public healthcare and its services should operate in terms of material and financial resources, as a way to improve the quality and efficiency of the system. Particularly, these organizations have urged Blacks to actively engage in the social control (*controle social*) of their own health. Thus, Black women's NGOs such as Criola, ACMUN, Maria Mulher and Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa in alliances with other social movement organizations and groups have fostered and organized courses, workshops, debates, protests, and publications that build awareness about the Brazilian healthcare system, specifically how it affects the Black population and especially Black women. In this sense, Black women's organizations have been able to form alliances as well as to generate and propose new programs and policies in the area of public health in the

country. I suggest that these set of political strategies developed by Black women's NGOs, particular with reference to women's health and sexual and reproductive health, to engage Brazilian State, society and Black communities in the struggle for gender and racial inequality and discrimination, represent what I named as African Diasporic Feminist Practice, which I will address and explain in the next and last section.

IV.2.1. African Diasporic Feminist Practice

In this last section, I analyze what these various forms of activism around Black women's health and rights issues inform us about Black women's NGOs politics, and how they have developed in recent decades. As a starting point, I borrow Sueli Carneiro's (2003) argument that "race has been used as an eminent political concept and always had a strategic sense (117)" to similarly affirm that Black woman's and Black population's health are political categories of analysis. From this perspective, in order to clarify Black women's NGOs politics in relation to public policy I want to establish two distinct, but complementary ways in which both Black peoples' and Black women's health has been utilized for – on the one hand, as a way of indicating social problems among Blacks, that they have been victimized by racism and other forms of discrimination that have impacted their health and lives, and on the other hand, as sites where Black people can establish themselves as political agents who confront racial and gender discrimination and inequality in the country.

The focus on Black health has emerged as a key political issue for Black women's NGOs due to an increasing need to give visibility to how health disparities affect Blacks

in Brazil. During the 1990s, the struggles for the incorporation of specific health programs and policy that focus on the Black population became a more organized movement led by Black activists, and particular by many Black women that worked as healthcare professionals and correlated jobs, such as doctors, nurses, social workers and psychologists (Fátima Oliveira 2003 and Marta Oliveira 2001). Black women's health started to be conceptualized based on the specific conditions of oppression – racism, sexism, classism, and heterosexism – that impacted their health; peculiarities that would not be addressed in the Black population's health programs (Werneck 2001c, Cruz, unknown date). Black women's health, particularly, their sexual and reproductive health, have constituted areas of Black women's individual and collective political engagement against various forms of oppression.

During my interview with one of my fieldwork collaborators, Julia, a well-known Black feminist in the NGO Criola, she shed some light on an important aspect of Black women's struggles and politics, a reflection she said took her several years to figure out. According to Julia, Black women have been seen as and have navigated two representations of them: as a problem and as *potência* (potency or potential/strength). She explained,

> In terms of how Black women are seen as the problem, for a long time, especially until the decade of 1980, feminism (from both Black and white women) used to see Black women through the peculiar lens of victimization, of problem… like Black women as victims of something dramatic: victims of female sterilization, of racism, etc. (…) Hence, for a long period there was no other way to look at Black women. I took also a long time to understand that there were other possibilities through which we could see them. When I understood that there was another way, I finally understood that the justification for Black women's victimization was not enough in terms of a political solution to their problems. On the other hand, I realized that Black women could be seen from the perspective of strength,

> and in this sense, I believe that "culture is the place where this strength appears explicit. It is in the culture that this strength builds up abundantly. In the culture, this thing about being Brazilian, is basically about embodying Black cultural expression. It is basically Black culture in Rio de Janeiro, for example (…) so I think the Brazilian culture is the place where we can better understand these mechanisms where the *potência* occur. The *potência* has also a relation to resistance, because it is resistance that determines the *potência*; i.e. it is resistance that comes first and defines the way in which things are going to happen, if it is going to be a hard or soft way, and so on (Julia 2007, passage taken from her testimony).

Drawing upon Julia's ideas concerning representations of Black women simultaneously as a "problem" and a "*potência*," I realized how this duality corroborates what I have tried to conceptualize as African diasporic feminism practice, and also most important, Julia's explanation help me to understand why Black women's NGOs have invested in public policy and why they have established a dialogue with government (or state) in this regard. In other words, I identify the African diasporic feminist practice to be an example of what Julia named in her testimony as "*potência*," where I could observe that, while Black women's NGOs have engaged in public policy construction and/or reform and dialogue with Brazilian state, they do not lose sight of the problems of discrimination that have victimized them historically and on a daily basis. They do not lose sight as well in terms of identifying who are the major responsible forces for their condition of oppression – to name a few: colonialism, capitalism, neoliberalism, patriarchy and state. In addition, this feminist practice also represents Black women's investment in a political view of themselves as agents of their own histories and consequently, can envision social transformation.

Looking at the social history of Black women's organizing we can observe that until the 1980s there was a tendency for Black women's organizations to focus their

attention on Black women as a "problem," because there was a need to denounce their conditions of oppression as well as the causes of that oppression. Nevertheless, the 1990s and the 2000s represented a shift in Black women's political focus to an ideology of "*potência*," from which they prioritized social action, in this case, the NGOs. Precisely, the 1990s was when the idea of Black women as a political bloc emerged, but not until the 2000s were these ideas fully materialized in the form of political organizations. In the 1990s Black feminists argued and assessed that there was a clear need to advocate for the development of a public policy in the country that incorporated gender and race perspectives.

In the 2000s, the founding of the AMNB – Articulação de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras[64] (Black Women's Organizations Network) in 2001 "did break out a series of processes in the various local and national spheres to mobilize different public and private organizations with the objective of strengthening the capacity of Black women's political intervention, who have historically lived isolated and invisible" (Werneck 2003:1)[65]. Examples of this qualitative improvement in Black women's political action can be observed in the increase in the number of Black women working in the government as ministers and parliamentary representatives who are able to advance these issues pertinent to improving their lives. Jurema Werneck (2003) pointed out that two

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[64] The Black Women's Organizations Network's mission "is to promote in an articulated way the political action of Black Women's Organizations against racism, sexism, class oppression, homophobia and other forms of discrimination (Werneck 2003:1)." This Network emerged in the context of the preparatory process of the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa.

[65] Werneck, Jurema. (2003). "Editorial." In: Articulação de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras. (2003). Publicação. Ed.: Afirma e Criola. Apoio: Unifem.

examples of such improvement are: first, the nomination of a Black woman, Matilde Ribeiro, to the Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial – SEPPIR (Special Secretariat for Policies for the Promotion of Racial Equality); and second, the nomination of another Black woman, Sueli Carneiro, as consultant of the Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social – CDES (The National Economic and Social Development Council), an advisory department of the federal government that discusses the political reforms (Werneck 2003:1). Although I will not delve into this discussion here, these acts by the State of bring activists to be part of its department and agencies can be seen as co-optation, i.e., a State tactic of neutralizing over Black women's movement by assimilating the activists into its institutions. However, at the same time I have to agree with this risk possibility posed by the State co-optation. I am also considering the previous discussion section concerning to the relationship between State and these NGOs; this discussion demonstrated that the link between them is mediated by a relation based in the NGOs' autonomy as the primary condition to the development of a cooperative work, and also that Black women's NGOs have as one of their main goals, to influence the construction of efficient public policies as a way to confront gender and racial discrimination and inequality. Thus, for many of these Black women's activists to work as consultants, or other major function inside the State represent political strategies to mobilize and influence its agents such as policymakers, program administrators and the various professional groups responsible to the management of the Brazilian State from the macro to the micro structures of power. Again, we came to this contradictory nature of this relationship between State and NGOs in Brazil.

Similar to the State arena, this reinforcement of Black women's political action also occurred at the civil society level through networks and forums, as in the example of the Iyá Agba, the National Network of Afro-Brazilian Religion and Health Network, ABONG (Brazilian Association of Non-Governmental Organizations), and Black LGBT Movements for social justice and human rights. Finally, we can observe the strategies and interventions employed to transform representations of Black women as victims and problems into "*potência*," have been effective in showing the fact that Black Women's NGOs have expanded and consolidated their political action, national and internationally, in defense of Black women in the Brazilian society.

Another fundamental investment of Black women's NGOs has been to merge Afro-Brazilian practices and institutions into healthcare public police and practices. In this sense, my research collaborator Julia affirmed, "we see Black women's political agency and consciousness through the employment of Afro-Brazilian culture and tradition." Thus, based on the activism of Criola, ACMUN, Maria Mulher and Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa, I argue that these organizations (and many others) have utilized this African diasporic feminist practice through their political activism in the arenas of health and human rights within and outside of Brazil. Although African Diaspora theories are rarely discussed in Brazilian academia (due mostly to the lingering of the racial democracy myth), a large number of Black feminists and Black women activists have identified themselves, both individually and collectively, as part of an African diasporic community who claim their space and rights in Brazilian society, which highlights the political and intellectual potential of this theoretical perspective. Based on this research, I argue that Black women's NGOs have embodied a representation of

"diaspora," which has led them to become living symbols of what Ruth Simms Hamilton (1995) calls "field of action" and/or "active site." which in my view represents what my collaborator Julia named as "*potência*" and what I identified in my study as African diasporic feminist practice (see also Werneck 2003a, 2005b and Santos 2006). By applying these terms to my research, I make the assumption that Black women's NGOs in Brazil have represented a space where Black women, both individually and collectively, have developed the infrastructure to empower themselves and Black communities, to build national and transnational[66] coalitions and relationships, to create and exchange knowledges, experiences, and information in order to generate strategies of survival and resistance. It seems that the visionary project of Black women's NGOs is, therefore, the realization of a Black feminist perspective grounded in Afro-Brazilian culture and tradition, an African diasporic historical legacy. Black Women's NGOs have utilized African descendant cultures to restructure, re-organize, and empower Black women in their communities. Their tactics have emphasized the value and usefulness of African cultural legacy to understand Black women's health conditions and to challenge the way healthcare policies and practices are implemented in Brazil. Examples of Afro-Brazilian cultural legacies in forming Black women's political collectives can be seen in Criola's partnership with the *yalorixás*[67] to build the Iyá Agba – Black Women's Network to confront Violence against Women in Rio de Janeiro, and also its alliance with the National Afro-Brazilian Religions and Health Network, and the Afro-descent LGBT groups and communities as well as the ACMUN's organization with the Lai-Lai Apejo –

[66] Basu 2003, Mato 1997 and 1998, Mond 2003
[67] Also called as *mães de santo*

Black Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, DSTs, HIV and Aids in Latin America, U.S. and Africa, among others. This reading of the relationship between culture and politics echoes the conceptualization elaborated by Gordon and Anderson (2000), who define diaspora as "a conceptual tool or referential term denoting a specific group of people," which can have a strategic use for the manufacturing of a "political project to create solidarity among peoples of African descent (235)."

Based on my readings of feminist and diaspora literatures in conjunction with my fieldwork experiences, I define the African diasporic feminist practice around Black women's health as a set of strategies, techniques, and programs of action grounded in Afro-Brazilian culture and tradition that include engagement in terms of radical caring (Rudrappa 2004a and 2004b) and the politicization of social responsibilities. Particularly, this issue of caring in Black communities that is mainly performed by Black women is an important practice among Blacks – in terms of their cultural and religious practices, and family – and this legacy has been employed as a key instrument to focus on healthcare for the Black population. For example it has constituted a strategy to reach Black communities to include *mães-de-santo* as individuals who lead public healthcare campaigns, projects, manuals and guides to confront major public health problems with high incidence among Black population such as HIV/Aids and other sexual transmitted diseases, high blood pressure, diabetes, domestic violence against women and children. The main idea of these strategies has been to bring up the *mães-de-santo*'s representations and authority in the community, as well their knowledge about the community; in general *mães-de-santo* know everything inside their community, either because people come to them to ask for help or through gossiping because people come

to them to tell anything: who is suffering with domestic violence, who is sick, etc. In this sense, the political strategies of Black women's NGOs have transformed "individualistic notions of self-help" and caring, which are usually part of women's everyday lives – and often represent a way of dealing with Black women as victims – into an ethics of politically responsible individualism[68] that urges Black women to develop themselves as potent force, individually and collectively (Shaw, 1996: 2).

Therefore, based on this thought that sees Black women as "potências", in their recent history, Black women's NGOs have been engaged in two projects that have strengthened their visibility and institutionalization. On one hand they work directly with Black women inside their communities developing activities concerning self-esteem, women's individual empowerment, and addressing issues that impact their lives on a daily basis, such as domestic and sexual violence, income disparities and other basic sources to provide for themselves and family, healthcare access, etc. One can see this attempt to reincorporate African cultural practices into struggles for reproductive health in the work of Black women activists who call for more a holistic perspective in health practices, rather than treating the body as separate from questions of Black women's emotional, social, and spiritual well-being.

On a larger level, Black NGOs have worked towards advocacy and public policy. In terms of health issues these organizations have attempted to lobby policymakers and health administrators in order to place qualified professional Black women in key governmental positions to negotiate their demands and those of the Black population in general. Black feminist advocates have also assisted Black communities in their demands

[68] This term was derived from Shaw's original term (1996), "socially responsible individualism (2)."

for specialized clinics and hospital, and health care services that are technologically up-to-date. This advocacy has also argued for the improvement of health programs that target the treatment of diseases that occur more frequently among Black populations (i.e. sickle cell anemia) and initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles. Advocacy at the international level has been done through networks and alliances, such as the Network of Afro-Caribbean and Afro-Latino Women, the Network of Latin American Women against Domestic and Sexual Violence, and the African Diaspora Black Women's Network in Latin America, U.S.A and Africa.

In addition, I argue that Black women's NGOs have developed a specific kind of advocacy politics, i.e. they have become experts in employing a gender-race advocacy politics that has challenged public policy in the country, particularly concerning health. Nonetheless, it is very important to understand that the development of this advocacy policy is in close connection to Black women's NGOs project to transform Black women into "potências" in terms of their political power and capability to negotiate with government and reach transformation in public policy (on health, gender, and health).

So, this know-how in advocacy policy without no doubt is a result of these organizations' extensive preparation and involvement, since the 1980s, in national and worldwide meetings such the National Women's Conferences, the U.N. World Population Conferences, and Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Meetings; above all, the development of such expertise is also placed in a more ample context of interests which is the strategies to use international resources such as funds, human rights groups, women organizations, small and major meetings, agreements and treaties, laws among other mechanism to press the Brazilian state and its agencies in district, state and federal

levels to recognize Black women's and Black population's needs, social and racial conditions, as well as their demands. Moreover, Black women's organization have used these strategies based in a international apparatus not just for the Brazilian state to acknowledge the existence of all these circumstances of discrimination and inequalities, but to force it to create mechanisms and structures through public policy to confront and eradicate them.

Thus, Black feminists and their organizations have a long tradition of organizing and participating in major events generated by the national and international feminist community, which can be identified as a Diasporic political strategy. Looking at the tables concerning the gatherings and meetings Black women have participated on pages 6 to 9, we can point out the great participation of Black women's activists and organizations in national meeting since the 1950s.

Globally I want to point out two major international meetings that were important in terms of the establishment of Brazilian Black women's movement leadership and their protagonism in transnational Afro-Diasporic feminism. Most important these two meeting can be seen as examples of what I identify in the previous paragraph as Black women's organization strategies to utilize international apparatus (meetings and subsequent agreements and recommendations that come from them) to force the Brazilian state to admit the existence of Blacks and women discrimination and inequalities in the country, and so through such tactics propose and demand changes through public policy. I will specifically address the examples of the: Ist Afro-Latino-American and Afro-Caribbean Women's Meeting (I Encontro de Mulheres Afro-latino-americanas e Afro-caribenhas) in 1992 held in San Domingo, Dominican Republic; and the 2001 World

Conference against Racism (III Conferência Mundial contra o Racismo, Discriminação Racial, Xenofobia e Intolerâncias Correlatas) that occurred in Durban, South Africa.

During the Ist Afro-Latino-American and Afro-Caribbean Women's Meeting in 1992, Black women established the day of July 25th as the international symbol of Black women's struggle and resistance in Latin American and the Caribbean (Deise Benedito, 2006:2). According to Black feminist Deise Benedito (2006) since the I Afro-Latino-American and Afro-Caribbean Women's Meeting, Black women's NGOs have worked to strengthen and give visibility to July 25, and to point the finger at gender and racial oppression experienced by Black women in everyday life. For Brazilian Black women activists (as well for their peers in Latin America and the Caribbean) this debate and agenda were so crucial that anti-racist feminists and activists required that these issues should continued to be articulated and addressed in the course of other worldwide meetings such as the ECO 92 or RIO 92 – the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992; the 3 World Conference on Human Rights, the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence Against Women, in Belém do Pará, Brazil in 1994; the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in 1994 in Cairo, Egypt; the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action at the IV World Conference on Women, in Beijing, China in 1995; and in the 2001 World Conference against Racism, held in Durban, South Africa, where, for the first time in the history of the United Nations Conferences, a Black woman from a social movement, Edna Roland a member of the NGO Fala Preta!, held the position of the U.N. Conference's general rapporteur (my translation, Benedito 2006: 2). Benedito (2006) affirmed that those plans of actions, declarations, and international instruments led Black women to demand at the local and national level the implementation of actions and politics that were established at

the international level, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1965, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly (see Benedito 2006: 2). Benedito pointed out that the I Afro-Latino-American and Afro-Caribbean Women's Meeting in 1992 represents a historical landmark for the organized Black women movements in Latin America and the Caribbean (2). This meeting was a transnational afro-diasporic feminist expression; an afro-diasporic alliance across boundaries to struggle for dignity, for the end of racial inequalities, violence and hazardous effects of racism. Benedito (2006) also argued for the need to acknowledge these Black women, young people, the elderly, outside of Africa who reconfigure their lives as agents of transformation and symbols of resistance that have their origins in Africa (my translation, 2). The Ist Afro-Latino-American and Afro-Caribbean Women's Meeting in 1992 was a remarkable example of transnational struggles and solidarity among Afro-descendent women to reinforce their local and global agenda concerning racial and gender discrimination and inequality, a effort that would be repeated even more stronger in the 2001 World Conference that will be addressed in the next paragraphies.

The 2001 World Conference against Racism (III Conferência Mundial contra o Racismo, Discriminação Racial, Xenofobia e Intolerâncias Correlatas) that took place in Durban, South Africa was considered a second major international meeting where Brazilian Black women assumed important leadership roles in the transnational Afro-Diasporic feminist community prior to, during, and following the conference. Because of the conference they created the Articulação de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras – AMNB (Brazilian Black Women Network), mainly because they wanted to make sure that their specific agenda as Black women would be addressed in the preparatory process for the

conference and in the actual conference proceedings. Thus, through this network Black feminists led the entire preparatory process for the conference, mobilizing groups of women and working to raise Black women's awareness about the conference, raising funds to cover Black women's travel expenses, and coordinating the issues that should be addressed in the conference, among other crucial tasks. It is also important to recognize that in the 2000s Black feminists working inside of the two major national networks which are composed of women from different racial identities – The Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras AMB (Articulation of Brazilian Women) and the Rede Feminista de Saúde or RedeSaúde (a Feminist Health Network) – have played important roles in bringing Black women's situation of oppression in the country to the center of these international gatherings. Those groups also participated intensively in the preparatory process of the 2001 Durban Conference. One of the key actions of the AMNB was to produce the document "Nós, Mulheres Negras" (We, Brazilian Black Women), which can be identified as the contemporary Brazilian Black Women's manifesto, eight years after the publication of the Manifesto of the Itapecirica da Serra that was produced for the United Nations Conference on Population in 1993. This document was approved and signed by thirty Black institutions associated with the Black women's movement and the Black movement. In this document Black feminists described and identified the major axes of their oppression, exploitation, and vulnerability; they also developed a critical analysis regarding the state of gender and racial politics in Brazil and presented statistical data regarding Black women on key issues such as housing, healthcare, employment, education, violence, etc. Finally, while I only emphasized these two major meetings it should be clear that Brazilian Black women have engaged in a wide range of meetings, conferences and major events both nationally and internationally (see mapping tables about other meetings in the beginning of this chapter).

As we can observe through these meetings African-descendent women have used race and gender as political concepts and strategies locally and worldwide to confront oppression, in doing so they have demonstrated how Black women's experiences from distinct socio-economic, political, geographical and cultural regions intersect at points of similarities. In order to do that they have formed and utilized African-diaspora networks and other forms of coalitions.

CONCLUSION

In this Chapter my effort was to explore the contours that have define Black women's NGOs; the central objectives of their struggles; the political aspects of Black women's NGOs as civil society's groups, their relation to the Brazilian state, and their particular interest in public policy as a strategy to confront and eliminate racial and gender inequalities and discriminations, particularly in the area of health. Black Women's NGOs form a core part of contemporary Black womanhood in Brazil, organizing and structuring this discourse and representation through an African diasporic orientation that challenges the ways that they have been historically and continue to be interpellated by dominant groups. These organizations have also been staging large resistance movements and leading Brazilians from different racial groups and social classes to reflect upon the negative effects deriving from racial and gender oppression. In doing so, and regardless of their present and future contradictions and limitations, these Black women have provided important studies and generated innovative insights into the formation of anti-racist struggles during difficult socio-economic times. There is still much research needed in terms of exploring what precisely Black women's NGOs are,

their history of struggles, and what have been their roles in Brazil, in this sense I expect to develop future research concerning these particular issues.

Chapter V: *Feminismo Negro* [Black Feminism] in Brazil

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will analyze the reasons and the key socio-economic, historical, and political issues that led to the emergence of *Feminismo Negro*[69] (Black Feminism) in Brazil. It is divided into two parts. Part I examines the factors that contributed to the foundations of this movement, which were identified as: (1) Black women's political aspirations to emancipate themselves from both the Black and feminist movements due to divergent perspectives on class and racial discrimination; and (2) a need to create their own movement and political agenda. These two reasons revealed that Black and white women had (and still have) different agendas that were difficult to reconcile. Disagreements between these movements were basically caused by the way these two groups looked at major issues such as labor exploitation, violation of sexual and reproductive health rights, conceptualizations of the female body and sexuality, the socioeconomic structure, neoliberalism, globalization and state politics.

Part II explores Afro-Brazilian feminist genealogies. Inspired by Joy James's (1999) conceptualization of three distinct forms of Black feminisms in the U.S.: liberal, radical and revolutionary, I organized a similar model to define the positionality and feminist politics of Black women's NGOs in Brazil. Following James' model I found that these NGOs' Black feminist liberation politics, and feminist ideology were based on how they position themselves in relation to sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism,

[1] I will employ Feminismo Negro and Black Feminism as synonymous.

which allowed me to observe the existence of three basic groups: (1) the feminist organizations that are apparently composed just by straight Black women; (2) the feminist organizations that are composed by mixed groups, straight, lesbian, and bisexual women; (3) the feminist organizations that are composed just by lesbian women. After this conceptualization of the NGOs, the section provides a briefly historical genealogy of Black women's organizations divided in three periods: 1950s-1960s, 1970s-1980s, and 1990s-2000s. This outline exemplify some of the issues pointed in the discussion regarding the NGOs' liberation politics, and also highlighted the major struggles that characterized the historiography of the *Feminismo Negro* in Brazil that I am trying to re-account in this Chapter. In this sense, the 1950s and 1960 are characterized by struggles for citizenship's rights and gender equalities respectively. The 1970s and 1980s symbolizes the establishment of Black women as a distinct group of the mainstream feminist movement, which has been know as the period of the '*Enegrecendo o Feminismo*' (Blackening Feminism). Finally, the 1990s and 2000s represent the period in which Black feminist movement recognized and included the perspective of intersectionality in their political agenda, based on race, gender, class and sexuality.

V.1. SEARCHING THE FOUNDATIONS

According to Eliane Santos (2002) the history of the organization of Black women "in defense of their interests goes back to the nineteenth century, with the creation of associations and brotherhoods; and during the twentieth century, the creation of organizations date from the 1950s, the year in which the National Council of Black

Women in Rio de Janeiro[70] was founded" (7). In the 1960s the Black women's movement, like other social movement groups, confronted a crises in their political organizing. As I will demonstrate throughout the chapter the military dictatorship that came to power in 1964 and lasted until the 1980s, forced members of the social movement in general to decelerate a great part of their political activities because of state violence and the unsafe environment established in Brazil. Nevertheless, Santos (2002) and Raquel Barreto (2005) identified the decade of 1970 as the period in which Black women re-established their organizational process. According to both authors it was the period when these women "began to question their participation in the Black Movement" (my translation, Santos, 2000: 7); they called for a more active role in the political struggle of the movement, instead of being assigned to do female household tasks inside the movement (see also Lemos 1997). Santos (2002) also argued that the early Black feminist groups sought to distinguish themselves from both the Black and feminist movements.

In her master's thesis Afro-Brazilian feminist Rosália Lemos (1997) identified two major factors that precipitated the formation of the Black women's movement. First, she pointed out the political desire of Brazilian Black women to emancipate and represent themselves, which led them to question and intervene in the mainstream feminist movement in an effort to create their own pathway and agenda. Lemos argues that the major challenge for the Black Women's movement in that period was to find out: (a) what were the most important issues that concerned Black women, (b) and how to better

[70] Later in the chapter I will provide more information about the National Council of Black Women in Rio de Janeiro.

develop and employ feminist concepts that would be vital to the organization of *Feminismo Negro*. Black Feminism in Brazil was a new concept to Black women, which Lemos referred as "a new type of political articulation" (my translation, 115-118). A characteristic of the *Feminismo Negro* identified by Lélia Gonzalez (1982), Lemos (1997) and other Brazilian Black feminists was its direct contradiction to mainstream Feminism. Gonzalez (1982) calls our attention to the fact that "the categories utilized by feminism equally neutralized the problems of racial discrimination and, as consequence, the problem of the isolation that Black community confront in the society (100)." Lemos (1997) also affirmed that mainstream feminists did not want to discuss women's differences – such as class and race/ethnicity with the excuse that it would divide the movement (my translation, 119). In addition to that, Barreto (2005) indicated that unlike racial issues, women's issues were more accepted by society; according to the author this response was "a result of the class and race origins within the feminist movement (34)" that generated distinct perspective and understanding about the relevance of these issues.

In this sense, Santos (2002) and Barreto (2005) pointed out that beyond the gender issue, Black women were also calling attention to social class and discrimination issues as factors that differentiated them from the white women and, thus, from the mainstream feminist movement as well. Santos's argument added that these Black women were accusing the feminist movement "of only addressing and including the aspirations of high middle-class white women" in its agenda and debates (my translation, 2000: 7).

According to Lemos (1997) this mainstream feminist positionality engendered many tensions and, eventually ruptures, within the movement. In 1987, the Brazilian

Black feminist movement split from the major feminist movement at the XIX National Feminist Meeting in Garanhuns, Pernambuco (I address some of the issues that came out in this meeting in the section IV of this Chapter). In this meeting Black women participants rejected the attempts of white feminists to homogenize women's demands and in so doing they revealed crucial differences between Black and white women, which had been disregarded inside the movement for a long time. Thus, through such conflict it became obvious for those women that there was a *Feminismo Negro* (Black feminism) and a *Feminismo Branco* (white feminism); this revelation brought up many crucial insights such as: the existence of "racial difference and racism" inside Feminism, "that the traditional (and original) feminists carried out a racist discourse (…) and that they were not prepared to discuss racism and share power" (my translation, Lemos 1997: 121, 123).

The second factor in the formation of the Black feminist movement in Brazil is closely linked to the first factor. Black women's need to establish a "new territory and self-representation of themselves led them to affirm and re-affirm ethnic differences and to denounce the existence of racism in Brazilian society my translation, Lemos 1997: 123)." among other efforts. Ethnic differentiation produced racial conflicts in the feminist movement that could no longer be disregarded. Since the movement was not able to address such themes, it became very difficult for Black women to remain there in silence and act as if there were no disparities among women and that the feminist struggle was just a concerned with gender issues. Lemos argued that the discussion produced by *Feminismo Negro* was not just a matter of a new debate, but more than that it was the emergence of a movement(my translation, Lemos 1997: 121).

These two reasons that created the possibilities for the formation of *Feminismo Negro,* revealed that Black and white women had (and continued to have) distinct perspectives, struggles, concerns and agendas (Lemos, 1997,Santos 2002, and Barreto 2005). Such differences are due to socio-economic, historical, cultural and political circumstances that place these two groups of women on distinct sides of Brazilian society, and as a consequence have led them to make distinctive ideological choices. In her work Lemos (1997) presented a very illustrative part of Jurema Werneck's argument that gives us an understanding of the kinds of critical distinctions between *Feminismo Negro* and the conventional Feminism,

> …there is underemployment, labor rights issues, the right to procreation that is different, because if the white woman claims the right to avoid children, the black woman claims the right to have children, to rise and watch them grow until old age (my translation, 125).

Werneck's testimony brings to our attention two key socio-economic, historical, cultural and political issues I mentioned above regarding Black women's living conditions, and indicate the major differences between Black women's and white women's political activism in Brazil – the labor exploitation and the suppression of their sexual and reproductive rights and health. Both have been powerful systems of domination used against Black women at least since the slavery period; and from then on these two mechanisms of subjugation have been updated and transformed into new and more destructive versions. These have been very useful tools for Black women's oppressors during colonialism, liberalism, neoliberalism, and continue to do their jobs in what has been called post-neoliberalism era. Thus, labor exploitation and sexual and reproductive rights and health have been instruments used by the Brazilian state and society to discriminate and to commit violence and injustice against the Black population.

The issues of labor exploitation and gender discrimination are critical issues for all women, but they have been much more problematic issues for Black women because the feminist struggle to protect women in the job market has been structured to benefit white women, particularly those with education and class privilege. For instance, the laws prescribe punishment when women suffer gender discrimination and sexism, but they are often insufficient when the victim is a Black woman since the type of discrimination she faces is not only about gender, but also racial discrimination. In other words labor rights laws are not prepared to defend and establish justice for those women who are victimized by racism and sexism simultaneously (Crenshaw 2000). We could go further and argue that such laws are not prepared to defend women against either lesbophobia or heterosexism, particularly if we think about the rights of single mothers and sex workers. I collected some impressive histories about Black women's mistreatment in their jobs; below I present a few of them. All of these women were directed involved with the NGOs I researched during my fieldwork either as staff members or volunteering in close collaboration with these organizations.

Eloisa, 37 years old:

> I remember I started to work as a maid in this home. At that time the house had five maids, and I came to replace one of them that was leaving. It was a big house and the owners were very rich. There was a theft in the house. But before that occurrence, the female owner asked me to go and look at the cabinets used by the other maid I was about to replace and look to see if she was stealing anything from their house; but I felt uncomfortable and decided not to search for anything, because she was a person like me, I was there to occupy her position; and I did not feel right doing that to her… However, in the first week of my work in the house, the owner went to the cabinet to verify what was in there, the other maid that I had substituted took many things that belonged to the family. And so the owner came after me in the kitchen and began to attack me in a very aggressive way, she tried to punch my face, calling me a thief and telling me that she would not expect it from me just in my first week of work; she did not give me the opportunity to explain nothing, to defend myself, to prove anything, and so she

did not believe that I was innocent. She called a relative that was police chief… and I just kept telling her that it was not me, that I was innocent (…) Finally they went to talk with the condominium doorman to check if he saw me leaving the place with anything suspicious, and thank God his testimony saved me! I was lucky because of his testimony in my favor; in addition, he led the police to the former maid and they found lots of things she stole from the house. So, I waited until the situation calmed down, I cried a lot and had a nervous breakdown, then when the situation was more under control I came to the woman and asked her, "is it everything alright now?" and she said, "yes everything is fine, we will talk tomorrow"; but I told her, "I am sorry I cannot stay here today, I got to go" and left the house very late in the night; I arrived at home completely nervous and shaking, my mother was impressed with my condition…and my mother wanted me to quit, and I want it too, but I was just too much in shock to address this issue that night, so I left the house just carrying my purse and the clothes I had in my body… I was in shock remembering them yelling at me, not believing that I was telling the truth regarding the theft… So I could not stay in that house anymore, and next day I went back to the house and told the owner I was leaving the job. She apologized, and asked me to forget about everything and begged me to stay, and I said, " no I cannot work here anymore." She did not have the money to pay me the salary for the week I worked for her, and scheduled a date for me to come back to get my payment, but I could never go back there, and so I did not get my money. Months later, the doorman contacted me because she asked him to check if I could come back to work for her to babysit one of her daughters at home, while she was in the hospital taking care of the other daughter that got injured; but I told him, to tell her that although I liked the girls very much it was impossible for me come back there, and that I would go to the hospital to take care of the ill kid, but never go again to that house… , so I never saw or heard from her again (Eloisa: July 2007).

Rosangela, 50 years old:

I remember that I worked for a company in a small city where I was the only Black lesbian. My duties were to write reports of all the meetings; and the participants of the meetings were men of Japanese descent; none of them liked me and discriminated against and discouraged me from being in that company position. They spoke in Japanese during the whole meeting so I could not understand anything in order to take notes and prepare the reports. It was a very unpleasant situation… (Rosangela: July, 2007).

Felicia, 59 years old:

In 1963 I was 23 years old and was just accepted into medical school, and so I decided to take my mother away from domestic work and from that family for

> good, because she had to choose to either be with me or them (the family that she worked for); but the house owners felt offended and accused us of betraying them after all those years they fed and sheltered us. It was also difficult to take my mother from that house, because she felt guilty and was afraid they could not live without her. She used to say: "no I cannot leave, how will they live in this house without me?" And I would reply: "Mom, that is not true, you and grandmother (that had already passed the way) did a lot for this family, you both worked here for so long, and that is enough, you can rest now, they will be fine without you". But she would not let it go, and was having a hard time telling them that she wanted to leave them and come with me to our new house. I was really upset because she was taking too long to talk to them and leave, so I decided to tell them, and as I told they felt betrayed and were so mean to us…
>
> I also had my own experience regarding jobs. I was always discriminated because I am a Black lesbian woman. I remember one time I was being interviewed by this woman that was really impressed by my background and qualifications, so she said that the job was mine, but when she discovered that I was lesbian she changed completely, and never called back to offer me the position. I also suffered a lot with both lesbophobia and racism in the company I worked for until my retirement. My boss and other colleagues made my daily routine in the company very difficult, but I never gave up and fought for respect and to keep my position (Felicia: July 2007).

These histories demonstrate the abuses that domestic workers confront and reveal a reality that is often very distinct from the realities of white women, particularly because they face gender and racial discrimination. According to Lemos (2000),

> While white feminists 'struggled' to enter the job market, Black women have been exploited for more than 500 years, and so because of that Black women demanded labor rights and not the right to work. Unlike the white woman that was living to embroider, giving orders to the slaves and serving her husband and "Master", the black woman always assumed the role of "unifying" and "provider" for the family. She is the person who raised their children, at a time when the slave society killed, mutilated and took apart black families (my translation, 125).

Another example of the disadvantages that Black women face concerning labor rights is that until recently many domestic workers are still without many of the benefits that other professional groups have such as vacation time, medical insurance or welfare,

retirement plan, childcare, and workers' compensation in case of injury at or out of work. They often work for 10 to 15 hours per day in comparison to the 8 hours mandated by the labor legislation, among other labor rights. Domestic work is one of the major sources of employment for Black women in Brazil. As demonstrated in Chapter I, among my research collaborators they represented 20.7 % of the group, and many of the other women I interviewed had some experience working in domestic functions at some period of their lives. Almost all of them had a mother or a close female relative that was or is a domestic worker. Lucia Xavier, a Black feminist and general coordinator of Criola, states that "We Black activists, men and women, were raised and sustained by domestic workers… we are a generation of activists made up and empowered by these women (Interview with author, June 2007)." The table below demonstrates that 20.7% of my research collaborators' occupations were employed through domestic work and reveals that kinds of employment opportunities that are available to most Black women.

Table 8: (Domestic Workers)

Professional background and/or occupation	Total	%
Domestic worker	4	6.9
Cleaning worker (public school)	1	1.7
Informal worker	4	6.9
Retired (Domestic worker)	1	1.7
Retired (Public school cooker and health assistant)	1	1.7
Public school housekeeping	1	1.7
Total:	12	20.7

Source: Sonia Santos, 2008.

These stories and testimonies regarding the abusive treatment of domestic workers are very similar. Some of the common threads that ran through their testimonies included sexual harassment, sexual violence (rape and other abuses), excessively long workdays, unsafe, unhealthy, and hazardous work conditions, delay in salary payment, and ongoing violation of their labor rights in general. It is important also to emphasize that many of my other collaborators who had different job occupations also reported similar forms of labor discrimination related to sexism, classism, racism and lesbophobia. This shows that although domestic workers might be in a more vulnerable position in some important respects, other groups of Black women have also confronted similar experiences in their jobs. These testimonies also reveal the link between labor exploitation and sexual violence against these women, and how these mechanisms of oppression are reproduced from the level of the state (a macro structure) to micro-levels of experience such as the family, but also the factory, the store, the office, among other "minor" places, which show that such structural violence is not a matter of chance, but rather is produced by a well-constructed socio-economical, historical, cultural, political, and ideological apparatus of domination. As reported by the *Dossiê Sobre a Situação das Mulheres Negras Brasileiras, 2007* [71]

> Brazil has eight million of domestic workers, the majority of which is black women; many of them have suffered from harassment or sexual abuses by their employer or their employer's family members. According to the president of the National Federation of Domestic Workers, Creusa Maria Oliveira, there are no reliable statistics in order to identify the magnitude of this problem because of the shame, humiliation and the fear have prevented the domestic workers from reporting the crimes. In addition, Creusa said that this is a reality that does not only victimize domestic workers, but all women; according to her generally, when they suffer harassment and rape, women feel ashamed to make a complaint because the sexist culture present in the society still tends to suggest that,

[71] Dossiê Sobre a Situação das Mulheres Negras Brasileiras, 2007 (Dossier about Brazilian Black Women's Conditions) , produced by the Brazilian Black Women's Network – AMNB.

somehow the woman, allowed the violence to happen, when in fact they are victims of a cruel power relation" (Rede Feminista de Saúde, 2005).[72]

In addition, the *Dossiê Sobre a Situação das Mulheres Negras Brasileiras, 2007* (Dossier about Brazilian Black Women's Conditions) indicates other serious conditions endured by domestic workers in the country:

> In 2005, of more than 85 million Brazilians that have an occupation, 42.2 percent are women; and domestic work corresponds to 17 percent of women's employment in the country. The PNAD[73] 2005 of IBGE indicates the existence of about 6.6 million domestic workers in Brazil, of which 93.4 percent are women; and from these, 55 percent are black women;
>
> According to the ILO, in the Brazilian metropolitan regions more than 60 percent of the female domestic workers have only a primary school education. In the city of Salvador (Bahia) and the Distrito Federal, over 20 percent of all young women employed between 18 to 24 years are domestic workers;
>
> According to PNAD 2004, while among white domestic workers 28.6 percent were employed under the labor legislation requirements, just 22 percent were among black workers. This means that an extremely small number of female domestic workers contribute to welfare; as a result of this situation, several studies have shown that blacks are those who start to work earlier and those that remain more time in productive activity (20).
>
> The IBGE estimates that among 502,000 girls and teenagers, between 5 and 17 years old, are in domestic work. The legislation prohibits minors under 16 years old from becoming domestic workers.. The majority of female children in domestic work are blacks: 52 percent light skin (*pardas*), 23 percent dark skin (*pretas*), corresponding to a total of 75 percent of blacks (*negras*). This data represent a total of 93 percent of girls and teenagers (21).

One strong contradiction of the mainstream feminist movement that Black women have pointed out is that Black women domestic workers have been exploited by white women who have struggled for their rights to gain better salaries, respect, and benefits on the job. Thus, the fight of domestic workers is often not embraced by feminists as a

[72]Taken from the *Dossiê Sobre a Situação das Mulheres Negras Brasileiras, 2007*
[73] PNAD – Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicilios.

major issue. In the past three years some feminists have joined Black feminist in an effort to claim domestic workers' right but it is still an undervalued issue by the movement in general and one in which Black women have to work by themselves in order to fight for their rights. Most Black women have to survive and support their families while gaining one third or half of what white women earn as family income. Historically, the majority of Black women are the heads of household, even in the cases in which the husband or partner lives with them; and we cannot forget that in many other cases Black families are led by lesbian women. According to the *Dossiê Sobre a Situação das Mulheres Negras Brasileiras, AMNB, 2007*,

> Households headed by women represent about 1/3 of all households, and that Afro-Brazilian women correspond to 60 percent of the families without income or with monthly income below a minimum wage (about US$ 180/month). Among the families with an income of three or more minimum wages, the number of those headed by black women drops to 29 percent (12).

Thus, if we take into consideration all of these realities we understand the magnitude of the failure of labor rights laws to protect and guarantee justice for Black women; because the failure in relation to these women exploitation has been silenced it has prevented them from demanding access to basic social, economic and political rights.

The second issue that has put Black and white feminists into two distinct camps, is the sexual and reproductive rights and health violations. In this sense, we need only look at the reality in which Black women and their families are among the most affected by maternal, infant, and youth mortality, general violence and profound inequalities in terms of access to health, food, housing, and education, among others problems in Brazil.

Another aspect that became an evident distinction between Black and white women is the family issue. While many white feminists often lived (and in many cases still live) in a environment characterized by the nuclear family model (father, mother and

children), even when they are divorced or separated from the father of their children, the central unit of the Black family was (and still is) the mother, children, and extended family networks usually comprised of grandmothers, aunts, sisters, and female friends. These networks are critical because if they do not have such networks their children will be by themselves while their mothers work. Traditional feminists have never embraced these issues as critical women's issues and all of the improvements and advances that the country has made in terms of women's health and rights have been for the benefit of white women. I limited my analysis here regarding this topic because Part II of the dissertation will examine these specific issues while addressing Black women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, their life conditions, and vulnerability to discrimination and violence.

Besides labor exploitation and Black women's sexual and reproductive rights and health, other crucial key socio-economic, cultural and political issues have been identified as factors that differentiate the priorities and struggles of Black and white feminists. A third aspect that Rosália Lemos (1997) drew attention to is Black women's relationship to the body and their sexuality. According to the author, although considered an important topic, many Black feminists criticized,

> the claim of feminism to free women's bodies and sexuality because they argued that such a demand was not necessarily a priority for them as it was for the white woman, since Black woman took charge and made decisions about her own body in the modern society; because her body was already part of her everyday, of her dances, of the balance with the tied package of clothes or with the famous bottled water on the head. There was a synchronicity between the body and the functions it performed. Even in the period of slavery, when the body of the black woman was property of the master of the plantation, when we compare the clothes and the relationship that black and white women had with it, we can tell that the way both women dealt with their bodies is quite different. In the case of dressing, for example, the body of the white woman, unlike the black, has always been hidden behind refills of wire frames and lots of fabric. This fact has led even some

> researchers of that period to associate sexuality with black women, arguing that they were more sensual and 'linked to the pleasures of the flesh', than white women. This fact however deserves our repugnance (my translation, 133).

Thus, Lemos argued that the concept of body for Black and white women are distinct, and that the former have often been criticized by the latter for having a more flexible and intimate relation to their bodies, such as "touching it too much" or exposing it. The author also pointed out the way African cultural practices engage and view the body. For example in *samba*[74] the body is an important vehicle of expression (my translation, Lemos 1997: 134). In Lemos' work Black feminists Jurema Werneck affirmed that,

> The employment of the body by the Black woman …depends on several issues… Black women use their bodies as a place of work, to give life and perform the *orixá*[75], (…) the classic feminist proposed an uniformization of the participants, all women would experience the use of their bodies throughout its wonderful possibilities, they would experience their sexuality (…). However, because in the case of Black women they were not in contact with those theorists intensively dictating the rules…there were all kinds of women. There are the 'believers' (the protestants) that will never advocate in any moment for this use of the freeing of the body, on the other hand there were women from Candomblé[76] that advocated freedom for their body in an easy and impressive way, in addition to the ones from the prostitute union movement, (…) it was not just about the body, but regarding everything, i.e., in fact, unlike the meetings of the classic feminism, in the everyday, there was more dialectics in the Black women's movement – there is – because the diversity is…do you understand?

Werneck's testimony demonstrated the refusal of Black feminists to embrace the uniformity proposed by white feminists in terms of the body and sexuality because of Black women's diversity, which led them to have different relationships to their bodies.

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[74] Samba is a combination of dance and music, of African origin (Aurélio Dictionary, 2007).

[75] Orixá among the Yoruba people and in the Afro-Brazilian religious rites (such as the Candomblé, Umbanda, etc) represents a personification or deification of the nature forces or of the divinized ancestors that, in life, had the control over these forces; a guide, a charming (Aurélio Dictionary, 2007).

[76] Candomblé is one of the most current Afro-Brazilian religions.

According to Lemos this diversity pushed Black feminists to create a pluralist perspective and approach that could liberate the movement from the eurocentrism inherited from traditional feminism (see Lemos 1997: 135). The testimony of Black feminist Wania Sant'Anna (in Lemos work) also complements Werneck and Lemos' key insights about the pluralism of the Black feminist movement,

> (…) one thing that I think is nice is that we can be whatever we want to be…we can be Evangelicals if we are interested in being it, *candomblecistas* (from *Candomblé*) if we are interested in being it, we can study if we are interested in doing so, we can make art (My translation, Lemos 1997: 139).

A fourth aspect in this comparison between Black and white feminist movements, Jurema Werneck (in Lemos 1997) identified an issue that Black feminism did not change when it established its own agenda. According to her both movements did not question the social structure in Brazil in terms of class and the economic hierarchy; the only difference was that Black women knew they lived outside of the social structure, that they were excluded so fought to be included into a social reality and have access its benefits. Unlike the mainstream feminist movement the majority of the women in the Black feminist movement are low-income and live in under-privileged conditions, while the white feminist movement was composed of higher educated, middle and upper middle-class women, which led them to not concern themselves with or focus on socio-economic issues.

A final aspect about the struggle of Black feminism regards confronting and understanding the impacts of neoliberalism, globalization and state politics. I did not ask specific questions about neoliberalism and globalization, but the signs of the effects of these systems can be identified in Black women's life histories that I collected and in recent analyses produced by the Black feminist movement. The Brazilian Black

Women's Network published the *Dossiê Sobre a Situação das Mulheres Negras Brasileiras, 2007* and the *Incorporação das dimensões de gênero e de Igualdade racial e étnica nas ações de combate à pobreza e à desigualdade*[77].

Neoliberal politics of global economic restructuring began in the late 1960s, and with it a series of violations in terms of women's rights. It is undeniable that neoliberalism, globalization, and state politics have affected all women, but because of the hazardous and vulnerable conditions that Black women already live under, the effects of neoliberalism on their lives take on catastrophic dimensions such as: (a) Increasing of levels of poverty and indigence among women and their families, hunger and nutritional diseases, and health problems. In terms of development, the Black population is decades behind Brazil's white population. The Dossier of the Brazilian Black Women's Network – AMNB (2007) indicated that,

> Racism prevented and continues to prevent the black population access to basic rights in order to live with dignity. The Human Development Report Brazil 2005, prepared by UNDP (United Nations Development Program), shows that, in some cases, the observed differences between white and blacks reveals a gap of more than one generation;
>
> The percentage of black men with complete college education in 2000 was lower than that of white men in 1960. The per capita income of whites in 1980 was double that received by blacks in 2000. Similarly, the illiteracy rate of blacks in 2000 was higher than that of whites two decades before, and life expectancy of blacks was similar to that of Whites in 1991. The survey also points that the homicide rate of blacks is twice that of white;
>
> According to a survey conducted by the UNDP and Cedeplar (Centro de Desenvolvimento e Planejamento Regional) black population present today the same levels of quality of life that the white population had in the early 90s (my translation, 13). The survey also demonstrated that the Black population "benefited of improvements in several areas in the last 20 years, such as the decrease in child labor exploitation, increasing of life expectance and a slight decrease in the number of poor. However, these developments were not enough

[77] Incorporation of gender and racial/ethnic equality dimensions in the action for the combat of poverty.

> to equalize the living conditions between black and white populations Brazil (my translation, AMNB, 2007: 13).

(b) Aggressive national and international interventions on the Black population's sexual and reproductive rights, especially women, in the name of global development, through methods such as female sterilization and family planning policies; and increasing sexual violence against Black women as a result of sexual tourism and women traffic.

(c) And digital exclusion, particularly as indicated by the Dossier of the Brazilian Black Women's Network – AMNB (2007),

> In 2003, in the households headed by whites, 78 percent did not have access to computers, 83 percent did not use internet and 53.5 percent did not use cell phone. In the case of households headed by blacks, the percentages were of 93 percent, 95 percent and 71 percent, respectively. Although there were no significant differences between men and women in terms of access to these technologies, when we compare the household heads by race and sex black women always appear as the group most subject to digital exclusion (17).

These the realities of labor exploitation, violation of sexual and reproductive health and rights, distinct conceptualizations of the body and sexuality, an unequal socioeconomic structure, and the impact of neoliberalism, globalization and state politics, among produced the perfect conditions for the organization, and subsequent growth, of *Feminismo Negro* in Brazil. First of all, because these factors created such unbearable living conditions for Black women and their families that they saw themselves forced to struggle even if they do not want to do so simply in order to survive. Second, there is no such possibility for African-descendents, particular women, to decide not to struggle for better lives, because racism, sexism, classism and heterosexism (that are the major producers of the kind of violations listed in the beginning of the paragraph) do not give these groups any choice. The social circumstances that drive African-descendents to the

path of struggle were set up before we were born, for most of us they start to suppress and threaten our existence in our mothers' womb. As African American poet Audre Lorde states:

> For those of us who were imprinted with fear like a faint line in the center of our foreheads
> learning to be afraid with our mother's milk
> for by this weapon
> this illusion of some safety to be found
> the heavy-footed hoped to silence us
> For all of us this instant and this triumph
> We were never meant to survive.
> And when the sun rises we are afraid
> it might not remain
> when the sun sets we are afraid
> it might not rise in the morning
> when our stomachs are full we are afraid
> of indigestion
> when our stomachs are empty we are afraid
> we may never eat again
> when we are loved we are afraid
> love will vanish
> when we are alone we are afraid
> love will never return
> and when we speak we are afraid
> our words will not be heard nor welcomed
> but when we are silent we are still afraid
> So it is better to speak remembering we were never meant to survive.
> (Audre Lorde, The Black Unicorn)

Thus, the will to survive and the refusal to continue to be dehumanized are the driving force behind Afro-Brazilian women's struggles. In the next section I present a genealogy of *Feminismo Negro* through feminist liberation politics as represented by Black women's organizations, with a particular emphasis on NGOs. I outline three periods of Black women's activism: the 1950s-1960s, the 1970s-1980s, and the 1990s-

2000s. Through this outline we will be able to look at many of the issues I addressed above as they appear in the historiography of *Feminismo Negro* in Brazil.

V.2. AFRO-BRAZILIAN FEMINIST GENEALOGIES

Joy James (1999) has produced key critical arguments, which I use as a lens to analyze the positionality and politics of Brazilian Black feminist movement, particularly the NGOs. James identifies three distinct forms of Black feminisms in the U.S.: liberal, radical and revolutionary. Such identification reflects the way in which these feminist ideologies locate their struggles in relation to the state and the market. According to James (1999),

> Black feminisms that accept the political legitimacy of corporate-state institutional and police power but posit the need for humanistic reform are considered liberal. Black feminisms that view female and black oppression as stemming from capitalism, neocolonialism, and the corporate state are generally understood to be radical. Some black feminisms explicitly challenge state and corporate dominance and critique the privileged status of bourgeois elites among the "left"; those that do so by connecting political theory for radical transformation with political acts to abolish corporate-state and elite dominance are revolutionary" (78, emphasis added).

My idea in employing James' (1999) model in my analysis is to help me navigate the perspectives and politics of Black Women's NGOs in Brazil. Drawing upon James's scheme I identified that these organizations' feminist ideology are more likely to be a radical feminist ideology because they both recognize that the State as the main vehicle of their conditions of oppression, but they also advocate state policy or legal reforms as a way to eradicate Black women's oppression, rather than "abolish the corporate-state" per

se as James argued for in the case of what she identifies as revolutionary Black feminist praxis.

Brazilian Black women's NGOs present a multiple and complex positionality in terms of their relation to the state and other social forces such as the Church (Catholic and Protestant), and political parties, that do not make it easy to classify them in a very specific category. These issues will be addressed in Chapter III, in which I specifically develop an analysis about Black women's NGOs in Brazil. Nonetheless, Joy James argued that to work through these distinctions – radicalism, liberalism, and revolutionary – in order to "theorize about black feminist liberation politics is extremely difficult but essential for understanding some limitations of 'left' politics and Black feminisms (80)." In other words, Black feminisms are not uniformly progressive or liberatory; one of the sites where we can see this fact is in the Black feminist movement's struggle to address heterosexism and homophobia which I discuss at length below. Drawing from James and my research findings I have attempted to outline the practices and ideologies that characterize Brazilian Black feminist liberation politics.

In differentiating the radical, liberal, or revolutionary ideologies of various Black feminist organizations, I found that by analyzing how these organizations themselves (in terms of their goals, mission, projects, programs, attitudes, diversity of staff members) in relation to sexism, racism, classism, heterosexism. I believe that the major issues in terms of differentiation from one organization to another depends on if the organization have lesbian members in their group and if they have a clear and strong standpoint concerning the struggles against lesbophobia and homophobia. It is important to emphasize that the connection between politics and the stance on sexuality is still not

clear in the political work of many Black women's organizations. The issue of lesbian or queer sexualities among Black women still carries a stigma and it seems to threaten many Black feminist organizers which has prevented them from developing a clear position on sexuality and the hegemonic discourse of heterosexism. Lesbophobia and homophobia, in particular, have been objects of struggle for a considerable time among Black feminist and mainstream feminist in general, but the acceptance of them as political categories continue to be a great struggle, because like gender and race, sexuality's categories have to be deconstructed from the domain of biology, and analyzed as social and/or cultural constructed realities. In this sense, lesbophobia and homophobia have been translated into a political agenda through the struggles to denaturalize male and female gender roles, sexuality, and heterosexism as given and immutable aspects of human nature. Regarding the four NGOs I studied they all match one of these three feminist liberation politics. Therefore, analyzing the above circumstances I identified three major groups. More specifically what I observed concerning variations between these organizations was how they approached lesbophobia and homophobia in their organizations, which I suggest is related to the explicit (and sometimes not explicit) presence or non presence of lesbian women in the group, particularly as staff members:

(1) The feminist organizations that are apparently composed of just straight Black women.

(2) The feminist organizations that are composed of mixed groups, straight, lesbian, and bisexual women.

(3) The feminist organizations that are composed of just lesbians.

I am trying my best to explain the differences between these three groups, but in the interests of transparency I have to point out that my own analysis on this topic is not fully developed. I realized when reviewing my fieldwork materials and data, that the questions and approach I used were not sufficient to grasp information that could help me to define the differentiations between these three kinds of organizations. Although I went to my field work to look at sexuality, heterosexism, and more specific at lesbophobia, the data I collected is not enough. In a total of 58 Black women I only interviewed 8 Black lesbians (13.8 percent) in contrast to 49 straight women (84.5 percent), and 1 woman that identified as straight but had previously had sexual experiences with women (1.7 percent). It is clear that in future research I will need to have more specific questions and data on those issues. This challenge calls for a future and urgent research in order to better categorize Black women's NGOs on the basis of their sexual politics.

In the case of the feminist organizations that are apparently composed just by straight Black women, it seems that there is a predominance of heterosexual women more than a mixed sexual orientation group. I say apparently because I suggest that there are Black lesbians in all types of organizations, but in many of them they are 'invisible' or marginalized, particularly when the organization does not have a clear politics regarding the confrontation of lesbophobia and homophobia. By "clear politics" I referring to the fact that the organization has a stated commitment to struggle against lesbophobia and homophobia which is clearly outlined in their mission statement and organizational goals. All four of the Black feminist NGOs I interviewed and observed stated that they are against these kinds of discrimination, and I am almost sure that if I would ask other

organizations they probably would not say that they are against lesbian and gays. For example, Criola has declared in its mission statement that it confronts sexism, racism and homophobia. Despite this commitment there is a critique from many lesbian feminists that women's organizations should address lesbophobia and not homophobia, because the first definition informs the peculiar discriminatory situations and practices that lesbian women face in society. Criola did not change or add the 'new' definition for lesbian discrimination in its mission, but it has worked with lesbophobia in its new materials, trainings, workshops, lectures, etc. Finally, although Criola presents itself as open to both straight and lesbian women this does not mean that the conflict has ended, it has been an everyday struggle for these women to co-exist and work not to reproduce lesbophobia or homophobia.

In Maria Mulher, for example, there are lesbians in the organization, although I was not able to talk to any of them. However, I observed that the organization did not have a specific statement in its mission and goals that states their commitment to struggle against lesbophobia and homophobia but they have produced posters that content the symbol of the LGBT community, a rainbow. It seems that, having the rainbow on their organizational materials suggests that Maria Mulher is trying to form solidarity with LGBT groups, but it does not necessarily mean that they are doing transformative work on their own internalized heterosexism.

Poster at ACUMN's office in the Vila do Cruzeiro, RS, Brazil, May 2007

Although the coordinators and staff members of the NGO ACMUN declared the organization's fight against lesbophobia and homophobia I did not find anything in their mission statement and goals and specific materials produced by them that visibly expressed their standpoint regarding these types of discrimination. However, I do remember in the period I was there in the office of Porto Alegre, one of the staff members commenting that the organization was invited to give a lecture and participate in a meeting of Black lesbian organizations of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. The existence of lesbian women in the group was not explicit in the conversation with the staff members and the organization's direct collaborators I interviewed. The other branch of ACMUN in the city of Passo Fundo did not present a different reality. I participated in the 2007 women's conference in the city as a speaker representing ACMUN, and at this same conference a representative of the local GLBT community, a male transgender, lectured for the first time in a women's conference in this city. Although Passo Fundo is

not a small town topics such as lesbophobia and homophobia, along with other GLBT issues remain taboo and endure a great deal of discrimination. So, when this representative was announced and began to talk there was a heavy silence and uncomfortable environment; I could hear people's breathing, and it was clear that this response was affecting the representative to such a degree that she had difficulty speaking and had to sit in order to continue her lecture. She apologized and for several seconds no words could come out of her mouth. This incident immediately caused an emotional response in the smaller number of other GLBT members and on the Black women in the room, including myself. I was taken aback by how we could actually almost feel the weight of the racism and homophobia, the rejection of the majority of the audience regarding that speech; so as an attempt to support her, we all (Black women and GLBT members) start to share some encouraging words with her, at first quiet and then loudly so she could hear us, like: "Come on! You can do it", or "It is ok, go on… don't worry about… " until she had mustered the strength to finish her lecture under strong applause. The Black women from ACMUN came to congratulate and show their support to her; I remember that Laura, the coordinator of ACMUN that lives in Passo Fundo, asked for the contact information of the GLBT representative to establish a relationship with the group. These are the kinds of experiences I observed in ACMUN in terms of lesbophobia and homophobia.

Criola has been an example of feminist organizations that are composed by straight, lesbian, and bisexual women; but there are many others with these same characteristics, and although many of them do not necessarily have a written statement about being against lesbophobia and homophobia, in everyday political arena they

strongly expressed this identity. However, as I already argued, if an organization fights against these kinds of discrimination it should be clearly stated on their mission and projects' main objectives. It is an important step to confront the marginalization of lesbians inside and outside the feminist movement, because while it still under shadows the discrimination will take place.

Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa is an example of feminist organizations that are composed just by lesbian women. NGOs composed entirely of Black lesbians or have a predominately lesbian staff have grown rapidly throughout the country; they have a long history but they have became stronger and more visible in the 2000s. They have entered the political arena claiming specific changes in policies, planning and programs that confront lesbophobia, benefit and protect Afro-descendent lesbian women, concerning health, education, employment, etc. For instance some of the issues they have addressed in their seminars, conferences, and workshops are: activism, militancy and networks, Lesbian NGOs and financial resources, lesbian identity, lesbophobia and racism in the feminist movement[78], among many other issues.

Another critical theme that distinguishes the ideological positioning of Black feminist organizations are their responses to polemical issues linked to heterosexism such as homophobia and lesbophobia, abortion, teenage pregnancy, single mothers, and sex workers and prostitution which are connected to Black women's oppression. This is a very crucial problem among Black women's organizing in terms of possibilities to unify struggles, because today we can assure that there is without contestation a need to

[78] These issues were part of the IV Meeting Lesbians from the Southeast Region Lesbians that occur in June 19-22, 2008, in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

struggle against race, gender and class discrimination and inequality; but, at the same time there still a lack of efforts in term of alliances to confront issues regarding heterosexism. Some scholars have already worked through these contradictions, which help me to explore the relevance and emergence of this discussion concerning of a more efficient political agenda and struggle against mechanisms that have generated Black population inequality and discrimination, particular of women. Black feminist scholars have identified two major interrelated reasons that have prevented many Black women activists and organizations to engage with the fight against heterosexist topics such as the ones I pinpointed in previous paragraphs.

One the one hand, I identified the investment and propagation of Brazilian state and society who maintain that issues such as homophobia and lesbophobia, abortion, and teenagers pregnancy, single mothering, and sex work are immoral and need to be prohibited. In the particular case of women, the state has always managed to intensify its repressive mechanisms of vigilance. M. Jacqui Alexander's (1997) analysis is key to understanding the state's constant control of women, especially women of color, lesbians, and women who may be heterosexual but not living in conformity with the hetero-normative model such as single mothers and sex workers as demonstrated by Cathy Cohen (2005: 26). According to Alexander, "women's sexual agency and erotic autonomy have always been troublesome for the state" because such behaviors are in direct confrontation to the nation and its greatest value, the nuclear (heterosexual) family, which represent "a source of legitimation for the state, which perpetuates the fiction that the family is the cornerstone of society (64)." Thus, any sign of sexual and erotic autonomy are considered as threatening to the nation, and a risky movement towards

losing respectability and citizenship (64; also see Audre Lorde 1984). Alexander, Lorde and Cohen help us understand that the challenge of Black women's NGOs in Brazil is to struggle against a state and society that is inherently anti-Black women and opposed to their being in every aspect. In addition, considering the discussion developed in Chapter II about NGOs and their relationship to the Brazilian state, these scholars' analyses led me to reflect on how complex and contradictory this relationship is since the state is anti-Black women. This would explain why it has been so difficult for these NGOs to work with the state.

On the other hand, the second reason for the difficult Black woman's organizing face to engage in heterosexist polemic topics can be explained through Alexander's (1997) arguments on how sexual liberation represents a risk to the "respectability of Black middle-class families, but, most significantly, to Black middle-class womanhood", due to the corruptive potential of sexual freedom. According to Alexander, in this prevailing condition postulated by the neocolonial state, prostitutes and lesbians have personified such eroticism and have throughout the course of history been utilized as representations of this danger (64-65). Black lesbians and even straight Black women are impacted by these negative assumptions because they are very often seen and portrayed as prostitutes, as having a degraded and promiscuous sexuality. The fear of being confused as promiscuous, loose, or immoral and having their image, as well their families, jeopardized has discouraged many Black women from engaging in and deeply investing in projects, writings or critical dialogue about heterosexism. Many organizations have discussed and tried to confront this situation, but it continues to be a serious point of contention among them. In addition, Alexander (1997) affirmed that "sex and gender lie, for the state, at the juncture of the disciplining of the body and

control of the population and are, therefore, constitutive of those very practices (65)". Regulating women's body and sexuality lays at the core of state practices, which are invested in policing Black women's bodies with a racialized, sexualized and gendered form of state discipline.

In spite of these challenges regarding Black women activists commitment to confront heterosexism – as part of a demand for a more inclusive feminist agenda during the 1990s and 2000s – many Black women's organizations started to develop an intersectional approach to identify and link their organizational mission and goals to struggles against racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia and/or lesbophobia. Such changes occurred because many Black lesbians began to denounce their status of oppression within their own organizations and groups and demanded changes in this regard. This shift was also linked to the increased militancy of the lesbian and gay movement in the 1990s and 2000s. This is a significant issue because many women's organizations are willing to fight against sexism, but such attempts did not necessarily translate into a commitment to include the needs of Black lesbians, single mothers, and sex workers in their organizational agendas. In this sense it represents a struggle against a sexist system while taking for granted a heterosexual and heteronormative framework, which immediately excludes those whose sexuality and sexual practices do not conform to the heterosexual ideal.

The Combahee River Collective (1983) and Barbara Smith (1998) addressed a similar reality in the US; their African-American perspective located the particular view of Black lesbians' experiences as distinguished from other black women. Both works brought to the center of black feminist studies the profound marginalization of lesbians inside and outside the black feminist movement and the black community and its social and cultural institutions. These analyses call our attention to the various levels of

exclusion that cannot be usually perceived because of the hegemonic dominance of heterosexism, which Smith and Combahee River Collective identify as a powerful system of oppression. Both works call our attention not only to the marginalization, subjugation, and silencing of Black women's experiences, but they also illustrate the disappearance of Black lesbians' voices within a marginalized community. This discussion continues to be a major issue inside of Black women's organizations and is at the center of intense debate and disagreements. This tension has led some Black feminists to separate from their groups due to an inability to openly engage and resolve this matter. Thus, Black women's organizations must be ready to discuss in their agendas the effects of heterosexism and heteronormativity of both homosexual and heterosexual Black women.

This tension concerning the problem of heterosexism inside Black militancy was a recurring theme in the testimonies of my collaborators. In my fieldwork I focused on four Black women's organizations in the Brazilian cities of Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre: Criola, Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa, ACMUN (Cultural Association of Black Women) and Maria Mulher. The Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa is a lesbian group, mostly composed of Black women. Although the other three organizations affirmed their commitment to struggling against lesbophobia and homophobia, only Criola made this explicit in its mission and goals. However, confronting homophobia and lesbophobia remains a serious problem for some of the members of these organizations. In fact, during my fieldwork I found that Criola was the only organization with both heterosexual and homosexual members that was actively creating spaces to discuss and confront homophobia and lesbophobia both within and outside of the organization; such issue became significant for Criola because lesbians have been part of the group since its foundation. Rosangela Castro, a Black lesbian feminist and member of the Grupo de Mulheres Felipa de Sousa, experienced this situation of being

discriminated against by both the feminist and Black movements and felt that the only possibility to develop her activism was to found with other lesbian women working in their own organization.

V.2.1. Black Women and Earlier Struggles: Fighting for Citizenship and Rights in the 1950s and Gender Equality in the 1960s

A quick look at the tables I presented in the last pages of the introduction of Part I demonstrate the quasi absence of Black women's organizing in the 1950s and 1960s which is not an isolated event, but a situation faced by Brazilian women as a whole in the country. Until the 1950s, Brazilian women were not considered citizens, and this exclusion was institutionalized in the constitution, laws, and other legal instruments. This situation began to radically change as Brazilian women realized that they needed to organize in order to gain their place in society (Costa and Silveira, 2004; Chumaher, Schuma and Vital Brazil, Érico). As an important sign of this need to access the rights of citizenship, Black women became very active in militant activist organizing.[79] The 1950s appear as a particularly important period in the historiography of the Black women's

[79] Although my dissertation focuses on contemporary Black women's organizing in the periods of from the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s I need to recognize that before making use of modern forms of organizing such as NGOS Black women have always struggled and expressed their politics through many other Afro-Brazilian institutions such as the Candomblés, quilombos, the Black religious sisterhoods (Irmandades Negras), and distinct cultural expressions (my translation, Schumaher and Vital Brazil, 2007: 293). On the other hand, it was during the 19th century that Black women, as well the general Black population began to incorporate new important mechanisms in their sociopolitical organizing to enhance their movement, for example, print journalism (*imprensa*), Recreational Black clubs (c*lubes negros*); and political and cultural organizations such as: *O Homen de Cor* (The Colored Man) later renamed the *Imprensa Negra Brasileira* (Black Brazilian Print Journalism) created in 1833 in Rio de Janeiro, the *Sociedade de Dança e Beneficência Floresta Aurora* (Dance and Beneficence Society Floresta Aurora) found by Black workers in the city of Porto Alegre in 1872. At the turn of the century, many clubs organized by Black women and men emerged in the Northeast of Brazil such as the Clube of das Vassourinhas (Vassourinhas Club) and the Clube of das Pás Douradas (Pás Douradas Club) na cidade de Recife, e em Salvador the Embaixada Africana e os Pandengos da África (my translation, Schumaher and Vital Brazil, 2007: 293).

movement, and has been identified as a period during which Black women began to build the basis for their own organizations, along increased demands for citizenship and civil rights. For example, the Black Women's National Council (*Conselho Nacional de Mulheres Negras*) was founded in May 18, 1950 in Rio de Janeiro, and is considered to be the first autonomous Black women's organization, created inside a mixed institution (male and female members) and focused on specific issues concerning Black women (my translation, Lemos 1997: 68, see also Santos 2002: 7).

According to Lemos (1997), and Eliane Santos (2002) this council emerged from the Female Department of the Teatro Experimental do Negro – TEN (Experimental Black Theatre), which was created by the Abdias Nascimento in 1944. The department was coordinated by Maria de Lourdes Vale do Nascimento, a social worker, and held activities such as educational classes as well as dance and music workshops among other activities. Lemos pointed out that this call for emancipation demonstrated that in 1950 Black women had already began to realize that just being a part of the department was not enough to satisfy their organization (1997). Lemos identified the Black Women's National Council as "a step into the formation of a kind of thought that merged ethnicity to female gender" (117). Specifically, this council was one of the central clusters within TEN, and its activities included issues related to women and children; it had a juridical department created to help the Black population with issues such as birth certification, worker's identification, and legal assistance (my translation, Schumaher and Vital Brazil, 2007: 298). As can be seen the Black Women's National Council, as well as Black activists in that moment focused their struggle to guarantee Black population and their own citizenship rights, such as access to public services in terms of school and healthcare units, and women's labor rights; and as I said in the beginning, such demand was the main flag of Brazilian women at the time. Black women's activism in the 1950s was

characterized by the struggle to improve and amplify their citizenship rights and the fight for political democracy and better socio-economic conditions.

In the 1960s did not witness the emergence of Black women's organizations, but it does not mean that they were less active; on the contrary the 1960s represented the period where the "pre-conditions for feminist movement's organization, expansion, and success in Brazil were established" (Costa and Silveira 2004:4). The mid-1960s represented a difficult time for Black militancy, and social movements in general in Brazil because of the military dictatorship that ran the country from 1964 to 1985. In this period there were many Black women groups but they were organized inside the Black movement. One of my collaborators, Felicia, 59, went through an especially difficult experience during this time when she was caught by the police and held against her will for several days. Several of my collaborators mentioned painful experiences during this period but Felicia's testimony was the only one that involved a life-threatening situation. She stated:

> My mother was always afraid that I would be caught by the police and has problems with the government. So, in 1971 I was arrested and spent three days in jail; because I went to a course I was doing, and it was the day that Maringuela[80] was murdered. In the classroom I used to study somebody wrote in the blackboard: "Maringuela died today, but his ideas stay!"; and for some reason my name and the names of two friends (a male and a female) appeared among the suspicious people accused of writing the sentence, but I swear, it was not me or none of my other two friends. But it didn't matter, at the end of the class, the principal called us at her office and told us that we need to go to the México street (rua México), because some people over there wanted to talk to us about the sentence we wrote in the blackboard, and I told him that it was not written by us, but I would be proud if it was me. The place was where the government agents and police used to interrogate people that were suspicious to conspire against the government. Thus, they took us to the Relação Street (rua da Relação). I was afraid when they took us, I thought it was the end …and I was afraid about my mother, if they would go ask her about my life, what I was doing, because she likes to talk too much; and I was also concerned how she could survive without

[80] Carlos Maringuela was one of the main leader against the dictatorship in Brazil, and was murdered in 1972 after suffer tortures in the prison.

> me if I could not get out of that place ever again. Thus the agents started to ask a lot of questions, like why and who wrote the sentence, who were the professors that participated in alliances, and lots, and lots of questions. I was not physically tortured, but mentally I was (my other two friends also received the same treatment). I was interrogated for three days, I cried a lot, calling my mother, for everybody; each day they would say, today you are going home and them nothing happen, they would not let us go; they called us horrible names, there were racist, lesbophobic and homophobic because we were all blacks, one gay and two lesbian; so they would call my female friend and I "*sapatão*[81]" (boot), and my male friend "*viado*[82]". They interrogated us separately and tried to use us against each other. We were hungry and thirsty for three days, they would give nothing for us to eat. The day we left they gave us a glass of water and a disgusting can of milk, I think it was for us not to faint in the streets; and so they let us go, but separately, in a way that I did not know if my other friends were also freed and sent home, I thought they stayed there (neither of them knew about each other). From that day I decided to not take any more any risks because of my mother… (Felicia: July 2007, Rio de Janeiro).

The period of the military dictatorship was characterized by the absence of democracy, the suppression of constitutional rights, censorship, political persecution, and repression of any person or group that could be considered a threat to the military government. The political crises within the Brazilian government started in 1961 due to president Jânio Quadro's renunciation of its responsibilities; so the vice-president João Goulart took his place in a very unfavorable political time. João Goulart's government ran from 1961 to 1964, and his administration was open to social organizations in the country like student and worker unions and popular organizations. This political opening was a source of concern for the conservative classes, such as businessmen, bankers, the Catholic Church, military and middle class, because they were afraid that Brazil could become a socialist country. In that period the world was living under the shadow of the Cold War and a populist and leftist government led not only the traditional classes but

[81] "Sapatão" is a female stereotyped slang for lesbians.

also the United States to fear a communist coup. The crisis became very serious in 1964; in March 31, military troops in the cities of Minas Gerais and São Paulo took over the streets because of strong demonstrations. To avoid a civil war President João Goulart left the country and requested political asylum in Uruguay. The military took over leadership of the country and dictated new rules. On April 9, 1964 they created the A-1, an institutional act that pursued political representatives that opposed the military regime, and removed the stability of any civil employees. Brazil underwent twenty-one years of the military dictatorship in the course of six distinct administrations: (1) President Castello Branco (1964-1967); (2) President Costa e Silva (1967-1969); (3) government of a military cluster (Junta Militar) [08/31/1969-10/30/1969] composed by the Ministers Aurélio de Lira Tavares (Army), Augusto Rademaker (Marine) e Márcio de Sousa e Melo (Air Forces); (4) General Emílio Garrastazu Medici (1969-1974); (5) General Ernesto Geisel (1974-1979); and (6) General João Baptista Figueiredo (1979-1985). The dictatorship made it hard for any social movement groups to organize, and social meetings were considered suspicious by the military, were prohibited and criminalized. People that did not comply with these laws often ended up arrested, tortured, or dead. In spite of such difficult times, militants risked their lives and continued to congregate through alternative means in order to discuss issues regarding their political agenda and to reflect on the effects of the dictatorship. Although the country continued to be under this anti-democratic regime until 1985, in the 1970s and 1980s social movements in general were fighting to free the country and were becoming stronger. By the end of the

[82] "Viado" is a male stereotyped slang for gays.

1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, many social groups resurged in the country, particularly the Black movement.

Since the redemocratization of the country Brazilian society grew in terms of political organizing. Unlike the 1990s and 2000s marked by the neoliberal devastation of labor rights and mobilization, the ends of the 1970s and 1980s were characterized by the rise of the rural and urban labor unions who became stronger interlocutors with corporations, business associations, and the Brazilian government in terms of claiming their rights as workers and citizens. In addition, the 1988 Constitution extended the right to organize in labor unions for civil service employees, which stimulated the emergence of several other labor unions throughout the country. During 1989 and the early 1990s two major labor union organizations - the Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT) and the Central Geral de Trabalhadores (CGT) – were calling the working class to engage in general strikes against the insufficient minimum wage the Brazilian government were proposing, as well as, against the work conditions many of the workers have to undergo every day.

On the other hand, this period was also characterized by an economic crisis, an unbalancing distribution of income and high unemployment, and also by the increasing of poverty and violence in urban and rural regions. Moreover, this period was also characterized by the impoverishment of Brazilian families, which increased the number of children abandoned and living in the streets without any assistance. Since the 1970s Brazilian society organized to react against the economic crisis to denounce the violation of human rights and citizenship that have victimized the majority of the population, particularly women and the Black population.

Some of the elements that contributed to the emergence of feminism as a whole in the country during the 1960s were the international feminist movement that became strong and began to influence women across the world as well as the social justice movements in Brazil led by students. The feminist student movement also gained momentum at this time.

During the re-emergence of the Black movement, the contestation of male dominance by Black women increased and became an important issue as the influence of the feminist movement began to spread throughout the country. According to Lemos (1997)[83] and Santos (2005), two crucial aspects have marked the relationship between Black men and women participating in political movements. On the one hand, Black women continued to be identified according to a gendered, sexist perspective which alluded to the particular role of household duties attributed to Black women in Brazilian society. On the other hand, and analogous to this point, Black women's political activism was constrained in strict accordance with this overtly patriarchal system. This situation led to criticism from both sides within the Black movement. Many Black women started criticizing Black men and accusing them of chauvinism. At first, Black women tried to organize themselves within the larger movement; these attempts were received negatively by Black men within the movement. Lemos (1997) describes reports from Brazilian Black women activists commenting on these negative reactions: feelings of discomfort caused Black men to occupy the rooms during the days and times when Black women

[83] Until contemporary days Rosalia Lemos' (1997) work continue to be the only historiography one, which address the history of Black women's in Brazil, particular in Rio de Janeiro. This is a really important point, I would move it up to the first time that you cite Lemos – you might even want to include this in the text.

had planned to meet. This situation precipitated a fight for space and power between women and men inside the Black movement. The main accusation from Black men against Black women's attempt at organizing was that they were creating a separate movement. For Black women, however, they were not radically separating from the Black movement, but creating their own movement where they could address their needs and demands, since those were not embraced by the Black movement. From Black women's perspective, the Black movement continued to be a partner in the struggle against racism and other forms of discrimination. Amidst these early conflicts, the First Black Women's National Meeting was held in Rio de Janeiro City in 1950; it signaled the first break with Black male activists on the basis of the women's need to discuss the impact of the intersection of gender and race oppression as part of the movement's agenda (Lemos 1997). Issues of sexuality also constituted a central part of this debate within the Black movement. Some Black male activists were said to have spread rumors that the meeting was a gathering of lesbians and were afraid that such an initiative would lead to a shortage of women interested in heterosexual romantic relationships (Lemos, 1997). Moreover this action would challenge the traditional roles performed by those Black women participating in political movements, that of serving as secretaries, minute takers, and preparing propaganda materials and food. No less important for Black women's concerns were the evidence of sexual assault, and other kinds of violence such as domestic violence among Black activists; serious issues that Black women were facing (and continue to do so in mixed groups) inside the Black movement and inside their homes at the hands of their male husbands and/or partners. This situation demonstrated to Black women that they lived under a distinct form of oppression within the mainstream

Black movement, and that there was a need for their own ways of organizing and debating their realities. Lemos (1997) argues, however, that Black women's search for autonomy did not lead to a rupture between them and Black men.

V.2.2. 'Enegrecendo o Feminismo' (Blackening Feminism): from the 1970s to the 1980s

According to Afro-Brazilian feminist Deise Benedito (2006), the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s can be characterized as periods during which Black women played a major role in the development of the 1988 Constitution, demanding action on issues such as discrimination in the job market, health and education (Benedito, 2006: 2). As I discussed earlier the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s represented a period when several social movements re-emerged in Brazil, in particular the Black movement, after the long years of the military regime. In Brazil's recent history, the 1980s witnessed the re-emergence of social movements struggling for democratization and human and social rights while debates about the country's racial disparities became more widespread. From the mid to late 1980s, social movements were actively engaged in constitutional reform with the main goal of restructuring and democratizing the Brazilian state in order to clear the legacy of the dictatorship.

Nonetheless, parallel to this national struggle for democracy and to confront racial inequalities, Black women were also struggling in the social movements for their specific agenda. *Enegrecendo o feminismo* (Blackening Feminism) is an expression employed by Black women to describe their trajectory inside the mainstream feminist movement in

Brazil.[84] Utilizing this concept, Black women had two objectives in mind: on the one hand to emphasize the White and Western identity of the classical frame of feminism; on the other hand, they wanted to highlight the movement's theoretical and political inability to integrate different feminist perspectives engendered in multiracial and multicultural communities. Through these perspectives Black feminists created an agenda that simultaneously confronted gender and intra-gender inequalities; in other words, they dealt with gender oppression externally, but also with the difference between women inside their own movement. Thus, the concept of e*negrecendo o feminismo*, constituted "a way to establish and give visibility to a Black feminist perspective that emerged from the specific condition of being woman, Black, and in general marginalized" (My translation, Carneiro, 2003: 118).

Carneiro (2003) argues that "when gender inequalities were politicized, feminism transformed women into new political subjects" (my translation, 119). Carneiro demonstrates how such conditions fostered the development of particular women's standpoints, for example, inside the feminist movement specific and distinct political claims emerged from groups such as indigenous women, Black women, campesino women, etc; and such singular demands could not be exclusively addressed from a gender perspective without taking into consideration the location (social, cultural, racial, sexual orientation, etc) of each of those groups (my translation, Carneiro 2003: 119). According to Carneiro (2003) "such particular viewpoints have gradually required that feminism equally incorporate diverse practices that amplify its conception and leadership in Brazilian society, without erasing or excluding those singularities" (my translation, 119).

[84] While the mainstream feminist movement in Brazil tended to be composed of and supported by middle-class, highly-educated white women, Black feminist organizations were mostly composed of low-income, Afro-descendent women. Although there are Black women with college degrees, most members have high school or lower levels of schooling.

Thus, Carneiro affirms that the call to articulate racism as a broader women's issue is historical, "because the variable of race produces subaltern genders, both with regards to the stigmatized feminine identity (of the Black women) and subaltern masculinities (of the Black men), attributing to them an inferior prestige in relation to the feminine gender pertained to the racially dominant group (white women) (119)." Sueli Carneiro (2003) demonstrates,

> That as a result of this double undervaluation, racism lowers gender status. In doing so, it establishes intragender equality as the first step to activating social equalization, taking as a parameter the social achievement patterns reached by the racially dominant genders. So, because of that, for Black women to achieve the same levels of equality between men and white women would mean to experience an extraordinary social mobility, since Black men, as most of the social indicators demonstrate, are located below white women's position in terms of the social hierarchy.

Carneiro (2003) also points to "the existence of a dialectical process generated by subaltern groups' diverse concepts and political practices" within the feminist movement; as a consequence, such dialogue fosters at the same time, "the establishment of women in general as new political subjects, and also requires the acknowledgement of the diversity and of the inequalities that are between these same women (119)." Carneiro refer to the analysis of Black feminist and intellectual, Leila Gonzalez.[85] According to Carneiro (2003) Gonzalez,

[85] Lélia Gonzalez de Almeida (1935-1994), or Lélia Gonzalez was a major Black militant and feminist. She passed away in 1994. She had the ability to articulate both the issues of both the Black women's and the Black movements. She participated in the creation of the Instituto de Pesquisas das Culturas Negras (IPCN-RJ), do Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU), em nível nacional, do Nzinga Coletivo de Mulheres Negras-RJ, do Olodum-BA, among many others. She was one of the major scholars in Brazil to introduce the debate of racism in the universities. She also participated in important international forums to combat racism. She became a national and international reference concerning black feminist struggle. Lélia Gonzalez integrated in her scholarship and political discourses the thoughts of great activist intellectuals, such as Malcolm X, Frantz Fanon, Steve Biko, and Nelson Mandela (site: http://www.leliagonzalez.org.br/).

> made precious contributions to feminism: the first points out the contradictions that historically marked the trajectory of black women within the Brazilian feminist movement; and the second refers to the fundamental criticism that the political action of Black women introduced into feminism, which significantly changed its perceptions, behaviors, and social institutions (my translation, 119-120)

In addition, Carneiro also pointed out that Leila Gonzalez disclosed two main challenging issues for Black women in relation to the Brazilian mainstream feminist movement's conceptions. On one hand, she highlighted,

> the problem brought about by the Eurocentric bias that refused to accept the central role of race in the constitution of gender hierarchies existing in Brazilian society, and also the attempts of such movements to universalize the values of Western culture to all women, without considering that the processes of domination, violence and exploitation (which are the basis for the interaction between whites and non-whites) constituted one more axis that articulate the myth of racial democracy and the whitening (embranquecimento) ideal (my translation, Carneiro 2003:120).

On the other hand, Gonzalez's critiques exposed that "the feminist movement was removed from the reality experienced by Black women, mainly because it has denied Black women's history of struggle and leadership " (my translation, Carneiro, 2003: 120). [86]

Hence, as pointed out by Sueli Carneiro (2003) "the awareness that gender identity does not shift naturally to intragender racial solidarity [*solidariedade racial intragênero*] led black women to face, within their own feminist movement, the contradictions and inequalities that racism and racial discrimination produced among women, particularly among black and white women in Brazil " (123). Conversely, the same process applies to "gender solidarity in terms of racial intergroup dynamics that led Black women to argue that the dimension of gender should be placed on the Brazilian

[86] Lélia Gonzalez cited by Luiza Bairros, 2000,p. 57

Black Movement's agenda as structuring element of racial disparities (my translation, 120)."

These perspectives inform Black women's participation in broader struggles – popular movements, Black movements, and the women's movement – nationally and worldwide, and their efforts to assure that their own specific political agendas will be represented in each of these movements. This process has facilitated the emergence of various Black women's groups since the end of the 1970s, and they are located throughout the country. It also has fostered several regional and national forums to discuss the feminist agenda in light of Black women's issues, such as racism and racial discrimination (Carneiro 2003: 120).

Nilza Iraci (2005), a well-known Black feminist and member of the NGO Geledés, identified two major gatherings in the 1980s that were critical in facilitating the autonomy of Black Women's organizing in that decade. First, the IX Brazilian Feminist National Meeting in 1987, held in Garanhuns, Pernambuco marked a new stage in Black women's organizing since Black women participants decided during that period to undertake their own national meeting. A second crucial gathering was the First National Meeting of Black Women held in December 1988 in Valencia, Rio de Janeiro. This meeting was considered one of the most important moments of the contemporary Black women's movement; 450 women from 17 states participated in the meeting and, as a result, other meetings took place in various Brazilian states. Despite the long history of Black women's struggles, the First Meeting brought to the political arena a critical lens concerning fundamental issues in the feminist agenda regarding the effects of racism and racial discrimination. In addition, this meeting provided the impetus for the emergence of the contemporary Black women's movement, which was born out of urgency and the need to cross the boundaries of feminism itself, articulating race with gender, class and

sexuality as political categories (my translation, Iraci 2006: 2). The 1990s and 2000s witnessed the realization of this agenda in the political practices of Black Brazilian women.

Iraci (2006) argued that since the 1990s both the Brazilian feminist meetings and the Latin-American feminist meetings have created spaces for the Brazilian Black feminist movement to engage in debates, exchanges, and the formulation of political strategies. Here I want to highlight what I refer to as the geographic and political exchanges these feminist meeting provided for Black women's organizing. I have observed in my research that various Afro-descendent feminist intellectual traditions have fostered diasporic and political exchanges in terms of knowledge and political practices. The national and international meetings were transformed into political sites that provided Black women with the tools to access spaces and debates in which they have been traditionally marginalized. Mobility and the ability to travel are crucial aspects of these transnational exchanges, because without increased mobility these exchanges cannot take place. These exchanges have been organized by a broad range of African descendent women's sisterhoods, divided in local and global levels (regional and local alliances, networks, etc), as I discussed in previous chapters. The key element in these exchanges is the sharing of their experiences of oppression. Such sharing occurs mutually in terms of an exchange of intellectual traditions and feminist and activist practices; thought and action are inseparable from those experiences. In addition, critiques of the state and capitalism (neoliberalism and globalization) are central issues in these meetings. Finally, the shared politics, political strategies, cultures and identities that Black women have developed to deal with oppression represents a particular type of knowledge production that is grounded in their experiences of racism, sexism, and

political marginalization.[87] Campbell (2003) argued that the meetings among Black women function as sites where Black women come together to exchange and share their experiences of oppression and to discuss and propose strategies to transform their realities.

V.2.3. Intersecting Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality: A call for a more inclusive Black Feminist Agenda in the 1990s and 2000s

In the 1990s and 2000s Black women's organizations, especially NGOs proliferated throughout the country. The major goals of their organizing were to struggle against racial, gender and class oppression, a major goal raised by the Black women's organizations that emerged in the 1980s. However, I want to highlight two key aspects that distinguish many feminist organizations of the 1980s from those of the 1990s and 2000s; specifically, the adoption of an intersectional approach to deal with the kinds of oppression that impacted their lives and the explicit incorporation of the struggle for sexuality as a powerful form of oppression, particularly recognizing heterosexism as a system that oppresses Black women in Brazil.

As I mentioned previously, the First National Black Women's Meeting in 1988 held in Rio de Janeiro facilitated the emergence of the contemporary Black women's movement with an agenda that defended the articulation of struggles for racial justice with gender, class and sexuality as political categories (my translation, Iraci 2006: 2).

[87] (see Hetherington 1993; Ifekwunigwe 1997; Mikell 1997; Mindry 2001; Nnaemeka 1998, 2003 and 2005; Oyèrónké Oyewùmí 2003; Mirza 1997a, 1997b, Mirza 1997c, Parmar 1997; Patel 1997; Persram 1997; Phoenix 1997; Agnew 1996; Beckles 1998; Bolles 1996; Hernandez 2003; Kincaid 2003; Mair 1996; Mohammed 1998; Reddock 1998; Alvarez, Fridman, Beckman et al 2003; Báez 2000; Bairros 1991, 1998 and 2002; Campbell 2003, 2005a and 2005b; Bento 2002; Blackwell and Naber 2002; Carneiro 1985 and 1999; Conceição, 1998; Consuelo 1998; Curiel 2003a and 2003b; Danticat 1998 and 2003; hooks, Brah, Sandoval, Anzaldúa and Others 2004; Iraci 2003; Xavier 2003 and 2004; Werneck 2000, 2003a, 2003b and 2005b; Young 1987)

The end of the 1980s already pointed toward the shifts that would be enacted by Black women activists and organizations during the 1990s and 2000s. More specifically these shifts were generated by the demands of Black women, and other women of color that argued that Feminism as it was primarily constructed did not embrace all women in terms of their diversity – culture, identities, politics, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, etc – and needs, and so there was a call for change, to construct a feminism that could consider such important differences. Brazilian Black feminist Jurema Werneck's (2005) argument helps us to analyze this demand for a shift in the feminist perspective through a particular Black feminist approach:

> When European white bourgeois women – the primary founders of feminism – named the women's struggles from the 1970s taking in consideration their own standpoint, they brought into the feminist conceptualization a Western perspective that was grounded in a profound lack of knowledge regarding other women around the world; in addition to being founded on an increasing individualism that was fostered by the capitalist system (my translation, 2).

The question pinpointed by Werneck was, to what extent the "concept of 'feminism'" is enough to represent "all activism, all struggles?" (My translation, 2). The answer for this question is that a narrow mainstream understanding of feminism is not sufficiently able to represent the diversity of social justice struggles. Feminism in its origin and in the way it was conceptualized cannot speak to all women, including all white women who are separated by class, nationality, sexuality, etc.. The main reasons for these impossibilities are justified, according to Werneck, by the nature of "Black women's political action that she defines as an engagement that traverses different levels of action, of fields of existence as human beings in society, influenced by conflicts or violence with the West, patriarchy, capitalism, and individualism among other systems of subordination" in addition to that, she argues that we cannot forget Black women's

circumstances of inequality generated because of their inferiorization and exploitation (my translation, 2)." Having said that, I want to shift this discussion and employ Werneck's inquiry to focus on Black feminism, particularly in Brazil, although it might serve to discuss other realities. Drawing from Werneck's idea I want to ask: Is the concept of Black feminism enough to represent all Black women's activisms, struggles and perspectives?

Looking at the literature throughout the African Diaspora, and particularly in Brazil, Black feminist solidarity and sisterhood has been defined and based on at least two premises: Black women's similarities that place them together as a group that experiences the same realities of oppression; and Black women's specific realities based on culture, region, background, sexuality, etc. In an effort to trace Black women's commonalities many scholars have defined Black feminists and feminism as a group that shares a historical reality of Afro-descendent women's continuous life and death struggle for survival and liberation[88]. In addition, as stated by Werneck 2005b and hooks 2000, a struggle of these women for decolonization in the different levels, i.e., bodies, minds, political, economic, social, religious, cultural, racial systems among others; a kind of feminism that simultaneously contradict and disrupt the ordinary feminism produced by several groups, since it struggle against positions of privilege and domination, i.e., against white supremacy interests, particular European and U.S. ones.

Those efforts were important and fundamental to our understanding that African-descendent women's share common struggles due to the impact of Western global set of domination, patriarchalism, racism, colonialism and capitalism. On the other hand, what is really driving me to this discussion is the divergent aspects that exist inside the Black

[88] Based on Combahee River Collective 1980: 273. The original piece states: "We would like to affirm that we find our origins in the historical reality of Afro-American women women's continuous life-and-death struggle for survival and liberation (273)."

feminist and Black women's movements as a whole that I presented a first discussion in the Introduction of Part I when I addressed the divergence among Black women; and which bring us to consider that, it is not just feminism that needs to be assessed in terms of representing women in society, but we also have to look critically at universal notions of Black feminism and Black women's movement that portrait them as a homogeneous political expression of Black women (Sudbury 1998). Thus, it is important to take into consideration that although the various segments of Black women's organizing have attempted to work together as "representative" of Afro-Brazilian women, they should not be necessarily understood as a homogenous community because there are contradictions among these various social groups.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the reasons and key socio-economic, cultural and political conditions that led to the organization of the *Feminismo Negro* in Brazil. Throughout the discussion I presented several aspects that justify this movement's formation, genealogy and feminist liberation politics; and also what have been the main elements that characterize and shape it. I want to end this chapter by examining the relationship between the Black feminism movement and academic discourse in Brazil, because until present days these discourses have been used to undervalued and marginalized Black feminist theory and knowledge production in Brazil. The situation Black feminists confronted in the activism arena regarding the acknowledgment of their needs and demands also extended to the academia. Very often mainstream feminist scholars covered-up Black women's conditions of oppression in their studies, which

became a major reason for society to not believe Black feminist studies that tried to argue in contrary way to those well established academic women. In addition, these responses have contributed to the devaluation of Black feminist scholarship and knowledge. For instance, Black feminist scholars such as Faye Harrison (1999b), Irma McClaurin (2001), and Lynn Bolles (2001) point out that Black women have often dealt with hostility and racist and sexist biases in academy in response to their work. McClaurin (2001) argues that "Black feminist anthropologists have been ignored, marginalized and have their scholarship minimized" (3) inside the discipline and academy. Harrison (1999) also addresses the challenges for Black scholars documenting "Black women's perceptions and experience (77)."

Moreover, mainstream feminist academic attempts have failed to analyze Black women's situation because they have chosen to look at all women through their own standpoint, specifically through a white middle-class women's perspective. Such a mainstream feminist worldview does not acknowledge, (and so, disregards) the problem of racial discrimination among Black women and how such circumstance impact their lives and status in a way different from white women. Thus, traditional feminist scholars looked in the wrong direction where Black women were concern and have seemed to be uninterested in black women's issues. As a result of that negligence, mainstream feminist researchers used problematic theories and methodologies that were inadequate for conducting social research on Black women. Therefore, for the reasons I have outlined, I want to suggest that Black women's conditions in Brazil need to be analyzed in light of their peculiar position from the intersection of race, gender, class, and

sexuality, because without such an approach we cannot begin to apprehend these women's conditions of oppression.

This chapter explored the reasons and the key socio-economic, historical, and political issues that contributed to the emergence of the *Feminismo Negro* (Black Feminism) in Brazil. It analyzed the elements that contributed to the foundations of the movement. In particular, Black women's desire to become independent and create their own agenda are the main reasons. Such attempts revealed the gap and divergences between them and the mainstream feminist movement; precisely it shows that white and Black feminists had distinct agenda concerning major issues such as labor exploitation, violation of sexual and reproductive health rights, among others. The chapter also examined Afro-Brazilian feminist genealogies; and discussed the existence of three basic groups that seems to reflect how Black women are organized in terms of their political liberation and ideology. In conclusion, based on the scenario discussed in the previous paragraphs, it is important to point out that there are some main challenges in the study of Black women's experiences of oppression in Brazil that need to be carefully taken into consideration. Afro-Brazilian women's experience of oppression constitutes an important foundation to the constitution of Black diasporic feminist theory in the country; and as a concept of analysis and knowledge production it has challenged the social sciences and social movements[89]. One first challenge is to find adequate analytical tools

[89] (see Agnew 1996; Barr 2003, 2005a and 2005b; Bolles 1996; Brewer 1993; Collins 2000; Christian 1985 and 2000; Combahee River Collective 1983; Crenshaw 1995, 2000 and 2002; George 2001; Curiel 2003a and 2003b; hooks 1981 and 1984; James 1997, 1999 and 2000; King 1988; Lorde 1990; McClaurin 2001; Mikell 1997; Mirza 1997a, 1997b, 1997c; Nnaemeka 1998, 2003 and 2005; Oyèrónké Oyewùmí 2003; Parmar 1997; Reddock 1998; Rufino 2002; Sant'Anna 1998; Shakur 1987; Smith 1983; Sudbury 1998; Terborg-Penn 1996a and 1996b; Xavier 2003 and 2004; Walker 1983; Werneck 2000, 2003a, 2003b and 2005b; among others).

to identify the role of race, gender, class, sexuality and state in Black women's life condition, which has been the object of analysis of many Black feminist intellectuals throughout the African Diaspora[90] . A second challenge is to re-claim and demand for visibility regarding the significance of Black women's history and experiences in Brazilian society. The third and last aspect to be faced, which is related to the second one, is to persuade social science practices in Brazil about the centrality of Black feminist praxis and thought.

[90] Bento 2002; Collins, 2000; Combahee River Collective, 1983; Crenshaw, 1995, 2000 & 2002; King 1988; Werneck 2001a, 2001b, 2003a & 2003b; Werneck, Mendonça & White 2000; Xavier 2003 & 2004, among others.

PART III: THE IMPACT OF THE ACTIVISM OF BLACK WOMEN IN BRASIL

In Part I the study focused on some of the material effects of the continued structural and historical conditions of the oppression in Black women's lives. In this Part III, I will discuss some of the results of such constraints, such as the deterioration of Black women's health in Brazil, for example, the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and their exposure to violence and marginalization in the healthcare system and in the Brazilian society as a whole. It comprises two chapters. Chapter VI: The Activism of Black Women's NGOs around Sexual and Reproductive Health provides a panoramic of the current impact of the activism of these NGOs in the health area, and examines specific themes related to Black women's health. Chapter VII: Effectiveness, Agency and Collective Organizing among Black Women's NGOs in Brazil addresses the two main questions that I propose to investigate in this study: (1) what has been the effectiveness of the political work of Black Women's NGOs in the areas of sexual and reproductive health in Brazil, particularly with respect to reducing the effects of racial, gender, and class discrimination? (2) what are the contributions that these NGO's have made to the formation of Black women's agency and collective organizing in their communities?

Chapter VI: The Activism of Black Women's NGOs on Sexual and Reproductive Health

Illustration 1: Course "Controle Social para a Saúde da População Negra" (Social Control on Black Population Health), organized by the NGO Criola, Brasília, Distrito Federal, 2006.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the activism of Black women's NGOs on Black women's health, particularly sexual and reproductive health, and is organized into two parts. The first part provides a general contextualization about the current impact of the activism of these organizations in the area of reproductive and sexual area, and presents critical demographic data on health disparities between Blacks and whites that have been utilized by these NGOs and other sectors of the Black movement to demand the implementation of specific healthcare programs for the Black population, particularly Black women, in Brazil.

The second part of the chapter examines the specificities of Black women's sexual and reproductive health in relation to the intersectionality of race, gender, class and sexuality, and subsequently presents evidence (statistical data and case studies) to illustrate how intersectionality impacts Black women's sexual and reproductive health and life conditions. I have divided the chapter into two subsections. In subsection I – *The Social Context of Black Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Brazil* – I provide a brief socio-historical panorama on the emergence of Black women's sexual and reproductive health as a topic of public policy and social science inquiry. Subsection II – *Redefining Black Women's Health and Sexual and Reproductive Health in Relation to Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality* – is the most important component of this study because it represents my effort to expand on a race, gender, class, and sexuality-based theoretical approach. I utilize this approach to look at Black women's sexual and reproductive health, and analyze what I have identified as the dehumanizing conditions of

Black women's health generated by two contemporary discourses in Brazil – the discourse of heteronormativity[91] on one hand, and the "racialized and classed sexuality"[92] of Black women on the other hand, that stigmatizes them. Follow the development of these arguments I will provide specific newspapers' accounts and demographic data on health disparities between Black and white women in order to demonstrate the effects of these two discourses on Brazilian Black women's lives. I conclude this section by suggesting a framework for re-conceptualizing Black women's health and sexual and reproductive health.

A crucial data that has prompted the Black women's movement to struggle in the health sector is that the Black population constitutes the majority of the patients in the public health system, the Unique System of Health (Sistema Único de Saúde), also popularly referred to as SUS. In general most Brazilians rely on SUS for their healthcare needs; in 2003 SUS was responsible for providing 63 percent of the healthcare assistance in the country. If we break this down according to race/ethnicity, the data reveals that 44 percent of these patients were white and 76 percent were Blacks.[93] This information cannot be disregarded considering the high prevalence of the racism in health services. Although we understand through a considerable number of studies that race is not biological, but rather is a social construct, it is clear that race plays a critical role in the administration of public health services in Brazil. Several socioeconomic, cultural and

[91] Heteronormative derives from the concept of "heteronormativity", which allude to the idea that conceives heterosexuality as normality.
[92] Laura A. Harris (1996).
[93] See Santos (2004) and Dossiê Sobre a Situação das Mulheres Negras Brasileiras, AMNB, 2007: 25 (Dossier about Brazilian Black Women's Conditions), produced by the Brazilian Black Women's Network – AMNB.

political studies in Brazil have revealed that racism and racial disparities produce serious consequences to health that affect Black people's lives and general well-being.[94] Black feminist Jurema Werneck (2002) affirms that,

> For [black people], racism is an ideology that determines ways to think and act. Thus, it is not difficult to understand that its structures will impregnate the relationships between all groups exposed to it, especially those relationships that occur between the racially dominant group (whites) and the ones considered racially inferior [Blacks and indigenous people]. From this perspective, it is easy to visualize the existence of racism (and sexism) in the relationships between professionals and clients in the health system, as well as, between the policymakers and managers responsible for the public policies and the populations that live under social and racial marginalization (18).

According to Werneck (2004) "Among Black women and men, it is possible to identify high rates of mortality due to cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, homicides, HIV/AIDS, maternal and child mortality, a higher incidence of hysterectomies for the treatment of myomas, and a higher prevalence of glaucoma, among other problems" (11). These health problems are examples of the disparities between the health situation

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[94] See Araújo 2001; Barbosa 2001; Batista 2002; Berquó 1997; Boletim Toques 1997, 2001, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2004, unknown date; Carvalho (unknown date); Carvalho (unknown date); Comissão de Seguridade Social 2005; Corrêa 1999; Correa and Petchesky (unknown date); Costa 1999; D'Oliveira and Schraiber 1999; Jornal da Rede Feminista de Saúde 2001; Jr. Lima 2003; Koifman and Koifman 1999; Lipke (unknown date); Lopes 2004; Mariano, 2003; Ministério da Saúde/Brasil 1992, 2001; Ministério da Saúde and Fundação Oswaldo Cruz 2004; Ministério da Saúde and Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial 2004a and 200b; Mulheres Negras na Marcha Zumbi (+ 10) 2006; Oliveira 1999, 2001a, 2001b and 2003; Oliveira 2001; Oliveira and Sant' Anna 2002; Organização Pan-Americana de Saúde 2001; Pan American Health Organization and World Health Organization (unknown date); Perpétuo unknown date; Pinho 2005; Programa das Nações Unidas para o Desenvolvimento/PNUD & Organização Pan-Americana de Saúde/OPAS 2001; Programa de Combate ao Racismo Institucional (PCRI) 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2005d and 2005e; Rea 1988; Reis (unknown date); Roland 1999, 2001 and 2006; Sant'Anna 2001; Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial 2004 and (unkown date); Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial & Ministério da Saúde 2004; Sistema das Nações Unidas 2001; Soares 2003; Silver 1999; Souza 2001; Souza (unknown date); Valladares 1999; Vieira 1999; Werneck, Mendonça and White 2000; Werneck 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2004 and 2005; Xavier 2003.

between Blacks and whites in Brazil. As indicated by Black activist Maria Inês Barbosa (1998),

> The majority of diseases that affect the Black population are the same ones that have an effect on the general population. What differentiates the Black population from the white population is a more critical profile regarding health, which is due to different historical contexts, and such circumstance should be attributed to the racism (...) (100).

In the last ten years, many studies by various segments of the Black movement in Brazil revealed that racism has drastically impacted healthcare, even when we consider other factors such as gender, sexual orientation, class, education, income and labor-market. Lucia Xavier, Black feminist and general coordinator of the NGO Criola, (2004) argues that,

> Racism is an element that sustains vulnerability because it deprives the individual of his/her dignity, of power and of citizenship rights that could guarantee his/her access to the means of subsistence and to society's services in an egalitarian way. Racism also places the individual in a situation of inferiority and social exclusion and obstructs the possibility that he or she can break out of political isolation (36).

In particular, the consequences of racism on health is an old discussion brought forth by Black feminists in Brazil and other parts of the African Diaspora, but there still a need for more scholarship in this issue in order that the society acknowledges the impact of racism in Black population's health and its existence in the healthcare system as real and emergent problems that demand government action.

VI.1. THE CURRENT IMPACT OF THE ACTIVISM OF BLACK WOMEN'S NGOS IN THE HEALTH AREA

Examining the current activism of Brazilian Black women's NGOs work on Black women's health (and of the Black population in general), we can observe the efforts of these organizations to promote and build awareness within Black communities and Brazilian society about racial inequalities in the healthcare system. In order to understand how this attempt operates and its implications for Black women and the Black population, it is crucial to apprehend their struggles against racial disparities in the health area. In this regard, Black women's NGO activisms has encouraged the Brazilian population to question: What is the relationship between health and racism? What are the methods needed to gather evidence that supports this link? Is Black population's health an issue related to racism or poverty (Is it a problem of racial or social inequality?) Why are Black women more likely to be discriminated against than other women? Brazilians across the political spectrum have asked these questions in order to understand, and in many cases delegitimize, the arguments of the Black movement and Black women activists demanding the implementation of specific healthcare programs and policies that focus on the needs of this population. The beliefs that the country is founded on a system of racial democracy has caused many Brazilians to deny the existence of racism and be skeptical that it would be associated with health inequalities and disparities between whites and Blacks. These crucial questions are generating popular debates about racial disparities in Brazil and also producing increased racial awareness within the population.

An important example of the demands produced by the activism of these Black women's NGOs and the Black movement can be seen in the claims for better health and education for Blacks. For instance, those claims have persuaded mainstream white social movement organizations (led by the organization IBASE - Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analyses) to create and promote a 2004 Campaign called "*Onde Você Guarda o Seu Racismo*? "[Where Do you Keep Your Racism?]. The campaign was supported by a coalition of more than 40 large and medium-sized organizations (comprised of both white and Black representatives), [95] and numerous other civil society groups and institutions.

Formulating responses to these questions is a complex task. The link between health and racism may be obvious for some Brazilians such as the Black people who experience poor healthcare services in public hospitals, but there are others who are uncertain or suspicious about these claims. In order to clarify such doubts, Black women's NGOs and other sectors of the Black movement have brought many segments of Brazilian society into productive debates concerning the status, life and health conditions of the Black population, and the socioeconomic disparities between Blacks and whites in the country. In spite of these critical and rich discussions that emerged in the country in the last several years, it seems that Brazil (not unlike other Latin American countries) is far from promptly reaching any solutions to such disparate social and racial circumstances. As an example of this complexity, Edward Telles (2007) pointed out that

[95] Some of these White and Black organizations are: Ibase, Observatório da Cidadania, Abong, Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras, Articulação de Organizações de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras, ActionAid Brasil, Cesec/Ucam, Cfemea, Comunidade Bahá'í, Criola, Fase, Geledés, Inesc, Instituto Patrícia Galvão, Redeh, Rede Dawn, among others.

the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)[96] which were approved by all of the Latin American and Caribbean nations "are silent on the question of race," despite the focus on race in the declaration of the World Conference against Racism advocating that all states should "close the social gaps caused by racial discrimination in such MDG target areas as illiteracy, primary education, infant and child mortality, general and reproductive health, and access to safe drinking water" (1). As a case in point I will present some examples of health disparities by race in Brazil in this section, and specifically issues about Black women's health in the second section (named Black women's Sexual and Reproductive Health).

In 2005 Brazil had 184.388.620 habitants, constituted by 49.8 percent of white; 43.2 percent of pardos (light-skinned Blacks); 6.3 percent of pretos (dark-skinned Blacks); and 0,7 percent of amarelos (Asians) and indígenas (indigenous people). The Black population is considered to be the sum of *pardos* and *pretos* that corresponded to 49.5 percent of the Brazilian population (see IBGE, 2006: 24-36 and Dossiê Sobre a Situação das Mulheres Negras Brasileiras, AMNB[97], 2007: 13).

[96] The set of social development objectives established by the United Nations and that need to be accomplished by the year of 2015.
[97] *Dossiê Sobre a Situação das Mulheres Negras Brasileiras, 2007* (Dossier about Brazilian Black Women's Conditions), produced by the Brazilian Black Women's Network – AMNB.

Table 9: Distribution of Brazilian Population by Race/ Color, according Great Region (Brazil, 2004)[98]

Region	Whites percent	Blacks percent
North	24	76
Northeast	30	70
Southeast	61	39
South	83	17
Central West	43	57

Source: IBGE, PNAD 2004.

The population data shows that Blacks and whites are almost equal in terms of size, but that these two groups have experienced distinct treatment and access to socio-economic and political rights in the country, which have produced inequality among Brazilians. As a case in point, the incidence of poverty and indigence among Blacks and whites reveals the disparities: in 1999, 22.6 percent of whites were poor and 8.1 percent indigents; while pardos constituted 48.4 percent of poor and 22.3 percent indigents; and pretos were 42.9 percent of the poor and 18.3 percent of indigents. These data demonstrate that in Brazil there is a strong association between "being born Black and high risks of living in poverty and indigence."[99]

[98] Reproduced from the Dossiê Sobre a Situação das Mulheres Negras Brasileiras, AMNB, 2007: 16.
[99] See IPEA 2007 and Dossiê Sobre a Situação das Mulheres Negras Brasileiras, AMNB, 2007: 14.

Table 10: Percentages of Poor, by Color/Race self-declared (Brazil and Great Regions, 2001)[100]

	North	Northeast	Southeast	South	Central West	Brazil
White	33.6	46.9	15.6	20.4	20	22.4
Black	48.4	61.9	32.1	38.9	33.6	46.8
Total	44.3	57.4	21.5	23.3	27.6	33.6

Source: IBGE, PNAD 2001.

Regarding life expectancy of the Brazilian population the Dossiê Sobre a Situação das Mulheres Negras Brasileiras, AMNB (2007) revealed the social disadvantages Black women encounter. Based on the data from the Census Bureau (IBGE),[101] the Dossiê pointed out that,

> The Brazilian population's life expectancy increased by more than three years between 1991 and 2000. Among women, life expectancy increased from 70.9 years to 74.1 years in that period. For men, life expectancy increased from 63.1 to 66.7 years. The aging population has been characterized by an additional number of females, i.e., in 2000 for every 100 elderly females, there were 81.6 elderly males (16);
>
> Even with respect to the distribution of population by colour / race, the IBGE indicated that there were an additional number of white women. From 1991 to 2000, the percentage of white women increased from 52.7 percent to 55 percent, while the proportion of pretas and pardo women dropped from 46.3 percent to 43.4 percent. This reduction of almost 3 percent … supports an historical and continuous claim and critique of the Black women's movement: mortality is higher among black women in the country (16);

[100] Reproduced from the Dossiê Sobre a Situação das Mulheres Negras Brasileiras, AMNB, 2007: 16.
[101] IBGE – Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (A Census Bureau that provides information and data about Brazil's geography and population status).

> Regarding age composition, the levels are very similar among white women and black until the age range between 25 and 44 years. From then it begins to vary due to differences of life expectation. In 2000, white women at birth expected to live 73.8 years, while black women could only expect to live 69.5 years. Similarly, white men had a life-expectancy of 68.2, while that of black men was only 63.2 years (16-17)[102];
>
> These disparities in life expectancy speak for themselves, reflecting Blacks' lower access to education, property and healthcare services, and infrastructure (housing, water, sewage, electricity), in addition to an increase in the possibilities of being exposed to higher risk of death due to external causes (such as murder and accidents), in the case of black men (17).

The table below was produced by the Dossier of the Brazilian Black Women's Network – AMNB (2007) and demonstrates some social indicators of inequality by race/color (raça/cor):

Table 11

Some Social Indicators, according race/color (Raça/cor) (Brazil, 2003)		
	Whites	**Blacks**
Composition of Total Population	54%	45.3%
Proportion of poor	22%	45%
Proportion of indigents	7.8%	19.5%
Average of labor income	R$ 697	R$ 341
Unemployment rate	8.2%	10.3%
Illiteracy for people over 15 years old	7.5%	17.2%
Average years of schooling	7 years	4,9 years
Children with delayed school	9.6%	22.3%
Homes with adequate sewage service	76.5%	55.5%
Homes with piped water	87.7%	62.7%
Life expectancy (valid to year 2000)	71.1%	69.1%
Human Development Index - HDI (valid to year 2001)	0, 820	0,712
HDI position among the 175 countries	46th position	107th position
Equivalent to HDI of:	Kuwait	El Salvador and

[102] See Sant'Anna, Wania (2001).

China

Source: Dossier of the Brazilian Black Women's Network – AMNB, 2007 (data from IBGE, PNAD 2002 and PAIXÃO, Marcelo)

As I will discuss in the second section, the studies conducted in the last decades demonstrate that Blacks experience the worst health conditions, and Black women in particular have been severely impacted by this reality. Telles affirms that Afro-Brazilian people (and Blacks throughout Latin America) "will be excluded from" the MDGs' achievement unless there are significant transformations in the response to racial inequality. He suggests that the "challenge for Brazil and other nations is not merely to achieve the MDGs; it is to reach them for all racial and ethnic groups (1)."

VI.2. BLACK WOMEN'S SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

> *How can we possibly talk about reproductive health policy without addressing race, as well as gender?(Dorothy Roberts,1997: 4)*

VI.2.1. The Social Context of Black Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health in Brazil

As indicated in Chapter IV, the issues concerning women's sexual and reproductive health – particularly female sterilization and family planning policies – in Brazil since the 1960s and 1970s have played major roles in the emergence of the Black

women's movement. Black Feminist Edna Roland (n.d.) argues that reproductive health constitutes a field of power relations, and it was also used by many groups (in the social movement and academy) as instrument to acquire financial resources from national and international agencies, such as the MacArthur Foundation (my translation, 5). Roland (n.d) affirms that "the MacArthur Foundation represented an important resource of financial support for institutions and also for individuals in Brazil (my translation, 5)." As a case in point, the author affirmed that "the MacArthur's Individual Scholarship Program played a fundamental role in the emergence of new Black leaders in the reproductive health field, informally functioning as an affirmative action program, which contributed to the development of the Black population health field" (my translation, 5). According to Roland the Black population's health field "was consolidated in Brazil in 1995, when the organizers of the *Marcha Zumbi Against Racism and Pro Freedom and Life*[103]*,* incorporated in the agenda of the rally a request for the implementation of the Women's Integrated Health Assistance Program (PAISM)[104], and for the formulation of a reproductive health program that focused on Black male needs (my translation, 5)." Roland also indicated that the Black population's reproductive health was also discussed by the Health Ministry and by a special workshop group representative of several other Ministries. One of the results of these meetings was the elaboration of the PAF –

[103] March Zumbi refers to a protest march against racism in Brazil that occurs every year in the November 20, the day named as Black Awareness.
[104] PAISM - *Programa de Assistência Integral à Saúde da Mulher*

Programa de Anemia Falciforme[105] (Sickle Cell Anemia Program) in 1996 (6; see also Oliveira 1999, 2001a, 2001b and 2003).

The formulation of the Black population's reproductive health also legally forced the healthcare system to require that all customers' records in clinics, hospitals and other units should contain a section to collect racial/ ethnic data (named as *"quesito cor"*) in order to support the organization of a Data base that could be used to analyze and understand the causes of health disparities and discrimination (see Roland n.d. and Oliveira 1998 and 1999). According to Roland one of the first efforts to collect racial/ ethnic data in the healthcare service occurred in the District of São Paulo, during the government of Mayor Luisa Erundina (Worker's Party). The gathering of racial/ethnic data have provided the necessary evidences to validate the Black movement's critiques of the existence of racism in the healthcare system, since it concretely demonstrates who has been mistreated, suffered injuries, and died in the health units. However, although the collection of racial/ethnic data is required by law, there are many providers and units that still refuse to complete the patients' records with such information, and often no administrative action has been taken to warn and penalize those who do not comply with the law. As demonstrated by Fátima Oliveira (1998), a renowned doctor and Black feminist, this refusal to comply has resulted in serious consequences,

[105] The emphasis on sickle cell anemia was due the fact that this disease were not properly addressed by the healthcare system and professionals because it was a disease that predominantly affects African descendent population, and so because of the racism in the health system, it did not create adequate treatment, information and assistance for the patients that have the disease. According Sueli Carneiro the disease affects 10 percent of the Brazilian population, more specifically African-descendents. Although the Brazilian government has generated some structures to improve the system regarding this disease treatment and support there still many problems that endanger the patients' lives.

> We did not reach a full understanding of the magnitude of the racial/ethnic differences and differential of gender oppression and of racism in the maintenance, re-establishment and loss of health in a classist society. There are so many controversies regarding the collection of racial/ethnic data. It has been a challenge in the scientific field, among professionals, services, policymakers and administrators in the area of health policies. There are many arguments in favor of and against it. The need to complete the records in this regard continues to be neglected and in general public services disregard the need for and importance of this information as essential epidemiological data (my translation, 43).

Despite so many challenges, useful information has already been produced from the racial/ethnic data collected from the public health services. Based on such information Black activists have forced Brazilian government to formulate specific programs to confront and prevent institutional racism in the public healthcare system. Black women activists have helped to train healthcare professionals and managers on racial, gender, class, and sexual discrimination throughout the country.

A series of groups and initiatives have contributed theoretical and politically to the development and acknowledgement of Black women's (and the Black population's) reproductive health field in Brazil such as the *Projeto Mulher Esterilizada* (Sterilized Women's Project)/CEAP/Rio de Janeiro (1990); the *Programa de Saúde do Geledés*, in 1991 (Geledés' Health Program); the NEPO – *Núcleo de Estudos de População* (The Center of Studies on Population) in the Campinas University, São Paulo; the *Programa de Saúde Reprodutiva da Mulher Negra*, 1992 do CEBRAP[106] (Black Women's Reproductive Health Program); Project Arayê – *Programa de Prevenção de HIV/AIDS para a Comunidade Afro-Brasileira* (1996)/ ABIA – Rio de Janeiro (Arayê Project – Prevention in HIV/AIDS for Afro-Brazilian Community); in addition the NGOs

[106] CEBRAP - Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento (Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning)

Geledés/São Paulo (1988), Criola/Rio de Janeiro (1992), Fala Preta/ São Paulo (1997) (see Roland, unknown date and Fátima Oliveira, 1998).

A final critical area of concern for Black feminist organizers in Brazil centers on a new field of research – bioethics.[107] Oliveira is a well-known specialist on bioethics studies in Brazil and has written extensively on the risks of studies in the bioscience, especially genetics (citing the example of the Human Genome Project), and the improper uses of revamped racist theories, like eugenics and Malthusianism. Oliveira has warned Brazilian society, especially the feminist and Black movements, about the threats of the development of eugenists practices with human beings that have the potential to affect non-white populations. She calls for a feminist and anti-racist perspective on Bioethics, especially because this field is globally controlled by white male scientists who have been acknowledged by government and policymakers, and have ample access to funds and other resources to develop their projects. The integration of reproductive health rights issue into the anti-racist agenda and the acknowledgement of the influence of racial/ethnic differences on this issue constitute a key contribution of Black feminism. In this sense, I want to explore in the subsequent section the conceptualization of Black women's sexual and reproductive health (Carneiro 2003).

[107] Bioethics is a field of study concerned with the ethics and philosophical implications of certain biological and medical procedures, technologies, and treatments, as organ transplants, genetic engineering, and care of the terminally ill (Random House Webster's Dictionary).

VI. 2.2. Redefining Black Women's Health and Sexual and Reproductive Health in Relation to Race, Gender, Class and Sexuality

> In 2001, I worked as an Instructor for the Program Capacity Building for Community Women Leaders (comprised mostly of black women and other women of color) created by Criola, and supported by the State University of Rio de Janeiro, and the governor of the State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I was responsible for teaching these women about black women's and the black population's health: rights, law, services available, access to justice, prejudice, etc. Although the majority of the women did not know about the legal terms and information regarding these topics, they were very aware of the conditions of discrimination and inequality produced in the healthcare system, primarily because those circumstances constituted their lived experiences. Thus, in every class session, my lectures were "interrupted" in the middle by several women who brought up their memories and experiences regarding themselves, their sisters, mothers, neighbors, friends, etc, who had faced discrimination, physical, verbal and emotional abuses, and other kinds of violence in health services by health professionals. Thus, I modified part of the meeting in order to allow the women to share and relive their experiences. The issue that most captured my attention was the mistreatment and violence against pregnant Black women. A large number of them reported that during their pregnancies, they were often treated by health professionals and society as "dirty, polluted" and "promiscuous" women, as if their condition was something shameful and immoral, and at the same time, they also argued that they were perceived as inappropriate, unprepared, and irresponsible to experience motherhood. It seems that both negative representations draw strengths from each other in a way that being a mother almost automatically becomes incompatible with black women because they are considered "naturally" immoral, like prostitutes (Field notes, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 2001).

This experience in 2001 deeply impacted me and led me to reframe and reconsider the way I have thought about Black women's sexual and reproductive health. I began to look at the everyday structure of Black women's oppression in relation to health conditions that led them to face the kind of vulnerability they experienced in Brazil; and also to examine the literature in order to create a theoretical and methodological framework to examine the impact and constraints of oppression on Black women's sexual

and reproductive health in Brazil, and the struggles and activism of black women's NGOs in this regard.

Regarding Black women's health on a structural and daily basis I want to point out the process of dehumanization in which Black women's sexual and reproductive health has been treated and portrayed as abnormal, threatening to the moral order, and in need of regulation, and in many cases, of eradication through invasive medical interventions. Both state and economic discourses have legitimated these representations of Black women's reproduction and sexuality as being outside the boundaries of the normative system that predominates in Brazilian society, especially in public health; we can trace such discourses back to slavery. For instance, the data on Black women regarding high rates of maternal mortality (Chacham 2001; Oliveira 2003), sterilization (Roland 1995, Oliviera 2003), and HIV/AIDS infection (Werneck 2001), among other conditions provide evidence of hazardous health conditions as a consequence of this process of dehumanization.

Data regarding female sterilization was presented in Chapter IV and data about maternal mortality and HIV/AIDS will be provided in subsequently paragraphies, in which I present several cases and statistical data to demonstrate the reality of discrimination against Black women. This situation has been a main point in the agenda of the Black women's movement for social justice. I identified that this dehumanizing situation is produced by two related structural discourses: on the one hand, the heteronormative discourse that operates in the Brazilian state and society, and which is based on the values of white European culture, middle-class, male, heterosexist, and nuclear family patterns; and on the other hand, as consequence of the former, the discourse of Black women's "racialized and classed sexuality" which represents them as sexually deviant.

A critical body of literature that helped me to identify the mechanisms that have generated and maintained Black women's dehumanization through heteronormativity, sexuality and heterosexism. I studied analyses that address the intersections between sexuality, heterosexism, racism, classism, sexism, and patriarchy. These scholars have produced key analyses on how these concepts intersect with each other and the implications of overlapping structures of oppression (Lorde 1984, Jacqui Alexander 1997, Cathy Cohen 1997, 2004 and 2005, Patricia Collins 2004, Roderick Ferguson 2000 and 2004, and Sylvia Tamale 2005). These scholars have identified sexuality and heterosexism as key sites for Black people's oppression. Sexuality and heterosexism are not new issues for Brazilian Black feminists, but a discussion of these topics in relation to race, gender and class needs to be explored further in Black feminist studies in Brazil.

The heteronormative discourse that has operated in Brazilian society has allowed the state to regulate Black women's sexual and reproductive health and behavior, and generate socioeconomic and political disadvantages in terms of health benefits and rights, and it has produced conditions and mechanisms to maintain and reproduce racial, gender, and class inequalities. For instance such circumstances lead us to what I have identified as the second structural discourse in Brazil that dehumanizes Black women's sexual and reproductive health, that of Black women's "racialized and classed sexuality" (Laura A. Harris 1996).

By the discourse of Black women's "racialized and classed sexuality" I am referring to the fact that Black women are among those marginalized groups who have their sexuality assigned to the bottom of the racial and class hierarchy in Brazil which in terms of sexual and reproductive health issues has made them more vulnerable to and placed them at greater risk to racial and gendered discrimination. In this regard, Black women have been especially impacted by health inequalities, mostly because the

Brazilian state has used the healthcare system and its policies to regulate their bodies, sexualities, and reproduction through a set of practices that have resulted in the dehumanization of their sexual and reproductive health. In addition, the process of dehumanization of Black women's sexual and reproductive health is circumscribed by a context that combine discriminatory practices such as racism, sexism, classism and heterosexism perpetrated by the state, but we also need recognize the roles of Brazilian society and the Afro-Brazilian Black community in the production of Black women's vulnerability in health matters. These groups have generated, maintained and stimulated misogyny, domestic violence, physical, emotional and sexual abuses, and exploitation of Black women's images, body and sexuality in negative and hazardous ways. Such structural and complex systems of oppression are the root causes of unsafe health conditions that have produced dramatic outcomes in terms of morbidity and mortality among black women.[108]

In the next paragraphs I present a testimony, newspaper accounts and demographic data on health disparities among Black and white women in Brazil. I suggest that this information provides examples of the impacts of the joint discourses of heteronormativity and deviant sexuality and their implications for Black women's well-being. I will start with the presentation of specific cases of discrimination in the public healthcare system that was reported by various Brazilian newspapers. I utilized the newspaper cases because they are important primary sources that complement the women's testimonies and the demographic data.

[108] Bairros 2002, Bento 2002, Carneiro 1995, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, 2005a and 2005b, Oliveira 2003a, 2003b and 2003c, Werneck, Mendonça & White 2000, Werneck 2001a, 2001b, 2003a, 2003b, 2004 and 2005 and Xavier 2003 & 2004, among others

Case 1

FOLHA COTIDIANO

PÁGINA C 1 ★ SÃO PAULO, DOMINGO, 26 DE MAIO DE 2002

MATERNIDADE *Pesquisa Fiocruz/Prefeitura do Rio revela que hospitais são mais cuidadosos com o pré-natal da gestante branca*

Até na hora do parto negra é discriminada

"Os médicos não me explicavam nada direito"

SABRINA PETRY

FRASE

Primeiro achamos que estávamos comparando pessoas de classes sociais e de níveis de escolaridade diferentes. Mas, quando percebemos que a diferença se mantinha, ficamos chocados

Illustration 2: Headline states, "Even during labor, black women are discriminated against". Folha de S. Paulo, 5/26/2002.

Case 2: My fieldwork collaborator, Elosia, a 39 year-old Black woman, had horrible experiences when she went to the public hospitals to give birth to her children.

> (...) I went through many difficult times in public hospitals when I was pregnant, and I fear that this will happen again with my future daughter in law who is pregnant. Sixteen years ago I had a hard time giving birth to my daughter Clara, I started to feel bad at 10 o'clock in the morning and I left my home at 6 o'clock in the afternoon to go to the Luiz Palmier hospital (Hospital Luiz Palmier), but as I arrived there I did not get assistance because there was no bed available to me, and so this hospital sent me to the São Silvestre hospital (Hospital São Silvestre) but they did not accept me because it was a private hospital and I could not stay there since I had no money to pay it; then they put me in an ambulance and sent me to the Antonio Pedro hospital (Hospital Antonio Pedro), but this hospital also had no vacancy, then it sent me to the São Francisco hospital (Hospital São Francisco), but this hospital also had problem it had no sterilized clothes, so they sent me back to the Antonio Pedro hospital, in this hospital, they put two more other women in the ambulance I was and sent us back to the São Francisco hospital; when we arrived there the hospital got sterilized clothes, but it had no

more anesthesiologist because his turn finished so he left the hospital; even so the other women and I – who spent almost one entire night back and forth to one place from one hospital to another, in pain to try to give birth and bring our children to the world – had to stay in this hospital. The director of the hospital, and its employers made some calls, and found a crazy individual that would be the anesthesiologist; so when the doctor examined me and said that my child was already dying, she was losing the heart beats and I needed to delivery immediately, and so it was when Clara was born.

My daughter stayed too long inside my belly without no oxygen and this affected her brain, she passed the time of birth; she spent four days in the incubator, and then she went home with these problems ... Clara at the age of 16 now, makes neurological treatment until today, because of the lack of oxygen. At that time I was so confused and lost that I could not think about nothing, I did not think about prosecuting the hospital.

And I went through this situation twice, because my other daughter died, if she was alive she would have 15 years today. This, my other daughter pass away here, at the Hospital das Neves, because the hospital did not have the resources to keep her alive; she was born and had a cardiac arrest and respiratory collapse, so she just lived for 25 hours; the hospital employees came to me and said that all they could do was: first my baby would need a Intensive Care Center, but the Hospital das Neves did not had one, and until now, 15 years later, it still has none; a child that is born there with those problems like my daughter is going to die (…) Then, the doctors told me that there was not Intensive Care Center in the hospital and that my daughter needed be transferred in a Intensive Care mobile (a kind of ambulance) to another hospital that could provide the Intensive Care Center, but she need pay for the Intensive Care transportation, that 30 years ago cost me NCz$ 70.000, because the SUS – Sistema Único de Saúde (Unified Health System), the state, and the hospital did not have the resources (neither the money or the apparatus), and so only the private hospital would have the resources my baby needed. I did not have the money to do the transfer of my child to other hospital, so as a result she lived for 25 hours and died; this time I did not had the problem of not having vacancy in the hospital and could stay there, but the problem was the hospital did not have the appropriate equipment to take care my daughter.

The doctor had already told me what she needed to save my child, but I could not do anything ... I had no money and I went through a cesarean section… because of the doctor's attitude I felt that the entire situation was my fault, it was like she was saying to me: I had no money and so what I went to do there? Why I went there to deliver baby? I felt so small, like a tiny ant, like I was nothing ... the human being in those times are nothing! But I think that those people in the hospital did not act like human beings because nobody moved to try to help me in that hospital, to get any help ... And I know that my daughter and my daughter-in-

law can be in the same danger I was and go though similar experiences when their time to have children comes (Personal Interview, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, February 2007).

Case 3: Student Joana Gomes de Almeida, 17 years old

Wednesday, January 31, 2007, 12:42 am to 01:38am updated

Pregnant woman dies during childbirth after passing through 4 hospitals.
The student Joana Gomes de Almeida, 17, died in the early hours of Monday, at 4:30 a.m., in the hospital of Andaraí, in the capital Fluminense, after passing through three other hospitals of the public healthcare system, in a journey that lasted 12 hours. Nine months pregnant, Joana suffered a cardio arrest and respiratory breakdown during an emergency cesarean section and died along with the baby. Her brother, Ednaldo Nascimento, 19 years old, affirmed that the family intends to protest at the Department of Justice because it was negligence.

Joana started to feel sick on the morning of Sunday, at 5h, when she was taken by her grandmother, a retired woman named Jandira Gomes de Almeida, 84 years old, to the hospital of Xerém (Hospital de Xerém) in the District of Duque de Caxias, in the Baixada Fluminense. As there were no anesthesiologists in the healthcare unit, Joana was transferred in an ambulance to the Municipal Duque de Caxias hospital (Hospital Municipal de Duque de Caxias). According to the family, Joana did not like the conditions of the service [that she observed when she was in this hospital] and asked to be moved to another unit. "The hospital was so full that there were people sitting up on the floor. It was Joana herself that did not want to be there," said her cousin Flavio Gomes de Almeida, 24 years.

Since Joana refused to be in that hospital, a man volunteered to take her in his car to the Pro-Matre hospital (Pró-Matre)l, in the center of Rio de Janeiro. According to the family, one of the female doctors from this unit said that Joana could not stay there because she was not ready yet to give birth. With money borrowed from other patients of the institution, Joana finally arrived in the Andaraí hospital (Hospital do Andaraí), around the 5pm (17h).

Seven hours of waiting
[In this new Andaraí hospital (Hospital do Andaraí)] The student waited for seven hours, until she could be moved to the delivery room. Because she was very weak, she was not able to make a normal delivery and had to undergo an emergency cesarean surgery. The doctors soon found out that the baby - a boy of 3.4 kg, which would be named Pedro - was already dead. The mother also could not resist her weak conditions and died hours later. "It was difficult to see my granddaughter agonizing and not be able to do anything for her. Even bleeding,

she was waiting abandoned in a corner of the hospital for hours without any care," said Jandira.

According to Ednaldo, Joana's death, who was buried yesterday in the Tanque do Anil Cemetery (Cemitério do Tanque) in Caxias, has not yet been explained. The cause of death is listed on the death certificate as "undetermined". "After all the family went through they had the right to have a final and official opinion in this regards," protested Ednaldo.

Secretary of Caxias: "She was warned"
Health Secretary of the District of Caxias: "She was warned"
The Health and Civil Defence Secretary Sérgio Côrtes, promised that Joana's death will not be just another statistic in the public healthcare system: "We will establish a administrative investigation to determine liability."

The Health Secretary of Duque de Caxias published a note saying that Joana was assisted in the hospital of Xerém (Hospital de Xerém) without any signal that would indicate that she was in labor. In the Municipal hospital, it was the family that did not want the young woman to stay there. Even though she was advised to return in case she felt pain again.

"We warned her about the risks. She could stay because we had beds available," said the Health Secretary, Oscar Berro.

At the Andaraí hospital, the technical coordinator Dázio Simões said that Joana was isolated from the other pregnant women because she was coughing too much: "Later on, she was having difficulty breathing, and her placenta broke. The doctors suspected that she had pulmonary embolism." (Quarta, 31 de janeiro de 2007, 00h42 Atualizada às 01h38, source: Journal O Dia Online [Wednesday, January 31, 2007, 12:42 am to 01:38am updated Newspaper O Dia Online])

Case 5: The headline news *"Grávida é vítima de racismo em hospital"* was published inApril 4, 2005 by the Newspaper Hoje em Dia, BH.

April 16, 2005
"Grávida é vítima de racismo em hospital" (A pregnant woman is victim of racism in hospital" (reporter: Augusto Franco)

Indignation. This was the reason that led housewife Sueli Rocha Rodrigues, 23, nine months pregnant, to call the police after hearing the racist comments of a general doctor named Jose Soares Ribeiro, 54 years old, while she was waiting to get assistance in the Hospital-Maternity Vespasiano, Metropolitan Region in the

city of Belo Horizonte on a Thursday afternoon. The doctor, who refused to give an interview to the HOJE EM DIA [Newspaper], spent the night in jail (…) and was released the next day at 7 pm, after paying R$ 2,400 ($ 1,200.00) for bail.

According to the delegate Benvindo Antônio Ferreira, [the doctor] was charged with the crime of attempting to commit injury based on racism, in accordance to the third paragraph of Article 140 of the Penal Code. He [the doctor] will respond to the crime. The complaint was made after the doctor made repulsive comments about poor and Black people. Sueli accounts that she went to the hospital, after have some contractions. While she was waiting to get assistance she heard the doctor say for two receptionists at the, that he "hated blacks [pretos]," that [Blacks] "were a miserable race," and that "black (sic) and poor should die." According to the student [Sueli], the [doctor's] statements had been made after the comments of the visit of President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to Africa. Moreover, according to her [Sueli], two other men were waiting to get assistance. One of them, Black, left, after making a brief comment stating his indignation [about the doctor's comments]. "Because I could not go due to my condition, I decided to call the police. I felt angry. The other guy left very angry. But in what kind of world I will put my son if I (or we) do not begin to combat this kind of attitude now? I had suffered prejudice before, but now, perhaps because of my condition, I could not swallow it [accept it anymore]," said Sueli.

The housewife also affirmed that she was never assisted by this doctor, and that she has always been treated very well in the Vespasian Hospital, where she went to have her cesarean surgery this afternoon. "The doctor was not speaking directly to me, but what he was saying and the ironical way he spoke, made me furious," she revealed. According to Sueli, attitudes such as the doctor's concern her. "I heard this doctor say that he hates Blacks [negros]. Can you imagine if I feel sick and have to depend on a person like that? He can even kill me by neglecting me, by disdain, I don't know. I feel peaceful because I made the denunciation," she declared.

In an interview to Radio Station Itatiaia, the doctor ensured that he did not made prejudiced comments, that he had an adoptive Black child of 9 years old himself, and also Black friends, and that he did not have any kind of prejudice. The receptionists at the hospital confirmed the version of the student in a testimonial (April 16, 2005 by the Newspaper Hoje em Dia, BH, Belo Horizonte).

All these cases constitute examples of how assumptions produced by the heteronormative and Black women's "racialized and classed sexuality" discourses in Brazil materialize in the way that Black women have been treated in healthcare units and services as a whole in Brazil. I want to highlight the impact of these discourses on Black

women's childbearing as we can observe in the five cases I presented above (see Roberts 1997 for similar situation in U.S.). Analyzing the U.S. context, Patricia Hill Collins (2000) argues that "black mothers were accused of failing to discipline their children, of emasculating their sons, of defeminizing their daughters, and of retarding their children's academic achievement" (174). These negative assumptions situate Black women as responsible for the deterioration of the family, the sacred symbol of state stability and reproduction.

The analyses of Black feminist scholars Roberts (1997) and Collins (2000) from U.S. and Oliveira (2003) in Brazil, reveal that both the U.S and Brazilian states and societies have historically linked Black family reproduction to ideas of the nation's socioeconomic underdevelopment and the production of subraces. Such a similar reality points to broader systems of economic power that have victimized Afro-descendent women worldwide. As these authors demonstrate in their studies, in order to avoid such threats, these states have produced disciplining apparatuses such as literature, policies and projects that target Blacks and poor people. Black women have been at the center of these repressive state mechanisms because of their reproductive practices. They have been portrayed as bad mothers, sexually and reproductively "out of control" and as responsible for spreading sexual diseases. This is a crucial issue that needs to be explored because pregnant black women embody simultaneously the images of being sexually immoral and terrible mothers. These misguided and prejudiced notions have made black women more vulnerable to diseases, other health problems, and violence in the healthcare system; as an illustration, we can cite the high cases of maternal mortality and female sterilization among Black women.[109] Drawing from the United States context, Dorothy Roberts (1997) demonstrated the importance of paying attention to

[109] Barsted 1999, Roland 1995 and 1999, Oliveira 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2003d, 2003e, and 2000f; Werneck 2000, 2001a, 2001c, 2003d, 2003e, 2004

reproduction policies since it influence people's perception that the Black population is responsible for producing racial inequality (5). In Brazil, the reality of the Black family[110] and sexual and reproductive practices are intricately connected to political economy and social development; unfortunately, there is a general lack of studies in Brazil produced on these complex connections.

Roderick Ferguson (2004) demonstrates in his analysis that U.S. state regulations have resulted in African Americans being deprived of their rights and have "allowed" the state to create a sort of "consent" that legitimates itself to regulate black people's lives. In this sense, drawing upon Ferguson's analysis, we can observe how the Brazilian state has crafted strategies, social policies and programs to dispossess poor and black families (mostly headed by women) of their sexual and reproductive rights in order to receive financial assistance to provide for their well-being and survival.[111] In 2004, the Minister of Women's Policies, Emília Fernandes, declared that the government should require that all families that wanted to receive financial support from the *Bolsa Família* Program (a Family Financial Support Program) enroll in the ministry's Family Planning Program. The discourse that justifies these policies is that the state needs to control the growth of poor families (the majority of whom are black) due to its impact on Brazil's economy and development. Sylvia Tamale (2005) argues that,

> the need to control and regulate women's sexuality and reproductive capacity is crucial in capitalist societies, because such control consolidates male domination through men's control of resources and their relatively greater economic power. The patriarchal family engenders these economic relations, in which men, as household heads, exercise control over the lives of women and children who effectively become the man's property (2).

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[110] Barsted 1999, Berquó 1988, Frazier 1942, Graf 1988, Jackson 1993, Lazo 1988, Pacheco 1988, Parreira 1988, Pereira 1998, Phoenix 1997, Queiroga 1988, Queiroz 1988, Samara 1988, Silva 1998, Slenes and Faria 1998.

[111] See also Dorothy Roberts 1997a, 1997b, 2000, and 2002 for similar discussion in U.S. context

This discussion leads us to examine the relevance of the political-economic circumstances toward the discrimination and dehumanization of Black women in the area of sexual and reproductive health in Brazil, and what social and cultural elements have been employed to structure those circumstances.

VI.2.2.a. Indicators: Racial Inequalities and Black Women's Health

Currently, we can find a larger amount of data and literature demonstrating the health situation of the Black population, in particular Black women's sexual and reproductive health. As an illustration of this, I want to highlight these women's enormous vulnerability to the HIV/AIDS epidemic,[112] to female sterilization,[113] and to maternal mortality,[114],as well as their exposure to violence and marginalization in the healthcare system.[115] These three health situations are also examples of Brazilian state

112 Silva 1998, Hammonds 1986, 1995 and 2004, Werneck 2001, Gilber and Wright 2003, Arilha 2002, Ávila1999, Barbosa 1999, Barbosa 1996, Barbosa and Villela 1996, Bastos and Szwarcwald 1999, Bastos 2001, Baylies and Bujra 2000, Boletim Epidemiológico 2004, Boletim Toques 1996, 2002 and [unknown date], Brito, Pizão and Souto 2003, Campbell 2003, CEBRAP 2000, Cohen 1997, Collins 2004, Farmer 2005, Galvão 2000, Geronimus 2003, Goldstein 1996, Guimarães 2001, Guimarães 1996, Heilborn and Gouveia 1999, Henriqueser 2004, Journal Folha de São Paulo 2002a, Knauth 1999, Obbo 1993, O'Leary and Cheney 1993, Parker 1994 and 1997, Parker and Galvão 1996, Parker and Jr, Kenneth R. de C. 1999, Patton 1999, Pimenta and Souto 2003, Singer, Merrill; Flores, Cándida, et all 1990, Rede Feminista de Saúde 2003, Santos 1996, Santos 1996a and 1996b, Skrivankova 2005, Villela 1997, 1999, Villela and Brito 1999, White 1997).

113 Berquó 1999a and 1999b, Molina 1999, Oliveira 1999, Perpétuo (unknown date), and Roland 1999 [1995]

114 Oliveira 1999, Perpétuo (unknown date), and Roland 1999 [1995], Barbosa 2001, Boletim Toques Criola 2003a and 2003b, Boletim Toques Criola 2003, Boletim Toques (unknown date), Bryant 1999, Costa 1999, Ferreira 2006, Galli and Ventura 2002, Martins 2001, Journal do Brasil 2001, Journal Folha de São Paulo 2002b, Leal, Gama and Cunha 2005, Morell and Silva (unknown date), Silva, D'Orsi et all 1999, Valladares 1999, Rea 1988, Ross 1993 and 1994, Rede Feminista de Saúde 2002,

115 See Barbee 1986 and 1993, Davis 1989, Greene 1990, Mullings 1997, and White 1994a and 1994b

policies that regulate black women's bodies[116]. Moreover, these three major health crises (among many others) pinpoint the "camouflaged" and "silenced" process of the extermination of black population in Brazil; to use João Vargas' (2005) words, it is a situation of genocide of the Afro-descendent population which he understands as " [to kill] and cause bodily or mental harm" to them, and create a means of preventing them from procreating (268).[117] As I have attempted to demonstrate the dramatic situations presented by these and other health major problems have created the need for Black women's demands for specific policies and programs to assist them. In the following paragraphs I will present data concerning Black women's health, particular sexual and reproductive health. In Brazil, many Black scholars inside and outside Black women's organizations have produced data to demonstrate the impact of racial inequalities on Black women's health. Above all, it is important to understand that the disparities regarding education, income, family conditions, and employment that Black population often faces in Brazil also extend to their health condition as a whole. Fernanda Lopes (2004) argued that Blacks and whites occupy distinct locations in social structures and they also present difference in the ways that they experience birth, life, illness and death. Research has shown that the Black population has less access to health services that the white population. According to Programa Estratégico de Ações Afirmativas: População Negra e AIDS 2006 (Afirmative Actions Strategical Program 2006):

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116 Bento 2002, Burrell 1995, Cade 1970, Carby, 1992, Carneiro 2001a, 2001c and 2002b, Davis 1981, Oliveira 2003a, 2003b and 2003c, Roberts 1997a, 1997b, 2000 and 2002, Xavier 2003 and 2004

117 According to Vargas (2005) "the multidimensional perspective on genocide is expressed in deadly physical violence, institutionalized discrimination by and in the police, courts, and legislatures; physical terror, economic and political marginalization, and militarization. These various facets highlight that, at the core of the Black genocidal process in the U.S, resides a set of dominant values and representations that dehumanizes Blacks, excludes them from the realm of the good society, and justify their continued disrespect and death (p. 260-270)."

> Regarding access to public health services, the Atlas Racial Brasileiro 2004 (Brazilian Racial Atlas) indicated that in 1998, about 70 percent of the Black population got medical care in the two weeks preceding the survey, while among whites this proportion was 83.7 percent. The same occurred with the number of medical appointments per year - the Black population had an average of 1.83 appointments and the white 2.29. Moreover, the inequalities increase when, in addition to belonging to the Black population, the client is female (7).

In order to illustrate Black women's inequality in the area of sexual and reproductive health I will focus on the data of maternal mortality and the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

According to Werneck (2003, Vol. 2) the maternal mortality situation has extrapolated the simple framework of "unexpected complications, that occur in the minority of the cases (…)," thus this kind of death needs to be questioned within a context of "vulnerabilities produced by sexism, racism, and poverty that interconnect to each other" (12). Werneck and Dacach (2004) indicated that:

> In 2000, the mortality rate of black women from 10 to 49 years old because of pregnancy complications, childbirth and the period from pregnancy to birth, was 2.9 times higher than that of white women (Batista et al, 2004). In the state of Paraná, Martins (2001) showed that the relative risk of maternal death is 7.4 times higher for Black women.[118]

> Black women are less likely to undergo complete gynecological appointments, prenatal care, and gynecological examinations in post-partum (Perpétuo, 2000, Chamcham, 2000). A Fiocruz Research (2004) showed that in the District of Rio de Janeiro, the rate of women that were assisted in public hospitals in 1999-2001 and did not receive anesthesia during regular childbirth, were 5.1 percent for white women and 11.1 percent of Black women. While 30 percent of white women were not informed and oriented about the signs of labor, among black women this percentage was 37.5 percent (Leal et al., 2004).[119]

Werneck (2003, Vol. 2) also indicated from data collected in 2001 that,

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118 Source: Data originally taken from Folheto Saúde da População Negra. A população negra, sua vulnerabilidade e o compromisso de todos os brasileiros, Ministério da Saúde, 2004.

119 Source: Data originally taken from Folheto Saúde da População Negra. A população negra, sua vulnerabilidade e o compromisso de todos os brasileiros, Ministério da Saúde, 2004.

> Estimates were that each year 515 thousand women would die [worldwide] as a result of complications during pregnancy, abortion, childbirth or puerperium; and among this total 99 percent of the deaths occurred in Third World countries. Countries mostly populated by Blacks, indigenous and their descendants, who live in unequal relations both at international and internally levels, which produce deep vulnerability for women (12).

Data of the Relatório do Comitê Estadual de Prevenção e Controle da Morte Materna e Perinatal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro[120] (2007), revealed that:

> In the state of Rio de Janeiro between 1997 and 2005, about 70 to 80 percent of maternal mortality occurs because of obstetric complications related to the pregnancy status, which reflects the quality of the healthcare provided to the pre-natal, birth and puerperium, as most of these deaths could be avoided (13).
>
> The three leading causes of maternal mortality persist: high blood pressure, bleeding, and abortion, all considered avoidable causes (14).
>
> Among 191 maternal deaths that occurred between 1997 and 2005 were examined by the State Committee for Prevention and Control of Maternal and Perinatal Death of Rio de Janeiro 121; from that analysis the Committee disclosed that 79 percent of the deaths were classified as preventable, 4 percent were classified as inevitable and 17 percent of the deaths were inconclusive due to lack of information. The low quality of medical records, a lack of local and regional research to precisely reveal the death's causes, and the lack of services to investigate the deaths are all related to this high percentage of the inconclusive cases (22).

In general maternal mortalities are preventable deaths, but especially in the case of Black women that comprise the majority of victims, it has become a naturalized outcome. Moreover, there is also a discourse that charges these women as responsible for their own deaths, because "they were poor, uneducated, and irresponsible." Nevertheless, if these women's deaths are preventable, the data and circumstances presented above reveal that Black female life has no value to Brazilian society or the state. Thus, the

[120] Report of the State Committee on Prevention and Control of Maternal and Perinatal Death of the State of Rio de Janeiro.
[121] Comitê Estadual de Prevenção e Controle da Morte Materna e Perinatal do Rio de Janeiro

failure of state policies to secure the existence of these women can be taken as an intentional action against them and their communities, which constitutes a form of genocide (see Vargas 2004).

Another major issue that affects Black women's sexual and reproductive health is maternal mortality caused by abortion. In many cases, Black teenagers and young women have been greatly affected by the moralizing and criminalizing discourses regarding abortion practices and as a result they experience a higher incidence of mortality or serious side effects. According to the *Relatório do Comitê Estadual de Prevenção e Controle da Morte Materna e Perinatal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro*[122] (2007),

> [Regarding] maternal death by abortion the data showed the lack of women's access to family planning. [This demonstrated] the need to expand and qualify family planning services and, when necessary, ensure access for all women to qualified services for the treatment of abortion complications (15).

When sexual and reproductive health is analyzed in relation to racial/ethnic data, the situation of Black women concerning maternal mortality becomes more complex. In particular I want to highlight the absence of racial equality in terms of the access of quality healthcare services; as the data below will show there are enormous disadvantages in the healthcare system for dark-skinned Black women (19). This finding deserves additional study to identify racial and educational factors that promote this discrepancy. For instance, data from the *Comitê Estadual de Prevenção e Controle da Morte Materna e Perinatal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro*[123] (2007), demonstrates that:

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[122] Report of the State Committee on Prevention and Control of Maternal and Perinatal Death of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

[123] Report of the State Committee on Prevention and Control of Maternal and Perinatal Death of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

> When we break down the data by racial/color124 classification there was a discrepancy between the deaths occurred in Black women in relation to other women. It was observed that there was a reduction in the last 9 years of about 50 percent of the deaths concerning the racial/color preta[125] (dark-skinned Blacks). In the other racial/color classifications there were no major changes, but the distance between the racial/color preta and the other racial/color classifications remained quite high in 2005 suggesting differences in the quality of the healthcare system for the Black women that are dark-skinned (preta) in relation to the other groups of women, including light-skinned Black women(15).
>
> Although maternal mortality affects women from all social and economic backgrounds, the overmortality ratio of Black women is more than 7 times that of white women. Concerning the years of studies the overmortality of women with 1 to 3 years of study in relation to women with more than 12 years of schooling is about 4 times superior (17). When we analyze the maternal overmortality by race/color controlled by the variable schooling, it was observed that the overmortality of a woman of race/color preta is greater than of white women in all levels of schooling. It calls attention to the fact that among women with 12 or more years of study Black women's overmortality is 14 times that of white women (18).

As can be observed the issue of maternal mortality represents a serious challenge to Black women's sexual and reproductive health. A final topic I want to explore sickle cell anemia. Some of the data from the publication "Mulheres Negras: um retrato da discriminação racial no Brasil. Dados e Informações. Brasília, 2001"[126] (Black Women: a picture of racial discrimination in Brazil: Data and Information) shows that this disease profoundly affects the Black population and is connected to the precarious conditions of

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124 In Brazil system the correct term of identification 'raça/cor'.

125 In this section I utilize Brazilian racial classification. The racial classification in Brazil is very complex; basically in nowadays Black scholars and other have employed to ways to classify Black population in Brazil. The classification of the IBGE – Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics) that classify Black population dividede in: *preto (a)* (that means dark skinned Blacks)*, pardo(a)* (that means light skinned Blacks). And the classification of the Black Movement that combine the categories *preto* and *pardo* to identify the Black population as *Negra* (that means Blacks).

126 Articulação de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras, 2001. Estes dados foram originalmente publicados pelas seguintes fontes: OMS; Marco Antônio Zago, "Problemas de Saúde das Populações Negras no Brasil – O papel da anemia falciforme e de outras doenças de natureza genética", 1996; dados citados por Fátima Oliveira, "Recorte Racial/ Étnico e a Saúde das Mulheres Negras", Jornal da REDESAUDE nº 22.

sexual and reproductive health, since the best way to deal with the disease is to detect it immediately after the child's birth by running simple tests.

> The prevalence of people with the sickle cell anemia trait within the Black population is about 6 percent to 12 percent, while in the general population this prevalence is 2 percent. The results of screening made in the pre-natal showed that 30 per 1000 pregnant women are carriers of the sickle cell anemia trait (26).
>
> Generally high blood pressure is more frequent, more severe and appears earlier in individuals of the Black population (and within them this problem is more serious in men). According the Practical Guide to Diagnosis and Treatment - Compendium CIBA - GEIGY, quoted by the author Fatima Oliveira, 'in the age range between 19 and 76 years, the rates of high blood pressure is 9 percent - 16 percent for whites and 22 percent - 30 percent for Blacks (Source: Fátima Oliveira, Jornal da REDESAUDE nº 22, Novembro 2000) (29).
>
> According to the Sistema de Informações sobre Mortalidade/DataSus (System of Information on mortality / DataSus), hypertension, which affects more Black women and is responsible for one third (1/3) of maternal deaths (Source: Ignez Helena Oliva Perpétuo, Jornal da REDESAÚE nº 22, Novembro 2000) (29).

As we can observe the enormous number of women's deaths, particularly Black women from maternal mortality could be avoided if the public health institutions, especially the ones that develop family planning programs, educational, and preventive programs for pregnant women would focus more on the socioeconomic, cultural and racial conditions of the women instead of focusing on constraining their sexual behavior and freedom. The focus should not be exclusively on the distribution of contraceptive methods, but should also provide qualitative information and options that would allow the women to plan their own sexual and reproductive lives. Another important aspect would be the decriminalization of abortion, offering to all women a safe treatment to perform the abortion if they so desire.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic represents another major challenge to Black women's sexual and reproductive health. According to Jurema Werneck and Solange Dacach

(2002) among the factors "that will influence, if not determine, the growing impact of the epidemic" in the Black population and among Black women are (21):

> Power asymmetries, determined by the presence of racism and sexism; asymmetries related to the age of the individuals and inadequate educational mechanisms for the prevention of infection among Black women from different age groups; and the presence of racism in the health institutions, worsening the quality of the healthcare provided (21).

According to Werneck and Dacach (2002) the progress of the epidemic among Black women requires that healthcare administrators and professionals review health procedures, how the providing services are organized, and research successful preventive measures that have been used in order to modify them to meet the needs of this group (21).

Data from the AIDS Epidemiological Bulletin of the Ministry of Health in May 2002, revealed that:

> The transmission of HIV in heterosexual relationships accounted for 80 percent of cases of the disease in women and 40 percent of cases in men. The statistics remained stable when the transmissions between bisexuals was analyzed;
>
> In the group of women in established heterosexual relationships, the contamination was increasing, especially in small cities and among low income women. [The data demonstrated that] the difficulty [was] that these women ignore[d] the possibility of their husband being unfaithful or drug users. In addition, there [were] cases where the couple [was] recently with partner and ignore[d] the previous sexual life of the husband.

A 2004 survey conducted by the Programa Estratégico de Ações Afirmativas: População Negra e AIDS (2006)[127] to investigate the "knowledge, attitudes and practices" of the population from 15 to 54 years old in relation to HIV and other STDs, indicated the

[127] Strategic Program on Affirmative Action: Black Population and AIDS, 2006.

existence of disadvantages for Blacks in relation to whites. Some of these disadvantages were:

> With regard to the knowledge of the forms of transmission of HIV, while 8 percent of the black population was not able to cite forms of HIV transmission this proportion among whites was 40 percent lower. The same occurred in relation to the forms of HIV prevention, where the proportion of the black population [was] 30 percent lower than the comparable among whites. Moreover, for the indicator of accurate knowledge about HIV/AIDS epidemic, the result obtained by the Black population was 63.5 percent - nearly 13 percent lower than that obtained by whites (73 percent). The differences became serious when the comparison were made among those individuals with lower education - this indicator varied between 65.3 percent and 56.2 percent for whites and Blacks with incomplete elementary school, respectively (8).
>
> In terms of sexual behavior, the black population [started] their sex life earlier. 27.4 percent initiated sexual activity with less than 15 years (among whites this percentage drops to 21.5 percent), and reaches 30 percent of the black population with incomplete primary education (8).
>
> It is interesting to observe that, in relation to the use of condoms, no major differences were observed between the black and white populations, and moreover, the use of condoms is higher among the black population, and remains the highest when comparing those with higher and lower schooling (8).

Another important aspect that has contributed to the growth of the HIV/AIDS epidemic is the issue of gender in intersection with violence

> The report of the Health Ministry concerning HIV/AIDS epidemic (2004) show [ed] that problems such as prejudice and social differences [were] making the number of registered cases of AIDS among young women from 13 to 19 years old increased more than among the young men. (…) As attest[ed] by the data collected in research conducted by the Perseu Abramo Foundation (2002), one in every 5 Brazilian (19 percent) spontaneously declared to have suffered some kind of gender violence, evoking physical violence (33 percent); threat with weapons (24 percent) ; attacks (22 percent), and marital rape (13 percent) (Dossier - of Gender Violence Against Girls, 2005: 17).

The final data I want to present is an exploratory study, Violence Against Women and Feminization of the impact of HIV/AIDS (2004). This study was organized by the

Black women's organization Maria Mulher in the city of Porto Alegre. The study analyzed the documentary records of women from the community that were assisted by the organization during the period of 1999 to 2002, and showed that from the 370 women linked to the organization, there were 57 HIV positive cases representing 15.24 percent of the total (8). The study indicated that among these 57 HIV positive women, 82 percent self declared as preta, parda, mulata, negra or morena, which show[ed] that this [was]a population constituted by African-descendant women, the poll also revealed that these women [were] located among the most low income groups(8). The age of these 57 HIV positive women ranged between 17 and 42 years old, which is divided in: "5 percent under 20 years old, 63 percent between 20 and 29 years old, 29 percent between 30 and 39 years old and 3 percent for 40 to 42 years old(8). The authors draw our attention to the fact that 92 percent of the women investigated were located in the initial period of adulthood (8)." Regarding this women's education, it was found that 30 percent were illiterate, 68 percent had incomplete elementary education and only 2 percent had entered high school, but did not complete it (9). The authors emphasized that "because of the low education, the women reported doing low-paying activities as a source of income; among the activities they declared are: 59 percent were employed as domestic workers, 28 percent reported not having any type of activity outside of their home, 5 percent performed cleaning tasks in households and private business places, 2 percent were kitchen assistant in restaurants, 2 percent worked as office girls, 2 percent were employed in general services, and 4 percent referred to perform street tasks such as distribute commercial papers and taking care of cars" (9). According to the authors of this study "the human development of these women was jeopardized, since they could not overcome barriers such as financial independence. The authors also affirmed that,

although many of them were heads of their households, they went through serious economic difficulties, and often were barely able to provide for their families (9)."

One last socio-demographic issue presented by the research referred to the marital status of women; only 4 percent of them [were] legally married while 96 percent lived with their partners. The researchers found that the women of the community began to live in conjugal unions when they were very young and some of them had more than one partner "in a short space of time;" in addition these women had an average of "four children and in most cases, from different fathers (9)."

As we can observe the data on health, and particular sexual and reproductive is crucial to revealing the socioeconomic, racial, and gender disadvantages Black women face in Brazil. The data on the cases of discrimination that women have experienced demonstrate an irrefutable reality that need to be considered in the formulation of public health policies and programs destined to assist women, particularly women of color, as well as other groups of women that are excluded from the public system because they are not in conformity with the heteronormative system that regulates Brazilian society.

.2.2.b. Conceptualizing Black Women's Health and Sexual and Reproductive Health

From the literature and data on the previous sections I began to think about how to conceptualize sexual and reproductive health in relation to Black women and race, gender, class, and sexuality. I found the work of Black feminist Dorothy Roberts, particularly her 1997 book *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*[128] very useful for my own research. One of Roberts' key inquiries in this book

[128] Roberts, Dorothy. 1997a. Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty. New York: Pantheon.

is "*How can we possibly talk about reproductive health policy without addressing race, as well as gender*? (4)", which I expanded to include class and sexuality, served as my main lens and framework to advance toward the second part of the project and explore the general concepts of sexual and reproductive health and rights and analysis. In this regard I found the following general definitions created in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo:

> Reproductive rights and reproductive health.
>
> Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes. It implies that people have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. Implicit in this is the right of men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility, which are not against the law, and the right of access to health-care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth. Reproductive health care also includes sexual health, the purpose of which is the enhancement of life and personal relations[129].
>
> Reproductive rights embrace certain human rights that are already recognized in national laws, international human rights documents and other relevant UN consensus documents. These rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. They also include the right of all to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence. Full attention should be given to promoting mutually respectful and equitable gender relations and particularly to meeting the educational and service needs of adolescents to enable them to deal in a positive and responsible way with their sexuality[130].

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129 Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, Chapter VII, Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health, www.unfpa.org/icpd/summary.htm# chapter7; see also Villela, unknown date; and Corrêa et al, 2003).

130 Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, Chapter VII, Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health, www.unfpa.org/icpd/summary.htm# chapter7; see also Villela, unknown date; and Corrêa et al, 2003).

Cornea et al (2003) affirmed that sexual rights are part of the human rights and embrace the right to experience sexuality with pleasure (11). The authors pointed out that according to the Platform for Action of the 1995 United Nations IV World Conference on Women in Beijing, China (11),

> The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. Equal relationships between women and men in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the integrity of the person, require mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behaviour and its consequences.[131]

As we can observe above none of these conceptualization articulated and acknowledged the specific influence of racial/ethnic differences on sexual and reproductive health or rights; thus serious circumstances that deeply impact women's lives and health such as discrimination and violence were addressed in general, and no differentiation in consider that racial discrimination and racial violence (as well as sexual orientation's discrimination, classism and the violence generated by both) operate in and through a specific frames, and so need to be examined and confronted with specific tools. It is from this reality, which has failed to protect women, particularly women of color, low-income women, and women that do not conform to the heteronormative discourse, such as lesbians, single mothers and sex workers that I want to recognize the contributions that Black feminists in Brazil and in the African Diaspora have made through their activism and scholarship.

131 Platform for Action of the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China. Site: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/health.htm .

In spite of the socio-economic, political, cultural, and geographic differences, African-descendent feminists around the diaspora have pointed out as a common aspect of their political and theoretical analyses the multiple dimensions of Black women's experiences with oppression and resistance. Race, gender, class, and sexuality appear as the major systems of oppression that shape their lived experiences.[132] In this sense, intersectionality emerges as a crucial analytical instrument to map black women's multiple experience of oppression. It has the potential to make visible the simultaneous nature of black women's oppression.[133] Therefore, I join my Black feminist colleagues – Brazilians and women of the African Diaspora – to argue that in order to change Black women's situation of vulnerability, violence and injustice in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights we must adopt an intersectional approach not just in theory but also in political practice.

As I have demonstrated in Chapter IV and in this chapter, in Black feminists in Brazil have struggled to show how the inclusion of the singular needs of Black women

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[132] (see Agnew 1996; Alexander and Mohanty 2001; Anzaldúa and Keating 2002; Barbosa 2001; Batista 2002; Boletim Toques 2001a and 2001b; Boletim Toques Criola 2003 and 2004; Bolles 1996; Brah 1996, Brewer 1993; Brixton Black Women's Group 1984, Caraway 1991, Carby 1983, Cole 2003; Collier-Thomas and Franklin 2001; Collins 1996, 1998; Collins 2000; Christian 1985 and 2000; Combahee River Collective 1983; Crenshaw 1995, 2000 and 2002; Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, and Thomas 1995; Criola 1998; Cruz 2005; Curiel 2003a and 2003b; Danticat 2003; Davis 1981a, 1990, 1998 and 2001; Décimo Encontro Feminista Latino-Americano e do Caribe 2005; DuCille 1994; George 2001; Gilkes 1988, hooks 1981, 1984a and 1984b, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2003, 2004a and 2004b; hooks, Brah, Sandoval, Anzaldúa, et al 2004; Hull, Scott and Smith 1982; Iraci 2003, 2005a and 2005b; Grigolin 2005; Gurgel 2005; Guy-Sheftall 1993, 1995, 1998 and 2003, James 1997, 1999 and 2000; Joaquim 2001, King 1988; Leon 2003; Lima 2005; Lopes 2004; Lorde 1990; Mackinnon 1989; McClaurin 2001; Mikell 1997; Mindry 2001; Mirza 1997a, 1997b, 1997c; Mohanty 2003; Moraga and Anzaldua 2002; Nnaemeka 1998, 2003 and 2005; Ogundipe-Leslie 1993; Okeke 1997; Oliveira 1999, 2001a, 2001b and 2003; Oliveira 2001; Oyewùmí 2003; Parmar 1990 and 1997; Payne 1989; Perpétuo unknown date; Ransby 1998 and 2003; Reddock 1998; Rufino 2002; Sandoval 2001; Sant'anna 1998; Sarti 2004; Shakur 1987; Slocum 2001; Smith 1983; Sudbury 1998; Wallace 1975; Taylor 1998 and 2001; Terborg-Penn 1996a and 1996b; Truth 1995; Xavier 2003 and 2004; Walker 1983; Werneck 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2004 and 2005; Werneck, Mendonça and White 2000; Wing 1997 and 2000; Yelvington 2001, among others).

[133] hooks 1981, Combahee River Collective 1983, Walker 1983, Audre Lord 1984, Brewer 1993, Smith 1998, Sudbury 1998, Collins 1999 and 2000, George 2001, Werneck 2001, Crenshaw 1995; 2000 and 2002, among others

and the Black population in the public healthcare system can become a reality. Concepts such as the Black population's health and Black women's health have emerged in the context of these needs. During the 1990s, the struggles for the establishment of these concepts gained visibility and became more organized. According to Fátima Oliveira (2003d) "Black population health is a politically and scientifically recognized field of study and research" (195).[134] Oliveira also pointed out that this idea is still under construction and present political and ideological constraints in terms of being employed by key institutions responsible for professional health and public health agencies and services (see also Marta Oliveira 2001).

The concept of Black women's health was established from the same needs, and focuses exclusive attention on the conditions of Black women, but it is not conceptualized in the same way as the black population's health (Werneck 2001c, Cruz [unknown date]). I expect to draw from the concepts of Black population's and black women's health the conceptualization of black women's sexual and reproductive health**.**

Although black women's sexual and reproductive health is discussed and developed within black women's social movement in Brazil, the same reality is not true regarding the academy and health institutions. According to Wilza Villela (n.d.), sexual and reproductive health are "socially and culturally constructed terms…they carry a history that characterizes the social, cultural, economic and political context of a given period in the society and the struggles of many women" (1).[135]

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134 See also Boletim Eletrônico (PCRI) 2005a, 2005b, 2005c, and 2005d, Gostin 2000, Institute of Medicine of The National Academies 2003, LaVeist 2003, Projeto Ató Ire: Religiões Afro-Brasileiras e Saúde 2004, Berquó 2001, Bertucci 1997, Bórgus 1998, Marques 1994, Mayberry, Mili and Ofili 2003, Morgan 1989a and 1989b, Mota 2003, Mwaria 2001, Ordover, Carrara 1996, Carvalho (unknown date), Ribeiro 1992, Romero 2002, Shapiro 2005, Ordover 2003, Vega and Amaro 1994, Williams, Lavizzo-Mourey et all 1994, Williams and Jackson 2000

135 See also Ató Ire-Religiões Afro-Brasileiras e Saúde (unkown date), Badiani, Gomes et all 1988, Berquó 1997, Corrêa 1999, Correa and Petchesky (unknown date), Costa and Amado 1995, Costa 1999, Carneiro 2001a Davis 1993, Kapsalis 2002, Rocha 1988, D'Oliveira and Schraiber 1999, Red

Villela (n.d.) argues that Black women's sexual and reproductive health in Brazil has a socially and culturally constructed history. Black women's sexual and reproductive health has been an object of state control since slavery. Such policies became more explicit, in the 1960s when Black women were at the center of repressive State processes and mechanisms; during this time the country engaged in the mass sterilization of poor women, the majority of whom were Black. Moreover, throughout the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s the Brazilian government has, and continues to, invest in family planning programs and policies to regulate these women's sexual and reproductive freedom. [136]

Hence, taking into consideration the conceptual and political analyses discussed in this Chapter, I want to conclude by emphasizing that Black women's sexual and reproductive health constitutes sites of theoretical and political knowledge production. These interconnected fields emerged from the confluence of different areas of study such as the reproductive health field and race relations (Roland n.d.). What I tried to propose in this section is to reframe in an intersectional approach, considering race, gender, class and sexuality, what so far has been utilized as concepts and references to think and produce practices and public policies in terms of sexual and reproductive health.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I explored the activism of Black women's NGOs on Black women's health, particularly sexual and reproductive health. At first I demonstrated the

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Latinoamericana y Caribeña por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos de las y los Jovenes – REDLAC 2005, Roland 2001 and 2006, Rushing 1993, Rutherford 1992, Shaw 2001, Silver 1999, Kizumba 1999 and 2001, Koifman and Koifman 1999, Souza (unknown date) and 2001, Souza (unkown date), Terry 1999, Campbell (Barr) 2003b, Fiscella, Franks et all 2003, Gilliam 2001, Gomes 2001, Gomez and Smith 1994, Hammonds 1997.

136 Barsted 1999, Roland 1995 and 1999, Oliveira 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, 2003a, 2003b, 2003c, 2003d, 2003e, and 2000f; Werneck 2000, 2001a, 2001c, 2003d, 2003e, 2004.

influence of these NGOs' activism in the field of public health. Second, I analyzed the specificity of Black women's sexual and reproductive health in relation to the intersectionality of race, gender, class and sexuality, and also examined how this interconnectedness has impacted Black women's sexual and reproductive health and life chances. As demonstrated in this chapter, Black women's sexual and reproductive health and rights have been profoundly violated; in this sense both civil society's and governmental agencies' racist, sexist, classist and heterosexist discourses and practices in Brazil have contributed to generate these circumstances of vulnerability and injustice. Brazilian Black women have been the main primary target of controlling policies and programs. The literature presented in this chapter demonstrated that the effects of racial inequality and racist practices have contributed to the formation of a social environment that promotes processes of exclusion, illness and even mortality. Many scholars (Barbosa 1998, Cunha 2001, and Werneck 2001) have pointed to the fact that the Black population is on the front line of this complex reality. When we look at the indicators of health, quality of life, and access to health services in connection with racial/ethnic data it is clear that there are serious inequalities and structural exclusion of Black Brazilians in the public health care system that has necessitated a Black feminist response to these ongoing forms of marginalization and genocide.

Chapter VII: Effectiveness, Agency and Collective Organizing among Black Women's NGOs in Brazil

INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses two of the main research questions proposed by this study: First, what has been the effectiveness of the political work of Black Women's Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the areas of sexual and reproductive health in Brazil, particularly with respect to reducing the effects of racial, gender, and class discrimination? Second, what are the contributions that these NGO's have made to the formation of Black women's agency and collective organizing in their communities? As indicated in the methodology section of this dissertation, my analysis of these two research questions has been developed through anthropological and historical research. Using this research I have tried to examine the efficacy of the political work of Brazilian Black women's NGOs' in the area of Black women's sexual and reproductive health. My strategy has been to assess the efficacy of their work by evaluating their projects, programs, experiences and grassroot practices. More specifically, using Arretche's model, I have sought to: (a) understand, identify, process and assess the political work of these NGOs; (b) narrate what I observed in the field; (c) provide an overview and diagnostic of the work of the NGOs; and (d) present the perspective of Brazilian Black women on the proposed issues (Arretche 2006: 34). [137] Within this structure, the

[137] Arretche. (2006). Avaliação de Políticas Públicas: uma questão em debate.

"evaluation of efficacy" has consisted of "the assessment of the relation between objectives and explicit instruments" of the NGO's and/or their projects in the area of Black women's sexual and reproductive health and "[their] effective results" (Arretche 2006: 34). This evaluation of efficacy also sought to involve "the assessment of the relation between the employed effort in the implementation" of the NGO's political actions regarding Black women's sexual and reproductive health and "the achieved results" (Arretche, 2006: 34).

It has not been as easy to assess the effectiveness of the NGOs as I thought it would be. As I argued in the methodology section, the problems I faced while trying to investigate the efficacy of these organizations has been attributable to two factors. On one hand, I did not have much time to complete this research (ten months). This limited my ability to examine the organizations sufficiently enough to evaluate the efficacy of their political work. On the other hand, I had difficulty finding specific information on the NGOs assessments of their own work and projects regarding the communities they have worked with that could help me formulate my evaluation of their work. I realized in the course of the fieldwork that in order to create a more accurate methodology, capable of assessing the specific daily impacts of the work of these organizations' (projects, activities, etc), I needed to spend more time with the organizations discussing and observing the process by which they devise strategies. During my ten months of fieldwork, I was able to interview the staff members and collect first-from the NGOs during my participant observation. I was able to access information about the projects they were developing in communities, but I did not have time to record the first set of

data, analyze it, and then return to the field to re-frame my questions, refining them to meet previously unforeseen challenges. In other words, the better way to conduct evaluate these cases and see more accurate results would have been to stop for a period, analyze all the information I gathered in the first trip to the field, then organizing it to critically discuss the preliminary results with the organizations. With this preliminary information I could have prepared a more elaborate evaluation, being able to return to the field to investigate new or re-framed questions, observe previously unnoticed circumstances and address other relevant issues.

During my fieldwork, I participated in Criola's discussions about the methods the organization uses to assess its projects and activities (it has been a long concern within the organization). However, the short time I spent in the field did not allow me the time necessarily to adequately address these matters. Since my return from the field, Criola has improved its methods for assessing Criola's projects and activities. The organization brought two specialists in to focus on these issues (better organizing reports, methods and instruments to organize and monitor projects, programs and activities, etc.). In ACMUN the reports continued to be the traditional method of project evaluation. As I indicated previously, because of the limited time I spent with Felipa de Sousa and Maria Mulher, I realized that I could not evaluate the efficacy of their work on Black women's sexual and reproductive health in relation to the they were developing with women and the community. Thus, my evaluation was constructed on the basis of a broad, macro structure concerning the political work of Black women's NGOs in Brazil. In Chapter III – Four Black Women's Sisterhoods and VI – Black Women's NGOs in Brazil, I respectively examined the investments of Black women's organizations in projects that

directly accessed Black women in local communities, and how the organizations formulated strategies, struggles and engaged the State and Brazilian society on subjects such as health, violence, and human rights in general in order to improve Black women's life conditions.

VII.1. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE POLITICAL WORK OF BLACK WOMEN'S NON-GOVERNMENTAL (NGOS) IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH FIELD IN BRAZIL

In the beginning of this study I intended to analyze the rise of Black women's organizations in Brazil from the 1990s to the present in order to examine their impact on the health arena (policies, services and practices) in Brazil, particularly with respect to Black women's health. However, in the course of the research I felt the need to do historical research on Brazilian Black women's organizations in order to understand the contemporary context of their struggles, so I also included information regarding the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. In this sense, I was able to trace the emergence of these organizations. In the course of my research I observed that the great impact and success of Black women's NGOs that has taken place from the 1990s until the present can be recognized as the result of organized social actions by Black women like Jurema Werneck, a Black feminist activist and coordinator of CRIOLA. According to Werneck, 2003 – due to Lula's presidency[138] – inaugurated a period of change in Brazilian society. A new political paradigm was affirmed which expands notions of a democratic society

[138] It was during the government of the President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva representative of the Worker's Party that was elected on 27th October 2002 in Brazil.

and begins to include sectors of the population that had been previously excluded in the country. During this period, Werneck spoke from a strategic position as the Executive Secretary of the Network of Black Brazilian Women's NGOs. She was also an advisor in the National Council of Social and Economic Development of the executive branch of the Brazilian government whose mission was to discuss federal proposals for social and economic reforms. The above-mentioned example of Jurema Werneck's activism in 2003 revealed that this period represented a crucial moment for political growth and the consolidation of political strategies among Black women's organizations at the national level. During this period of political growth, my study revealed that Black women's organizations have struggled against forms of racial, gender, and class discrimination that affect their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Accordingly, the mobilization to combat these forms of discrimination as they impact Black women's health and the health of the Black population in general, represented vital aspects of this rise in political organizing within Brazil as a whole.

In general, the efficacy of the NGOs is associated with a series of dynamic aspects – local and global, internal and external. With respect to efficacy, as I tried to demonstrate throughout the six chapters of this study, the claims and struggles for political autonomy and citizenship rights waged by Black women's NGOs around women's sexual and reproductive health (and health in general) have played a central role in both transforming Black women's life conditions and promoting their agency and collective organizing in the country. For instance, Black women have collectively organized to develop strategies to demand better services in terms of local public services in areas such as healthcare, education, employment, justice. In these efforts they have

organized local campaigns to mobilize the community, healthcare providers, and formed groups to meet with healthcare managers and policymakers' authorities in their regions to demand better services. These are some of the examples of daily and historical confrontations Black women have had with the Brazilian State and its institutions. There has also been an increase in the number of Black women involved in national debates with policymakers and healthcare administrators on health disparities and health services. Furthermore, because of the activism of Black women's NGOs, the federal, state and district governments have been forced to endorse and implement specific policies and programs that directly benefit the Black population generally, and Black women, in particular. There has also been an increase in the number of Black women working in the government as major assistants, consultants, ministers and parliamentary representatives who are able to advance these issues pertinent to improving their lives.

Nevertheless, my study identified two other aspects of efficacy that have concerned members of Black women's NGOs in terms of political effectiveness: first, the lack of a more efficient internal management, and second, the difficulties in terms of access to financial resources. As I write this conclusion in June 2008, I have recently begun a conversation by email with a Black activist friend in Brazil concerning the current situation and future of the NGOs. In fact, this conversation began due to the fact that we were exchanging information about the NGO job market. We both have worked as activists in NGOs for more than 14 years. My friend was telling me how Brazilian NGOs are experiencing many financial and management challenges that have made it difficult to sustain them.

The issue of internal management is mainly associated with the difficulties these NGOs face in finding appropriate staff members that are able to deal with the specific internal and external dynamics associated with Black women´s NGOs. There are no professional careers or appropriate sources of study that prepare a person to work for these types of organizations; the duties within these organization are part of an ongoing and self-development process that also requires individual autonomy, a dynamic that most of the four NGO staff members I interviewed was considered overwhelming and hard to follow. One example of such complexity is associated with the execution of multiple tasks, as I observed during fieldwork. These organizations expect their staff members to handle a wide range of duties and activities, from housekeeping to providing office amenities, to being a counselor and researcher, to training and educational activities outside the office, among others. Thus, staff members are required to address and perform numerous activities at the same time. Many of my research collaborators who directly worked for Black women's NGOs criticized this aspect of the work. For them, working in such conditions affected their ability to manage and in many cases the quality of their job performance, which according to most of these women would often lead to less efficient work. Some collaborators went further in their critique and pointed out that this situation prevented the organization from properly planning its future because the staff was so overwhelmed with multiple tasks that there was nobody to dedicate their time exclusively to specific organizational duties, particularly the ones linked to acquiring the financial resources necessary to guarantee the existence of the group. In addition, some collaborators indicated that it is difficult for organizations to keep high skilled women who pass through the training process because of the financial

considerations associated with working in the non-profit sector. In such cases, the NGOs train and empower women in the community and for a period of time some of these women that demonstrate good development are invited to work with the NGO or a particular project. However, when the financial resources for that activity finish, in many cases the NGO is no longer able to keep that person as a paid staff member. These are often temporary positions and in many cases are just a strategy to encourage the women to improve their skills and employ them it in their communities. Very often these women will continue to be linked as collaborators, and are allowed to use the NGO's facilities to organize their community activities and projects. Eventually the organization might find new funds to hire that person again, but there is not necessarily a commitment in this regard. A final internal aspect pointed out by the collaborators is the lack of a methodological assessment concerning activities, programs and projects developed by the NGOs. They indicated that the organizations should have instruments to assess and monitor the impact and efficacy of the work they develop as a way to verify if they are accomplishing the proposed goals and how their projects and activities have impacted women in the communities they serve. As a result, many collaborators affirmed that the deficiency of evaluation methods can limit the NGOs ability to perform more efficient work with respect to articulated goals. They pointed out that the usual method of evaluation is the report format. Many of them suggested that the report is a valid and necessary assessment, but it should be accompanied by more accurate techniques to avoid the production of vague and inaccurate descriptions of reality.

Particularly in the 2000s, the problem of financial support turned into a huge crisis in Brazil, which is not just a problem of Black women's NGOs but a situation

experienced by the majority of NGOs – large and small – in the country. Many of these NGOs were forced to stop their activities and close their doors because there were no more funds. The main explanation for such a dramatic situation has been that supporting agencies, mostly international, are no longer investing in Brazil as they did in the past. They still provide financial support but to a very limited number of organizations. In the battle for these agencies' funds, Black NGOs were the most affected. A case in point is the Ford Foundation's decision to decrease its financial support of Black NGOs. Over the past five years, this drop in funding has left many Black NGOs without resources. None of the four NGOs I interviewed have received funding from the Ford Foundation now or in the past. Criola, in particular, has argued that it will never accept Ford's funds because of the agency's contentious past and association with investments in mechanisms and projects that negatively affect non-white populations and women throughout so-called "Third world regions", particularly with respect to health issues such as mass female sterilization and the testing of birth control methods in Black, indigenous, and poor communities, among other activities. However, many other Black women's NGOs have received financial support from the Ford Foundation.

The shortage in funding from private Foundations has increased the competition for other donors that still operate in Brazil, and also for government resources. However, in this new environment, the organizations that hold more privilege in the Brazilian hierarchy in relation to gender, race, sexual orientation, and economic and political status, are the ones that continue to receive funding sources and survive. In addition to this hierarchical structure, in these hard times the access to information is very crucial, but

such access is unequal, and is closely related to the size and scope of the influence NGOs have locally, nationally and even globally.

These crisis circumstances lead us to the issue of NGOs' autonomy and their relation to funding agencies. In what way is NGO autonomy diminished or limited when the funds disappear? Are there any alternatives when there are no funds from cooperation agencies or government? It might be possible for the NGOs to work with low or no funds, but what I have observed is that it is very difficult for them to sustain their activities for long because they are based on an structure that requires paid staff and office space (they have to afford rent, internet, electric bill, city taxes and fees, etc). In addition, their main source of funds often comes from projects supported by governmental and non-governmental agencies. Thus, financial sources have a direct impact on how efficient the organizations run. In other words, they might be willing to do their best but if there is no money to guarantee the basic structure such as staff members' transportation, salaries, payment of electric, phone and internet bills, there will be considerable limitations and risks.

Another important question to ask is to what degree these funding agencies impose certain restrictions on the NGOs that might compromise or put in danger their autonomy, and as a result their effectiveness? What I observed in the four NGOs I researched is that guarantying their own agendas and priorities in relation to the established agenda of the cooperation agencies (governmental and non-governmental) is a process of intense negotiation between what the NGOs and the population they represent want and what those agencies envision. I observed that, in the end, the NGOs often obtain what they wish for, and at the same time they satisfy at least some of the

issues the agencies would like put in practice, but it is a common sense negotiation, and not an imposition.

Finally, a last aspect I have been interested in is how the autonomy of these organizations functions in relation to an oppressive and authoritarian State, such as the Brazilian one. As I already indicated, Brazilian NGOs emerged in a period of profound repression – the military dictatorship in the 1960s – which shapes their organizational structure and forms of resistance (see Landim 1988). According to Landim (1988) such circumstances characterize the foundation of the NGOs. They "first emerged as institutionalized sites focused on the re-articulation of a 'popular civil society', and it is such a perspective that will define the role of these organizations" (49). I believe Black women's NGOs are not vulnerable to the oppression of Brazilian State. Like some other civil society groups, they have found strategies to develop a relationship to the State where they can guarantee some of their demands. As said by one of the NGO general coordinators that I interviewed, such a relation to the Brazilian State and its agencies are not a rosy picture, but rather, very difficult, complex and stressful. They are aware of the role of the State in their condition of oppression, but such reality is not a reason for the NGOs to avoid to debating and interacting with the State. Taking this into consideration, to come to the conclusion that the NGOs are subjugated to the State and have no agency or elements of resistance is problematic because NGOs relationships with the State as mediators is an important part of NGOs' organizational strategy. Landim's definition of NGOs in general, including Black women's NGOs, is very useful to understand these organizations' roles. As she states,

> They are based on an institutional project itself, different from the projects of other institutions like political parties, unions and Churches. They have achieved a tremendous autonomy, in relation to the State. They have strong roots in social movements, without being organisms that belong to these movements. The general objectives of NGOs converge with the ones of the groups and social organizations with which they act, but their [NGOs] institutional projects are separate and unmistakably distinct from these other entities. ... [There are hundreds of these organizations] throughout the country's regions and they are developing various kinds of activities, reflecting different ways of thinking their links with the processes of social transformation (1988: 49).

Landim's definition leads us to understand why NGOs need to establish a dialogue with the State as part of their strategies to push for change and stop the ongoing dynamics of inequality that have affected Blacks and women in the country.

VII.2. BLACK WOMEN NGOS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FORMATION OF BLACK WOMEN'S AGENCY AND COLLECTIVE ORGANIZING

The second question of my study is what are the contributions that these NGOs have made to the formation of Black women's agency and collective organizing in their communities? With respect to contributions, as I tried to demonstrate in this study, the foremothers of what we call today Black women's NGOs goes back at least to the 1950s. In the 1950s and 1960s Black women were struggling for Black citizenship rights. In order to advance their own agenda in the 1970s and 1980s, they started to emancipate themselves from both the Black movement and the mainstream feminist movement and established their own movement and agenda; and thus continued their rise all the way through the 1990s. Since their beginning, these organizations focused on guarantying the

Black population's and women's citizenship rights and better socio-economic opportunities. They have fought against the processes of discrimination and disparities among other essential issues in order to assure the survival of Afro-Brazilians. For example, these groups of Black women have used racial consciousness-based strategies to demand better health resources for Black women and the Black population. These strategies have primarily focused on prenatal and postpartum care, treatment for specific diseases or health problems that greatly impact the Black population (i.e. sickle-cell anemia, high blood pressure, among others), and HIV/AIDS prevention and education since the epidemic started to spread in Brazil in the 1980s.

A second set of contributions came from the understanding and acknowledgement of Black women as a diverse group that have common and distinct needs as constituents of both the female and Black populations. Black women's NGOs have attempted to reach a common ground for understanding Black women's marginalization and discrimination, but at the same time, particularly from the 1990s, there have been efforts to encompass the diversity of perspectives that exist within this group and within Black and mainstream feminist movements. In doing this, Black women have facilitated the recognition of commonalities and distinctions in terms of how systems of oppression operate in society in relation to race, gender, class, and sexuality. In addition, I believe that this attempt to identify commonalities within a broader group of Black women (according to regional origin, sexual orientation, social and educational background, worldview, etc) has been critical for successfully building collective struggles. In local communities Black women's NGOs have helped women through their training and projects to look at ways in which different forms of discrimination such as racism,

sexism, classism, lesbophobia, homophobia, and heterosexism interact and impact people and communities in various contexts. This work has highlighted how intersecting forms of discrimination make Black women vulnerable to violence, the HIV/Aids epidemic, or how stress caused by the discrimination is associated with higher levels of maternal and infant death and high blood pressure among other situations. Using such an approach enables women to understand the more general context of their conditions of oppression, and highlights the fact that such circumstances are associated with a more broad and complex set of factors, not just local issues. For many of the women that work directly inside the NGOs, to be able to empower the Black women in the communities, having this broader perspective is a vital step towards being able to create mechanisms that protect and empower different groups of women.

A third contribution of Brazilian Black women's NGOs is related to their help in redefining and refining human rights politics and agendas, which have benefited the Afro-Brazilian communities and society as whole. Black women's NGOs concentration on human rights issues has emphasized the importance of vigilance and bringing to the public sphere cases of human rights violations that have dramatically affected Blacks, women and low income populations, such as police violence (which are State abuses) and the complete absence of the State in providing basic services to the population, such as (sanitation, drainage, piped water and related supplies, garbage collection, health clinics, and school.) In addition, Black women's NGOs have been crucial in pointing to the limitations of the human rights framework, especially its failure to deal with patriarchal, racist, sexist, and heterosexist ideologies. In so doing, they have argued that due to these

fundamental flaws, the idea of human rights has not been successful in preventing the occurrence of prejudices and intolerance.

A fourth contribution of Black women's NGOs is that their projects are set up to help women help themselves, family and community, instead of creating a paternalistic structure that would result in a dependent relationship between the NGO and the women. Thus, I observe among the four NGOs I researched, efforts to demand that the women be active participants in changing their own living conditions. These and other efforts to empower women, such as promoting the formation of Black women's cooperatives (of clothes, hand craft artifacts, food, etc.) or serve as fund intermediaries to help a small or communitarian-based groups of Black women to develop projects and make demands, reveals a common project among Black women's NGOs that is to encourage Black women's sustainable development and so contribute to their socioeconomic and political autonomy.

Finally I argue that the rise of Black women's NGOs from the 1990s through the present in Brazil is due to these organizations' focus on racial and gender solidarity, and building and strengthening local, national and international networks. This framework of solidarity involves collective action among Black women's groups that focus on identifying common problems lived by Black women and brings them to the agenda of the feminist and Black movements. As a network (AMNB) of organizations, they are able to better understand these processes and create strategies to negotiate with the government and civil society. In addition, they empower Black communities to comprehend the complexities of their conditions and to fight against oppression.

I also suggest that the growth of Black women's NGOs is the result of the formation and strengthening of a collective racial and political identity among Black women through political strategies rooted in African-Brazilian traditions and values. Black women's groups emphasize the value of the cultural legacy they have inherited from their African ancestors. For instance, they utilize African culture to understand African-Brazilian women's health conditions and transform the way that health policy and practices are implemented in Brazil. In addition, these strategies focus on two types of political actions: generating technical knowledge and empowering Black women. On the one hand, aiming to improve their own performance and goals, these organizations have produced their own research and knowledge production (particular technical knowledge) that identify the conditions of Black women and Black population as a role, focusing on key issues such as health, education, housing, employment, among others in all the regions of the country, for example, the disproportionate numbers of Black women who are infected with sexually-transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS are victimized by maternal mortality and suffer from mental health problems, among other issues. Such publications have been used to impact policymaking and the ways in which governmental health agencies think about Black women's and the general Black population's health. On the other hand, these organizations have used Afro-descendant cultures to restructure, re-organize, and empower women in African-descendant communities. More specifically with respect to health issues, Black Brazilian women's organizations have helped Black communities make public demands such as: the availability of specialized clinics and hospital care services that attend to cases which demand more advanced medical attention; the improvement of the public health programs that guarantee the inclusion of

diseases specific to the Black population; and the advancement of existing health promotion initiatives that contribute to the adoption of healthy lifestyles. These demands from the Black population promote actions to reduce and control risk factors related to disease and other health problems.

Thus, these two strategies –collective organizing based on solidarity through networks and the formation of a collective racial and political identity among Black women – have given visibility to Black women's organizations before, but especially since 1990 and have raised awareness to their health needs and their political demands as part of the social agenda of the country.

CONCLUSION

In spite of the challenges I faced during fieldwork, this study has revealed important aspects concerning the conditions of Brazilian Black women's in the regions I researched, which can serve to provide a general perspective of the conditions of Black women's living conditions throughout the country. I returned to Brazil during a very productive period in Criola's trajectory (and other Black women's NGOs) in public health advocacy with respect to civil society and government, which I explored in the Chapter VI. Black women's NGOs appeared in the forefront, as protagonists of the discussions and struggles for health equality and benefits for the Black population generally and Black women in particular throughout the country. I have also observed how Black women's organizations have confronted financial crisis that impact the

continuation of their work. According to my research collaborator Julia, the organization "learned to walk with insecurity" (of resources, support).

As I identified in Chapter I, what has been particularly striking has been the degree of vulnerability among Black women in the regions I researched, particular in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Issues such as health discrimination, racism, sexism, heterosexism and violence have profoundly shaped the lives of these women daily. This situation of vulnerability appears attached to a multifaceted reality generated by many factors. Three major factors emerged from my fieldwork findings.

The first factor is the violence produced by organized crime (drug traffickers and paramilitary groups composed by former policeman, firefighters, and others). Particularly, in the state of Rio de Janeiro, the population has suffered from fights between these two groups for the control of the communities. In addition, while they battle with each other, they also confront the state police that generate more conflicts and risks for the population. Thus, the population in general, particularly women, Black women and their families, are exposed to an astonishing degree of violence. The newspapers that I have collected show incredible scenes of Black women running with their children in the middle of shooting and small children playing close to armed policemen. The newspapers have also documented the painful moments in which Black women are visibly emotionally affected by the loss of their children, partners, other relatives, and friends. One aspect that I learned in the fieldwork was that this environment of violence does not allow these women to spend time to think about their own health, prevention and care for their lives. Their concerns are often attached to the safety of those that live around them, especially children. This aspect can affect the any

organization's ability to effectively realize its projects if the women who work for the organizations or are somehow associated with them are concerned with the dangerous contexts of their communities, such as trying to escape from the shootings and keep the their loved ones safe. Even if health might also be important, the feeling of constantly living within the context of imminent life threats will overcome the need to go to the hospital or urge the government to improve healthcare services.

A second factor refers to the unpredictable challenges in stopping the fast and dramatic growth of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) among Black women. For example, I found out during my fieldwork that the history that evangelical churches beliefs have interfered in the treatment of HIV positive women in the communities because many of these churches sustain the idea that people that follow and believe in God are protected from the HIV virus and disease. These churches have objected to the use of condoms as a form of HIV prevention and in the case of those already living with the virus or disease, many refuse to take necessary medicines (HIV cocktail) because they believe God will protect and cure them. Consequently, they feel that outside help is not necessary. A female doctor who organized a HIV positive group of women to improve their lives also tells an interesting story. She found out that among the women she was assisting, there were some of them prayed instead of taking their medicine. The doctor said that these women would receive a group of evangelical women from a church everyday in their homes. The group would pray that Jesus would cure the ill women from the disease or virus. When the group finished praying, they would tell the HIV positive women that if they really believed in God they would just throw away the pills, pray and have faith. As a result, many women

were had taken that path. These practices can also be indicated as a factor that can have a negative effect on the objectives of Black women's NGOs concerning prevention and consciousness raising with respect to health conditions. In addition, the evangelical churches' interference could be related to the exposure of many women to domestic and sexual violence, and sexism. When I visited a center that confronted sexual and domestic violence among women in the district of São João de Meriti, the coordinator of the center argued that very often many women affiliated with the evangelical churches in the region came to the center asking for help due to a kind of gender, sexual or domestic violence. The women told stories of being mistreated and terrorized by their husbands and/or family members in their homes. They were afraid to report the incidents because they were afraid of the men's reaction, but they were also reluctant to report these abuses because their attachment with the church. As a result, they did not want to be accused of being traitors against their husbands in front of the church and put in an uncomfortable position since many of the male churchgoers are abusive. According to the coordinator, the center often receives threats from the men of the church complaining that the organization should not interfere in their relationship with their wives and family. In addition, the coordinator affirmed that the same abusive relationships that expose women to the risks of HIV/Aids and other STDs is also associated with involuntary abortion due to physical violence and a variety of sexual traumas and abuses. The coordinator said that the Catholic Church also played a great role in some of these issues. These situations are examples on how patriarchy continues to play a major role on Black women's daily lives. In this sense, this has represented a challenge for Black women organizations to empower and support women in communities.

A third and last factor that I addressed in the Chapter III, and one that seems to constitute a situation that increases Black women's vulnerability to racism is the fact that many of them do not consider themselves Black because they have light skin (they can be classified as brown, *morena*, *mulata*, etc). This way of thinking makes these women vulnerable because they often (or rarely) think about themselves as victimized by racism and racial inequalities. For those that recognize the presence of racism, they claim they do not feel affected by it and that such a matter is not important because the country is a racial democracy. According to some of my research collaborators the fact that many Black women do not see themselves as Black can many times become an obstacle to the success of the organizations' activities or project goals, since these women question what such activities have to do with them since they do not identify as Black or associate themselves with Black people . For them, racism is not a factor because Brazil is a "racial paradise."

These challenges have urged Black women's organizations to formulate more creative projects and strategies to reach women in the community, such as identifying and recruiting women who are victims of sexual and domestic violence in order to integrate them into team projects. They also make efforts to engage with and invite women from distinct religious affiliation to be part of their projects and employ music and performance as part of the techniques to raise consciousness among women, and other strategies. Paradoxically, on one hand my study has demonstrated that the life conditions of Black women still have room for much improvement because they continue to undergo unbearable situations of exclusion and violence. On the other hand, we cannot disregard some of the contributions that have been made by Black women's organizations in the

country, and yes there have been changes even if small. The problem is that racism, sexism, heterosexism and classism are powerful systems of domination, and indeed challenge Black women's efforts to organize and struggle, Although it is hard for us to perceive the changes, they exist and we must believe that they are achievable.

Final Conclusion

For those of us who were imprinted with fear like a faint line in the center of our foreheads
learning to be afraid with our mother's milk
for by this weapon
this illusion of some safety to be found
the heavy-footed hoped to silence us
For all of us this instant and this triumph
We were never meant to survive.
And when the sun rises we are afraid
it might not remain
when the sun sets we are afraid
it might not rise in the morning
when our stomachs are full we are afraid
of indigestion
when our stomachs are empty we are afraid
we may never eat again
when we are loved we are afraid
love will vanish
when we are alone we are afraid
love will never return
and when we speak we are afraid
our words will not be heard nor welcomed
but when we are silent we are still afraid
So it is better to speak remembering we were never meant to survive.
(Audre Lorde, The Black Unicorn)

Scholarly books produced by Afro-Brazilian women are still rare in Brazil, mainly because of discrimination that has resulted in the devaluation of their scholarship in the academic world and because of a general lack of mentoring and financial support in the academy. As a result, research on Afro-Brazilians, particularly women, that challenge established notions of racial and gender relations in the academy and in the society are still disregarded as sources for knowledge production. There is an emergent need to debunk the myth that Black women cannot make valuable and scholarly contributions to the Brazilian academy.

Much of the great scholarship on African descendent population dealing with the construction of the Black presence and the history of Black movement in the American continent have focused on the experiences of Black males, which is often a consequence of the absence of a gender analysis. This absence of a gendered perspective has had theoretical and political implications for the study of racial politics and forms of resistance within Social Sciences in general, and particular in African Diaspora studies. Particularly, one important result of this lack of a gender approach has been that Black woman's experiences, social practices, knowledges, forms of resistance, and politics have been minimized or neglected in the construction and reconstruction of African descendants' histories and traditions. Another effect can be observed on the unwillingness to recognize how patriarchy subordinates and alienates both men and women, making them victims as well as producers of gender oppression. Research in the field of African Diaspora must address how Black history, culture, and politics have been developed and shaped by Black women. The male-centered approach shows us that male scholars often speak of Black people as a homogeneous group when in fact gender,

class, racial, and sexuality distinctions exist. I want to conclude this dissertation reflecting briefly upon some of the reasons for these challenges, particularly in African Diaspora studies.

In general the symbols of Black resistance and Black radical tradition, such as revolutions, rebellions, war, slavery abolition, strategies, maroon communities, and freedom, are presented as a male domain. Such approaches have failed to identify how Black women and men participated in these strategies and how the gender roles and constructions were configured during historical periods. As a case in point, an in-depth analysis on the specificities of gender roles would highlight that while for enslaved men racial prejudice was the main concern, for enslaved women such obstacles were related to both racial and gender discriminations. In this sense, it is important to remember that in the colonial period power was not only expressed through racial control, but also through harsh gender regulation and control that suppressed, even though in certain distinct forms, white and Black women. From this perspective, it seems that the absence of a gender analysis in descriptions of the colonial period underestimates the patriarchal ideology as a powerful instrument that has been ruling men and women role in many societies for centuries in the American continent. This deficiency in these historical accounts is particularly prejudicial for women because it masks the production of inequalities, violence, exclusion and marginalization that a patriarchal system produces.

The major African Diaspora theoretical framework that has examined Black resistance is male-centric. Ignoring the interrelation of race and gender in African descendants' everyday strategies of survival and struggle against regimes of subordination, the studies on African Diaspora will only provide a partial picture of

African descendants' responses to forms of subordination and power. In addition, most of the scholarships that focus on race, racial relations, racial politics, as well as other research on Black cultures and traditions, have often concentrated on the experiences of Black men, thus even if not intentionally, equating Black identities and forms of resistance with masculinity (Robinson 1983, Hanchard 1994, Wade 1997, Andrews 2004, among others). Moreover, the current socio-economic and political conditions have indicated the continuously increasing process of exclusion and marginalization of African descendent women at all levels of societies in the Americas. In this regards, Black feminist scholars have highlighted African descendant women's anti-racist, sexist and heterosexist responses throughout their political work (hooks 1981; Combahee, River Collective 1983; James 1996, 1999; Collins 2000; Smith 1998; McClaurin 2001; Bolles 2001, Werneck 2001, Ochy 2003, among others). A crucial intellectual and political project for many Black feminist scholars has been to build on and address how African descendent women have articulated racial politics and how they have resisted oppression in the society. Black feminist work in this area has been inclined to consider the construct of race as it relates to gender in shaping Black women's experiences.

bell hooks' book (1981), *Ain't I a Woman: black women and feminism*, illustrates how African-American women's scholarship and activism have been neglected within the Black movement. She wrote the following:

> Although Black women and men had struggled equally for liberation during slavery and much of the Reconstruction era, black male political leaders upheld patriarchal values. Gradually the radical revolutionary spirit that had characterized the intellectual and political contribution of black women in the 19th century was quelled. In the twentieth century black women had learned to accept sexism as natural, a given, a fact of life. When the civil rights movement began

> in the 50s, black women and men again joined together to struggle for racial equality, yet black female activists did not receive the public acclaim awarded black male leaders. Sexist role patterning was as much the norm in Black communities as in any other American community. Black activists were not rejecting the value system of that culture. Consequently, they did not question the rightness of patriarchy. In the 60s movement toward black liberation, black women were told that they should take care of household needs and breed warriors for the revolution (4-5).

Similar struggles against sexism occurred in Brazil during similar historical periods. According to Lemos (1997), two crucial aspects marked the relationship between black men and women participating in political movements. On the one hand, Black women identified around a gendered anti-sexist perspective which recognized the peculiar role attributed to black women in Brazilian society. On the other hand, Black women's political actions were constrained in strict accordance with this overt patriarchal system. This situation led to criticisms within the black movements. Many Black women criticized Black men and accused them of chauvinism. At first, Black women attempted to organize their own agenda within the larger Black movement. This coming out of women's movement within the Black movement generated strong reactions from Black males. This situation led to a struggle for space and power between women and men within the Black Movement. The central allegation pointed by Black men against Black women's attempt at organizing around their own issues was that they were creating a distinct group. A vital concern for Black women was the problems of sexual assault among Black activists. In addition, through sexism and other forms of gender repression, patriarchal ideology has contributed to the devaluation of Black womanhood (hooks,

1981). bell hooks reveals that the black movement's goal of liberating people in the U.S. was transformed into a project to set up "Black male patriarchy (5)".

In conclusion, a process of "gendering race"[139] on African Diaspora studies and scholarship is urgent and necessary. It is interesting to observe that, while many Black scholars struggled with mainstream Western thinkers, such as Marx and Foucault due to their lack of consideration for the history of Africans and African descendents, those scholars omitted in their analyses the history of gender oppression and the power that patriarchy has exerted in their societies. Furthermore, those scholars have neglected to explain how patriarchal ideologies have been structured in ways that operate as a barrier to the struggle for freedom among Africans and African descendents. Thus, not considering gender in relation to race identifying how a society operates or how an individual's identity and life experiences are shaped[140] is a misstep that jeopardizes the efforts for radical social change.

Scholarship in African Diaspora must acknowledge that gender construct (sustained, produced, and re-produced by patriarchy) generated distinct demands and responses from Black men and women within the movement for resistance and liberation, as well as generated distinctive processes of discrimination, enslavement, violence, identity formation, and racial consciousness. The gender absence in those studies suggests that there is still much work to be done in order to unpack the sources and forces that have silenced and naturalized gender oppression in the entire world. Finally, this

[139] Wright, Weekes and McGlaughlin, 1999
[140] Mascia-Lees and Black, 2000: 10

dissertation contributes to fill the gaps I pointed in the previous paragraphs, by offering analyses that will debunk the myth that Black women cannot make valuable scholarly and political contributions to the Brazilian society and African Diaspora as a whole, particular in the academic circles. Additionally, this dissertation aims to contribute to women and gender studies, and specially to the establishment of the field of Afro-Brazilian Women's Studies.

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