

**GLOBAL FEMINISMS
COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES OF
WOMEN'S ACTIVISM AND SCHOLARSHIP**

SITE: BRAZIL

**Transcript of Haynará Negreiros
Interviewer: Marisol Fila**

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Haynará Negreiros was born in São Paulo and holds a master's degree in Science of Religion from PUC SP (Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo), where she investigated the relationships between clothing, candomblé and affective memories of the community of the *Redandá* terreiro (*Redandá* candomblé house) from São Paulo. Haynará is a writer and researcher of diverse aesthetic languages and her main areas of study are Afro-Brazilian and African aesthetics that are manifested through dress, fashion, religiosity and family memories. She published in *Blogueiras Negras*, has a tumblr called *O axé nas roupas* (The *axé* in the clothes), where in her own words she “performs a mapping of memories, a cartography about Afro-Brazilian aesthetics”. In 2018 she worked as a curatorial assistant at Red Bull Station, a space for experimenting with arts and music in downtown São Paulo. Between November 2019 and March 2020, she was the curator of the exhibition *Indumentárias negras em foco* (Black clothing in focus), that was the result of a partnership between the Moreira Salles Institute and the *Feira Preta* Institute. She currently teaches seminars at the MASP-São Paulo Art Museum School and at the Adelina Institute and writes the column "Negras Maneiras" (Black Manners) at *ELLE* Brazil.

Marisol Fila is a PhD Candidate in Spanish and Portuguese in Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Michigan. Her research explores articulations between black/diasporic and national identities in twenty-first-century digital and print press from São Paulo, Buenos Aires, and Lisbon. Marisol is also interested in Critical Pedagogy and Digital Humanities and in the ways in which technology and digital media can serve as a tool to share her research and work to a wider audience, but also to develop digital projects in partnership with Afro-descendant organizations across Portuguese and Spanish speaking countries.

Marisol Fila: Good afternoon, we are here with Haynará Negreiros. She was born in São Paulo, has a master's degree in Religious Sciences from PUC,¹ São Paulo. She is a wide-ranging researcher and is currently an assistant curator at Red Bull Station, an art and music experimentation space here in downtown São Paulo.² Thank you so much.

Haynará Negreiros: Sure.

MF: So I would like to start the interview by asking a little bit about your life experience, and your story, and how it made a connection or impacted your work.

HN: It's funny to think about this ... I've been revisiting this question of my family's history and memories, right? And to think that, well, I am a black woman, born Brazilian in São Paulo, I joke that I am from São Paulo with my feet in Maranhão because my paternal family is all from Maranhão and everyone lives there, so I am half from Maranhão and half from São Paulo.³ I am 26, and at some point in life I began to wonder, at school -- I studied fashion in college, and there, I couldn't find a connection to anything about black ancestry in Brazil. And I started to wonder about that. I realized something was wrong. And in fashion college at one point I started identifying myself as black. I always knew I was black, I have dark skin, very dark hair, very kinky, so, with black parents, I never doubted my blackness, but identifying as black is a process, right? So if you start to question a lot of things -- and in college it was that moment of questioning -- I started to get really upset about the college I attended. I didn't see any references. In art history we didn't study anything about Africa or Egypt, or if Egypt did come up, it was a something detached from the African continent, right?

MF: Sure, Egypt is part of ...

HN: Yes. And then I said, you know, there's something wrong here and I wanted to quit college, and my mom, who I think is one of the people most responsible for my education, said, like, "No Haynará, you will not quit college, which is super expensive, right? You graduate and then you will do what you want." So I graduated in 2013 and said good, now I want to understand this relationship between fashion, which is something that I have been interested in since I was very young, and race relations in Brazil. How can I explain all this? And I started thinking and thinking.

In the meantime, I met my current partner, who is a practitioner of Candomblé.⁴ And then he said, oh let's go to a *terreiro*.⁵ I had never been to a Candomblé *terreiro*. I was very curious and when I went in, when I arrived there, there was a celebration for Logunedé and

¹ Translator's note: Pontifícia Universidade Católica (Pontifical Catholic University) of São Paulo.

² São Paulo is the capital city of São Paulo state in Brazil, and is the 4th largest city in the world. It also has the largest GDP of the cities in the Southern Hemisphere and Latin America. ("São Paulo." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/São_Paulo. Accessed September 26, 2020.)

³ Maranhão is a state in northeast Brazil. ("Maranhão." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maranh%C3%A3o>. Accessed September 24, 2020.)

⁴ Translator's note: Candomblé is an African-Brazilian religion that originated in nineteenth-century Bahia, Brazil.

⁵ Translator's note: *terreiro* (literally ground or yard) is the sacred ground, usually a pátio, yard, or space in a house, where Candomblé ceremonies take place.

Nvunji, deities of the Bantu pantheon who are related to abundance, youth, the woods ... they are two distinct deities who celebrate together.⁶ It was September of 2012, I will never forget it. When I joined this celebration I realized instantly that the *terreiro* functioned as a space for reconnection with various forms of black African ancestry. So I have this in my head. The image of the women caught my attention. The majority are black women like me, [and they were] fully embellished and adorned with those clothes and jewelry, and I began to identify the signs imbued within the garments and I said, wow. This is what I want to study. How do I do it? And then I started scratching my head, thinking, thinking, thinking.

I learned about the religious science program at PUC, knocked on the door, saw that there was a professor, who is now my advisor,⁷ who guided me through the entire master's program. He was the only professor in the religion department, the only religion scholar, who studied Afro-religiosities. We have just...we have only one professor. I went to talk to him and I said -- it was all very simple -- I had no idea of a project or anything. I said, "Professor, I want to study Candomblé clothing. How do I do that?" "Come study here." And then we started to think about it, we had a conversation to try to create a proposal. This was in 2015, the first semester of 2015. I spent the second semester of 2015 doing this proposal with him. I submitted the proposal and passed, in first place. And then I got a scholarship because PUC is private and it's super expensive. Graduate school in Brazil is very expensive. Because I was ranked in first place I won a scholarship, the only available full scholarship. So I did the master's degree without paying anything. I did have other difficulties. I worked in a bar, right? I did a lot of other things. So I did various things, thinking about other possibilities for myself. Because when I left the fashion college, I tried several times to get work in the field of fashion, applying through several processes, and failed. And it was very strange because, I thought, what is going on? ... And it was obviously the deep-seated racism that didn't allow me into that system. And I was even happy, because I managed to escape and create another perspective, let's say. Then I discovered that research is very important to me. The issue of knowledge production, academic knowledge, of writing, it is very important to me.

So now we arrive at, we can go back a little in my story to 2013, which is when I started writing for *Blogueiras Negras* [Black Bloggers]. I discovered *Blogueiras Negras*, which is this amazing portal made and managed by black women from all over Brazil. A portal whose purpose is to talk about various topics, which has as its main focus the figure of the black woman as agent of her own ideas. And after finding this portal, I met Charo Nunes, who was one of the first women to get things moving, together with Maria Rita Casagrande, Larissa Santiago, all these women.⁸ I don't even know what they are doing with the project today. I

⁶ Bantu mythology varies between ethnic groups and cultures, however, fables beliefs about a common God are often shared. ("Bantu mythology." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bantu_mythology. Accessed September 24, 2020.)

⁷ Translator's note: The professor is Enio José da Costa Brito.

⁸ Charo Nunes, Maria Rita Casagrande, and Larissa Santiago are the creators of *Blogueiras Negras*. (Nunes, Charô; Santiago, Larissa; Casagrande, Maria Rita; Rocha, Verônica; & Pires, Zaíra. "Somos Blogueiras Negras, Exigimos Respeito!" (English: "We Are Black Bloggers, We Require Respect!") Fulanas: Negras da Amazônia Brasileira. <https://redefulanas.com/somos-blogueiras-negras-exigimos-respeito/>. Accessed September 24, 2020.)

met them on Facebook.⁹ If you wanted to write, you would send an e-mail. They had an agenda and schedule. I started writing there. I can't remember the first article, but I think I wrote about the relationship of ... being a black woman with kinky hair.

MF: Oh, yes, that one! That's precisely the one I found.

HN: Exactly. I think it was my first article. That was precisely that question. So I had always been black. My mother always braided my hair. My mother is a super beautiful woman, and always cared about her appearance. And someone who always cared a lot about talking to me, talking about race issues. And always complimenting me a lot, always trying to make me grow up to be a woman, a girl, a woman who was proud to be black, to feel beautiful, right? But even so, I did this process to my hair that we call relaxing, which is not quite a straightening procedure, but it is a chemical process too, in which you have the utopia of loosening the curls, right? For those who have extremely curly hair. And even though I was braiding my hair and doing a lot of Afro hairstyles, I did this because my hair is too kinky and I didn't want that. And then in 2012 I decided not to do that to my hair anymore. Also, this movement was starting, and then I did a lot of research on images, adapting Pinterest.¹⁰

MF: Yes ... lots of hair colors.

HN: I fell in love with that because I am so moved by images. So, at that time Pinterest was where you could see a lot of images, many, multiple references. And I started researching references to black women who looked like me, and I saw a lot of bald black women. In the meantime I met a friend of mine, Taís, who was a black woman -- she is a black woman -- very dark like me, bald. And I said, look how beautiful!

MF: How beautiful, yes.

HN: I shaved my head. And again my mother participated in this process, in which she cut my hair. We didn't even have a machine, she cut my hair with scissors. And I became bald. I stayed bald for a little while and when I started letting my hair grow back on my head, kinky, I saw and was reminded of how kinky my hair was. And then I started feeling the conflict of thinking more and more about negritude, black aesthetics, blackness through the body, through hair, through our clothes, but then I realized the contradiction of not being satisfied with my hair type. Because to be bald turned out to be a way for me to camouflage my hair too.

MF: Although at first you thought no, it's like ...

HN: It is liberating.

MF: Exactly.

HN: Totally. And then my hair started to grow back, it was like, ... I need to start writing again. Writing allows... it is this place where I can find a way to somehow work out these

⁹ Facebook is a social networking website founded in 2004. ("Facebook." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facebook>. Accessed September 24, 2020.)

¹⁰ Pinterest is a social media website founded in 2009. It is primarily used for the sharing of ideas on "pinboards." ("Pinterest." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pinterest>. Accessed September 24, 2020.)

traumas, all of these issues. And then I started writing about this, and that's when I did some other articles and *Blogueiras* was this space where my texts reached more people, so I received a lot of comments from women who were going through situations like mine, or they remembered a situation, or they had a very strong affective memory relationship with my texts, which made me realize that I was not going through a situation in which it was just my own experiences, but that this could be understood as collective experiences, too, of the diaspora, right? Thinking of this diaspora, then, which is a shifting black diaspora in which these women are always there at the epicenters of revolution.

If we go back to Candomblé, Candomblé is a matriarchal religion, founded by women. Candomblé as a religious institution, as we know it today, with this clothing that we see and the *terreiros*, well, black religiosities in Brazil existed always, right? From the first time a black man arrived here, this relationship with religiosity began because it is, it is this cosmological way of dealing with these situations of oppression. I usually say it like this, in the jokes I tell lately, that when when we think about this forced diaspora that arrives here, this forced diaspora of slavery, we can think that black people arrived with three things, right? They arrived with their bodies -- black, physically and emotionally debilitated, right? The people who managed to survive the months of the passage and the slave ship [endured] all those violent conditions we already know. So they come with a body. They arrived with memory, a corporeal memory, which is a memory that runs through the body. This relationship of the black body, the African body, the Afro-Brazilian body, is very strong, right, in African culture. The body is time, right? And they arrived with faith, which manifests itself through memory, which manifests itself through the body. So it is this triad that ends up developing all these relationships that we understand as Afro-Diasporic. Not only in Brazil, but in the Caribbean, the Americas. So these women are always there.

MF: And after your work with *Blogueiras Negras*, how did you continue your work?

HN: And then, well, I wrote some other things on *Blogueiras*, always on topics related to aesthetics. An aesthetics that we understand as running through the topic of clothing. Because there are various aesthetics; you can talk about various types of aesthetics. And I started thinking basically about aesthetics in this sense, to talk about about hair, clothing. I think I finished writing in 2015 maybe. I didn't write much, I didn't write many articles. I spent those two years doing different things and it was also a cycle that ended when I started the master's program, so one thing led to another. So I think *Blogueiras Negras* was an important device [that helped me] understand that writing is really a place where I would like to be, a place where I could produce knowledge, a place where I could discuss these subjects that seemed to pertain to me alone, but in fact they did not, and that led me to the master's program. It led me to academic production, it took me ... and things started falling into place.

MF: And working here at Red Bull as an assistant curator is also different, isn't it?

HN: Yes, I never thought of working with curating or visual arts directly. But then I did this work in 2015 and 2016 with Diane, through AfroT, Afrotranscendence ...¹¹

MF: Can you tell me a little more about this?

HN: That was super cool. So eh ... it was a jump, a shot, a chance I took. I did the production, project coordination and it was done here, the sessions were here. And then after I did this work, Fernando Velásquez, who is the current curator, invited me to be his assistant.¹² And it was super cool because when I came to work here I was the only black woman in the office. Because the other black people were in these so-called subordinate positions, such as cleaning and security. And there were no black people in the office, in positions of production, curation, programming, directing. So it was complicated for me in the sense that I thought, oh, can I do this? Because that's how it is. In academic spaces, spaces of art and knowledge production, even if some black people have access, we are still very few, right? It is not just knowledge production, not just artistic production. There is also the elaboration of being a black woman. So when you understand yourself, when you see yourself in this space, where you are usually one or two, you end up questioning your ability to be there. Because you have no peers, you do not have a history of peers, of people similar to you. So I often wondered. And... sometimes you have to speak English, and my English is not fluent, so until I unfroze and came to understand that I speak well, and I could even have a conversation with someone.... I didn't study at the British school or study abroad, I didn't do an exchange. So there were these chains that I was breaking every day. Every day.

MF: And back to the issue of feminism, do you consider yourself a feminist?

HN: I keep asking myself. I try to study, I try to see what it is that women are producing about feminism today. So, we have Djamila, we have some women who are thinking about this.¹³ But it's important to remember that we are not inventing the wheel now, that we already have women out there. And then I ask myself, what does it mean to be a feminist? Would my grandmother, Maria Joana, a woman from Pedreiras,¹⁴ in Maranhão, who went to São Luís¹⁵ in the 1950s, would she not be a feminist? She had two children while working as a domestic worker in the home of a family, then she became a pedagogue.¹⁶ Then I also remember my great aunt Rosa, the sister of Maria Joana, my grandmother, who

¹¹ Diane Lima is a Brazilian activist, curator, and creative director. Lima created *AfroTranscendence*, a project that celebrates Afro-Brazilian culture, in 2014. (See more information and her interview by the Global Feminisms Project at <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/globalfeminisms/>.)

¹² Fernando Velásquez has been the curator and artistic director of the Red Bull Station in São Paulo since 2015. ("Fernando Velásquez." Urban Media Art Academy. <http://urbanmediaart.academy/lecturer/fernando-velasquez/>. Accessed September 24, 2020.)

¹³ Djamila Taís Ribeiro dos Santos is a Brazilian journalist, philosopher, and feminist and anti-racist activist. She is the author of *A Short Anti-racist Handbook* and a contributor to the publications *Carta Capital* and *Folha de S.Paulo*. ("Djamila Ribeiro." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Djamila_Ribeiro. Accessed September 14, 2020.)

¹⁴ Pedreiras is a municipality of Maranhão, Brazil. ("Pedreiras, Maranhão." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pedreiras,_Maranh%C3%A3o. Accessed September 24, 2020.)

¹⁵ São Luís is the capital of Maranhão, Brazil, and is the state's largest city. ("São Luís, Maranhão." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/S%C3%A3o_Lu%C3%ADs,_Maranh%C3%A3o. Accessed September 24, 2020.)

¹⁶ Translator's note: "pedagogue" might mean a teacher or professor.

was the first woman in the family to earn a master's degree. That was in the seventies, in Maranhão. She left the interior of Maranhão, became a historian, became a professor. So I think that these feminisms can be understood in a variety of ways, and maybe I fit in as a feminist doing micropolitics, making these microevolutions, right?

MF: Yes. Because that's what I was going to ask, what is it, how would you define this feminism?

HN: I would define this as a dynamic feminism. What happens here, giving this interview to you. I think this may be an act of feminism. Or when I'm at home with my partner, who is an amazing guy, and I question something, he listens to me and then we have this opening to talk. When I'm in line at the grocery store and I see a situation that I think is wrong involving another woman, if I speak up, intervene in that situation, I think these are small things that can be understood as this plural feminism that can be understood in many ways.

MF: And in that sense, how do you see the relationship between feminist academic or intellectual production and social movements, and a more activist position?

HN: I think there are diverse spaces. And it has a lot to do with each person's profile. There are people who will not have the patience to stay in academia. That can be a pain sometimes. There are people who don't have the emotional and physical capacity to go to the street and organize marches, so I think these profiles of diverse people work to put people in every corner, making these micro-revolutions, you know? So, having a black woman like me, who is in academia like me, struggling there, often having a hard time getting her master's degree, having a hard time accessing a xerox machine, is an act of feminism. Because, usually, the research that we have been developing in the academy, we black women, mainly in the humanities, is related to our own relationships, so it is related to our stories.

It is no wonder I decided to research the aesthetics, the garments of Candomblé, focusing my research even more closely on women. So when I studied Redandá, which is the *terreiro* where I do my research, I interviewed a lot of people, men and women, but I did ... I take an approach that is somewhat low key. I take an approach that allows me to talk about the feminine, right? I focus my research on the skirts, I focus my research on embroidery, I focus my research on the women who make the clothes in the *terreiro*. These are the women who are fostering this aesthetic of caring, this aesthetic of adorning divinity. So when you're going to make clothing for a saint, according to the conversations I had, you have to prepare for it. So they don't drink, they do not smoke near the clothes they're sewing. There is a whole – and it is mostly women who do this, right? So, there is no way not to focus on them. All our studies, our activities, are linked, directly linked, to the issue of women, black feminism, and I think we are ... I think we will not see this in all its plenitude.¹⁷ I felt this sense of urgency. I suffered a lot because of this. So I wanted to ... I fought, and ... I don't know.... And I said, I'm not going to see this. I'm doing part of the *terreiro*, and who knows, maybe my great-granddaughter will see [the whole thing]. I don't know. And I think that's exactly it, we think we leave a better *terreiro* for the next generations, right? This year marks one hundred and thirty years since the abolition of

¹⁷ Translator's note: by "in all its plenitude" might be translated as "the whole picture."

slavery, right?¹⁸ So if we think about how it lasted over four centuries, and compare this to one hundred and thirty, then I think we still have a long road ahead.

MF: And in your particular work, what is this relationship like? Because what I see from what you said, from what I've read, is that there is a very important relationship between the issues of materiality, the body, and identity, as well as ancestry, right? What do you think about this, because it is interesting that when you give interviews or reflect on these experiences, they seem very concrete. How do you translate this experience into writing?

HN: Yes, this is one of the doubts I raise right away, in the introduction to my research. How can we put into written form the orality of a community, of a *terreiro*? Because it's like this, Candomblé as a whole is a religion of oral origin, of oral transmission of knowledge that is passed from older to younger people by talking and observing. So when you want to become a son/daughter of a saint [*filho de santo*], to become a member of a Candomblé or Umbanda community, or of any of the other black religions, of which there are many, you go, you start observing.¹⁹ Nobody is going to tell you anything. I realized this during my research. I was this crazy woman there, wanting to finish a master's degree. I arrived there, wanting to interview people, wanting to record, wanting to ... and the people ... and then I realized that it wasn't like that. Then I saw a lot of things, I noticed a lot of things that aren't in my research because I kept them to myself, or because during the interviews several people said, "look, I don't want you to record this part," or "I'm telling you this, but I would like you not to include it in your writing," and then said something incredible [background noise], which could change the direction of the research. But I understood that I could not use it. And regarding the material aspect specifically, it is very interesting to think about it this way. If we consider that Candomblé is structured, it began by creating a structure based on the idea that we encounter up to today, this *terreiro* formation, with several children, with a leader. We we don't see this in Africa, right? There is no Candomblé in Africa. The formation of Candomblé as a religious institution that exists today was born in Brazil, as a consequence of the diaspora. So it's no wonder that the highest authorities in the *terreiro* are called *Pai de Santo*, *Mãe de Santo*,²⁰ because in the process of slavery, even though slaves insisted on creating families -- Robert Slenes²¹ talks about the importance of the black family, the family of captives, the enslaved family -- but Candomblé and the *terreiros* were organized into this kind of family, having actual family members, reconstituting a family that was destroyed in the process of enslavement. And so these handicrafts are learned by watching, through contact. Embroidery takes a long time to

¹⁸ On May 13, 1888 Princess Isabel of Bragança signed Imperial Law number 3,353, which abolished slavery in Brazil. (The Brazilian Report. "Slavery in Brazil." Wilson Center. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/slavery-brazil#:~:text=On%20May%2013%2C%201888%2C%20Brazilian.slavery%20in%20all%20its%20forms>. Accessed September 24, 2020.)

¹⁹ Umbanda is an Afro-Brazilian religion that combines aspects of Roman Catholicism and Spiritism with Indigenous American ideologies. ("Umbanda." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Umbanda>. Accessed September 24, 2020.)

²⁰ Translator's note: literally, Father of the Saint, Mother of the Saint.

²¹ Translator's note: Slenes is a historian known for pioneering work on enslaved families in Brazil, including *Na senzala uma flor: esperanças e recordações na formação da família escrava (Brasil Sudeste, Século XIX)*. Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 2011.

learn, you have to watch and practice. So, I spoke to Kuanza, who is an *equede*,²² who is this person, she is the woman who does not incorporate [the saint] and who, among other functions, dresses the deities. Kuanza began making clothing for the deities when she was perhaps ten years old. She learned from watching her mother. I think actually she wasn't ten, but I don't know, maybe fifteen. And she still remembers the skirt, the first skirt she made, by hand. So this materiality is vital when we think about the enslaved in a situation of extreme violence. We can distinguish those who were enslaved in the countryside from those in the city. For those enslaved in the city, the possibility of adorning themselves was much easier. The resources were much easier to find. And the city is the place where enslaved people served to display the wealth of their masters. So during religious festivals or public events, such as Sunday Mass, for example, it was very common in the nineteenth ... eighteenth, nineteenth centuries, to see the circulation of mostly enslaved women who were lavishly adorned by their masters as proof of their wealth.²³ It is very crazy to think that the black body serves as a hanger. But the adornment was important to these women, too. It mattered, it was important to them even though it was an enactment. In a society in which black people had no autonomy over their own bodies – their bodies were commodities -- what could it mean to these women? Moreover, we see the aesthetics of women's attire, attire from Bahia, which is basically the attire worn by women, which includes a hoop skirt, a clear European influence, and a *Pano da Costa* [shawl], which is an African influence, primarily from Nigeria.²⁴ There is also a turban, which is what I'm wearing on my head today, three hundred years later, which is an Afro-Islamic influence.²⁵ So, the clothing is syncretic, a syncretism in which various languages meet. And how do all these relationships take place on the black bodies that were present in the slave society? This clothing and structures still exist to this day. Why don't we dance in Candomblé, or pray in Candomblé, wearing jeans and a t-shirt? What is the real importance of clothing? Why does this continue to this day?

MF: Wow, how amazing. So, back to the issue of the feminist movement. What is the relationship you see between a black feminist movement and a more traditional white women's feminist movement?

HN: Totally different things. Because they are totally different demands, right? Because the black woman, beyond *machismo*, experiences racism.²⁶ And that's it. That's basically it. That is the structure. And it's very difficult because we see ruptures, divergence, often about feminisms, especially on the internet, right? So these places, these social networks that serve as meeting places, for conversations, are often also a place for arguments, and

²² *Equede* is the name of a role in the candomblé religion for women. Women in this role do not enter a trance during a ceremony, but instead remain awake in order to meet any needs of those in trances, largely priests. ("Ekedi." Wikipedia. <https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ekedi>. Accessed September 26, 2020.)

²³ Sunday Mass is a liturgical service practiced in Christian denominations. ("Mass (liturgy)." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_\(liturgy\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mass_(liturgy)). Accessed September 24, 2020.)

²⁴ Bahia is a state in northeastern Brazil. ("Bahia." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bahia>. Accessed September 24, 2020.)

²⁵ A turban is a cloth head garment worn in many cultures. ("Turban." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turban>. Accessed September 24, 2020.)

²⁶ Machismo refers to a sense of inflated masculinity that includes emotional invulnerability, sexual prowess, and bravado. ("Machismo." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Machismo>. Accessed September 24, 2020.)

ruptures, and violence. The internet causes this confusion. And so they are different things. I think black women – thinking about black people in general -- black women are at the forefront. Because they are out there thinking, they are thinking academically, they are pointing fingers, they are stirring things up. Now men are also thinking about their masculinities, but black women, they are out in front, right?

MF: Absolutely. I got here and I was really impressed by the visibility, the importance, the relevance of black feminist women and the discussion about visibility they are having today.

HN: It's that we understand that we have the racism factor, which makes everything more complex, difficult to access. And it's all very difficult. So, in the case of a black woman, such as me, I suffer a lot of things, a lot of violence. But I have the privileges of being a thin woman, of being a straight woman, right? Who has access to this kind of place, who comes from ... I grew up in Osasco, my family is from Osasco, from a suburb of Osasco, but I've always had access to a lot of things.²⁷ So, we see these suburban black women, you know ... from out there in Campo Redondo,²⁸ or from out there in the South Zone,²⁹ coming out and doing theater. So there are Capulanas,³⁰ there are these women who are changing these structures in various ways. Art is a means of changing these structures, communicating. Academic writing is another.

I see these feminisms in a totally different way. I think we can talk, yes. And the idea is for this to happen more and more, so that we can establish (I think we never...). But also, I think there is no need to create a union either. I think there are too many differences for this to happen, and I think it doesn't need to happen. We need to respect each other. I think white women need to listen a lot more. A lot more. I see many cases of white women who get offended, who often feel upset, and they do not want to listen. It's been centuries, right? All women -- white, yellow, black -- have always been oppressed, right? We know, right? But the specific question of racism, the question of coloniality, of slavery, persists to this day. And black women discovered this a while ago. And we are able to talk, more and more. So my grandmother is up there in Maranhão, living her life to this day, at eighty-four years old. I consider my grandmother Maria Joana a feminist. I consider my mother Regina a feminist, when she decided to end her thirty-three-year marriage to a black man and live her life on her own.

²⁷ Osasco is a municipality of the Brazilian state São Paulo. Osasco is a densely populated city and has a high gross domestic product. ("Osasco." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Osasco>. Accessed September 25, 2020.)

²⁸ Campo Redondo is a municipality of the Brazilian state Rio Grande do Norte. ("Campo Redondo." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Campo_Redondo. Accessed September 25, 2020.)

²⁹ The South Zone is a coastal region of the Brazilian city Rio de Janeiro. ("South Zone. (Rio de Janeiro)." Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Zone_\(Rio_de_Janeiro\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_Zone_(Rio_de_Janeiro)). Accessed September 25, 2020.)

³⁰ Translator's note: Capulanas Cia de Artes Negras [Capulanas Black Art Company]. The Black Women of Brazil website describes the company as "a São Paulo group formed by the actresses Adriana Paixão, Débora Marçal, Flávia Rosa and Priscila Preta, spawned in 2007, during a course of Communication of Body Arts, at PUC university in São Paulo." <https://blackwomenofbrazil.co/the-capulanas-black-art-company-bring/>. *Capulana* is the word used in Mozambique for a colorful cloth traditionally worn by women.

MF: And how do you think this black feminist movement will evolve here in Brazil?

HN: I think there is a tendency toward increasing numbers of black women in academia. And I think this place of knowledge production ... I am very inspired by women such as Sueli Carneiro,³¹ such as Conceição Evaristo.³² Mostly I am very close to Conceição's work through her books, in which she is able to transpose the black female universe through her literary work in a way that ... it's like this, I start reading her books, and it takes me months to finish them, because sometimes they are short books, but it's all so painful, and speaks to me so profoundly, so I take a long time to finish reading. And I think this tendency of ours to produce knowledge ... not that the academy is the only place to produce knowledge. We produce knowledge in the *terreiro*, with the Mothers of Saints who are also producing knowledge; we produce knowledge when we do street theater, when we are parading in samba schools, with more autonomy over our body, our own bodies, but I think academia is fundamental.³³

MF: Yes, for the sake of visibility and legitimation too ...

HN: And to establish these black forms of knowledge. Because it's like this, my dissertation is a production of academic knowledge, and my black traits are imbued within it, right?

MF: And what do you think is the relationship between the black feminist movement here in Brazil and the feminist movement or social movements in other countries? In the United States or Latin America?

HN: I confess that I have not paid that much attention to this. So ... I think from what I've been thinking about the United States for some time, blacks as a whole have organized themselves in a different way there, because of racial segregation. So a black bourgeoisie was created and with it, a universe that we are now starting to create here in Brazil too. So I guess, I don't know, I don't know how to answer this question, but I think increasingly through the internet we can connect with these black women from other places, talk to these black women from other places, see what they are doing, show them what we do here. I think these exchanges are fundamental for us ... More and more I think the tendency is to move forward together.

MF: And in relation to your own work, do you see that you have connections or that you can make connections with other work from other countries, with other researchers? Or maybe because of the question of religion?

³¹ Aparecida Sueli Carneiro Jacoel is an Afro-Brazilian philosopher, author, and anti-racism advocate. Carneiro established and directs Geledés — Instituto da Mulher Negra (English: "Geledés — Black Women's Institute"), a Brazilian anti-racist and anti-sexist organization. ("Sueli Carneiro." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sueli_Carneiro. Accessed September 25, 2020.)

³² Maria da Conceição Evaristo de Brito is an Afro-Brazilian author whose work explores social justice issues such as racial and gender discrimination. ("Conceição Evaristo." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Concei%C3%A7%C3%A3o_Evaristo. Accessed September 25, 2020.)

³³ A samba school is a club dedicated to the Afro-Brazilian dance and drum technique samba. ("Samba school." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samba_school. Accessed September 25, 2020.)

HN: Yes, I connected with ... I've forgotten her name ... she's from Martinique.³⁴ I will search here. She is ... a black researcher who came and she did a study here in Brazil, too, and she did some research on clothing. It isn't her main research topic; she researches Central African clothing, which has a lot to do with my research. When I looked for her texts, I had not seen her picture. When I saw her texts, I saw that she was black. And I was delighted. Wow, that's cool. And then I talked to her in my basic English and she was super receptive. And I think that's it, like this. When I meet black academic women here in Brazil or elsewhere I always try to talk to them.

MF: Establish networks, contacts.

HN: That's right. Show my work, get to know theirs. And I think that's how we are stitching things together.

MF: Absolutely. Thank you. Want to add something else?

HN: I feel very happy to be able to give this interview for this project. I think it's important ... I confess that I was a little bit hesitant. But I think it's really important to review and discuss all these things. And how nice that you're researching this and listening to these women. I think that's it.

MF: Absolutely.

HN: Yes. And build this research by paying close attention to our discourses. We try to get out of the role of object of research, to become the subject who does the research, but I think that the more topics, the more research done about us, made by us, black women or not exactly, but, if not by black women, with these voices integrated in a way that allows us to understand these women from the place of the subject too. I think that's it.

MF: I totally agree. This is always my thinking. I always try to do collective knowledge production. So for me this is fundamental. It is a matter of a relationship and not ... more a joint production relationship and not a relationship that is ...

HN: Object-researcher, with a distance

MF: Exactly. Or from outside, just reading about what is produced and what others say. I think it's fundamental. And in relation to the project I think it is essential to include young voices, people who are here working, working in Brazil and that is important.

HN: Thank you.

MF: Thank you very much.

³⁴ Martinique is a West Indies island in the Caribbean Sea. The island is a French overseas territorial collectivity. ("Martinique." Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martinique>. Accessed September 25, 2020.)