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Nicole Hayes
Sarah Lawrence College

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“FIGHT, AND IF YOU CAN'T FIGHT, KICK; IF YOU CAN'T KICK, THEN BITE”: A
Comparative History of Afro-Brazilian and U.S. Black Women’s Stories of Resistance¹

Nicole Hayes

May 2022

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in Women’s History
Sarah Lawrence College

¹ Gerda Lerner, ed., “Fight, and If You Can’t Fight, Kick,” in *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History*, (Vintage books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 34.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an intellectual and cultural exploration of U.S. Black and Afro-Brazilian feminism(s). Each chapter begins with history and scholarship from Brazil to shift the conversation away from an Anglophone-Americentric perspective. Within U.S. Black feminist thought, there is an over-representation of voices and experiences of English-speaking Black women. This is not to say that U.S. Black feminists have not reached across socially-constructed borders to incorporate scholarship from women living in other parts of the Black diaspora. However, there has not been nearly enough cross-cultural and transnational dialogue happening between U.S Black and Afro-Brazilian feminists. The time frame of this project begins with the colonial history (a period marked by racialized gender violence and the various ways Black women resisted) to enter the post-abolition era (where we see the development of the myth of racial democracy in Brazil), and finally into the height of anti-racism and anti-sexism movements, such as the Unified Black Movement in Brazil and second-wave feminism in Brazil and the U.S. The goal of this thesis is to assist in bridging this diasporic divide by demonstrating that Afro-Brazilian women's intellectual knowledge should move from the margin to the center within mainstream Black feminist thought. Multicultural communication is a vital component in any liberation struggle. It is a way for individuals and collectives to learn about people's different struggles as well as how to struggle together. In constructing these converging herstories, my hope is for future Black feminists to not allow differences in cultures and languages to deter them from reimagining a more inclusive and diverse feminism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completing this thesis would not have been possible without the assistance of numerous people. I wish to show appreciation to my thesis advisor, Rachelle Rumph, whose insightful comments helped me genuinely make this project a comparative history. She always highlighted areas where Brazilian and U.S. histories converged or diverged. I am forever grateful for her assistance.

I would also like to thank my second thesis reader, Mary Dillard. She was very attentive to helping me map out my vision for this project by assisting me in filling in gaps in my research. Additionally, Dr. Dillard has an open-door policy and would always respond to my Morse code emails when I felt defeated. She never hesitated to give invaluable advice that helped me turn these scattered histories into succinct stories.

I'm deeply indebted to Professors Julia Petitfrere and Steven Parlato (at Naugatuck Valley Community College). They, over the years, have helped and watched me grow into a scholar and have encouraged me to follow my dreams regardless of any obstacles. Their continued support and mentorship have helped me navigate the world of academia with confidence and poise.

I am also thankful to Professor Jesse Nasta (at Wesleyan University) for his continued support in my academic journey. Professor Nasta has taught me the necessary tools required to conduct archival research. Without his expertise in locating complex (and in many cases, hidden) sources, this project would have looked very different.

A special thanks to my mother, Jane Harrison, who has always provided me with her unconditional love and support. She has witnessed me grow as a person and has always been

there when I have needed her, despite being in different states, time zones, and so many miles apart.

A special thanks must be given to Chriss Sneed who introduced me to Afro-Brazilian feminism during my undergrad time at Wesleyan University. Moreover, Professor Sneed provided me with additional resources and names of Afro-Brazilian scholars who enhanced my understanding of Black women's experiences in Brazil.

Getting through this thesis required many conferences and conversations, and I appreciate all my family and friends who were willing to listen to my ideas and to add to them. I am forever grateful for all of those listed above (and many others not named) who have helped me succeed in completing this thesis.

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Introduction

“To All the Black Women Scattered Across the World”²

.. It was then that a really cool bunch of Whites invited us to their party, saying it was for us too. It was all about a book on us, we were given a great welcome and treated very kindly. They even called us to sit at the table where they were sitting while they were making a nice speech saying that we were oppressed, discriminated against, exploited. They were all fine, educated people who'd travelled through this God-given world; they knew about things. And we got to sit there at the table. Only it was so full of people that we couldn't sit with them. But we sorted ourselves out, we looked for some chairs and sat right behind them. They were so busy, teaching a lot of things to the Black audience, that they didn't even notice it was possible to squeeze more people around the table so that everyone could sit down together. But they were the hosts, and we couldn't mess it up by suggesting people move here or there. We had to be polite. And there was speech after speech, all with lots of applause.

That was when the Black woman who was sitting with us took a bold step. They asked her to answer a question. She got up, went over to the microphone and began to complain about certain things that were happening at the party. That set the tone for the quizumba. It looked like Black folks were just waiting for the chance to mess everything up. And there was so much yelling, booing, that you couldn't even hear what was being said anymore. It was clear as day that the Whites were turning white with anger, and with good reason. They'd invited us to a party about a book that talked about us and we were behaving like that, interfering with their speeches... What on earth was going on? They knew more about us than we did, didn't they? Weren't they here, with all the good will in the world, teaching us a whole bunch of stuff? It got to a point when they couldn't put up with all the racket those ignorant, unruly Blacks were making. It was all too much. At some point, an angry White man picked a fight with a Black who had taken the microphone to speak against the Whites. And the party ended in a fight... Now, let's be honest, who was to blame? That sassy little Black woman, now. If she hadn't babbled... She's burnt her bridges as far as White folk are concerned. They've been badmouthing her ever since. Who told her not to know how to behave? That's why they say "if Blacks don't take a dump on their way in, they'll shit on their way out"...³

At first glance, one might assume this epigraph was articulated from the perspective of a Black woman from the US in 2020 or 2021, especially since Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm is credited with saying “If they you don't have a seat at the table, bring a folding chair.” Various

² Christen Smith and Archie Davies, “‘In Front of the World’: Translating Beatriz Nascimento,” *Antipode* 53, no. 1 (2021): 316, doi:10.1111/anti.12690.

³ Lélia Gonzalez, “Racism and Sexism in Brazilian Culture,” trans. Maria Júlia Venâncio, Mateus Mendonça, and Gustavo Segat, *New Sociological Perspectives* 1, no.1 (2021): 148.
Translator notes, *quizumba* is “an African-Portuguese word for ‘mess.’”

sections speak to the current conditions of racialized gendered violence that Black women in North America encounter on a regular basis.⁴ However, “Racism and Sexism in Brazilian Culture” was written over forty years ago from the perspective of an Afro-Brazilian woman—Lélia de Almeida Gonzalez (1935-1994). On October 31st, 1980, Gonzalez gave this oral presentation at the IV Annual Meeting of the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Social Sciences (ANPOCS) in Rio de Janeiro.⁵ As a philosopher, anthropologist, intellectual, and Black feminist activist, Gonzalez’s scholarship provides valuable insight into the development of Black women’s intellectual, political, and social consciousness in Brazil. Many of Gonzalez’s neologisms remain on the margins of North American academic discourse. One example is her coining of the term “amefricanidade” which “references both the black diaspora and indigenous populations of the Americas, signaling their histories of resistance as colonized peoples.”⁶ Afro-Brazilian women become what Keisha-Khan Perry refers to as, “academic others” when their historical contributions are left out of global North and South feminist and Black diasporic agendas.⁷

Tapping into the herstories of Afro-Brazilian women, this thesis is attempting to sew together the intellectual and cultural herstories of Afro-Brazilian and U.S Black feminists beginning in the colonial era and extending into the late 1980s. This timeframe is significant for analyzing the evolution of Black feminist thought because many Afro-descendant women and Women of Color took an unapologetic approach in challenging implicit and explicit racism,

⁴ Throughout this thesis, I use Afro-descendant to refer to Black people who are scattered across the Black diaspora, Black Americans to refer to Black people living in North America, and Afro-Brazilians for Black people living in Brazil.

⁵ Gonzalez, “Racism and Sexism in Brazilian Culture,” 147.

⁶ Sonia E. Alvarez and Kia Lilly Caldwell, “Promoting Feminist Amefricanidade: Bridging Black Feminist Cultures and Politics in the Americas,” *Meridians* 14, no. 1 (2016): V, doi:10.2979/meridians.14.1.01.

⁷ Keisha-Khan Y. Perry, “The Groundings with my Sisters: Toward a Black Diasporic Feminist Agenda in the Americas,” *The Scholar and Feminist Online*, 7.2 (Spring 2009): 2.

misogyny of Black men, and the imperialism of white feminists. I argue that Black cultural and women's liberation movements often fail at addressing how interlocking systems of oppression (i.e., racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, etc.) negatively impact the lives of Black women.⁸ Furthermore, language barriers, hemispheric isolation, and patriarchal structures have largely excluded Afro-Brazilian women from participating in radical Black diasporic conversations in ways similar to how racism and sexism marginalize U.S. Black women's knowledge production. The solution has become the creation of Black feminism as a corrective measure filling in historical gaps and redefining Black womanhood outside of the hegemony of mainstream scholarship.

Core Questions

This thesis aims to reconstruct how the various ways Afro-Brazilian and U.S. Black women have come to their feminist consciousness by working from the edge, corner, and then moving into the center. In order to piece these largely scattered herstories together, the following questions will be addressed: What are some of the political and social benefits of engaging in transnational dialogue between U.S. Black and Afro-Brazilian feminists, and what do these conversations reveal about Black women's status(es) in the Americas? As this thesis argues, it is important for English-speaking Black feminists to foreground the philosophical and political thoughts of non-Western and non-English speaking women in their scholarship so that they do not reproduce colonial relationships. In Gonzalez's speech above, she highlights what a colonial

⁸ Legal scholar, Kimberlé Crenshaw, coined "intersectionality" in 1989 to describe how multiple systems of oppression interact and create distinct experiences for people who have multiple identities. Intersectionality is not a new concept; it is a contemporary label that dates back to the antebellum period with Black feminist foremothers, such as Maria W. Stewart, Sojourner Truth, Anna Julia Cooper. To read Crenshaw's inspiration in coining intersectionality, see Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex," 39-52.

relationship entails, “*They [white women] even called us to sit at the table where they were sitting while they were making a nice speech saying that we were oppressed, discriminated against, exploited. [...] They were so busy, teaching a lot of things to the Black audience, that they didn’t even notice it was possible to squeeze more people around the table so that everyone could sit down together.*”⁹ This quote highlights how white Brazilians attempted to dominate conversations concerning race as a protective method of not addressing real societal issues: unequal distribution of wealth, exclusionary practices from political and social institutions, and disproportionate access to education. Similarly, it is problematic when U.S. Black women replicate comparable forms of domination in their scholarship by following the pattern of “suppression by omission” through not attempting to use or even access the scholarship of non-English-speaking women.

Brazil has the largest population of people of African descent outside of the African continent. In this regard, Afro-Brazilians are the largest portion of the African diaspora. A 2010 census record revealed Afro-Brazilian women make up roughly 25% of the nearly 200 million people living in Brazil.¹⁰ Given this, U.S. Black feminists’ attention should be drawn to Brazil. Afro-Brazilian women experience similar forms of oppression to their sisters in the global North. For example, Perry explains, “Black women have the poorest quality of life and the worst chances of survival, according to the human development indexes for Latin American nations, such as Brazil.”¹¹ One of the major factors to the poor conditions that Black women throughout

⁹ Gonzalez, “Racism and Sexism in Brazilian Culture,” 148.

¹⁰ Paulo Mileno, “The Largest Black Nation Outside Africa and its Racist Politics,” *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 41, iss. 1 (Fall 2018): XV, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5070/F7411042298>.

¹¹ Perry, “The Groundings with My Sisters,” 2.

the Americas live under is the economic and political legacy of slavery.¹² Brazil was one of the last Western countries to abolish slavery in 1888, which means Portuguese colonizers had over three-hundred years to practice exerting dominance and superiority over Black and Indigenous Brazilians peoples.¹³ Legacies of slavery, imperialism, anti-Black violence, misogyny, etc., continue to impact the lives of Afro-descendant peoples. Much of U.S. Black feminist scholarship on the history of slavery remains focused within the national boundaries of the U.S. I argue that a comparative study of the histories of Black women in both the U.S. and Brazil highlights the urgency of a Black diasporic feminism that transcends the limitations imposed by the English language and national borders.

Methodology

The methodology used in this project is guided by what Maylei Blackwell refers to as retrofitted memory—“a practice whereby social actors read the interstices, gaps, and silences of existing historical narratives in order to retrofit, rework, and refashion older narratives to create new historical openings, political possibilities, and genealogies of resistance.”¹⁴ Retrofitted memory is an important tool for Black feminists to utilize in their theory building because it allows marginalized women to link largely separate histories into shared spaces. Although Blackwell specifically uses “retrofitted memory” to center Chicanas in the 1970s U.S. Western Chicano movement, its application can be employed in a Black diasporic framework to enhance

¹² See Patricia Hill Collins’ *Black Feminist Thought* for examples on the various systematic discrimination practices that have and continue to limit Black women from accessing better-paying and higher-status jobs and how this is rooted in the legacy of slavery—the devaluation on Black life. See also Lebon, “Beyond Confronting the Myth of Racial Democracy,” 52–76 for a Brazilian equivalency.

¹³ Edward Telles, “Racial Discrimination and Miscegenation: The Experience in Brazil,” UN Chronicle, United Nations, accessed February 4, 2022.

¹⁴ The Santa Cruz Feminist of Color Collective, “Building on ‘the Edge of Each Other’s Battles’: A Feminist of Color Multidimensional Lens,” *Hypatia* 29, no. 1 (2014): 32.

our understanding of the roots of the current state of anti-Black violence. Furthermore, retrofitting the scattered radical Black feminist genealogies can help create a stronger intercontinental Black women's consciousness. Black women have been engaging in cross-cultural and transnational conversations with women around the world creating more ties with transnational women's rights activism. However, there continues to be an absence of strong transnational connections with Afro-Brazilian women.

Audre Lorde, one of the most lauded U.S. Black feminists who began the process of mapping out shared herstories, asks (and answers), "What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow parameters of change are possible and allowable."¹⁵ Similarly, what does it mean when linguistic, ethnic, and national diversity are missing from conversations that analyze women's thoughts and experiences on a global scale? It leads to the repetition of gaps in awareness, activism, and knowledges in Black women's tools of resistance. In this respect, U.S. Black feminist literature written only in English becomes part of the "master's tools" as it prevents non-English and English-speaking Afro-descendant women from having open dialogues with each other.

Robert Phillipson, a linguistic human rights advocate, explains, "English is now marketed as a language that everyone needs and that all should learn. This is one of the myths of global English. It is blithely proclaimed as the *lingua franca* of science, of business, of European integration, and of international understandings as though no other languages serve such

¹⁵ Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 1984), 111.

purposes.”¹⁶ The global status of English as “*lingua franca*” is problematic because it creates and maintains unnecessary divisions between people—particularly marginalized groups.¹⁷

Furthermore, privileging English scholarship leads to the erasure of peoples, cultures, and languages. By not expanding their analysis to countries like Brazil, many U.S. Black feminists may be unknowingly or unintentionally perpetuating hierarchies of cultural memories with U.S. experiences placed at the center.

It is intellectually short-sighted to view Afro-descendant women and women of color’s theoretical contributions as irrelevant when constructed outside of Western theories. Invited as a guest speaker to give commentary on “the role of difference within the lives of American women: difference of race, sexuality, class, and age,” Lorde made a similar critique to a group of mostly white feminists at “The Personal and the Political Panel” conference in 1979.¹⁸ Lorde criticized the lack of diverse voices in the papers presented at the conference stating, “What this says about the vision of this conference is sad, in a country where racism, sexism, and homophobia are inseparable. To read this program is to assume that lesbian and Black women have nothing to say about existentialism, the erotic, women’s culture and silence, developing feminist theory, or heterosexuality and power.”¹⁹ Lorde draws precise attention to the dangers of erasure regarding Black women’s sexuality. Lorde’s argument about the misconception that women with diverse ethnic, cultural, racial, etc., backgrounds have nothing to contribute to

¹⁶ Robert Phillipson, “Myths and Realities of ‘Global’ English,” *Lang Policy* 16, (2017): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-016-9409-z>.

Lingua franca refers to a common language. It is a language that people use to communicate with other who do not share a common language. English is currently assumed to be the *lingua franca* of the world.

¹⁷ Phillipson explains, “After 1945, English became the dominant language of international relations, trade, banking, scientific scholarships, and popular culture, not by chance but through American leadership. The groundwork was laid in think tanks funded by US foundations during the war [World War II], and implemented in the Bretton Woods institutions, the UN, World Bank, IMF, NATO and countless other ways. This was a deliberate US strategy: ‘The whole world should adopt the American system.’” Phillipson, “Myths and Realities of ‘Global’ English,” 7.

¹⁸ Lorde, “The Master’s Tools,” 110.

¹⁹ Lorde, 111.

feminist theory can be applied to assumptions made about non-English-speaking women having nothing to contribute about their own oppression, as Gonzalez articulates in “Racism and Sexism in Brazilian Culture.” U.S. Black feminists must address the ways in which American imperialism immobilizes efforts for woman to create authentic movements together. A more Black diasporic approach in Black feminism has value and it is highly sought after by Afro-descendant women. Take, for example, Afro-Costa Rican poet Shirley Campbell, whose poem “*Rotundamente negra*” has been widely distributed and championed between Afro-descendant women living in Latin American.²⁰ “*Rotundamente negra*” is a poem of self-affirmation and a battle cry about Black women’s double-invisible lives.

Historiography

My approach to this project is influenced by contemporary Black liberation movements, such as the #Black Lives Matter and the #MeToo movement, which call for the destruction of racism, discrimination, and sexual violence directed towards Black and Brown bodies. Both movements were established by Black women and their efforts have reignited global conversations around the continued subjugation of Black female-identified individuals. Additionally, contemporary Black feminist, Brittney Cooper’s *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women* has encouraged me to embark on the necessary journey of intellectually tracing bibliographies that catalogue the names and works of Black women beyond U.S. borders. Cooper refers to this practice as “listing”: “Black women literary workers participate in a long practice of what I term *listing*, in which African American women created lists of prominent, qualified Black women for public consumption. These lists situate Black

²⁰ Dorothy E. Mosby, “Traveling Words: A Reflection on ‘Rotundamente Negra’ and Afro-Descendant Women’s Cultural Politics,” *Meridians* 14, no. 2 (2016): 25, 40, <https://doi.org/10.2979/meridians.14.2.03>.

women within a long lineage of prior women who have done similar kinds of work.”²¹ The act of listing is a revolutionary tool of resistance ensuring the names of Black foremothers do not become lost to the archives. Writing Afro-Brazilian women into existence within U.S. Black feminism is a crucial step in decolonizing how we place hierarchies on certain knowledges, such as assigning more value on intellectual scholarship that comes from Anglo-North American scholars.

Gonzalez is not the only Black woman from Brazil whose intellectual scholarship has yet to be widely distributed within U.S. Black feminist and Latin American discourses. Beatriz Nascimento is another. Christen Smith, Archie Davies, and Bethânia Gomes provide one of the first English translations of writings by Beatriz Nascimento: “The Concept of Quilombo and Black Cultural Resistance,” “For a (New) Existential and Physical Territory,” and “Dream.” Nascimento was a “historian, intellectual, political organizer and poet” and a vanguard member of Black political organizing in Brazil during its dictatorship (1964–1985).²² Although Nascimento distanced herself from a feminist label, researchers of her work believe Nascimento’s theologism on Black subjectivity, specifically from the perspective of a Black woman, belongs in “Black feminist geography and the Black radical tradition” noting, “We believe that we can situate her within a genealogy of Black feminist thought in the Americas that has also always critiqued traditional feminism anchored in white supremacy. For example, Nascimento’s contemporary Lélia Gonzalez fiercely critiqued white Brazilian feminism specifically and (white) Latin American feminisms more broadly.”²³ It was not uncommon for Black and non-white women to reject feminism because it erased their experiences. Much of

²¹ Brittney C. Cooper, “Introduction: The Duty of the True Race Woman,” in *Beyond Respectability: The Intellectual Thought of Race Women*, (University of Illinois Press, 2017), 26.

²² Smith and Davies, “In Front of the World,” 280-282.

²³ Smith, Davies, 290.

Nascimento's theoretical contributions predate what is now referred to as "radical Black feminist thought."

Happening alongside second-wave feminism in the U.S. were the 1970s Black nationalist movements in Brazil to end racism. Black women in Brazil were active in anti-racism and anti-sexism movements and experienced misogyny and racism from their Black male and white female counterparts who were unable to see Black women as equals. For example, Fátima Oliveira explains how both movements "had a lot of difficulty understanding this thing called 'a *questão da mulher negra*' (the question of the black woman)."²⁴ Additionally, Thereza Santos, a woman's rights and Black activist, provides yet another example of intragroup tensions and states, "Despite the role of black women as the economic mainstay of black men and in the struggle for resistance, black women's participation has been relegated to that of servant, as a consequence of the *machista* [also known as *machismo*] ideology that has permeated the black movement."²⁵ Comparably, U.S. Black feminist, Michele Wallace coined a similar term, "Black Macho," to describe the patriarchal culture within the Black Power movement that began in the 1960s.²⁶ Black male patriarchy seeks to conquer and control and was prevalent in Brazilian and Northern Black American anti-racism movements.

²⁴ Kia Lilly Caldwell, "The Black Women's Movement: Politicizing and Reconstructing Collective Identities," in *Negras in Brazil: Re-Envisioning Black Women, Citizenship, and the Politics of Identity*, (Rutgers University Press, 2007), 156.

²⁵ Jessica H Franklin, "Building from and Moving Beyond the State: The National and Transnational Dimensions of Afro-Brazilian Women's Intersectional Mobilization" (M.A., University of Western Ontario, 2013), 106. *Machista* or *machismo* is a term used in Latin America to describe what is now defined as "toxic masculinity." As the definition describes, men who display this type of behavior typically exert dominance and superiority over women. Socially constructed gender roles attach dominance, assertiveness, and competitiveness to male. *Machismo* is a learned behavior that negatively impacts the lives of *all* women.

²⁶ Michele Wallace, "3," in *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*, Verso classics ed., (Verso Classics, 26. London: Verso, 1999), 161.

Chapter 1

Chapter one, “The Inheritance of Slavery is Not Ours—It Belongs to Slave Owners and Their Descendants,” explores the process of racialization in Brazil and the U.S. beginning during the colonial era and extending into the early twentieth century. I chose to begin in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century because this is where we witness race evolve into its modern conception. I compare and contrast the institution of slavery in both countries to illuminate the different paths each took in categorizing and classifying socially-constructed definitions of race. In large part, Black women’s bodies were used to make these distinctions and to justify the mass kidnapping and transportation of Africans to present-day Latin and North America. I do this to highlight the importance of using an intersectional framework to study the history of Black women’s history, such as showing how capitalism has always been synonymous with racism. I trace stories of Black women resisting racial and gender oppression to demonstrate the multiple ways Black women in Brazil and the U.S. have asserted agency. This chapter provides important historical background information for understanding the rise of the Black freedom movements during 1960s into the 1970s.

Chapter 2

The second chapter, “Some Things Cannot Be Separated” examines how anti-racism and anti-sexism movements in the latter half of the twentieth failed at addressing Black women’s concerns in both countries.²⁷ I trace the evolution of Black consciousness groups and where Black women fit into this history. During the 1970s in Brazil and the U.S., there was an increase

²⁷ Kenneth Williamson, “Some Things Cannot Be Separated: Intersectionality in the Lives of Black Women Activists in Salvador, Brazil,” *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, 8:1 (2015): 98, doi:10.1080/17528631.2014.972702.

in activism, specifically activism that challenged racism, imperialism, capitalism, sexism and other systems of oppression. Black women were active participants in these liberation movements, but experienced the double burden of racism and sexism. I examine the various ways Black American and Afro-Brazilian men embraced a Black male patriarchy in these movements, despite wanting to dismantle (white) patriarchy in society. Subsequently, I explore Black women's responses to *machismo*, Black Macho, and (white women's) hegemonic attitudes carrying over the common theme in Afro-descendant women's lives—resistance as a means of survival.

Chapter 3

In chapter three, "*Enegrecendo o Feminismo*" (Blackening Feminism), I employ an interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, and transnational framework to examine Afro-Brazilian women's feminism. This chapter takes a different approach as it does not provide a comparable U.S. section. Instead, it incorporates a Latin American and Caribbean feminist framework because Afro-Brazilian women had more interaction with feminists from this region. I begin with a discussion on the evolution of Latin American and Caribbean feminism which as a collective movement began in the 1980s. Due to time constraints and the lack of access to translated Brazilian Portuguese scholarship from Afro-Brazilian feminists, I am not able to exhaustively map the roots and routes of Black women's feminist activity. However, with the available translated scholarship written about and by Afro-Brazilian women, such as Lélia Gonzalez, I map Black women's contributions and intellectual scholarship into a Black feminist diasporic framework. Black women across the Americas not only pulled a chair up to the table, but they also determined the placement of the chairs around the table to demonstrate that their existence deserves a prominent spot at the round table.

Chapter 1

“The Inheritance of Slavery is Not Ours—It Belongs to Slave Owners and Their Descendants”²⁸

In this chapter, I explore the roots of Brazilian and U.S. subjugation of and resistance by Black women by looking at the slavery-era laws, forms of violence against women, and ways Black women resisted gender-based violence. A common theme in both locations is the interaction between control and domination, which correlated with masculinity and power. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part examines the colonial history of Brazil, which follows a different path towards building the nation compared with other global powers during the sixteenth century. Following this discussion, I analyze the role language played in justifying African women's mass enslavement and rape. I address travel narratives written by European white males who helped give rise to pseudoscientific racism that was used in providing religious and moral justification for the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. The conversation shifts into ways Black women resisted their enslavement through self-emancipation and claimed autonomy over their reproductive rights. Lastly, the remainder of the chapter focuses on the “racial question.” Here, I analyze the ways in which both countries constructed their sometimes unique, and other times similar strategies to maintain white supremacy. This comparative history between Brazil and the U.S. is important because it illuminates how racialized gendered violence has and continues to shape race relations in the contemporary moment or well into the twenty-first century.

The fifteenth century is known as the “Age of Discovery” because countries like Spain and Portugal were leading in establishing new trading routes giving rise to global trade.

²⁸ Ana Irma Rivera Lassén, “Afrodescendant Women: A Race and Gender Intersectional Spiderweb,” trans. by Manuela Borzone and Alexander Ponomareff, *Meridians* 14, no. 2 (2016): 67-68, doi:10.2979/meridians.14.2.05.

Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama was the first European to chart a course from Europe to India by sea successfully. da Gama's cartography helped Portugal become a world power as Portuguese traders transported highly sought-after commodities, such as gold and spices, from India back to European countries. Another important Portuguese traveler was Pedro Álvares Cabral, who is credited with discovering Brazil. In 1500, Cabral and thirteen ships filled with 1,200 men departed from Lisbon, Portugal with the intent of sailing the same route da Gama had mapped out.²⁹ Along the journey, one of the 13 ships disappeared, and its whereabouts remain unknown. With 12 ships remaining, Cabral carried on with the expedition but mistakenly sailed too far South and then West causing the fleet to make landfall in Porto Seguro, located in the present-day state of Bahia, rather than arriving on the shores of India. Thus, began the Portuguese colonization of Brazil and a legacy of subordination that remains part of the political landscape today.

Once Portuguese explorers placed wooden crosses along the Atlantic coast in Brazil, the country officially belonged to the Portuguese Crown. The 1493 Doctrine of Discovery issued by Pope Alexander VI gave Portugal and other European countries international permission to seize unoccupied and occupied land from inhabitants that did not follow the Christian doctrine.³⁰ The Doctrine consisted of ten elements to support the conquest and colonization of newly-discovered territories. Shortly after claiming Brazil, Portuguese explorers began exploiting the lands and Indigenous Brazilians, the *Tupí* people, with the goal of establishing another important global trading station. During this era, one of the staple commodities was *pau brasil* (brazilwood)—a

²⁹ "Pedro Alvares Cabral," The Ages of Exploration, The Mariners' Museum and Park, accessed March 24, 2022.

³⁰ Miller, Robert J, and Micheline D'Angelis. "Brazil, Indigenous Peoples, and the International Law of Discovery," *Brooklyn Journal of International Law* 37, no. 1 (2011): 9.

highly prized export because of its distinctive red and purple dyes.³¹ The Portuguese launched several trading posts—which were referred to as *feitorias* (factories)—along the Atlantic shoreline, making their presence known in this region of the world. *Feitorias* also served to deter other global powers (such as France, Spain, England, and the Dutch) from taking control of these essential trading sites and routes.³²

Many European explorers used the Doctrine of Discovery not only to justify the mass enslavement of Indigenous and African people but to commodify women's bodies. Jennifer Lee Morgan argues, "Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers conveyed a sexual grotesquerie that ultimately made African women indispensable, in that it showed the gendered ways of putting African savagery to productive use."³³ The goal of many male writers during 1500-1770 and later was to use pseudoscience as a marker of difference between whiteness and Blackness. These writers sought to demonstrate the moral justification for commodifying the bodies of individuals who fit outside of European cultural norms. Morgan also notes how language within these narratives often focused on both women's reproductive and productive capabilities:

Abolitionist John Atkins similarly adopted the icon of black female bodies in his writings on Guinea. 'Childing, and their Breasts always pendulous, stretches them to so unseemly a length and Bigness that some . . . could suckle over their shoulder.' Atkins then considered the idea of African women copulating with apes. He noted that 'at some places the Negroes have been suspected of Bestiality' and, while maintaining the ruse of scholarly distance, suggested that evidence 'would tempt one to suspect the Fact.' The evidence lay mostly in apes'

³¹ James Naylor Green and Thomas E Skidmore, "The Making of Colonial Brazil," in *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*, (Third ed. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), Brazilwood.

³² With the small number of Portuguese colonizers and the high demand for *pau brasil* and "other more exotic items such as parrots and animal skins," the old fashioned method of trading goods in exchange for services with the *Tupí* people became not profitable. In the mid-1500s, the Portuguese began coercing and enslaving *Tupí* peoples to ensure that there was enough physical labor to meet the international demand for Brazilian natural resources. To maintain a stronghold in Brazil during this era, the Portuguese Crown began allowing wealthy citizens to fund voyages across the Atlantic to settle in Brazil. This signaled beginning of formal colonization. To read more about the Brazilian Indigenous peoples in relation to their contact with European travelers and Jesuit missionaries refer to Hébrard, "Slavery in Brazil," 7-61.

³³ Jennifer L. Morgan, "'Some Could Suckle Over Their Shoulder': Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1770," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 1 (1997): 178.

resemblance to humans but was bolstered by ‘the Ignorance and Stupidity [of black women unable] to guide or controll lust.’³⁴

Despite the fact that he was an abolitionist, Atkins clearly held a negative view of African women’s autonomy. He relayed to his readers that African women were sexually deviant, and his dramatized description of their bodies implies these women were far away from European beauty standards. He and other European writers then used these ideas to emphasize fundamental differences and alleged racial inferiority. Unfortunately, many of these racialized and gendered descriptions of African women’s bodies would continue to be borrowed in other narratives.

Given the popularity and acceptance of these early depictions of Black inferiority and sexual deviance, it should come as no surprise that the Portuguese were leaders in the importation of enslaved Africans. As early as the 1400s, Portugal aggressively made their presence known on the coastlines of West Africa by setting up *feitorias*. These trading posts, such as the Elmina Castle located in present-day Ghana, became an important last stop for Africans before being forced to leave their homelands. Elmina Castile, otherwise known as “The Door of No Return,” has significant connections to Brazil. Many Africans passed through this last stop before arriving to Brazilian ports in “Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, Recife, and São Luís” before being sold throughout the not-yet-established country.³⁵ Although it is impossible to

³⁴ Morgan, ““Some Could Suckle Over Their Shoulder,”” 188-189.

³⁵ Library of Congress, “Slavery in Brazil A Escravidão no Brasil,” *The United States and Brazil: Expanding Frontiers, Comparing Cultures*, accessed February 8, 2022.

The institution of slavery initially began in the 1550s and lasted legally until 1888 in Brazil. Many Africans were transported to Brazil and worked on sugar cane plantations located in Brazil’s Northeastern coast. According to the Library of Congress, “For more than a century, Brazil was the world’s leading sugar exporter. A flourishing ‘triangular trade’ developed: slave labor imported from West Africa worked the sugar plantations in Brazil; sugar and sugar products were exported from Brazil to Europe; and the profits from the sugar were used for European manufactured goods with which to purchase more slaves in the African coastal slave markets.” Sugar cane exportation and slave importation were some of Brazil’s most lucrative markets between the seventeenth and eighteenth century. Nearly a century later, Brazil experienced another economic boom with the discovery of gold and numerous coffee plantations that arose in the early 1720s. Green and Skidmore, “The Making of Colonial Brazil,” *Brazilwood*.

accurately estimate the number of Africans transported to Brazil, researchers suggest the number is around four million.³⁶

The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade was the largest forced migration of people in history and the Portuguese were amongst the leading countries in the importation and exploration of “human cargo.” For most of Brazil’s history, white people were and remain outnumbered. With the lack of access to white women, white Portuguese men often formed relationships (though it is important to note that many of these relationships were coerced) with African, Afro-Brazilian, and Indigenous women. This practice of race mixing is referred to as miscegenation. In “Race and Slavery in Brazil,” Leslie B. Rout argues miscegenation was socially acceptable in early Brazil and uses the story of a priest being run out of town for voicing his objection to these sexual interactions as proof:

Paradoxically, in the absence of a large number of white women, female captives of color here enjoyed unaccustomed opportunities for social and financial advancement. In Brazil the keeping of Negroid mistresses was a common practice; in the gold fields, Luso-Brazilians believed that sleeping with a Mina woman brought good luck. Indeed, some priests preached that a Luso-Brazilian committed no sin if he kept slave concubines, and one priest who argued otherwise was run out of town.³⁷

One reason why the objecting priest was censured is because acknowledging the poor treatment of a Black woman would humanize her. Furthermore, the quote addresses some of the earliest forms of white men fetishizing Black women’s bodies in Brazil. Across the Americas there was and remains a misconception that white men should have unchallenged access to Black women’s bodies. The racist and misogynistic tropes that originated in the sixteenth century would later inspire modern feminist movements in Brazil and the U.S.

³⁶ To view a comprehensive history of the Trans-Atlantic slave route and the names of individuals kidnapped see, “Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade,” Table.

³⁷ Rout, “Race and Slavery in Brazil,” *The Wilson Quarterly* (1976-) 1, no. 1 (1976): 80. Luso-Brazilian refers to the mixture of Portuguese, African, and Indigenous Brazilian cultures.

Scholar of the Iberian Atlantic, Stuart B Schwartz argues that conditions on sugar plantations once captives arrived in Brazil were “hellish” for most of the eighteenth century. Schwartz notes how Portuguese enslavers were concerned with extracting as “much labor at as little cost as possible” and “conditions of housing, clothing, and food often left much to be desired.”³⁸ To ensure that the maximum amount of labor was extracted, Africans were ruled with cruelty. White plantation owners implemented severe punishments and terror to maintain dominance because those in power feared rebellion. Schwartz adds, “This sort of institutionalized brutality, when coupled with arduous labor, poor working conditions, and simple cruelty, contributed to the motivations for escape.”³⁹ The ill treatment of slaves was so abysmal the Crown had to intervene on two separate occasions instructing plantation owners to provide adequate nutrition to their slaves. Royal authorities in Brazil intervened not from the kindness of their heart, but rather because they feared there would be a slave uprising. In Brazil, large-scale revolts were less common compared with other European colonies in the Caribbean and Latin America. Instead, individuals who were freeborn or self-emancipated formed alternative communities free from white domination referred to as *ladeiras*, *mocambos*, and most recognizable quilombos.⁴⁰ These runaway communities threatened the longevity of the

³⁸ Stuart B. Schwartz, “The ‘Mocambo’: Slave Resistance in Colonial Bahia,” *Journal of Social History* 3, no. 4 (1970): 316.

³⁹ Schwartz, “The ‘Mocambo,’” 317.

⁴⁰ According to Hébrard, “In Brazil, it was large-scale marronage rather than revolts that initially drew the most attention. The Portuguese empire had experienced the first serious affair of this kind at Palmares. For years the rise and the suppression of this rebellion had been continually re-described and reinterpreted. Established at the beginning of the seventeenth century in what was at the time the Captaincy of Pernambuco, the quilombo (or mocambo) of Palmares consisted of several different communities of fugitive slaves and others whose livelihoods relied on farming. These communities constituted a kind of a republic. When the war between Holland and Portugal (1630–1654) destabilized the large-scale sugar plantations, the quilombo swelled to the size of several thousand residents (20,000 by the end of the seventeenth century). Under attack by both the Portuguese and the Dutch, Ganga-Zumba, one of the last leaders of the quilombo, tried to reach an agreement to capitulate to the Portuguese crown on relatively advantageous terms. But Palmares was definitively defeated in 1695.” Hébrard, “Slavery in Brazil,” 61.

institution of slavery because they jeopardized the economic livelihoods of white plantation owners and Portuguese elites residing abroad.

The practice of self-emancipation is an important part of Brazilian colonial history and the story of Maria Felipa de Oliveira, whose story only recently came into Brazil's national memory, demonstrates its significance. On September 7, 1822, Brazil officially declared its independence from Portugal. The Portuguese army did not fully recognize this political emancipation and routinely sent soldiers to intimidate Brazilian provinces in order to convince them to rejoin the colony.⁴¹ These aggressive tactics did not scare Oliveira, other Black women, or Indigenous *Tapuias* and *Tupinambás* people into submission who resided on the fishing island of *Itaparica* in Bahia. Between 1822 and 1823, Oliveira successfully led a fleet of nearly 200 freed men and women into battle against Portuguese soldiers.⁴² Although the inhabitants did not have access to heavy weapons, they used other defenses to ward off the invaders, such as machetes and thorny branches. One of the most successful tactics was the use of seduction on the part of the women. Once lured away from the ships, "the Portuguese followed the women to the beach, drank and were undressed. However, instead of having their desires satisfied, they were caught with fatigue, by a plant that causes a burning sensation on the skin."⁴³ Oliveira's leadership and heroic efforts are just one part of Brazilian history of Black women's resistance. Many other women, such as "Dandara dos Palmares, Anastácia, Luísa Mahín, Teresa de Benguela, Adelina, the Charuteira" and countless other Afro and Indigenous Brazilian women serve as symbols of resistance."⁴⁴

⁴¹ "Maria Felipa de Oliveira," Plenarinho, December 7, 2021.

⁴² Coffee with Feminism, "Maria Felipa de Oliveira and the Stars of Salvador," Medium, December 16, 2020.

⁴³ "Maria Felipa de Oliveira-Freed Slave Who Fought Against the Portuguese," Extraordinary Women Maria Felipa de Oliveira, Avalara Brasil, June 9, 2021.

⁴⁴ Maya Manzi, "The Body, The House and The City," 5-6.

White elites were constantly having to develop new ways of controlling enslaved bodies because the ideology of resistance within these marginalized communities was so strong. Stories of resistance during slavery are often masculine and neglect to discuss the various ways *all* enslaved persons fought for their liberation. For example, rather than participate in large scale rebellions, enslaved Black women have resisted the institution of slavery through individual acts, such as “running away, committing suicide, and infanticide, abortion or killing their masters and the masters’ children.”⁴⁵ Throughout the so-called “New World,” Black women’s bodies, as Jenifer Lee Morgan contends, were historically commodified for their reproductive and productive abilities, especially during slavery. In Brazil, infanticide was a common form of reproductive resistance utilized by enslaved Black women. Cassia Roth establishes, “As feminist scholars have contended and historians of medicine have supported, women have always controlled their fertility for a variety of reasons. Enslaved women’s reproductive resistance across the Americas demonstrates that not wanting to bring a child into slavery was one salient reason to practice abortion and infanticide.”⁴⁶ Unlike in the U.S., white enslavers in Brazil did not value enslaved women’s wombs, rather they relied on the cheap price of imported slaves. Enslaved women across the Americas committed infanticide for several reasons, such as not wanting to subject their future child to the horrors of slavery and to achieve reproductive agency for themselves.

Black women’s desire to achieve agency overall is evidenced by the story of Rosa Egipcíaca da Vera Cruz. Believed to be born in Lagos, Nigeria and sold into the Trans-Atlantic

⁴⁵ Ana Lucia Araujo and Luis A. Avilés, “Black Purgatory: Enslaved Women’s Resistance in Nineteenth-Century Rio Grande Do Sul, Brazil,” *Slavery & Abolition* 36, no. 4 (2015): 572, doi:10.1080/0144039X.2014.1001159.

⁴⁶ Cassia Roth, “From Free Womb to Criminalized Woman: Fertility Control in Brazilian Slavery and Freedom,” *Slavery & Abolition* 38, no. 2 (2017): 273-4, doi:10.1080/0144039X.2017.1316965.

See also, Angela Davis, “Reflections on the Black Woman’s Role in the Community of Slaves,” 2–15 for a U.S. perspective on enslaved women asserting agency.

Slave Trade as a child, Vera Cruz arrived in Rio de Janeiro in 1715 at the tender age of six and went on to experience sexual violence throughout her life.⁴⁷ Almost three-centuries later, Luiz Mott documented Vera Cruz's life story in a nearly seven-hundred and suggested that it serves as a model of resistance and self-advocacy "against the intersecting forms of repressive hierarchical power."⁴⁸ Mott uses archival documents, personal letters, criminal records, and Vera Cruz's testimony to construct a nearly seven-hundred page biography on eighteenth century slavery and colonialism in Brazil awakening Vera Cruz "into contemporary memory."⁴⁹ Despite being converted to Catholicism when she first arrived in Brazil, Vera Cruz practiced her own version of religion. Celeste Henery explains, "Rosa's devotion chartered a new course. She took the name Egipcíaca from Saint Mary of Egypt to whose likeness she presumably related — a darker skinned woman, a former prostitute who retreated to the desert of Palestine. With Lopes [her spiritual collaborator, guardian, and liberator], she founded a sanctuary for women, many of color, to devote themselves to God. Rosa grew a following, sermonized, and served as a spiritual touchstone."⁵⁰ Writing revisionist histories and offering counter-narratives on Black women is an important exercise for contemporary historians practice. It is a way for researchers to humanize the experiences of individuals, such as Vera Cruz, whose lives and stories have been neglected within mainstream academia.

At this point in Brazilian colonial history, patriarchal control over women's bodies was held by individual enslavers. Until recently, discussions on the sexually predatory behavior of white women towards their male and female slaves were understudied. Much of the history of sexual violence during slavery was concentrated on white women being passive observers of

⁴⁷ Celeste Henery, "Excavating the History of Afro-Brazilian Women," Black Perspectives, April 5, 2021.

⁴⁸ Henery, "Excavating the History of Afro-Brazilian Women," Black Perspectives.

⁴⁹ Henery, Black Perspectives.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

their husbands' sexual behavior. Lamonte Aidoo brings attention to recent archival findings that reveal white mistresses also participated in sexual relations with slaves. Aidoo explains, "White mistresses and their female slaves shared a closely entwined existence that was a convoluted fusion of intimacy, sex, exploitation, and violence embedded in the white patriarchal structures of slavery and coloniality."⁵¹ White women disrupted the patriarchal limitations of ascribed gender norms by threatening "to displace white men as the sole sexual gratifiers of women."⁵² Violence and exploitation marked the relationship that white mistresses had with their slaves. In chapter 2, I will discuss how white female domination continues to be a common theme between relationships with white and non-white Brazilians.

In 1871, the "Law of the Free Womb" was passed. Although abortion had yet to be legally abolished, this law freed children born to enslaved mothers. Martha Abreu explains, "It obliged slave owners to care for these children until the age eight. In exchange for whatever expenditure or inconveniences might be entailed in these responsibilities, slave owners could choose a state-funded indemnity of 600 *milreis* [a former unit of currency in used until 1940], in the form of thirty year bonds paying six per cent [*sic*]. Or they could employ these children (known as *ingênuos* –or free-born) until they reached the age of twenty-one."⁵³ Enslavers had the option to forfeit their economic responsibilities to the state and were financially rewarded. The Brazilian government's monetary compensation is like the practice of North American insurance companies that offered life insurance policies to ensure slave holders could protect their

⁵¹ Lamonte Aidoo, "The White Mistress and the Slave Woman," in *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 68.

⁵² Aidoo, "The White Mistress and the Slave Woman," 68.

⁵³ Martha Abreu, "Slave Mothers and Freed Children: Emancipation and Female Space in Debates on the 'Free Womb' Law, Rio de Janeiro, 1871," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 28, no. 3 (1996): 568.

commodities—their slaves.⁵⁴ Abreu highlights how Brazilian slave-owners felt betrayed by the language of this new law, particularly the “Free Womb” phrase. Thus, the Brazilian government listened to their concerns and started using euphemisms, such as “the tissue of the Servile Element or freedom for the unborn.”⁵⁵ This euphemism deployed by the Brazilian government foreshadowed how the country would decide to deal with the race problem.

The so-called “race problem” or “the Black question in Brazil” led to the gradual abolition of slavery. Jean M. Hébrard argues, “Portugal was one of the first European empires to make slavery the primary tool of its colonization of the Atlantic world” and it was the last Western country to abolish it.⁵⁶ In 1888, slavery was legally abolished with the passage of Lei Áurea (Golden Law). Brazil experienced a dilemma. On one hand, Brazilian elites were concerned about the Black image of Brazil, and on the other, they were concerned about the labor force shortage. In 1890, French anthropologist, Vacher de Lapouge, predicted by 1920 that Brazil would become “an immense black state, unless, as is probable, it reverts to barbarism.”⁵⁷ White Brazilians were eager to prove to the world that they were a civilized nation and elites deployed various tactics, such as anti-Black immigration policies and whitening strategies to inch closer to the Aryanzation of Brazil. Hébrard explains:

Brazilians created a unique variety of eugenics to specifically handle Brazil's ‘race problem’—the country's allegedly ‘inferior’ gene pool attributed to its large presence of Blacks and mulattoes. ‘Brazilian scholars used a theory of constructive miscegenation and proposed a solution of ‘whitening’ through the mixing of whites and nonwhites. Whitening, as prescribed by eugenicists, became the major basis of Brazil’s immigration policy. To facilitate the goal of

⁵⁴ North American banks also profited from the exploitation of slavery by allowing enslavers to use slaves as collateral. To learn more about this U.S. racist capitalist history, see Swarns, “Insurance Policies on Slaves,” *The New York Times*.

⁵⁵ Abreu, “Slave Mothers and Freed Children,” 571.

⁵⁶ Jean M. Hébrard, “Slavery in Brazil: Brazilian Scholars in the Key Interpretive Debates,” *Translating the Americas*, trans. by Thomas Scott-Railton, no.1 (2013): 48, doi:10.3998/lacs.12338892.0001.002.

⁵⁷ George Reid Andrews, “Brazilian Racial Democracy, 1900-90: An American Counterpoint,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 31, no. 3 (1996): 486.

“whitening” the country, Brazilian states implemented policies to recruit European settlement, in addition to financial incentives, while the federal government expressly barred African and Asian immigration.⁵⁸

Brazilian elites wanted to continue to have free (exploitable) labor despite the shifting global culture that was moving towards moral righteousness. Brazil’s formal institution of slavery lasted for nearly four hundred years.

“*A Questão Negra no Brasil*” (*The Black Question in Brazil*)⁵⁹

In the 1920s, Brazil was experiencing an identity crisis. After participating in nearly four hundred years of Black and Indigenous genocide, forced physical labor, and sexual violence, elites in Brazil were eager to prove to the world that the country was civilized and “pure.” Gilberto Freyre, a Brazilian sociologist, anthropologist, and historian who comes from a long lineage of Pernambuco sugar mill plantation owners, answered the elites’ call to addressing Brazil’s tarnished identity.⁶⁰ Freyre traveled to the U.S. to study sociology and anthropology at Baylor University in Waco, Texas first and then completed his masters at Columbia University in New York.⁶¹ Jonathan Michael Square notes in “Da Outra América: Gilberto Freyre’s Racial Formation in the United States,” “Freyre ended up in Waco, a conservative, racially segregated college town in central Texas” and his experience in a “racially-charged environment would

⁵⁸ Hébrard, “Slavery in Brazil,” 50.

⁵⁹ Lélia Gonzalez, “A Questão Negra no Brasil,” *Cadernos Trabalhistas* (1981): 60-6.

⁶⁰ Pernambuco is located in the Northeastern part of Brazil and was a major sugar producing region. During the nineteenth century, plantations in this region tended to be large and could exploit anywhere from forty to three-hundred slaves at a given location. Plantation owners in Pernambuco believed in free labor, and even after the abolition of slavery, employers continued to have a “high dependency” of “rural proletariat on the planter class.” Eisenberg, “Abolishing Slavery,” 580.

⁶¹ Jonathan Michael Square, “Da Outra América: Gilberto Freyre’s Racial Formation in the United States,” PDF file, accessed March 12, 2022, 51.

greatly shape his ideas of race.”⁶² It is evident in Freyre’s work that his travels shaped his scholarship.

In 1933, Freyre published a very controversial revisionist history of colonial Brazil—*Casa-Grande & Senzala: Formação da Família Brasileira sob o regime de economia patriarcal* *The Masters and the Slaves (Casa-Grande & Senzala): A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*), which romanticizes Portuguese colonists’ interactions with formerly enslaved individuals. Freyre’s book centers on the idea that Brazil is free from racism and racial discrimination because racial harmony existed during colonial Brazil between those in power (white Brazilians) and individuals who were controlled under the institution of slavery.⁶³ *Casa-Grande & Senzala* has many critics, such as Ian Carrillo, a researcher on the correlation between race and racist policies in different societies. In “Racialized Organizations and Color-Blind Racial Ideology in Brazil,” Carrillo discusses how the myth of racial democracy acts as a white supremacy shield from addressing race problems in Brazil and states, “Brazilian racial democracy portrays centuries of slavery and sharecropping through a nostalgic lens in which masters enjoyed cordial relations with enslaved peoples. Rather than abhorring the power inequalities inherent in the denial of human freedom, racial democracy romanticizes paternalistic relations.”⁶⁴ Much of Freyre’s scholarship pushed the narrative that race-relations equate to Brazilian exceptionalism.

⁶² Square, “Da Outra América,” 3.

⁶³ Freyre is the founding father of sociology in Brazil and would later coin “Lusotropicalism” which is a term that implies that, unlike other imperial powers at the time, Portugal was better or more humane at colonizing places. Filipe Carreira da Silva and Manuel Villaverde Cabral explain, “Lusotropicalism – the general account of the Portuguese-speaking world as a distinct civilizational unit based upon racial miscegenation, social assimilation and cultural integration – is developed iteratively.” da Silva and Cabral, “The Politics of the Essay Lusotropicalism,” 88.

⁶⁴ Ian Carrillo, “Racialized Organizations and Color-Blind Racial Ideology in Brazil,” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 7, no. 1 (January 2021): 58, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332649220943223>.

The racialized stereotype of Black women as being sexually available to white men has roots in the colonial Americas. Black women's bodies have historically been dehumanized and fetishized to justify enslavement and massive rape campaigns. In *The Masters and The Slaves*, Freyre provides a romanticized version of this history:

We almost all of us bear the mark of that influence. Of the female slave or 'mammy' who rocked us to sleep. Who suckled us. Who fed us, mashing our food with her own hands. The influence of the old woman who told us our first tale of ghost *bicho* [define]. Of the mulatto girl who relieved us of our first *bicho de pé* [define], of pruriency that was so enjoyable. Who initiated us into physical love and, to the creaking of a canvas cot, gave us our first complete sensation for being a man.⁶⁵

The "creaking of a canvas cot" distorts and oversimplifies the sexual violence that Black women experienced working for intimately white families. Elizabeth Farfan argues, "Freyre was a proponent of miscegenation as a positive social phenomenon. Unlike eugenicists, he believed that the Indigenous and black races were the most crucial components of the *mestiço*; he claimed that they were the ones that made possible the adaptation and survival of Europeans in the tropics."⁶⁶ Freyre shared a slightly different view on race relations in Brazil compared with most other white elites. For example, Freyre believed that miscegenation was integral in nation-building in Brazil, whereas his white counterparts believed the pseudoscience of "eugenics" as the most effective nation-building tool. The Brazilian social thinking of the 1930s was heavily influenced by Freyre's distorted harmonious and egalitarian depiction of racial interactions between "masters and slaves," which was constructed from his personal and intimate interactions with enslaved Black women.

⁶⁵ Gilberto Freyre, "The Negro Slave in The Sexual and Family Life of the Brazilian in The Masters and The Slaves," *The Masters and the Slaves: (Casa-Grande & Senzala) A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*, trans. by Samuel Putnam, 2D English language ed., rev ed., (New York: Knopf, 1956), 278.

⁶⁶ Elizabeth Farfan, "(Re)Membering the Quilombo: Race, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Recognition in Brazil" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2011), 35.

Race and racial categories were constructed differently in Brazil and the U.S. For example, in the U.S. there is a Black and white binary supported by an artificial percentage quota that legally classifies someone as Black—“the one drop rule.” In Brazil, where miscegenation was strongly supported, there are several ways to classify racial categories, such as “*mulattos*, product of the crossing of the White with the Black, [...] *mamelucos* or *caboclos*, product of the crossing of the White with the India, [...] *pardos*, product of the crossing of the three races but predominantly from the crossing of the mulatto and the Indian, or with *mamelucos caboclos*.”⁶⁷ Racial categories in the U.S. and Brazil have historically been used as tools of white supremacy. David Covin argues, “Racialized societies are societies that function as they do in large part because of the meanings they ascribe to race. Racialized societies are characterized by the highly significant meanings they give to race and the effects of these meanings give to the structures of society.”⁶⁸ Across the Americas, the meanings that have been placed on racial categories are overwhelmingly negative. White people globally have designed systems of oppression to maintain white domination. In Brazil, those in power believed socially, political, and economically whitening the Brazilian population would ensure Black people knew their place in society.

The history of racialized gender violence extends across the Black diaspora. It is imperative to study these dark histories from multiple perspectives because they give insight into how those most marginalized (i.e., Black, Brown, and Indigenous peoples) continue to be negatively impacted by the various ways white people placed and continue to hold themselves at the top of racial hierarchies by way of domination and violence. Many scholars have already

⁶⁷ Peter Fry, “The Politics of Racial Classification in Brazil,” *Journal de la Société des Américanistes*, 95-2 (2009): 277.

⁶⁸ Covin, *The Unified Black Movement in Brazil*, 9.

taken up the task of writing comparative histories on Brazil and the U.S. dating back to the 1800s.⁶⁹ These narratives are often told from the perspectives of men, Black and white. Missing from these converging stories are the perspectives of Black women. In the remainder of the chapter, I fill in Black women's diasporic comparative history gaps beginning with the re-telling of colonial U.S. history up until 1918.

*“Come Celebrate/ with Me that Everyday/ Something Has Tried to Kill Me/ and Has Failed”*⁷⁰

In 1607, Jamestown, Virginia became the first permanent settlement for the English colony in the “New World.” Historical inaccuracies would have many believe that encounters between English colonizers and Indigenous peoples in the “New World” were amiable, but this was not the case. When the English first arrived, they struggled with starvation because they were unfamiliar with the agricultural practices in this region of the world, and they relied heavily on the generosity of the Indigenous Powhatan peoples to supply them with food and basic survival skills. This relationship took an ominous turn once John Smith, the elected governor of Jamestown, and his men began treating the Powhatan people as inferior. Reginald Daniel notes, “English settlers in Anglo North America, like Portuguese settlers in Brazil and Spanish colonizers in the Caribbean, were unsuccessful at exploiting Native Americans as a captive labor force, unlike Spanish colonizers in Mexico and Peru.”⁷¹ Like other colonial powers at this time,

⁶⁹ Interestingly, the U.S. and Brazil have had a close relationship over the decades. According to the U.S. Department of States, “The United States and Brazil enjoy robust political and economic relations. The United States was the first country to recognize Brazil’s independence in 1822. As two of the largest democracies and economies in the Western Hemisphere, the United States and Brazil have a partnership that is rooted in a shared commitment to expand economic growth and prosperity; promote international peace, security, and respect for human rights; and strengthen defense and security cooperation.” “U.S. Relations With Brazil,” U.S. Department of State, September 7, 2021.

⁷⁰ Lucille, Clifton, “Won’t You Celebrate With Me,” lines 11-12.

⁷¹ Reginald G. Daniel, *Race and Multiraciality in Brazil and the United States: Converging Paths?*, (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 85.

England used part of the Doctrine, *terra nullius* (vacant lands), to seize possession of Indigenous land controlled by Chief Powhatan.

English settlers needed physical labor to be self-sufficient in Virginia and turned to different levels of servitude to work cash crops. One of these levels, indentured servitude, differs from slavery because it is a form of debt bondage where a contractual arrangement between two parties stipulates a temporary amount of time that an individual is to serve. Voyages to the “New World” were expensive which made emigration difficult from England to North America, so some people chose to exchange labor for servitude lasting anywhere between “five to eight years of voluntary labor,” Daniel notes.⁷² Another important aspect attached to debt bondage was that once an individual’s contract is completed there was an automatic acceptance into community membership. Indentured servitude would eventually help pave the way for the development of chattel slavery.

In the mid-1600s, white planters were concerned with how they would control the influx of Africans arriving in Virginia and believed systems were needed to develop a caste system not based on class but on race. They promulgated new laws that effectively racialized slavery by attaching the institution to “Blackness.” One such law enacted in 1662, Act XII states, “Negro womens children to serve according to the condition of the mother,” served the purpose of criminalizing womanhood and sexuality. The first half of the statute states, “WHEREAS some doubts have arrisen whether children got by any Englishman upon a negro woman should be slave or ffree, Be it therefore enacted and declared by this present grand assembly, that all children borne in this country shalbe held bond or free only according to the condition of the mother.”⁷³ If an enslaved woman were to give birth, her child(ren) became the property of her

⁷² Daniel, *Race and Multiraciality in Brazil and the United States*, 86.

⁷³ “Laws on Slavery,” Virtual Jamestown, accessed February 13, 2022.

white enslaver. Black women had no legal parental rights, and their children were often sold away from them. Not only did this law ensure the institution of slavery would continue to flourish, but it departed from the English tradition of passing status through patrilineage. This law served the interests of white plantation owners who benefited economically and morally because they did not have to legally claim their progenies if enslaved women gave birth to them. In Brazil, enslaved women's children remained under enslavers' authority and white men controlled how women mothered their children.

The second portion of Act XII is also important because it demonstrates the hypocrisy of white European men. Act XII states, "And that if any christian shall committ ffornication with a negro man or woman, hee or shee soe offending shall pay double the ffinnes imposed by the former act."⁷⁴ Unlike in Brazil where miscegenation was socially acceptable until after the abolition of slavery, it was considered taboo in British and North American colonies. One might believe this law was intended to deter white males from race-mixing with African women, especially with the added double fine punishment. However, the inclusion of "a negro man" confirms that this Act was to mostly criminalize the sexual behavior of white women. In fact, at the time this statute was created, nearly "one-quarter to one-third" of Afro-English children were born.⁷⁵ White servants and Africans often lived and worked in proximity with each other, and

⁷⁴ It is also important to highlight how quickly the English established laws to maintain chattel slavery. During the early stages of the Transatlantic slave trade, the English asserted that Christians could not be slaves. Therefore, many Africans converted to Christianity hoping that this would grant them freedom. A new law, 1667-ACT III, was created to prevent them from escaping bondage. It stated:

WHEREAS some doubts have risen whether children that are slaves by birth, and by the charity and piety of their owners made pertakers of the blessed sacrament of baptisme, should by vertue of their baptisme be made ffree; It is enacted and declared by this grand assembly, and the authority thereof, that the conferring of baptisme doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or ffreedome; that diverse masters, ffreed from this doubt, may more carefully endeavour the propagation of christianity by permitting children, though slaves, or those of greater growth if capable to be admitted to that sacrament." "Laws on Slavery," Virtual Jamestown.

⁷⁵ Some white women would receive a penalty of an extended seven year service or a "whipping at the public whipping posts." Their children would also be punished and made to serve "until thirty-one years of age." Ball, Seijas, et al. *As If She Were Free*, 91.

white planters grew increasingly concerned about the prospects of these two marginalized groups banding together to critique or undermine the social order. Early colonial governments decided to punish white women's sexual behavior to maintain white male domination. Initially, miscegenation was not an illegal practice but rather a morally shunned act. This changed when more concrete racial hierarchies were established between whites, poor whites, slaves, and free Black persons. Miscegenation between white enslavers/overseers and the enslaved posed little to no threat to the institution of slavery in the U.S. Daniel explains, "This patriarchy established an economic and political system as well as a cultural ideology, grounded in racial, gender, and class oppression. The social forces granted them [white men] the power to control the productive (and to some extent reproductive) labor of not only African American men but also African American and European women."⁷⁶ Thus, white men often evaded criminal punishment for engaging in miscegenation because they were the ones who designed and enforced the criminal justice system.

Despite having little say over their reproductive and productive rights, U.S. Black women—like enslaved Afro-Brazilian women—found ways to resist their white enslavers and the institution of slavery as a whole. One tool of resistance was through birth control. Liese M. Perrin points out that scholars have not devoted enough time to survey the different types of contraception enslaved populations in North America used. Perrin used edited life histories from oral interviews of formerly-enslaved individuals that were included in the 1920s and 1930s Works Progress Administration (WPA) work program, alongside outside archival material.⁷⁷ Perrin discovered many enslaved women used cotton roots to prevent pregnancies and notes,

⁷⁶ Daniel, *Race and Multiraciality in Brazil and the United States*, 91.

⁷⁷ For more perspective of the various types of women's resistance outside of the U.S., see "Women in Resistance," *Caribbean: Slavery and Resistance*, University of Miami.

“the use of contraception can be seen not only as a form of resistance, but also, a as form of strike, since reproduction was an important work role for most slave women.”⁷⁸ Cotton roots contain a poisonous pigment, gossypol, that if ingested negatively impacts fertility.⁷⁹ This gender-specific resistance in the Antebellum South was popular amongst enslaved women.⁸⁰ Angela Davis argues fertility control was one way enslaved women could assert their agency.⁸¹ As mentioned in the first half of the chapter, enslaved women’s reproductive resistance is a testament to their ability to survive during a time when their lives were easily disposable.

Interviews of formerly-enslaved individuals demonstrate how abortion, infanticide, and abstinence were not the only forms of “gynecological resistance” that enslaved Black women practiced. Perry demonstrates this through sharing an excerpt from William Byrd’s oral interview:

William Byrd, an ex-slave also from Texas believed that: “the negro race would have been depopulated cause all the negro womens they had become wise to this here cotton root. “He went on to describe the use of the cotton root, saying: “They would chew that and they would not give birth to a baby. All of their Masers sho’ did have to watch them, but sometimes they would slip out at night and get them a lot of cotton roots and bury them under their quarters.”⁸²

⁷⁸ Liese M. Perrin, “Resisting Reproduction: Reconsidering Slave Contraception in the Old South,” *Journal of American Studies* 35, no. 2 (2001): 256.

Perrin traces the possible origins of ingesting cotton as a form of birth control noting that Barbara Bush’s study on slave women in the Caribbean mentions “Among Mandingo women, the root of the cotton tree, which grew in abundance in parts of Africa, was used as an abortifacient during the first trimester of pregnancy. [...] Bush explains that although it is generally thought that African societies did not encourage birth limitation, it was practiced.” Perrin speculates that African women could have brought this knowledge with them when they were transported to the “New World.” Perrin, “Resisting Reproduction,” 258-9.

⁷⁹ Research on the effectiveness of gossypol as a contraception from the late 1980s indicates that when taken orally, gossypol inhibits the production and mobility of sperm. On the other hand, gossypol interferes with menstrual cycles. Perrin, 256.

⁸⁰ The histography on contraception dates as far back to the BC era. These examples include the following: “Barrier contraceptives such as plugs made from cedar gum and crocodile dung were used in Ancient Greece and Egypt. Suppositories and pessaries consisting of such varied substances as peppermint and honey were also commonly used. Oral contraceptives containing copper sulphate, as well as in Rome.” *Ibid.*, 259.

⁸¹ Cassia Roth, “From Free Womb to Criminalized Woman,” 273.

⁸² Perrin, “Resisting Reproduction,” 261.

Enslaved Black women were often forced to marry or “breed” for their masters and ingesting poisonous roots was one method of asserting agency over their bodies while also denying white enslavers the ability to capitalize off their wombs. Brazilian enslavers replenished their free labor with the continuous importation of slaves as the country was usually the first stop in the West. In contrast, U.S. enslavers mostly replenished their slave labor force through natural reproduction. This is not to argue that North American enslavers placed more value on Black life. It was simply more cost effective for them to have enslaved women increase their capital value. Stories of enslaved women using birth control as a form of resistance are present yet often unacknowledged in the herstories of Black women challenging systems put in place to dehumanize them.

Enslaved Black women have served as principal models for various ways women can assert their agency—even when systems put in place have been designed to specifically maintain their inferiority. Black women have always been imparters of resistance and have instilled this fighting spirit into those near them, especially their children. In “Fight, and if you can’t fight, kick; if you can’t kick, then bite,” the story of Fannie, an enslaved Black woman from Eden, Tennessee, attests to Black women’s innate ability to fight back.⁸³ Fannie’s story is told through the testimony of her daughter—Cornelia, nicknamed Puss. In the re-telling of an incident that occurred between Fannie and Mistress Jennings (their owner), Puss recalls her mother physically fight with the Mistress after she struck her. The two fought for nearly thirty minutes, and a nearby storekeeper had to separate the pair.⁸⁴ Puss explains the aftermath:

Pa heard Mr. Jennings say that Fannie would have to be whipped by law. He told ma. Two mornings afterward, two men came in at the big gate, one with a long lash in his hand. I was in the yard and I hoped they couldn’t find ma. To my

⁸³ Gerda Lerner, ed., “Fight, and If You Can’t Fight, Kick,” in *Black Women in White America: A Documentary History*, (Vintage books ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 34.

⁸⁴ Lerner, “Fight, and If You Can’t Fight, Kick,” 36-37.

surprise, I saw her running around the house, straight in the direction of the men. She must have seen them coming. I should have known that she wouldn't hide. She knew what they were coming for, and she intended to meet them halfway. She swooped upon them like a hawk on chickens. I believe they were afraid of her or thought she was crazy. One man had a long beard which she grabbed with one hand, and the lash with the other. Her body was made strong with madness. She was a good match for them.⁸⁵

Fannie was determined not to be whipped. She instilled these same attributes of self-worth, self-advocacy, and willpower into Puss reminding her “don't be abused, Puss.”⁸⁶ Stories of Black women's day-to-day resistance during slavery have been taken up by feminist successors. Take for example, Rebecca Hall's 2021 *Wake: The Hidden History of Women-Led Slave Revolts*, which offers a counter-narrative to archival documents that have overshadowed Black women's use of violence when resisting the institution of slavery. Hall's book provides an important counter-narrative to the archives, but it is American-focused. Other historians can collaborate with Hall and bring a global perspective, such as including Brazilian enslaved women's revolts and acts of rebellion into the narrative.

Enslaved Black women were ahead of the federal governments monumental changes that would legally grant freedom for all enslaved persons. The first initiative signed into law was the Emancipation Proclamation which states, ““all persons held as slaves' within the rebellious states 'are, and henceforward shall be free.’”⁸⁷ The Proclamation only applied to states above the 1920 Mason-Dixon line. A few years later, President Abraham Lincoln signed into law the Thirteenth Amendment that formally abolished slavery in all states. As noted above, Black Americans were

⁸⁵ Lerner, “Fight, and If You Can't Fight, Kick,” 37.

⁸⁶ Lerner, 38.

⁸⁷ “The Emancipation Proclamation,” National Archives, National Archives and Records Administration, January 28, 2022.

ahead of President Lincoln by participating in self-emancipation through running away or with rebellion.⁸⁸

*“Troublesome Presence”*⁸⁹

Eventually, the 13th Amendment was passed in 1865 which effectively abolished slavery throughout all the states.⁹⁰ However, Black Americans were not liberated from the deep-rooted attitudes that claimed their race was inferior to that of European’s definition of whiteness. Soon after abolition, America entered the Reconstruction period (1865-77) which granted certain rights to newly-freed Black Americans. This was a very deadly period for many in the South because there was a rise in white vigilantism. Many white Americans feared that if Black Americans acquired positions of power the Black population would inflict the same violence that had been directed towards them. Furthermore, poor whites did not want Black Americans to have access to the same rights that they had, such as voting and property ownership that would allow for greater social mobility. This is when America entered its first “white redemption” phase where what small rights that Black Americans gained began to disintegrate.

In “An Analytical History of Black Female Lynchings In The United States, 1838-1969,” David V. Baker and Gilbert Garcia make note of the understudied experiences of Black women and girls in lynching scholarship. They argue that it has been difficult for researchers to identify Black female lynchings because of gaps in historical records and have currently only confirmed

⁸⁸ To learn more about these individual and collective stories of women’s resistance, see Bell, “Self-Emancipating Women,” 1–22.

⁸⁹ Nikole Hannah-Jones, *The New York Times Magazine*, Caitlin Roper, Ilena Silverman, and Jake Silverstein. 2021, “Democracy,” in *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*, (New York: One World. 2021), 23.

⁹⁰ The 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution states, “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.” “13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Abolition of Slavery (1865),” National Archives, National Archives and Records Administration, February 8, 2022.

188 cases from 1838 to 1969. One such case is the story of Mary Turner in Lowndes County, Georgia. Mary and her husband, Haze “Hayes” Turner, worked together on a plantation where the owner, Hampton Smith, was known for his cruelty. In fact, Smith had to resort to convict leasing to supplement labor because many locals were aware of his brutality and exploitation of workers. On May 16, 1918, one field worker, Sidney Johnson, had enough of Smith’s mistreatment and shot into Hampton’s home killing him and injuring his wife. Initially, Johnson was able to flee and escape the mob that had formed to search for him. This was not the case for many Black people in the vicinity of the town. For the next few weeks, the mob lynched thirteen people and intimidated anyone who they suspected was involved in the murder of Smith. One person who the mob suspected was Hayes Turner.⁹¹ He was accused of plotting Smith’s murder after he threatened him after learning about how Smith beat his wife—Mary Turner. For two days, Turner’s body hung lifeless at the public lynching post.

Nineteen-year-old and, at the time, eight months pregnant Mary publicly proclaimed her husband’s innocence. The angry white mob then turned their attention to Mary for daring to challenge them publicly and declaring that she wanted to seek arrest warrants for those involved in her husband’s murder. An arrest warrant was issued out for her, and she was apprehended shortly after. On route to the local jail with the sheriff, Mary was abducted by that same mob. A leading civil rights activist and executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Walter White shared gruesome details about her lynching from the very individuals who were part of the mob:

Securely they bound her ankles together and, by them, hanged her to a tree. Gasoline and motor oil were thrown upon her dangling clothes; a match wrapped her in sudden flames. ‘Mister, you ought to’ve heard the nigger wench howl!’ a

⁹¹ David V. Baker and Gilbert Garcia, “An Analytical History of Black Female Lynchings In The United States, 1838-1969,” *Journal of Qualitative Criminal Justice & Criminology* (2019), <https://doi.org/10.21428/88de04a1.105517eb>.

member of the mob boasted to me a few days later as we stood at the place of Mary Turner's death. The clothes burned from her crispy body, in which, unfortunately, life still lingered, a man stepped towards the woman and, with his knife, ripped open the abdomen in a crude Caesarean operation. Out tumbled the prematurely born child. Two feeble cries it gave—and received for answer the heel of a stalwart man, as life was ground out of the tiny form. Under the tree of death was scooped a shallow hold. The rope about Mary Turner's charred ankles was cut, and swiftly her body tumbled into its grave. Not without a sense of humor or of appropriateness was some member of the mob. An empty whiskey-bottle, quart size, was given for headstone. Into its neck was stuck a half-smoked cigar—that had saved the delicate nostrils of one member of the mob from the stench of burning human flesh.⁹²

In spite of White's activism, Mary's story would later be overshadowed by the numerous lynching cases that happened to Black men and boys. In 1918, Missouri Congressman Leonidas Dyer introduced the Anti Lynching Bill after being pressured by the NAACP to make lynching a federal crime. Unfortunately, the bill passed the U.S. House of Representatives but failed repeatedly in the U.S. Senate.⁹³

Conclusion

In this chapter, I used a transnational perspective to explore the construction of modern day Brazil and the U.S. Both Brazil and the U.S. profited off the exploitation of free labor which led to these countries being able to afford to become independent from European rule but as a result of decades of committing human atrocities. I looked at slavery-era laws and highlighted points where Brazil and the U.S.'s histories diverge. For example, U.S. chattel slavery has always been a contested part of North American history, whereas slavery in Brazil was not (for the most part) viewed as inhumane. Unlike the U.S. where slavery was an issue from its very

⁹² Baker and Garcia, "An Analytical History," <https://doi.org/10.21428/88de04a1.105517eb>.

⁹³A map was submitted to Congress in 1922 to illustrate the need for federal intervention to stop mob justice and lynching. Out of the states listed on the map, Georgia has the most cases of lynching—429. To view this map, visit U.S. House of Representatives, "Red Record of Lynching Map," Map.

beginning and became a bitter point of contention in the Civil War, slavery was easily accepted by Brazil's Portuguese settlers whose long familiarity with slavery dates to the Moorish invasions. Thus, this is one reason why it took Brazil so long to officially abolish the practice. There have been several scholars from both countries who have already written extensive comparative histories, but many failed at discussing the interconnected experiences of enslaved Black women living under such harsh conditions. Additionally, another failing in these comparative histories is that scholars have only concentrated on one country. In the U.S., the conversation on slavery tends to focus on the experiences of enslaved Black men, particularly how they were unable to protect their families from the horrors of slavery. On the other hand, in Brazil, scholars give a lot of attention to Freyre's construction of racial democracy, forgetting to mention Freyre's connection with U.S. culture and politics.

Brazil's history demonstrates why Black women involved in the Civil Rights era understood race and gender must be in relation to another. The early forms of Black women's resistance highlighted in this chapter help to reveal why "Black feminists have been and are still demanding that the existence of racism must be acknowledged as a structuring feature of our relationships with white women. Both white feminist theory and practice have to recognize that white women stand in a power relation as oppressors of black women. This compromises any feminist theory and practice founded on the notion of simple equality."⁹⁴ Black women can point to no single oppression because of the way race and gender have been socially constructed in a manner to that continues to subjugate them to reoccurring themes of violence and exploitation.

⁹⁴ Hazel V. Carby, "White Women Listen!: Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood," in *Black British Culture and Society: A Text-Reader*, ed. by Kwesi Owusu, (London: Routledge, 2000), 83.

Chapter 2

“Some Things Cannot Be Separated”⁹⁵

The 1970s into the 1980s was an important time for Western Afro-descendant peoples as many continued to be at the bottom of material and social orders despite achieving political gains. For example, in the U.S., the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act contained pivotal anti-discrimination laws and affirmative action policies that prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion, national origin, gender, disability, and age. In Brazil, however, “separate but equal” laws based on race were not implemented. Instead, systemic racism manifested in other social barriers, such as “occupational segregation, fewer education opportunities, and different wages for similar jobs.”⁹⁶ The country’s long history of miscegenation created unique and complex racial categories. For example, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Bahia’s Black majority gave way to a new socially constructed racial category—*branco da Bahia* (Bahian white). This term defines someone who phenotypically looks Black but is “legally classified as white.”⁹⁷ Unlike what is experienced in the U.S., race in Brazil is what Stuart Hall refers to as a “sliding or floating signifier.” Racial classifications are often based on cultural and historical differences rather than in biological markers of difference. Hall argues racial meanings are created in societies in order to uphold and extend social and political hierarchies.⁹⁸ One’s

⁹⁵ Kenneth Williamson, “Some Things Cannot Be Separated: Intersectionality in the Lives of Black Women Activists in Salvador, Brazil,” *African and Black Diaspora: An International Journal*, 8:1 (2015): 98, doi:10.1080/17528631.2014.972702.

⁹⁶ Katarine Flor, “Racism and Sexism Make Black Women the Lowest-Paid Group in Brazil,” trans. Aline Scátola, ed. Julia Chequer, *Brasil de Fato*, accessed November 19, 2019.

⁹⁷ Lamonte Aidoo, “Social Whiteness: Black Intra-racial Violence and the Boundaries of Black Freedom,” in *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 115.

⁹⁸ Stuart Hall, “Race—The Sliding Signifier,” in *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation*, ed. Kobena Mercer (Harvard University Press, 2017), 33, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvqht03>.

racial categorization in Brazil is fluid, and it can change according to access to wealth and social prestige.

What sets this chapter apart from scholarship focusing on the construction of Black consciousness across the Americas is the hyper-focus on exploring where Black women fit into the Black radical and feminist political and intellectual traditions. I look to Jamaican-born Keisha-Khan Y. Perry for inspiration throughout this chapter. Perry's "The Groundings with my Sisters: Toward a Black Diasporic Feminist Agenda in the Americas" is an important article that takes an international lens to examine where Black women fit into the history of feminist and Black social movements. Perry asserts, "It remains a challenge for black diaspora and black feminist scholars in the U.S. to increase their knowledge of black women's thought and praxis throughout the Americas. Engaging black feminists in Latin America and allowing a black diasporic vision to emerge deepens black feminism's radical possibility of global sisterhood and the convergence of common struggles."⁹⁹ Following Perry's advice, the aim of this portion of the thesis is to disrupt hegemonic structures that classified identities outside of whiteness as being "other."

To construct this international dialogue, I use critiques from Black women involved in anti-racism and anti-sexism movements in both the U.S and Brazil during the 1970s and 80s, including primary and secondary scholarship to decenter the voices of Black men and white women. This will be done first by examining Brazilian and U.S. Black women's responses to racist structures and ideologies within their respective countries. This includes examining their roles in the rising Black Power movements taking place during the 1960s into the 1970s. Correspondingly, an analysis of disguised and overt racism(s) within the women's movements in

⁹⁹ Keisha-Khan Y. Perry, "The Groundings with My Sisters: Toward a Black Diasporic Feminist Agenda in the Americas," *The Scholar and Feminist Online* 7.2 (Spring 2009): Conclusion: Resisting Erasure.

Brazil and the U.S. created a double marginalized status for Black women. The goal of this chapter is to expand the boundaries of knowledges and histories of Afro-descendant women across the Americas to better understand their common experiences and divergent paths as they encountered both Black empowerment and feminist organizations.

“*The Black Woman: Where Does She Stand?*”¹⁰⁰

To better understand Black women’s social and political activism in Brazil. In this section, I provide a brief history of the rise of Black consciousness groups in the 1970s. During the height of Getúlio Vargas’s military dictatorship (1965-1985), a strong emphasis on “national unity and economic progress” promoted the myth of racial democracy.¹⁰¹ In contrast to their white counterparts, Afro-Brazilians did not experience the same economic progress and nor did they possess an overall positive view towards a Brazilian identity because it erased their culture. Brazilian sociologist Florestan Fernandes argues, “racial democracy was a myth that served the purposes of holding blacks responsible for their own social, political, and economic backwardness, as well as in exempting whites from their responsibility in the social development of blacks.”¹⁰² Brazilian white elites falsely attributed Afro-Brazilians’ inability to improve their social standing to their class and culture rather than their race. The legacy of slavery and the myth of racial democracy have made research on reliable sets of socioeconomic data based on color difficult to locate in Brazil. It was not until the 1980s that social scientists with the support of the Ford Foundation were able to analyze the 1976 National Household Surveys (PNAD)

¹⁰⁰ Lélia Gonzalez, “A Mulher Negra na Sociedade Brasileira,” *O Lugar Da Mulher Negra: Estudos Sobre a Condição Feminina na Sociedade Atual.*, Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Graal. no.1 (1982): 5-45.

¹⁰¹ Elizabeth Farfan, “(Re)Membering the Quilombo: Race, Ethnicity, and the Politics of Recognition in Brazil” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2011), 28.

See chapter 1 for a detailed explanation on the myth of racial democracy.

¹⁰² Farfan, “(Re)Membering the Quilombo,” 36.

along with previous census records to support arguments highlighting the significance of race in perpetuating social and economic inequality.¹⁰³

In the 1970s, an *abertura democrática* (democratic political opening) gave rise to a revitalized Black consciousness movement.¹⁰⁴ Farfan explains how numerous racial identification and cultural freedom spaces, such as “*candomblé terreiros* (Afro-religion houses of worship), capoeira groups, samba schools, and new social groups focused around black theatre, art, music, and research became havens for black social life.”¹⁰⁵ Simultaneously, the revitalized Black cultural movement was viewed as less threatening to military authorities, as it allowed Black Brazilians to create affirming activities rooted in African cultural expressions. The goal within many of these Black cultural organizations was to reconstruct what it meant to be an Afro-Brazilian outside of the color-blind “one-race” Brazilian identity.

Since the passage of the Golden Law in 1888, Afro-Brazilians have been actively working towards constructing a stronger sense of racial solidarity between Black people and “mulattoes” because socially-constructed racial categories create divisions between people. For example, in the latter part of the 1880s a secret society, the *Guarda Negra* (Black Guard), was founded in Rio de Janeiro post-abolition to overcome “invidious distinctions” that “prevented traditional [Black] organizations” from unifying to advocate for social and economic reform.¹⁰⁶ White Brazilians sought to undermine Afro-Brazilian political unity and used miscegenation and the notion of a homogenized national identity to undermine the strength of radical Black movements. As noted in chapter 1, there are several ways to categorize race and ethnicity in

¹⁰³ Reginald G. Daniel, *Race and Multiraciality in Brazil and the United States Converging Paths?*, (University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), 188-9.

¹⁰⁴ Daniel, *Race and Multiraciality*, 185.

¹⁰⁵ Farfan, “(Re)Membering the Quilombo,” 38.

¹⁰⁶ Daniel, *Race and Multiraciality*, 57.

Brazil. Black Brazilians in the twentieth century forged a “new” Afro-Brazilian identity replacing categories, such as *pardo* and *preto* with *negro*.

Much of the “new” Afro-Brazilian identity was influenced by the political struggles occurring in Northern hemispheric Black communities. The 1960s Civil Rights Movement and the 1970s Black nationalist organizations in the US embraced a Pan-Africanist consciousness—an African or Black identity that transcended national and hemispheric boundaries. For example, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) incorporated Pan-Africanism into its political framework. Historian Carol Anderson during an interview noted, “[The NAACP] understood that white supremacy as an organizing principle was a global phenomenon. And so that phenomenon was the one that propped up Jim Crow, was also the one that propped up colonialism. And so if you took it down in the United States but left it standing everywhere else, you hadn’t done the work, because the work for freedom was a global struggle.”¹⁰⁷ One solution to challenge white supremacy was to increase transnational dialogues between those living in the Black diaspora.

As previously mentioned in the Introduction, language barriers have and continue to prevent the exchange of intellectual, social, political, and cultural dialogues between American and Brazilian Black activists. However, images are just as powerful at evoking messages. Leigh Raiford documents the power of images and suggests that they have historically been used by activists as a tool of resistance. Raiford claims photography can “challenge dominant representations of African Americans as ignorant, poor, and unfit for citizenship.” At the same time, other images can be used “to visually assert an image of worth, dignity, and self-

¹⁰⁷ Emerson Sykes, “The Racist Reality of Voter Suppression,” in *At Liberty* Podcast, audio transcript, 4:24, accessed April 13, 2022.

possession.”¹⁰⁸ Part of the liberation process for many Black Americans was to place an emphasis on pride by celebrating Black culture and embracing African heritage. The numerous photos of Black Panther Party members protesting police violence and state oppression across America in the 1970s demonstrates this shift in Black consciousness. David Covin explains how Afro-Brazilians were influenced by these radical images: “The civil rights movement. The Black *Power* movement. Malcolm X. The Black Panthers. These things were going on in the U.S.A. They were explicitly political. The music, the films, came from this creative, explosive *black* population. Brazilians dancing in the clubs, strutting on the streets, partook on the Spirit drifting southward from their northern cousins. Race was giving them a new attitude.”¹⁰⁹ Black activists in Brazil placed a positive value on Blackness and this threatened the alleged anti-Brazilian phenomenon of race.

Brazilian scholar and political activist, Maria Beatriz do Nascimento (1942–1995), discusses how Black Americans helped foster her Black consciousness after witnessing Tommie Smith and John Carlos raise their fists during the medal ceremony at the 1968 Mexico City Olympics:

In Rio in 1968 the moment was June, not May. June saw the great marches of the Student Movement, as well as the anti-racist mobilisations and anti-war movement in the United States of America. In August, a single moment at the Olympic games in Mexico captured the attention of the world's press. The gold medal winning athlete (American, Black) and his team-mate, the bronze medalist, took to the podium and raised their left fists, in the symbol of the Black Panthers. With this gesture they refused to receive their prizes. It was a negation of North American nationality. It was the most searing image I had ever seen. I stopped in the street when I saw it in my hands, on the cover of the magazine *Fatos e Fotos* [Facts and Photos].

¹⁰⁸ Leigh Raiford, “Introduction,” in *Imprisoned in a Luminous Glare: Photography and the African American Freedom Struggle*, 1st ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 9.

¹⁰⁹ Covin, *The Unified Black Movement in Brazil*, 52.

At that moment I abandoned all my bourgeois projects. It was as if I had found an imaginary *Exit* from the March of the One Hundred Thousand.¹¹⁰ At that moment I became conscious of my Blackness and the extent to which I could really start all over again. My political activism began then, with the militancy of the Black Movement. In truth, these were the first stirrings towards a social change that was beginning to crystallise in every continent of the world, no longer in the *Imaginary*, but in the *Real*. This is a GREAT quote. It perfectly communicates just how exciting, confronting and radical these times were and what impact they had on her.¹¹¹

Nascimento, along with other members of the Black diaspora, received Smith and Carlos's message to embrace racial pride alongside the importance of standing in solidarity with those impacted by the negative history of colonization around the globe. For centuries, Afro-Brazilians had been taught to distance themselves from their African ancestry. This has been the case across the Americas and even in parts of Africa. In Brazil, Black people were encouraged to disassociate from their Black heritage through social whitening (i.e., miscegenation or assimilation into a white identity). Lamonte Aido argues that white Brazilians "pandered to blacks' desire to belong, and, more importantly, appeared to make the dream of acceptance and first-class citizenship a possibility."¹¹² Racial gatekeeping worked in whites' favor as a way of maintaining their power in a predominantly black nation. White Brazilians controlled who could pass for white and under what terms. Transracial tokenism also promoted the myth of racial democracy and was used as a scapegoat to explain away inequalities between white and non-white Brazilians. Black individuals were blamed for not achieving class mobility—instead of the systems in place that maintained unequal racial hierarchies—with whites on the top.

¹¹⁰ During the 1960s, many Latin American protests were organized throughout Central and South America to protest brutal dictatorship, censorship, and corruption. The largest of these protests (and noted as being one of the most peaceful ones) happened on June 26, 1968, in Rio de Janeiro—One Hundred Thousand. Nearly 100,000 college students, faculty members, workers, and activists gathered to protest the Brazilian military dictatorship. Zubair, "The March," StMU Research Scholars.

¹¹¹ Christen Smith and Archie Davies, "'In Front of the World': Translating Beatriz Nascimento," *Antipode*, 53 (2021): 307, <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12690>.

¹¹² Aido, "Social Whiteness: Black Intra-racial Violence and the Boundaries of Black Freedom," in *Slavery Unseen: Sex, Power, and Violence in Brazilian History*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 119.

Brazilian activist, Abdias do Nascimento (no relation to Beatriz Nascimento), used stories of resistance from slavery to defend Black Brazilians' personal and historical identities.¹¹³ Much of the history that has been written about Afro-Brazilians in academia was told by oppressors. In “Quilombismo: An Afro-Brazilian Political Alternative,” Nascimento argued the need for Afro-Brazilians to formulate their own scientific knowledge outside of European and Euro-Brazilian concepts that served the purpose of further dehumanizing Black people. One solution in re-telling the history of Afro-Brazilians was through locating the various ways self-definition and self-determination has been constructed. Nascimento explained how, “Quilombos were the result of this vital exigency for enslaved Africans, to recover their liberty and human dignity through escape from captivity, organizing viable free societies in Brazilian territory.”¹¹⁴ Quilombos were a collective approach towards liberation. In comparison, quilombos are the equivalent of maroon communities which existed in other parts of the Americas.

Abdias do Nascimento’s groundbreaking scholarship on quilombos continued this conversation of liberation by coining the term “quilombismo,” which he defines as a nationalist movement that “teaches us that every peoples struggle for liberation must be rooted in their own cultural identity and historical experience.”¹¹⁵ Nationalism is loosely defined as an “identification with one's own nation and support for its interests, especially to the exclusion or detriment of the interests of other nations.”¹¹⁶ However, Nascimento’s interpretation of

¹¹³ Beatriz Nascimento’s activism extended beyond the confines of academia, and she was a member of one of the most recognizable Black consciousness groups in Brazil, The United Black Movement, that centered the quilombist tradition. Nascimento believes quilombos were “a place where liberty was practiced, where ethnic and ancestral ties were reinvigorated” and declares that quilombos exercised a “fundamental role in the historical consciousness of the Black people.” Alex Ratts, who authored a biography on Nascimento, argues that Nascimento’s theoretical contributions towards this form of the Black radical tradition in Brazil through a gendered perspective is undervalued and understudied. Nascimento, “Quilombismo,” 155.

¹¹⁴ Abdias do Nascimento, “Quilombismo: An Afro-Brazilian Political Alternative,” *Journal of Black Studies* 11, no. 2 (1980): 151.

¹¹⁵ Nascimento, “Quilombismo,” 155.

¹¹⁶ “Definition of nationalism,” Oxford English Dictionary, accessed April 6, 2022.

nationalism is one that “rejects Western social models of nationalism. [...] Freeing all oppressed peoples of the world and rejects conforming to Western notions of liberation.”¹¹⁷ Many Afro-Brazilians adopted the quilombist tradition in their organizing, especially during the 1970s to search for solutions to create a more equitable and just society for all oppressed communities in Brazil and beyond. For example, Black activists pushed the government to formally recognize slave-era quilombos as claimable land for descendants of slavery in 1988. This was an important initial step in Brazilian policy because Afro-Brazilian and Brazilian Indigenous peoples have historically participated in decades of grassroots organizing trying to achieve collective land and citizenship rights. Rather than accepting the narrative that Afro-descendant and Indigenous peoples are passive in their oppression, scholarship from Afro-Brazilians and historians reveal marginalized peoples in Brazil have a long history of coming together to form movements that advocate for basic human rights (i.e., territorial rights and political representation).

The *Unified Movement Against Racial Discrimination* (MUCDR) was founded on July 7, 1978, in São Paulo by a group of activists.¹¹⁸ It later changed its name to *Movimento Negro Unificado* (Unified Black Movement/MNU), and it stands out from other Black nationalist organizations because it formally recognizes the importance of eliminating race and class discrimination. Other Black nationalist movements were concerned with addressing problems related to the racial integration of Afro-Brazilians and they usually operated independently at a statewide or regional capacity. One of the founding members of MNU, Lélia Gonzalez, explained, “The MNU differs radically from the FNB [*Frente Negra Brasileira*] and the TEN

¹¹⁷ Nascimento, “Quilombismo,” 155.

¹¹⁸ Noted as the first Black civil rights movement in Brazil, there were two events that ignited the MNU’s formation. The first was the torture and assassination of Robson Silveira da Luz by the 44th Police District in Guaianazes on April 28, 1978. While in his bed dying, Luz repeated, “They have deprived me of my dignity.” The second event is attributed to the dismissal of four Black male children from Tietê Yacht Club’s volleyball team because of their race. The MNU stood against police brutality, systemic racism, and the continued subordination of Black people beyond the Brazilian border. Gonzalez, “The Black Movement Unified,” 123.

[*Teatro Experimental do Negro*] in that it does not have a leader with power to control the destiny of the organization.”¹¹⁹ MNU members insisted that they were not just forming an organization, but that they were creating a unity comprised of individuals from other Black organizations into a *movimento* (a movement).

Gonzalez provided one of the most detailed summaries of the early years of MNU activity. In describing the organizational frameworks and means of action, Gonzalez stated, “The MNU defines itself as a political movement of revindication, without any distinction of race, sex, education, or political or religious belief, and without seeking profit. Its objective consists in the mobilization and organization of the Brazilian Black population in its fight for political, social prejudice and its practices.”¹²⁰ MNU members believed the movement needed to be non-racialized to eliminate racial oppression and exploitation that began in Brazil’s colonial era. To help eliminate discrimination within the MNU movement, all members were required to actively participate in campaigns, such as repealing “legislation which criminalizes gays and prostitutes” and “supporting legislation which provides preferential employment for women and gays, the extension of all rights, particularly to women—to the point of advantaging them.”¹²¹ The MNU saw the importance of humanizing individuals who society has cast aside and the organization placed value on them regardless of class, race, sexuality, and lifestyle choices.

¹¹⁹ Lélia Gonzalez, “The Black Movement Unified: A New Phase of Black Political Mobilization,” in *Race, Class, and Power in Brazil*, ed. Pierre-Michel Fontaine, (Caas Special Publication Series, 7. Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, 1991), 126.

The *Frente Negra Brasileira* (Brazilian Black Front, FNB) was a political party that formed in 1931 and it was active until 1937. It advocated for the economic advancement of Afro-Brazilians as well as it worked towards rebuilding a more respectable image of Blackness. The *Teatro Experimental do Negro* (Black Experimental Theater, TEN) was founded by Abdias do Nascimento in 1944 in Rio de Janeiro. TEN was a theatrical group, a literary group, and a newspaper publisher among other Black cultural enriching activities. To learn more about the FNB and TEN, see Covin, *The Unified Black Movement in Brazil*; Franklin, “Building from and Moving Beyond the State,” Gonzalez, “The Black Movement Unified,” 120-134.

¹²⁰ Gonzalez, 126.

¹²¹ Covin, *The Unified Black Movement in Brazil*, 111.

Despite advocating for the advancement of women's and "homosexual rights," the MNU was not free from misogyny or homophobia. Jessica Franklin conducted extensive research on Afro-Brazilian women's identity formation and collective mobilizing around race and gender. She argues, "In principle, the MNU was committed to the recognition and elimination of the 'sexual, economic and social exploitation of the Black woman' and welcomed women [...] to join the membership and leadership ranks."¹²² In reality, once women joined MNU, they were placed in supportive rather than leadership roles. Franklin explains, "once they became members of the organization, women were gradually moved to behind the scenes and were expected to complete secretarial and organizational tasks."¹²³ Many Black men exhibited *machismo* attitudes (a Latin American term used to describe exaggerated masculinity that can be aggressive and dominant) and were unwilling to share power with Black women. Several Black men viewed Black women as rivals rather than equals within the MNU. Further along in this chapter is a discussion on how this same misogynistic attitude or *machismo* was witnessed in U.S. Black anti-racism movements.

Several female activists across the Americas have posited that Black male activists have been reluctant to address gender discrimination because many wished to maintain power and privilege within anti-racism movements. Take, for example, an interview with a former MNU member, Sara, who explained that despite the movement rallying around Black unity, Black male activists endorsed sexist behavior:

When you look at the struggles and conflicts between black men and women, you see striking differences because of the fact that the black man does not want to lose the power and space that he has. At that moment, he forgets that the black woman is in front of him; he does not divide power or space. They want you as a comrade, as a black person who wants other people to come to consciousness as

¹²² Jessica H. Franklin, "Building from and Moving Beyond the State: The National and Transnational Dimensions of Afro-Brazilian Women's Intersectional Mobilization" (M.A., University of Western Ontario, 2013), 104-105.

¹²³ Franklin, "Building from and Moving Beyond the State," 105.

black people, yet they construct barriers between us. In disputing power, the black man becomes the opposition, at times the enemy of black women.¹²⁴

Sara asserted that responses to racism and sexism cannot be separated and the failure to recognize this leads to the misconception that Black women were the true enemy rather than white supremacy. Another female activist, Zete, provided insight into the various ways Black men discriminated against Black women in the MNU: “When we raise an issue about black women, they say well that’s not true. They dismiss the words of women around the table. They assume that men always have to be in leadership and not women. When a woman speaks, you can tell that the men turn their heads.”¹²⁵ Akin to how white masters masked enslaved women when they were confronted with uncomfortable truths, some Black male activists curbed complaints brought to them by their female counterparts. Gender politics within the MNU was reflective of the wider Brazilian culture that embraces the subordination of all women.

Black women in Brazil faced a unique experience when it came to their autonomy. What women faced was either invisible to men, misunderstood, or viewed as being less important. In 1985, the MNU Women’s Group presented at the fifth meeting for Black Brazilians located in North and Northeastern regions of the country. This was held in Salvador. The panel, called “The Black Woman in Society,” addressed the connection between birth control and forced sterilization to racism and how international imperial powers, such as the U.S., were utilizing these tools of mass genocide.¹²⁶ An article titled, “Birth Control and Sterilization Equal Racism,” states, “Here in Brazil, ob/gyns became international instruments for using Black and non-white

¹²⁴ Williamson, “Some Things Cannot Be Separated,” 98.

¹²⁵ Williamson, 96.

¹²⁶ Forced sterilization is not unique to Brazil. Black and Women of Color throughout the Americas have experienced lack of autonomy over their reproductive rights. This is especially true for Indigenous women. To read more about other Latin American and Caribbean women’s lack of access to reproductive rights, see Azize-Vargas and Avilés, “Abortion in Puerto Rico,” 56-65; Davis, “The Historical Context,” 21–23; Hevia and Constantin, “Gendered Power Relations and Informed Consent,” 197–203.

women as guinea pigs, testing birth control methods that were prohibited outside the country, prescribing them for their victims. They've received substantial funding from international organizations and domestic nazis."¹²⁷ Due to the sizeable sterilizations happening to Afro-Brazilian women, Black men adopted a *pró-natalismo* (pro-birth) stance creating other issues, such as economic misery for women.¹²⁸ Some Afro-Brazilian men believed in a genocidal conspiracy, which had some truth in the motivation behind sterilizing Black women. In this sense, Black women became mothers of the nation repeating slave-era policies that either made them responsible for hindering or contributing to the progress of the modernization of Brazil.

Black women who participated in the emerging Black movements consistently found that their concerns about gender discrimination were not being addressed. Afro-Brazilian women were not viewed as equals in male-dominated Black movements' organizations around anti-racism. In the 1970s, many Afro-Brazilian women became leaders within MNU, organizing to call attention to not only racism but sexism and homophobia in Brazilian culture. The first National Congress meeting for the MNU held in Caxias, Rio de Janerio, sponsored a discussion Black women's status in society became a focal point of the meeting. Gonzalez explains, "We finally approved a resolution on what might be called "double militancy." This means that externally our priority is the struggle against racial discrimination. On this level, women are side by side with their brothers. Internally, however, women's activities will be directed towards

¹²⁷ Covin, *The Unified Black Movement in Brazil*, 111.

¹²⁸ This concern is analyzed well by Sônia Beatriz dos who argues, "Oftentimes, the Brazilian media reproduces information that labels black women and families as the root cause of the country's violence, poverty, underdevelopment, disease epidemics, among other socioeconomic problems. This gendered racial discourse with regard to black women explicitly suggests that the government should create programs and policies to prevent poor women from having too many children. The images that appear in the media represent black women and families as in need of state control through public health policies and programs such as sterilization and birth control that primarily target the black population." dos Santos, "Controlling Black Women's Reproductive Health Rights," 13-30.

denouncing the *machismo* of our comrades and deepening discussions about ourselves.”¹²⁹ Black women involved in activism understood the complexity of how sexism and racism intersected to create violent conditions for women. In this next section, Afro-Brazilian women’s participation and exclusion in Brazilian feminism will be discussed because to truly understand the status of Black women, it is important recognize that some things cannot be separated, such as the intersection of race, class, gender, and sexuality.

*“Being black and a woman in Brazil, we repeat, is being [the] object of triple discrimination, as the stereotypes generated by racism and sexism place her at the lowest level of oppression.”*¹³⁰
— Lélia Gonzalez

Several Afro-Brazilian women and scholars on Black women’s diasporic history from the global South have noted that Black women’s journey to feminism is from their participation in Black consciousness groups and their involvement in national, regional, and international conferences focused on Black and “Third World” women’s oppression.¹³¹ Grassroots movements on anti-racism and anti-sexism have informed Afro-Brazilian women’s interpretation of feminism. Differences in social experiences caused divisions between white and Black Brazilian women in the feminist movement. Caldwell notes, “On the surface, it seemed that Black and White Brazilian women should be able to unite and find common cause around their experiences and oppression as women, the differences between them became sources of conflict and division

¹²⁹ Gonzalez, “The Black Movement Unified,” 129-30.

¹³⁰ Waddell Doris Gilliam, “I Have to Know Who I Am’: An Africana Womanist Analysis of Afro-Brazilian Identity in the Literature of Miriam Alves, Esmeralda Ribeiro and Conceição Evaristo” (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2013), 34.

¹³¹ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, a specialist in postcolonial and transnational feminist theory building, uses her political, historical, and intellectual location as a “Third World” feminist to describe “Third World” women. Mohanty states, “Third World” women as being “[of] African, Caribbean, Asian, and Latin American descent, and native peoples of the U.S. [It] also refers to ‘new immigrants; to the U.S. in the last decade—Arab, Korean, Thai, Laotian, etc.” “Third World” women became a popular phrase in the 1980s because Western feminists wanted to create new ways of connecting with women from diverse backgrounds and to describe the experiences of women who fit outside of Black/white racial binaries. Mohanty, “Cartographies of Struggle,” 7.

within the Brazilian women's movement.”¹³² These conflicts primarily consisted of different views on the definition of womanhood, reproductive health, and economic exploitation. Afro-Brazilian women once again felt displaced in a movement intended to give them a greater sense of agency. White Brazilians championed a singular focus in the women’s movement, similar to their Northern counterparts by believing the root of all women’s oppression was patriarchy. In this section, I will be exploring how the conceptualization of the modern women’s movement in Brazil, beginning in the 1970s and extending into the 1980s, failed to recognize how race, gender, class, and sexuality are interconnected.

Aparecida Sueli Carneiro Jacoel, best known as Sueli Carneiro, is an Afro-Brazilian activist and founder of *Geledés — Instituto da Mulher Negra* (Geledés — Black Women's Institute), and a leading scholar of Black women’s history in Brazil. In “Women in Movement,” Carneiro argued, “The Brazilian women’s movement is one of the most respected women’s movements in the world. [...] It is also one of the best-performing social movements in the country.”¹³³ According to Carneiro, women in Brazil have made significant progress in achieving more constitutional rights for women, such as advocating for gender equality and demanding the end of gender discrimination against women. Despite making these advances in gender equality in Brazil, Black and Indigenous women were slow to experience the same rights. One example is the pathway to Brazilian women’s right to vote. In 1934, Brazilian women won voting rights, but it was not until 1989 that those rights extended to people who were not literate. In those 55 years, most Afro-Brazilian women were ineligible because of their relative impoverishment and lack of access to school. The Brazilian national feminism (white) perspective caused Black women

¹³² Kia Lilly Caldwell, “Racialized Boundaries: Women's Studies and the Question of ‘Difference’ in Brazil,” *Journal of Negro Education* 70, no. 3 (2001): 224.

¹³³ Sueli Carneiro and Camargo Regina, “Women in Movement,” *Meridians: Feminism, Race, Transnationalism* 14, no. 1 (2016): 30, doi:10.2979/meridians.14.1.03.

involved in the movement to point out these contradictions. Epifania Akosua Amoo-Adare explains, “[T]he [Brazilian] women's movement ignores the fact that around 50 percent of Brazilian women are black with the majority of them living in poverty, and has so far neglected the inequality of opportunity which exists between black and white women in all spheres of social, economic and political life.”¹³⁴ Black women in Brazil continue to experience extreme income inequality gaps; and scholars, such as Gonzalez, attribute these disparities to the continued subordination of Black women into lower-paying positions.

Since the 1970s, new critiques of the racialized gender differences between white and non-white women in Brazil have emerged. Scholars examining Brazilian labor markets recognized the importance of analyzing the interconnected experiences of race, gender, and class as they often reveal inequalities in Latin American labor markets. One such study used census records from São Paulo and found race-based gaps in the labor market. In particular, the study noted that based on their salaries Afro-Brazilian women continue to be one of the most disadvantaged groups in the labor market.¹³⁵ For example, in 1980 under the “Domestic” occupational category, white women labored at 15.4%. In contrast, Afro-Brazilian women dominated the domestic labor market at 37.9%.¹³⁶ Historically, Black women’s socioeconomic status has been associated with domestic work. Afro-Brazilian women have since occupied a precarious position in the labor market because they continue to earn meager wages while their white female counterparts are able to achieve social and economic mobility largely as a result of feminist activism that relies on Black women’s labor. For more context, Caldwell explains, “In

¹³⁴ Epifania Akosua Amoo-Adare, “Exploding the Myth of Racial Harmony: The Afro-Brazilian Female Experience,” *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 30, no 2-3 (2004): 96.

¹³⁵ Peggy A. Lovell, “Race, Gender, and Work in São Paulo, Brazil, 1960-2000,” *Latin American Research Review* 41, no. 3 (2006): 71.

¹³⁶ To read more about the racialized gendered stratification of Brazilian labor markets and to view the full occupational distribution chart, see Lovell, “Race, Gender, and Work in São Paulo,” 63–87.

Brazil, domestic work is a structuring element of social economic relations. Many white women were pursuing social and gender liberation. And this alleged liberation was achieved at the expense of another woman, a black woman, being put in the condition of a worker inside the house.”¹³⁷ White women disproportionately have a socioeconomic advantage in Brazil because systems have been designed to maintain white domination, and this reveals the racialized and gendered nature of poverty.¹³⁸

Intellectual scholar, Lélia Gonzalez pointed out how Afro-Brazilian women have been racialized differently than white women because of the history of Brazilian slavery, especially through negative controlling images of Black womanhood. Gonzalez described three prominent racist stereotypes attached to Black women: “the *mulata*, the *doméstica*, and the *mãe preta*” and asserted these images are the reason why Black women continue to experience such disparities in Brazil’s contemporary moment.¹³⁹ Even with the passage of the Golden Law, little has changed in the socio-economic conditions for Afro-Brazilian women. Gonzalez argued:

The exploitation of black women as sexual objects is something that is much greater than the Brazilian feminist movements think or say. These movements are generally led by white middle-class women. For example, “*senhoras*” [a married Portuguese of Brazilian woman] still exist who seek to hire pretty young black women to work in their homes as domestics. But the main goal is to have their

¹³⁷ Caldwell, “Racialized Boundaries,” 224.

¹³⁸ Beatriz Nascimento has made important “interventions about gender and Blackness. In 1976 she had written, for the journal *Ultima Hora* in Rio de Janeiro, a piece called ‘A Mulher Negra no Mercado do Trabalho’ [The Black woman in the Labour Market] in which she associated gender oppression with histories of colonialism and slavery.” Our understanding of this important aspect of Black Brazilian feminism will remain incomplete as long as this and documents like this are not translated. has yet to be translated into English. Smith and Davies, “In Front of the World,” 285.

¹³⁹ Translator notes: “‘*Mulata*’ has two meanings. The first, more traditional, of a woman descended from a person of African origin and one of European origin. The other, developed by the author, highlights the strong sexual connotation that is central to the stereotype attached to the ‘*mulata*’ in Brazilian history and culture. For this reason, we decided not to translate the term to ‘*mulatto* woman’ or ‘*mulatta*.’ ‘*Doméstica*’ is a common name used for housemaids who do household cleaning and organizing activities, and often take care of the children as well.’ ‘*Mãe preta*’ (Black mother) was the name given to enslaved Black women who fulfilled the functions of care and wet nurse of White children during the period of enslavement, similar to the ‘mammy’ figure in the US.” Gonzalez, “Racism and Sexism in Brazilian Culture,” 148; Gilliam, “‘I Have to Know Who I Am,’” 40.

sons be initiated sexually with them. This is just one more example of economic-sexual superexploitation . . . in addition to perpetuating myths about the special sensuality of black women.¹⁴⁰

Enslaved Black women were expected to fulfil all kinds of roles inside white homes. Gonzalez hypothesized that Afro-Brazilian women are “locked into dichotomous roles of domestic and *mulata*” and are unable to escape this reality because white elites accept Black women’s location as being “hidden, invisible, in the kitchen.”¹⁴¹ Scholars of Black women’s history in Brazil reveal overwhelming evidence that “black women are symbolically and practically associated with domestic work.”¹⁴² Afro-Brazilians’ devalued status in society is also reflected in their position within feminist leadership. Franklin explains how “the low status positions frequently accorded to black women within feminist organizations and overwhelming presence of black domestic workers in the homes of white middle class members served as further evidence of the penetration of racial hierarchies.”¹⁴³ Several white feminists were reluctant to address any racial hierarchies in society as they directly benefited from exploiting Black women. Some of these same “superexploitations” continue even in the twentieth century for Black female domestic workers.

Divisions between white and Black Brazilian women were formally recognized in 1975 during the United Nations “Year of the Woman” and at the beginning of the United Nations “Decade of Women” during that same year.¹⁴⁴ In July 1975, the *Manifesto das Mulheres Negra* (Manifesto of Black Women) gave a presentation at the *Congresso das Mulheres Brasileiras*

¹⁴⁰ Kia Lilly Caldwell and Sonia E. Alvarez, “Advocating for Citizenship and Social Justice: Black Women Activists in Brazil,” in *Women’s Activism in Latin America and the Caribbean: Engendering Social Justice, Democratizing Citizenship*, ed. by Elizabeth Maier and Nathalie Lebon, (Rutgers University Press, 2010), 176.

¹⁴¹ Gilliam, “I Have to Know Who I Am,” 40.

¹⁴² Cecilia McCallum, “Women Out of Place? A Micro-Historical Perspective on the Black Feminist Movement in Salvador Da Bahia, Brazil,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 39, no. 1 (2007): 55.

¹⁴³ Jessica H Franklin, “Building from and Moving Beyond the State: The National and Transnational Dimensions of Afro-Brazilian Women’s Intersectional Mobilization” (M.A., University of Western Ontario, 2013), 109.

¹⁴⁴ Caldwell, “Racialized Boundaries,” 223.

(Congress of Brazilian Women) to illuminate white women's racism. Caldwell provides an excerpt from that meeting, "[Black Brazilian women have received a cruel heritage: to be the objects of pleasure of the colonizers. The fruit of this cowardly crossing of blood is what is now acclaimed and proclaimed as 'the only national product that deserves to be exported: the Brazilian *mulata* [mixed-race woman of African and European ancestry].'"¹⁴⁵ The "cruel heritage" that the Manifesto refers to is the long history of the racialized sexual exploitation of Black women and how white women participated in this form of violence. For instance, white women "prostituted their slave girls for their own gain or were spurred by jealousy to acts of cruelty."¹⁴⁶ White mistresses equally participated in the violent exploitation of enslaved women and most archival documents conceal this narrative by omitting white women as being active agents in anti-Black violence. Afro-Brazilian women, such as Gonzalez, have been committed to not leaving these stories behind.

Scholars of Afro-Brazilian women's history argue that the country suffered from a "political lag" in addressing race related disparities, such as the lack of impetus on challenging the myth of racial democracy. In "Racism and Sexism in Brazilian Culture," Gonzalez drew attention to how "disguised racism" (known in the US as "covert racism") is unchallenged by many white Brazilians. Gonzalez's sarcastic undertone says differently: "Racism? In Brazil? Who said that? This is an American thing. Here there are no differences because everyone is Brazilian above all, thank God. Here Blacks are well treated, have the same rights as we have. So much so that, when they make an effort, they can move upwards in life. I know one who is a

¹⁴⁵ Caldwell, 223.

¹⁴⁶ A. J. R. Russell-Wood, "Women and Society in Colonial Brazil," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 9, no. 1 (1977): 7.

doctor; very polite, cultured, elegant and with such fine features... doesn't even seem Black."¹⁴⁷

The Brazilian identity is one that emerges from the social construction of whiteness. To become Brazilian, one must undergo deculturalization. This same stripping of one's identity is witnessed in feminism. Black women involved in women's liberation movements are often forced to enter into feminist spaces by leaving their Blackness at the door. Afro-Brazilian feminists, such as Gonzalez, have pointed out that racism is explicit in Brazil, despite the efforts of some to depict the country as racially democratic and equitable.

Gonzalez's statement on the universalizing of whiteness in Brazil is like U.S. Black feminist Elizabeth Spelman's later concept of "homogeneous womanhood." Spelman believes that white feminists are unable to separate their whiteness from womanness arguing, "The womanness underneath the black woman's skin is a white woman's, and deep down inside the Latina woman is an Anglo woman waiting to burst through an obscuring shroud."¹⁴⁸ At the same time, it is important to point out how in Brazil, Spelman's statement requires additional commentary because racial categories are not fixed and one can become white if one attains a certain class. White Brazilians permitted transracialism as it allowed them to justify being ignorant towards racial inequalities. Black Brazilian feminists were not convinced by such an easy transracialism and articulated the direct, detrimental impact that this had on Black women in Brazil. In this next section, I will provide a comparative analysis of the rise of Black consciousness in the U.S.. Given the divergent histories of racial orders in Brazil and in the U.S. (i.e., expansion, colonization, exploitation, and enslavement), it is important to explore the racial

¹⁴⁷ Lélia Gonzalez, "Racism and Sexism in Brazilian Culture," trans. Maria Júlia Venâncio, Mateus Mendonça, and Gustavo Segat, *New Sociological Perspectives* 1, no. 1 (2021): 149.

¹⁴⁸ Elizabeth V. Spelman, "Introduction," in *Inessential Woman: Problems of Exclusion in Feminist Thought*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), 11.

and gendered ideological connections among these histories so that women located in the Black diaspora of the Americas can continue to work towards ending all forms of oppression.

*“We don’t hate nobody because of color. We hate oppression”*¹⁴⁹

Between the 1950s through the late 1970s, civil and social justice movements were at the heart of the American identity. For example, the 1960s Civil Rights Movement is credited for helping initiate various causes such as, the Chicano movement, advocating for women’s rights, and LGBTQI+ movements. These activities sought to advance the rights of marginalized citizens and helped achieve equal-rights legislation for all Americans. What is not always acknowledged is that Black women were at the forefront of much of this heightened consciousness. However, mainstream narratives often dismissed or underrepresented Black women’s roles and Black women historians have filled in those gaps. For example, Deborah King notes, “[Black women] founded schools, operated social welfare services, sustained churches, organized collective work groups and unions, and even established banks and commercial enterprises.”¹⁵⁰ During the 1970s and the early 1980s, U.S. Black women also played pivotal roles in advancing women’s causes even while being marginalized within anti-racism and anti-sexism movements in the U.S. This next section will explore both the parallels and differences in relation to Afro-Brazilian women during a similar time frame.

One of the most nationally and internationally known organizations that came out of this radical era was the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP), founded in 1966 in Oakland,

¹⁴⁹ On April 7, 1968, Bobby Seale responded to a report in the Sunday Examiner that “labeled the Black Panthers as being ‘anti-white.’ Seale rejected that characterization and stated, “We don’t hate nobody because of their color. We hate oppression!” To listen to Seale’s speech, see “Bobby Seale,” archival Newsfilm video.

¹⁵⁰ Deborah K. King, “Multiple Jeopardy, Multiple Consciousness: The Context of a Black Feminist Ideology,” in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, ed. by Beverly Guy-Sheftall, (New York: New Press, 1995), 301.

California, by Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. At the core of the BPP was a ubiquitous sense of racial solidarity, which Patricia Hill Collins defines as “the belief that members of a racial group have common interests and should support one another above the interests of members of other racial groups.”¹⁵¹ Racial solidarity and liberation have always been a cornerstone for Black Americans to mobilize around.¹⁵² In comparison to other cultural movements, the BPP took a different approach towards demanding racial justice. Party members grew impatient with the non-violent tactics toward racial progress witnessed in racial-uplift organizations, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) the National Urban League Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). As a result, Party members advocated for “revolution now” opposing legal gradualism as the only pathway towards Black liberation. Another impetus for the formation of the BPP was to combat police brutality. In its early years, the BPP conducted police patrols to monitor police activities and used shortwave radios to intercept police broadcasts of arrests. Once members arrived at the scene of the arrest, a law book was used to inform the “person being arrested of his constitutional rights.”¹⁵³

Another unique aspect that distinguished the Party from other anti-racism movements during this era was the Party’s incorporation of socialism and "revolutionary

¹⁵¹ Patricia Hill Collins, “Glossary,” in *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*, Revised tenth anniversary ed. Second ed. (New York: Routledge, 2000), 300.

¹⁵² Unlike in Brazil where multiracial identities are socially embraced, in the U.S., Black American activists have often viewed embracing multiracial identities over Black identities as an approach that undermines unity in the struggle against racism. Daniel notes how multiracial identity projects were products of Eurocentrism and were responsible for colorism which has historically sown division amongst Black Americans. For more information on colorism and its negative impact within Black American communities, see Daniel, *Race and Multiraciality*, 201, 204-5.

¹⁵³ Huey P. Newton, “War Against the Panthers: A Study of Repression in America” (PhD diss., University of California, Santa Cruz, 1980), Ideology of Revolutionary Intercommunalism.

intercommunalism.”¹⁵⁴ The BPP was a “Marxist revolutionary group that fought for African American weapon rights, exemption from ‘white American’ sanctions, and financial compensation for years of racial exploitation. In addition to fighting for political and economic equality, the BPP became well known for providing access to medical clinics and free breakfasts for children.”¹⁵⁵ The Party favored separatism as a means of liberation.¹⁵⁶ In this regard, separatism did not physically mean separation (segregation). Rather, members believed in eliminating Black oppression by enhancing Black culture and lifestyle through the implementation of “survival programs.”¹⁵⁷ Compared to Brazil, the BPP is most similar to the MNU because most members from these organizations believed in community outreach programs that would in turn better the conditions of Black people. Both movements articulated and created highly organized action programs.

The dominant public image of BPP members is reflected in an iconography that highlights the hypermasculine image of Black men wearing Black leather, a Black beret, and Black sunglasses along with a fist. Nearly two-thirds of the membership, however, was comprised of Black women. Women who joined the Party ranged from as young as teenagers to

¹⁵⁴ Revolutionary intercommunalism is an ideology that combines socialism, Maxims, nationalism, and internationalism as a method to create solidarity with other nations of the world. See Newton, “War Against the Panthers,” for more details.

¹⁵⁵ “HUSL Library: A Brief History of Civil Rights in the United States: The Black Panther Party,” Howard University School of Law Library, accessed April 8, 2022.

¹⁵⁶ For more information on the BPP territoriality and Black separation, see Tyner, “Defend the Ghetto,” 107.

¹⁵⁷ The BPP established over 60 survival programs, such as free breakfast programs for children, free community employment programs, free liberation schools: free music and dance programs, and free legal aid and educational programs among other empowering outreach programs. For a more comprehensive list of programs, see “Programs of Survival,” It’s About Time.

Another important and often overlooked aspect of BPP history is the organization’s stance on health activism. The BPP worked alongside various activist groups, such as feminist groups, allies in the Rainbow Coalition (founded by BPP member Fred Hampton in Chicago on April 4, 1969), and the Young Lords Party (a Puerto Rican Chicago-based civil and human rights organization who also established different branches across the U.S.) to establish health clinics to serve in underrepresented communities. To learn more about the BPP’s medical activism, see Nelson, *Body and Soul the Black Panther Party*, Origins of Black Panther Party Health Activism.

approximately the mid-30s.¹⁵⁸ Individuals, such as Tarika Lewis, Kathleen Cleaver, Elaine Brown, and Angela Davis are among numerous Black women involved in BPP community organizing. Black women joined the Party for several reasons, such as being interested in participating in Black liberation struggle, participating in community empowerment, and advancing racial pride and solidarity. Seale recognized the importance of having women work side-by-side with men and declared that the Party needs to work towards “absolute equality between male and female.”¹⁵⁹ Seale explained, “We must too recognize that a woman can be just as revolutionary as a man and that she has equal stature, that, along with men, and that we cannot prejudice her in any manner, that we cannot regulate her to an inferior position.”¹⁶⁰ In 1968, he officially banned all gender-based divisions of labor.

Unlike the glass ceiling that Black women experienced in the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, the BPP allowed women to hold leadership positions—though only a limited amount. Similar to women’s work in the MNU, Black women’s contribution to the Black liberation struggle was crucial in sustaining the movement. For example, one former member, Malika Adam pointed out, “Women ran the BPP pretty much. I don’t know how it got to be a male’s party or thought of being a male’s party. Because those things, when you really look at it in terms of society, those things are looked on as being woman things, you know, feeding children, taking care of the sick and uh, so. Yeah we did that. We actually ran it.”¹⁶¹ Women Panthers took on various roles that helped sustain the movement, such as editing and creating content for the BPP newspaper, becoming teachers in “liberation schools,” and leading

¹⁵⁸ Darryl Robertson, “A Look Back at Black Panther Women Amid the Party’s 50th Anniversary,” *Vibe*, November 4, 2016.

¹⁵⁹ Monica Marie White, “Panther Stories: A Gendered Analysis of the Autobiographies of Former Black Panther Members” (PhD diss., Western Michigan University, 1988), 33-4.

¹⁶⁰ White, “Panther Stories,” 34.

¹⁶¹ Ashley Farmer, Mary Phillips, et al. “Women in the Black Panther Party,” *International Socialist Review*, Winter 2018-19, accessed April 13, 2022.

community-based programs.¹⁶² An interesting nuance to Adam's assertion about women running the Party is that her statement is factually correct. By the 1970s, BPP male leadership was in decline because of the increased repression from law enforcement. Men were "either incarcerated" or "forced to go underground or assassinated during the various encounters with police."¹⁶³ Women were forced or encouraged to fill those vacant positions.

Once Black women joined the Panthers, several noticed how the Party was unable to merge anti-sexism and anti-racism into the Black liberation movement. For example, Barbara Ransby and Tracye Mathews argued, "This vision of black struggle and empowerment equates black liberation with black male liberation only; uncritically accepts the dominate society's patriarchal model of gender and family relations; sees the sexual objection and sexual manipulation of black women as a male prerogative; and defines political militancy as part of some exclusive male domain."¹⁶⁴ Scholars of early African American history often refer back to slavery to explain how Black male slaves were unable to protect women and children from white terror campaigns and this emasculated them. As a result, they argue, Black Power movements have been co-opted with this desire to restore Black "manhood." Black women were not opposed to Black men achieving more power in society. However, they did not welcome Black men using that newfound power to further subjugate Black women. Black unity was, as Angela Davis explained, "built on top of the silence of Black women."¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² For a more detailed analysis on Black women's role in the BPP, see "Intersectional Black Panther Party History Project," The Intersectional Black Panther Party History Project; Saba, "Red Papers," Bay Area Revolutionary Union; Bukhara-Alston, "On the Question of Sexism within the Black Panther Party," 1-15.

¹⁶³ White, "Panther Stories," 35.

¹⁶⁴ Barbara Ransby and Tracye Matthews, "Black Popular Culture and the Transcendence of Patriarchal Illusions," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, ed. by Beverly Guy-Sheftall, (New York, NY: New Press, 1995), 532.

¹⁶⁵ Djamila Ribeiro, "Black feminism for a New Civilizational Framework," *SUR* 24 (2016): 101.

Black feminist and critic of the culture of sexist discourse within Black Power movements, Michele Wallace highlighted how, “Misogyny was an integral part of Black Macho. Its philosophy, which maintained that black men had been more oppressed than black women, that black women had, in fact, contributed to that oppression, that black men were sexually and morally superior and also exempt from most of the responsibilities human beings had to other human beings, could only be detrimental to black women.”¹⁶⁶ Even though Seale banned gender-based labor division, it continued because the Panther movement was not a monolith, given that there were different chapters throughout the U.S. Black women were expected to perform traditional domestic and submissive roles attached to womanhood, such as conducting secretarial work and becoming a nurturer and companion to Black men.¹⁶⁷ Women Panthers had to battle both racism and male chauvinism. Wallace’s “Black Macho” construct is most comparable to Latin American feminists’ criticism of *machismos*. For example, several Black male activists in Brazil held onto the idea that their male privilege gave them the authority to dominate and control Afro-Brazilian women, as noted by Gonzalez in Chapter 2. Both “Black Macho” and *machismo* attitudes are rooted in what bell hooks refers to as the “ruling-class male power

¹⁶⁶ Michele Wallace, “3,” in *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*, Verso classics ed., (Verso Classics, 26. London: Verso, 1999), 161.

Wallace offers a unique take on how unchallenged sexism haunts the U.S. Black community. She states, “The American black woman is haunted by the mythology that surrounds the American black man. It is a mythology based upon the real persecution of black men.” Wallace goes on to provide examples of the types of violence that Black men have experienced, such as being unable to acquire employment, unable to financially support his family, and being persecuted by prison guards and police. The conversation then shifts to what happens when Black women also try to understand her oppressed status. Wallace uses ghosts of the past as a metaphor (ghosts can easily be placed with Black men) to describe how Black women are haunted when they “wonder about” their “own misery.” Wallace explains, “Every time she starts to wonder about her own misery, [...] the ghosts pounce. She is stopped cold. The ghosts talk to her. ‘You crippled the black man. You worked against him. You betrayed him. You laughed at him. You scorned him. You and the white man.’” During the 1970s, Black women were chastised if they failed to center the liberation of Black men and were viewed as enemies of the revolution. Wallace, “1,” in *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman*, 15-6.

¹⁶⁷ White, “Panther Stories,” 32.

structure that promotes” sexism.¹⁶⁸ Tensions between men and women in Black cultural movements continued throughout the active years of the Black Power era. Black women became increasingly frustrated with Black men who refused to view Black women as equals.

Frances Beal, an active member of various liberation movements and co-founder of the Third World Women’s Alliance, provides scholarship on Black men’s acceptance of sexual politics relating to the derogation of Black womanhood. Beal believed Black men have lost sight of who the true enemy is in society and asserts:

There seems to be some confusion in the Movement today as to who has been oppressing whom. Since the advent of Black Power, the black male has exerted a more prominent leadership role in our struggle for justice in this country. He sees the System for what it really is for the most part. But where he rejects its values and mores on many issues, when it comes to women, he seems to take his guidelines from the pages of the *Ladies Home Journal*.¹⁶⁹

Beal singled out the *Journal* to insinuate that too many Black men involved in Black liberation organizing openly embrace the false narrative that Black women are to blame for their devalued status. Thus, Black men embraced patriarchy rather than recognizing how this acceptance in male dominance is oppressive to Black women. Adding to this scholarly conversation, Audre Lorde noted, “It is not the destiny of Black America to repeat white america’s mistakes. [...] Freedom and future for Blacks does not mean absorbing the dominant white male disease of

¹⁶⁸ bell hooks, “Men: Comrades in Struggle,” in *Introduction to Women’s, Gender & Sexuality Studies: Interdisciplinary and Intersectional Approaches*, (Oxford University Press, 2018), 169.

¹⁶⁹ Frances M. Beal, “Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female,” *Meridians* 8, no. 2 (2008): 167. According to Jean Hunter, On March 18, 1970, members from various feminist groups, such as the National Organization for Women, the Feminists, Media Women, etc., organized a sit-in at the editorial offices of the *Ladies’ Home Journal* demanding that the editor and managing editor be replaced by women. Furthermore, the protestors also requested an “all-women editorial and advertising staff” to allow the *Journal* to align itself with the modern feminist movement. Editors from the magazine opted not to fulfill the women’s requests. Hunter, “A Daring New Concept,” 583.

sexism.”¹⁷⁰ Beal and Lorde articulated the need for Black men and women to have open and honest conversations with each other to jointly look for solutions to end oppressive systems rather than justifying one oppression for another.

As one of few Black female leaders in the BPP, Elaine Brown, former Deputy Minister of Information, and an editor of the Panther newspaper provides insight into what it was like for most women involved in Party activism in her autobiography—*A Taste of Power*.¹⁷¹ Brown explains, “A woman in the Black Power movement was considered, at best, irrelevant. A woman asserting herself was a pariah. If a Black woman assumed a role of leadership, she was said to be eroding Black manhood, to be hindering the progress of the Black race. She was an enemy of the Black people.”¹⁷² Men have been socialized to place more value on their agency. As a result, Black male Panthers felt threatened when women achieved more power in the movement, especially if positions of authority were given to women. Even if Black women were in positions of power, they could only do so much to change the culture. For example, Brown went on to explain how most Panthers, both male and female, believed, “Sexism was a secondary problem. Capitalism and racism were primary. I had maintained that position even in the face of my exasperation with the chauvinism of Black Power men in gender and Black Power men in particular.”¹⁷³ Historically, Black women are pressured into advocating for the liberation of the

¹⁷⁰ Audre Lorde, “Sexism: An American Disease in Blackface,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, (Berkeley, California: Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984), 63.

It is also important to mention the controversial 1965 Daniel Moynihan report—“The Negro Family: The Case for National Action” in discussing how Black poverty is blamed on Black women. Kimberlé Crenshaw explains how Moynihan “depicted a deteriorating Black family” and blamed Black women for not being able to “live up to a white female standard of motherhood.” This report claimed poverty in the Black community was caused by the rise of single and unwed Black mothers. To read more about the controversy surrounding “The Negro Family” from a Black feminist perspective, see Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” 65-81.

¹⁷¹ White, “Panther Stories,” 34.

¹⁷² Elaine Brown, “A Woman’s Revolution,” in *A Taste of Power: A Black Woman’s Story*, (New York: Anchor, 2015), 357.

¹⁷³ Brown, “A Woman’s Revolution,” 367.

race rather than addressing other gender-related oppressions. Black men continued to advocate for this singular-axis framework in the BPP, which reproduced the subordination of women. As revolutionary as the BPP was, men openly embraced white male patriarchy not considering the irony of holding these attitudes within anti-racism movements.¹⁷⁴

Like what was witnessed in Brazil, U.S. Black women experienced forced sterilization and lack of control over their reproductive autonomy in the BPP. Reproduction has always been a major political concern in U.S. Black communities, and this focus is a result of slavery because white enslavers maintained control over Black bodies. Black female Panthers were expected to ensure the survival of the race by becoming mothers of the movement. Wallace explained, “Young black female friends of mine were dropping out of school because their boyfriends had convinced them that it was ‘not correct’ and ‘counter-revolutionary’ to strive to do anything but have babies and clean house. ‘Help the brother get his thing together,’ they were told.”¹⁷⁵ Black men often failed to recognize how this double burden placed on Black women caused yet another additional barrier for them to overcome.¹⁷⁶ Economic capitalism reduced Black women to another form of enslavement extending the long history of their bodies being used for political and economic exploitation. In this sense, women’s bodies were tools in sustaining the BPP revolution.

¹⁷⁴ U.S. Black feminist, civil rights activist, and critical race theorist, Kimberlé Crenshaw has also analyzed intragroup tensions between Black men and women by linking racism to domestic violence. Crenshaw’s view, Black men “act out” towards Black women when they are unable to access the power and privileges that dominant (white) men enjoy. Furthermore, Crenshaw argues that until racial oppression is dismantled in the U.S., Black women will continue to be negatively impacted by gender-related violence from both white and Black men. Crenshaw, “Mapping the Margins,” 1258.

¹⁷⁵ Michele Wallace, “Anger in Isolation: A Black Feminist’s Search for Sisterhood,” in *Words of Fire*, ed. by Beverly Guy-Sheftall, (New York: New Press, 1995), 224.

¹⁷⁶ Political activist and former leader in the BPP, Leroy Eldridge Cleaver (1935-1998), writes in *Soul On Ice* about how he used to rape “white women as an assault upon the white community” because he viewed rape as an insurrectionary act. For Cleaver, raping white women was a way of getting revenge for the decades of white men defiling black women. Cleaver admits to first raping “black girls in the ghetto—in the black ghetto where dark and vicious deeds appear not as aberrations or deviation from the norm.” This is yet another example of Black women’s bodies being commodified and victimized in the service of someone else’s agenda. Cleaver, “On Becoming,” 14.

“There is a pretense to a homogeneity of experience covered by the word sisterhood that does not in fact exist”¹⁷⁷ –Audre Lorde

In addition to being attendant to the misogyny present within U.S. Black liberation movements, U.S. Black women encountered, unsurprisingly, similar hostility towards them from white feminists during the second wave feminist movement between the 1960s and into the 1980s. In various ways this paralleled Black women’s experiences participating in anti-sexism organizing in Brazil. Several Black women looked towards joining the women’s movement with the hope of escaping the misogyny that they battled in Black nationalist organizing. Unfortunately, many white feminists were unwilling to make space for Black women’s voices and concerns in the movement failing to recognize the multidimensionality of Black women’s experiences. For example, Black women were regularly excluded from participating in developing feminist theories and from contributing to anti-sexist policymaking. In this section, I review the U.S. women’s movement through a Black feminist lens and expose how several white feminists ignored the impoverished and exploitative conditions that Black women lived under during important shifts happening in American culture between the 1960s into the 1980s.

Some of the tentative goals of second wave feminism consisted of achieving equality between the sexes, ending gender discrimination, increasing women’s career options, and most importantly, dismantling the patriarchy. U.S. women historians have unanimously pointed out the roots of modern feminism, which they argue is grounded in Betty Friedan’s 1963 *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan’s book was written against the backdrop of major cultural shifts happening during the 1960s, such as nation-wide anti-war campaigns and the burgeoning 1960s

¹⁷⁷ Audre Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches by Audre Lorde*, (Freedom, Calif.: Crossing Press, 1984), 116.

Civil Rights Movement.¹⁷⁸ In the book's opening statement, Friedan posed this question: "Can a majority be treated like a minority?" and then proceeds with testimonials, such as, "Want an education? You can get one—if you don't mind being told to take courses that won't tax your brain."¹⁷⁹ After providing other examples, Friedan ends with "No, we're not talking about American Blacks. We're talking about American women of every color and class, all victims of THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE."¹⁸⁰ In reality, this last statement is misleading because *The Feminine Mystique* spoke little to the conditions of *all* women. The targeted audience was limited—middle and upper class, college-educated women, and housewives. Not surprisingly, *The Feminine Mystique* had a large readership amongst that selected group because many related to Friedan's critique of society's continued acceptance of the nineteenth century "cult of true womanhood."¹⁸¹ Furthermore, *The Feminine Mystique* was reflective of the current culture in feminism which largely ignored discussions on race, power, and class.

While Friedan argued that suburban housewives desired a more fulfilling life which included having careers and access to higher education, others argued that Black women have

¹⁷⁸ Another women's movement that developed during second wave feminism was antiwar feminism. For more information on this branch of feminism, see Cohn and Ruddick, "Antiwar Feminism," 2-6.

¹⁷⁹ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1963), Cover Page.

¹⁸⁰ Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, Cover Page.

Additionally, U.S. white women have historically used the status of Black men as a backdrop to demand more rights. One example was with early suffragist leaders—Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony—who were enraged with the passage of the 15th Amendment that supposedly gave Black men voting rights before women. Stanton and Anthony allowed their racism to distract them to the point that they intentionally "forgot" to include Black women into the suffrage movement.

¹⁸¹ hooks, bell, "Black Women: Shaping Feminist Theory," in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, 2nd ed. South End Press Classics, v 5 (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1984), 2.

The cult of true womanhood was used to justify the exclusion of women from performing work outside of the domestic sphere because it was argued that women were too fragile for such tasks. Furthermore, "in the fifties [white] women were told, once again, that careers, assertiveness, and higher education were dangerous chimeras," argues Giddings, "A Second World War After," 242.

traditionally been prevented from experiencing that stay-at-home lifestyle and were already working.¹⁸² For example, Bukhari-Alston critiqued white women's bourgeois demands:

The white women were seeking to change their role in society vis-à-vis the home and the work place and to be seen as more than just a mother and homemaker. They wanted to be afforded right to the work place or whatever role they sought to play in society. But our situation was different, we had been working outside of the home and supporting our families. We had been shouldering the awesome responsibilities of waging a struggle against racist oppression and economic exploitation since we had been brought to these shores on the slave ships. Our struggle was not a struggle to be liberated so we could move into the work place, but a struggle to be recognized as human beings.¹⁸³

Bukhari-Alston pointed out how the legacy of slavery continued to shape the different and unequal statuses for women. Economic conflict between Black and white women produced divisions. Hence, Black and white women worked towards different goals. Many white women in the 1970s were concerned about achieving equality with white men at the expense of Black and non-white women. Lorde explains one reason why there was such a difficult time converging goals in the feminist movement: "White women face the pitfall of being seduced into joining the oppressor under the pretense of sharing power. This possibility does not exist in the same way for women of Color."¹⁸⁴ Many Black women rightly feared that once white women achieved equality with white men, white women in return would continue the legacy of using the "master's tools" to ensure Black women remain as second-class citizens.

Although U.S. Black women and Afro-Brazilian women experienced similar employment struggles, empirical studies based on the economic progress of female workers from the U.S.

¹⁸² For a more comprehensive history of the differences between white and Black housework, see Davis, *Women, Race & Class*, 222-244.

¹⁸³ Safiya Bukhari-Alston, "On the Question of Sexism Within the Black Panther Party," *Panther Sisters on Women's Liberation*, September 1969, 11-12.

¹⁸⁴ Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, (Berkeley, California: Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984), 92.

between 1940 and 1980 reveal where Black women's labor history diverges. For example, Afro-Brazilian women experienced little change in their socio-economic position from post-emancipation into the late twentieth century, as noted earlier. These women continued to largely be surrogate mothers for white families. In contrast during that same time frame, specifically the 1970s and onward, significant numbers of U.S. Black women moved out of domestic work and into other occupations, such as factory work and clerical labor. According to William A. Sundstrom, "In 1940, fully 58 percent of black female workers were domestic servants; by 1980 this percentage had dwindled to 6.2."¹⁸⁵ There are several ways to explain Black women's occupational exchange. Some of the major contributors to Black women's entrance into clerical work are greater access to education and legislation outlawing of workplace discrimination. In 1964, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed Title VII into law making it unlawful for state and local government employers with fifteen or more employees to discriminate "on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin or sex."¹⁸⁶ Prior to the 1970s, Black women experienced occupational segregation and were excluded from accessing better-paying employment opportunities. Thus, Black women were largely concentrated in the private domestic service field before civil rights and labor laws broke down these barriers.

This feeling of success in the feminist movement based on white women's ascension up the wage-earning ladder overshadowed the fact that Black women were still overrepresented in some of the lowest-paying clerical jobs, despite shifting from "servants to secretaries." hooks explains,

More than ten years later, it is evident that large numbers of individual white women (especially those from middle class backgrounds) have made economic

¹⁸⁵ William A. Sundstrom, "From Servants to Secretaries: The Occupations of African-American Women, 1940-1980," *Ssrn Electronic Journal*, (May 2000): 1, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1104056>.

¹⁸⁶ "Civil Rights Requirements-E. Federal Employment Discrimination Laws, H.R. Doc.," Health and Human Services, October 27, 2021.

strides in the wake of feminist movement support of careerism, and affirmative action programs in many professions. However, the masses of women are as poor as ever, or poorer. To the bourgeois “feminist,” the million dollar salary granted newscaster Barbara Walters represents a victory for women. To working class women who make less than the minimum wage and receive few if any benefits, it means continued class exploitation.¹⁸⁷

Black women were not able to achieve the same upward socio-economic mobility as white women because institutionalized systems have been put in place to maintain white domination. For example, Daniel argues, “By the time of the Regan-Brush administration in the 1980s, many whites and some privileged blacks and other individuals of color began to assert that civil rights legislation” fulfilled its duties of closing disparities between the races.¹⁸⁸ Members from these privileged backgrounds claimed protective legislation was no longer needed and began dismantling federal anti-discrimination laws. Some even went as far to assert that minorities received “unfair preferences” with the implementation of racial policies such as Affirmative Action while numerous studies have shown that the primary beneficiaries of affirmative action policies have and continue to be white women. Black feminists argue that white women have been able to achieve such social progress by stepping on the backs of Black women and continuing to make use of Black women’s labor.

Although U.S. Black and Afro-Brazilian are geographically located in different places and, for the most part, were not engaging in transnational dialogues—except for a few individuals—they were both addressing the failing of mainstream feminism not addressing the socio-economic exploitation of Black women.¹⁸⁹ For instance, Gonzalez made visible the

¹⁸⁷ bell hooks, *Feminist Theory*, 59.

¹⁸⁸ Daniel, *Race and Multiraciality*, 210

¹⁸⁹ Some of those individuals from the U.S. who have either been in contact with Afro-Brazilian women or have had their scholarship translated into Brazilian Portuguese include the following: Angela Davis, bell hooks, Audre Lorde, Patricia Hill Collins, Christen A. Smith, and Kia Lilly Caldwell. This list of names of U.S. Black women academics in contact in one way or another with Afro-Brazilian women continues to grow.

circumstances that allowed white women in Brazil to enter the paid labor force in increasing numbers and points to Black domestic workers as being the ones who made this possible. Similarly, Lorde pointed out how white feminists relied on the domestic labor of Black and “women of Color” to participate more freely in building their careers and dominating feminist discourses. Black, Women of Color, and poor women have been tasked with raising the nation, while at the same time, white women excluded them from conversation and social mobility. Lorde proceeds to ask, “What is the theory behind racist feminism?”¹⁹⁰ Lorde is calling out that “racist feminism” exists, and until white women acknowledge this reality, they will continue to “divide and conquer using the same tools that the white male patriarchy has supplied them with. The legacy of slavery and the “superexploitation” of Black women had yet to be examined in (white) mainstream feminism when this question was asked. Lorde explains, “By and large within the women's movement today, white women focus upon their oppression as women and ignore differences of race, sexual preference, class, and age. There is a pretense to homogeneity of experience covered by the word sisterhood that does not in fact exist.”¹⁹¹ Racism is so ingrained in American culture that many white feminists are unable to recognize how systemic discrimination further oppresses Black women. This conscious and unconscious behavior on the part of white women continues in the contemporary moment. If white feminists truly want to end oppression for *all* women, they must first recognize and fight to eliminate racism, including their own.

Those who benefit from white supremacy are also the primary actors striving to make it and the privileges associated with it invisible by those who benefit from its existence. For many

¹⁹⁰ Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, (Berkeley, CA: Crossing Press, 1984), 112.

¹⁹¹ Lorde, “Age, Race, Class, and Sex,” 116.

white feminists, being truthful about their internalized racism is difficult. For Ellen Pence, it was not until she began conversing with her Black friend that she recognized the backwardness in her politics. Pence recounted, “As white women, we continually expect women of color to bring us to an understanding of our racism. White women rarely meet to examine collectively our attitudes, our actions, and, most importantly, our resistance to change.”¹⁹² This form of unpaid and often coerced labor Pence mentions is referred to as epistemic exploitation.¹⁹³ Lorde provides a more concrete definition on how this form of epistemic, social, and political oppression is distractive to the larger feminist movement:

Women of today are still being called upon to stretch across the gap of male ignorance and to educate men as to our existence and our needs. This is an old and primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's concerns. Now we hear that it is the task of women of Color to educate white women—in the face of tremendous resistance—as to our existence, our differences, our relative roles in our joint survival. This is a diversion of energies and a tragic repetition of racist patriarchal thought.”¹⁹⁴

Pence believed that she was “a good white person” and after many discussions with her one Black friend, she concluded that Black women’s anger directed at white women’s racism is justified. For example, she admits that white feminists did not view Black and other Women of

¹⁹² Ellen Pence, “Racism—A White Issue,” in *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies*, ed. by Gloria T. Hall, Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith, (Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1982), 46.

¹⁹³ Nora Berenstain, “Epistemic Exploitation,” *Ergo, an Open Access Journal of Philosophy* 3, no. 22 (2016): 570, doi:10.3998/ergo.12405314.0003.022.

Berenstain defines epistemic exploitation as being “when privileged persons compel marginalized persons to produce an education or explanation about the nature of the oppression they face. Epistemic exploitation is a variety of epistemic oppression marked by unrecognized, uncompensated, emotionally taxing, coerced epistemic labor. It maintains structures of oppression by centering the needs and desires of dominant groups and exploiting the emotional and cognitive labor of members of marginalized groups who are required to do the unpaid and often unacknowledged work of providing information, resources, and evidence of oppression to privileged persons who demand it—and who benefit from those very oppressive systems about which they demand to be educated.” Berenstain, “Epistemic Exploitation,” 570.

¹⁹⁴ “Lorde, “The Master’s Tools,” 113
Gonzalez’s epigraph from the introduction demonstrates that white women, regardless of location, have been taught to not view Black women as equals.

Color as equals and only offered them a seat at the table on their terms.¹⁹⁵ The interlocking nature of whiteness, white supremacy, and white privilege will continue to oppress society's most marginalized members because its purpose is to disguise racism.¹⁹⁶

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the converging and diverging herstories of Black women situated in racialized societies—the U.S. and Brazil—during important pivotal movements. The chapter began with the history of the MNU and analyzed where Afro-Brazilian women fit into this history. Black women played an important role in sustaining the movement and are often written out of the story. For example, Covin filled in a significant gap in the academic literature on Afro-Brazilian politics of the MNU, and at the time his book was published, there was not any written in English. However, Afro-Brazilians' contribution to the movement is only briefly mentioned. This same intellectual omission happens in the scholarship written about the BPP. To learn more about Black women's experiences in the Party's organizing, one must compile several different sources to gather their stories.

Feminist culture critic, Hazel Carby points out, "It can be argued that as processes, racism and sexism are similar. [...] The fact that black women are subject to the simultaneous oppression of patriarchy, class, and 'race' is the prime reason for not employing parallels that render their position and experience not only marginal but also invisible."¹⁹⁷ My research in this chapter through the scholarship from and about Beatriz Nascimento, Lélia Gonzalez, Audre

¹⁹⁵ Pence, "Racism—A White Issue," 46.

¹⁹⁶ Derald Wing Sue, "The Challenge of White Dialectics: Making the 'Invisible' Visible," *The Counseling Psychologist* 39, no. 3 (April 2011): Abstract, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000010390702>.

¹⁹⁷ Hazel V. Carby, "White Women Listen!: Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood," in *Black British Culture and Society: A Text-Reader*, ed. by Kwesi Owusu, (London: Routledge, 2000), 82.

Lorde, and Kimberlé Crenshaw, among other Black women intellectuals, demonstrates the impetus for Black feminists and other Black women intellectuals from the global North and South to engage in more transnational dialogues about Afro-descendants stories of resistance living in a racist, classist, sexist, imperialistic, homophobic, etc., societies. These transnational dialogues can continue to facilitate necessary consciousness-raising, identity forming, and collective action organizing that is essential in dismantling interlocking systems of oppression because Black women across the Americas have and continue to face adversities. Analyzing the history of racialization, miscegenation, racial democracy in Brazil demonstrates that despite socially constructed borders, anti-Black and misogynic violence needs to be at the forefront feminist movements. U.S. Black feminists can learn about their (for the most part) shared history of violence with Black women living in Brazil.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ I would like to highlight that many Black lesbian and queer identifying women have contributed greatly to feminism. Given the time constraints, I was not able to fully incorporate their contributions to helping shape feminism. This will be a project that I will take on in the future because as someone who identifies as a Black lesbian I understand the importance of making visible the histories, experiences, and voices of non-heterosexual and non-cisgender peoples.

Chapter 3

*“Enegrecendo o Feminismo” (Blackening Feminism)*¹⁹⁹

Far too often, U.S. Anglophone Black feminists have not reached across the Southern hemispheric divide to learn more about the proliferation of Black feminism in Brazil. As mentioned in the Introduction, language barriers and the lack of access to literature makes this intellectual and cultural exploration difficult. However, this is starting to change with academic Black feminists, such as Patricia Hill Collins who argues that Black women in the North and South are largely unaware of their common experiences combating multiple systems of oppression. During an interview with Nadya Araujo Guimarães, Collins explained that she began the process of creating more dialogue between U.S. Black and Afro-Brazilian women in her 2014 travels to Brazil to study Black feminism there:

The current question is how to construct Black women’s communities across national borders who engage in this collective project. The challenges that I faced in developing my understanding of Black women’s experiences and ideas throughout the African Diaspora were particular to me but have general implications. When it came to learning about Black feminism in Brazil, the process was especially challenging. Because I could not read Portuguese, I had to rely on secondary sources about Black people in Brazil as well translations of primary sources that were written by Afro-Brazilian women. The gatekeeping was immense. So, I had to work around multiple gatekeeping practices that frame how we are encouraged to see one another across national settings.²⁰⁰

The “gatekeeping” that Collins is referring to is the lack of access to scholarship from and about Afro-Brazilian women’s experiences. In the Brazilian imaginary, elite whites depict the Black woman’s persona using the “scantily clad samba dancers.” Unbeknownst to Collins at the time of publishing *Black Feminist Thought*, her analysis of controlling images from a U.S. Black

¹⁹⁹ Sônia Beatriz dos Santos, “Brazilian Black Women's NGOs and Their Struggles in the Area of Sexual and Reproductive Health: Experiences, Resistance, and Politics” (PhD diss., University of Texas, 2008), 336.

²⁰⁰ Nadya Araújo Guimarães and Louisa Acciari, “Interview with Patricia Hill Collins,” *Social Time* 33, no. 1 (April 28, 2021): 328.

feminist perspective could also speak to the lived conditions for women who are part of the Black diaspora.

In this chapter, I continue this process of closing the intellectual divide between U.S. Black and Afro-Brazilian women. Like Collins, I rely on a limited number of available translations of Afro-Brazilian scholarship from and about their paths towards creating a more diverse and inclusive feminism. Using academic scholarship from Lélia Gonzalez, I employ an interdisciplinary approach to analyze the evolution of Black feminism in Brazil. Although Brazil is geographically located in South America, its feminist practice is categorized within a Latin American framework. Portuguese and Spanish are rooted in the same language (Latin) which makes it easier for some Afro-Brazilian women such as Gonzalez to become fluent in Spanish or grasp the language.²⁰¹ Additionally, Brazil's proximity to other Latin American countries makes it easier for Afro-Brazilian scholars to intellectually engage with women from that region. As a result, it is appropriate to incorporate a Latin American feminist framework to analyze the evolution of Black feminism in Brazil during the latter half of the twentieth century. The time frame of this chapter focuses on the social and political activism of Afro-Brazilians between the late 1970s into the late 1990s.

To construct this history, I will be analyzing the dialogue that emerged from two of the thirteen critical conferences, referred to as *Encuentros*, that were held in Latin America and the Caribbean during that time frame: the first *Encuentro* in Bogotá, Columbia 1981 and the third in Bertigoa, Brazil, 1985. *Encuentros* have been critical in Latin American feminism as they are

²⁰¹ Lélia Gonzalez, "La Catégorie Politico-Culturelle D'amefricanité," trans. by Hélène Le Doaré, *Les cahiers du CEDREF*, no. 20 (2015), <https://doi.org/10.4000/cedref.806>.

It is important to note that Brazilian Portuguese slightly differs from Portuguese that is spoken in Portugal. Lélia Gonzalez points out how Portuguese that is spoken in Brazil is influenced by the African language, quimbundu (mbunda). Furthermore, Gonzalez adds, "let us add that the Bunda are a Bantu ethnic group in Angola that, in addition to quimbundu, speaks two other languages, bunda and ambundu. However, Luanda was one of the largest ports for exporting slaves to America."

considered to be “historical markers” [where] “key strategic, organizational, and theoretical debates” [have] “characterized the political trajectory of contemporary Latin American feminisms.”²⁰² Feminism in Latin American and Caribbean regions largely take a grassroots approach in organizing. This is especially the case for Black feminism in Brazil which will be explored further in this chapter. The overarching themes presented at these *Encuentros* are debates on autonomy, inclusion, and the expansion of feminism. This chapter demonstrates how these *Encuentros* influenced the development of a transnational and intersectional feminist framework employed by Afro-Brazilian women through a close reading of the work of Gonzalez.

Beginning in 1981, women located in Latin America and the Caribbean organized a series of conferences that explored the diverse struggles of women. These regional meetings occurred every two or three years and issues raised “ranged from political, economic, cultural, human rights and social issues to dealing with diversity of class, ethnicity, racism and the impact of globalization in the region.”²⁰³ Sonia E. Alvarez, Elisabeth Jay Friedman, Ericka Beckman, et al. argue, “While much of the recent literature on transnational feminist organizing has focused on how ‘official’ international public arenas, such as the United Nations women’s conferences, have fostered transborder links among feminists, scholars largely have overlooked the rich history of ‘extra-official’ processes, such as the *Encuentros*.”²⁰⁴

What set these meetings apart from other larger-scale international conferences, such as the 1985 World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women held in Nairobi, Kenya, and the 2001 World Conference against Racism (WCAR) held

²⁰² Sonia E. Alvarez and Elisabeth Jay Friedman, et al. “Encountering Latin American and Caribbean Feminisms,” *Signs* 28, no. 2 (2003): 539.

²⁰³ “The First Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encuentro,” Center for Women’s Global Leadership, Center for Women’s Global Leadership, Rutgers University, accessed April 9, 2022.

²⁰⁴ Alvarez, Friedman, et al. “Encountering Latin American and Caribbean Feminisms,” 539.

in Durban, South Africa, was the fact that meetings were nonhierarchical and less formal. To participate in larger conferences, individuals were required to have “specialized skills, greater material resources, and alliances with both government and international organizational officials.”²⁰⁵ In contrast, regional meetings held in Latin America allowed for more women from underrepresented backgrounds, such as Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and poor women to engage with other women on *quehacer político feminista* (loosely, feminist political work) helping shape Latin American feminism. Latin American and Caribbean feminists took on the stance that working-class women were key constituents to helping end “economic crises, political repression, human rights abuses.”²⁰⁶

One former attendee, Peruvian feminist Virginia Vargas, attested to the positive impact *Encuentros* had in the region. Vargas stated, “This transnational feminist action was oriented fundamentally toward recreating collective practices, deploying new analytical categories, new visibilities, and even new languages being invented by feminisms at the national level, naming that which heretofore had no name: sexuality, domestic violence, sexual harassment, marital rape, the feminization of poverty, and so on.”²⁰⁷ *Encuentros* gave a name to many of the experiences that had not been publicly addressed in Latin American and Caribbean cultures. Additionally, meetings helped create a new “imagined” Latin American feminist community, such as the implementation of identity-specific networks and advocacy coalitions, outside of traditional white middle-class feminism. Much of what these women learned at these meetings did not stay isolated. The structure of these interregional conversations was generally free from the hierarchical structures witnessed in other Leftist and feminist organizations. For example,

²⁰⁵ Alvarez, Friedman, et al. “Encountering,” 548-9.

²⁰⁶ Alvarez, Friedman, et al. 544.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 539.

meeting proceedings were “translated and reworked to fit specific local and national contexts,” which made it easier for women to take what they had learned from their conversations back to their respective locations.²⁰⁸ Alvarez, Friedman, and Beckman further suggest, “local movements have benefited from the rotation of the *Encuentros* among different countries and subregions, as each meeting highlights issues or problems specific to the host context, allowing these to be aired, and sometimes worked out, in a supranational(ist) movement setting.”²⁰⁹ Latin American and Caribbean feminists learned new strategies and different ways to frame local, regional, and national issues and demands based on their experiences/conversations at *Encuentros*.

Chandra Mohanty believes there is power in recognizing common struggles between women because this is where feminists forge authentic connections with one another. Mohanty explains, “I am suggesting, then, an ‘imagined community’ of third world oppositional struggles. ‘Imagined’ not because it is not ‘real’ but because it suggests potential alliances and collaborations across divisive boundaries, and ‘community’ because in spite of internal hierarchies within third world contexts, it nevertheless suggests a significant, deep commitment.”²¹⁰ Recognizing common struggles allows feminists to create new alliances with women from different regional, national, and international locations. Man-made borders are artificial and serve to divide and conquer rather than unite and liberate people. Mohanty’s vision for the future of feminism consists of community building exercises between diverse women through reimagined spaces. Feminists who are committed to dismantling patriarchal systems of

²⁰⁸ Alvarez, Friedman, et al. “Encountering,” 540.

²⁰⁹ Alvarez, Friedman, et al. 540.

²¹⁰ Chandra Mohanty, “Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism,” in *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. by Chandra Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 4.

control must recognize the power of reaching across imagined borders to create the radical transformation needed to disarm their oppressors.

During the first decade of the *Encuentros* held between 1981 and 1990, debates on understanding “the relationship between feminist movement and the male revolutionary Left and later, as movement expanded, the relationship between feminist movement and the broad *movimientos de mujeres* (women’s movement)” occurred.²¹¹ The first five regional meetings happened during a time when there was “widespread economic crisis and human rights abuses throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.”²¹² Many of the locations where *Encuentros* happened were under authoritarian rule, such as in Chile, El Salvador, Brazil, Argentina, etc.²¹³ Participants were encouraged to learn about the different struggles women faced in fostering environments that allowed women to work through their differences and develop “a common feminist grammar” dispelling the notion that Latin American women’s experiences are a monolith.²¹⁴

The first two Encounters (*Encuentros*) in Bogotá, Colombia in 1981 and Lima, Peru in 1983 centered on questions around feminist autonomy.²¹⁵ These interregional conversations tended to be polarized because embedded in them were questions around “who was (and who was not) a feminist.”²¹⁶ Philosophical and strategic debates between *feministas* (women involved

²¹¹ Alvarez, Friedman, et al. “Encountering,” 541.

²¹² Alvarez, Friedman, et al. 542.

²¹³ Jeffrey Puryear, “Latin America Since 1980: Political & Economic Changes,” *The Inter-American Dialogue*, April 26, 2016.

²¹⁴ Alvarez, Friedman, et al. “Encountering Latin American and Caribbean Feminisms,” 539.

²¹⁵ Autonomy concerning feminism is loosely defined “as the capacity to act independently.” Feminists active during the first decade of *Encuentros* were concerned that these regional meetings would become co-opted by “actors such as political parties, the state, funding agencies, and even other social movements.” As a result, the first few meetings were self-funded so that organizers could ensure no outside influences would distract “the ideological, political, organizational, and financial autonomy” of the nascent Latin American and Caribbean feminist movement. *Ibid.*, 541.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 553.

in feminism) and *políticas* or *militantes* (women who continued to participate in Leftist organizations) emerged. These disputes on labels were not a new phenomenon in women's organizing because many were carried over from second-wave feminism and party and revolutionary movements. *Feministas* wanted to be separated from organizations "that consider the battle for women's liberation a secondary goal."²¹⁷ By contrast, *militantes* "defended a strategy of *doble militancia* (double militancy) or concurrent participation in feminist and party/revolutionary organizations."²¹⁸ For many Black women across the Americas, any activist movement that dubbed race "secondary" was hegemonic and repressive. Sueli Carneiro explains, "Can there be feminism without anti-racism in a multi-racial country? Can there be feminist practice without real commitment to confronting racism? How can real commitment to anti-racist struggle be carried out without discussing the privilege that racial positioning offers to white feminists?"²¹⁹ As Chapter 2 demonstrates, Afro-descendant women have always found empowerment in their participation in mainstream feminism.

It is important to not overgeneralize or undergeneralize women's relationship to feminism, especially for marginalized women whose experiences are often overlooked within (white) mainstream feminism. "Feminisms in Latin America: From Bogotá to San Bernardo" argues that North American and Western European feminist scholars must be cautious in their analysis of Latin American feminism. There is a tendency for North American and Western European academics to use "testimonial literature" to claim all Latin American women rejected feminism. Black and "Third World" women often point out there is no singular feminism that can account for all women's experiences and sometimes distance themselves from a feminist

²¹⁷ Alvarez, Friedman, et al. "Encountering," 543.

²¹⁸ Alvarez, Friedman, et al. 543.

²¹⁹ Cláudia Pons Cardoso and Miriam Adelman, "Feminisms from the Perspective of Afro-Brazilian Women," *Meridians* 14, no. 1 (2016): 20, doi:10.2979/meridians.14.1.02.

label, but that does not mean those women do not participate in advocating for improving women's conditions.²²⁰ One participant at the Bogotá *Encuentro*, Magely Pineda explained, "In many Latin American countries, feminist is still a harsh word which jolts people—although we are beginning to defend it."²²¹ Feminism in the 1980s was not as inclusive as it is in its current state. When Pineda declared, "we are beginning to defend it," it is an important historical marker to demonstrate Latin American and Caribbean feminism was beginning to incorporate race, class, gender, sexuality, etc., into its framework. These *Encuentros* benefited women, especially those from marginalized or underrepresented communities because they now had access (somewhat) to platforms to voice their grievances, concerns, and visions towards women's emancipation.

Another reason why scholars must be willing to explore women's relationship to feminism is that not to do so could lead to the erasure of valuable scholarship from women who do not use or embrace the label "feminism."²²² Take, for example, Brazilian Black scholar Beatriz Nascimento who distanced herself from adopting a feminist label, while simultaneously theorizing about gendered racial politics transnationally. Scholars, such as Joy James have created a label for women like Nascimento—protofeminists. James explains a protofeminist is someone "who preshadowed contemporary black feminist radicalism, provided models and

²²⁰ Another example of a Black woman who has a complicated relationship with feminism is Angela Davis. During an oral interview in 2019, Davis stated, "I rarely talk about feminism in the singular. I talk about feminisms. And, even when I myself refused to identify with feminism, I realized that it was a certain kind of feminism . . . It was a feminism of those women who weren't really concerned with equality for all women..." Peterson, "The Revolutionary Practice of Black Feminisms," *Smithsonian*.

²²¹ Marysa Navarro, "International Notes," *Signs* 8, no. 1 (1982): 158.

²²² Chandra Mohanty provides more context on women's reluctance to embrace a feminist label. Mohanty argues, "The term feminism is itself questioned by many third world women. Feminist movements have been challenged on the grounds of cultural imperialism, and of shortsightedness in defining the meaning of gender in terms of middle-class, white experiences, and in terms of internal racism, classism, and homophobia. All of these factors, as well as the falsely homogeneous representation of the movement by the media, have led to a very real suspicion of 'feminism; as a productive ground for struggle. Nevertheless third world women have always engaged with feminism, even if the label has been rejected in a number of instances." Mohanty, "Cartographies of Struggle," 7.

strategies for resistance that rejected strict black female adherence to middle-class norms.”²²³

Christen Smith uses James’s definition to assert, “Beatriz Nascimento was in every way a profeminist in limbo. She was a prolific radical thinker whose writings and recorded ideas mirror deep reflection on the conditions of gendered Blackness in Brazil and the Americas, the trans-Atlantic Black experience, and the politics of gendered Black subjectivity.”²²⁴

Nascimento’s activism was, for the most part, grounded in the militancy of the Black Movement rather than the Brazilian (white) feminist movement. Given this, scholars of Black diasporic and Black Latin American feminism deem Nascimento’s intellectual contributions within the “genealogy of Black feminist thought in the Americas” as appropriate.²²⁵ Debates on how to identify women’s social and political activism continue to be contested and configured even in the twenty-first century.

At the “*Primer Encuentro Feminista de Latinoamérica y el Caribe* (First Feminist Meeting of Latin America and the Caribbean) arranged in the outskirts of Bogotá, Columbia in 1981, conversations between *feministas* and *militantes* about women’s varying conceptions of feminism continued. Participants at this *Encuentro* came from various backgrounds, such as young university students, agricultural workers, and representatives for battered women, and from various Latin American countries including Mexico, Ecuador, and Brazil.²²⁶ Once partakers arrived at the school for agricultural workers where the conference was held, they were inundated with banners containing information about the current conditions of women from several countries and “political statements, such as: ‘We have erased borders walking our paths,

²²³ Joy James, “Profeminists and Liberation Limbos,” in *Shadowboxing: Representations of Black Feminist Politics*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 1999), 45, accessed April 12, 2022, ProQuest Ebook Central.

²²⁴ Christen Smith, “Towards a Black Feminist Model of Black Atlantic Liberation: Remembering Beatriz Nascimento,” *Meridians* 14, no. 2 (2016): 75, doi:10.2979/meridians.14.2.06.75.

²²⁵ Christen Smith and Archie Davies, “‘In Front of the World’: Translating Beatriz Nascimento,” *Antipode*, 53 (2021): 290, <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12690>.

²²⁶ Navarro, “International Notes,” 155.

crossing the sea, flying, to meet here, in the solidarity of women who struggle, not feeling foreigners despite our different nationalities, our cultures, our languages. We have broken the scheme of belonging to a country, to a father: what can make us feel foreigners is our Discourse!”²²⁷ The Bogotá conference, therefore, was intended to bridge the divide between women’s politics, alienation, and access to collective mobilizing. Most participants shared the common denominator of beginning their activism in *militantes* movements, and this allowed women to use this shared background to begin the necessary steps towards building a more expansive definition of feminism.

Encuentros were organized in such a manner that gave priority to Latin American and Caribbean feminists. This was reflective in the documented attendance recorded in Bogotá. Marysa Navarro explains, “[Women] came from Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Curacao, Ecuador, Venezuela, Peru, Brazil, Chile, and Colombia. Each woman paid her own way—\$50 for Latin Americans and \$80 for all others. Most of the women were Latin American, but there were two women from Canada, three from the United States, and a dozen from Europe.”²²⁸ A bulletin report published in the Women’s International Information and Communication Service (ISIS) contains a brief description of the atmosphere at this *Encuentro*.²²⁹ It states, “The atmosphere was warm and friendly with none of formality and rituals so often found in international conferences, so communication was easy. Everyone worked hard during the day, showing great dedication and enthusiasm. We all wanted to learn

²²⁷ Navarro, “International Notes,” 155.

²²⁸ Navarro, 154.

²²⁹ In 1974, the Women’s International Information and Communication Service (ISIS) was established, and it consisted of a collective of women whose mission was to gather women’s and feminist group materials and make it accessible. Part of this collective’s mission was to regularly publish in the ISIS International Bulletin. The ISIS International Bulletin “Report From Bogota: Women and Liberation in Latin America” has been digitized by The Freedom March Archives. Within this report, you will be able to find information on what was discussed at this meeting. Additionally, the bulletin contains other information on international women’s current discussions. “Report From Bogota,” 1981.

from each other.”²³⁰ Many of the attendees agreed that women are the most exploited class and that they must work together on creating specific driven demands to end those oppressions, such as “the end of the double burden, equal pay for equal work, the right to work, the right to abortion.”²³¹

Although organizers and participants at the first *Encuentro* claimed that they envisioned a Latin American feminist movement free from the classic feminist essentialism, many lesbians, Black, Indigenous, working-class, and poor women felt alienated when they came forward about the lip service to diversity at the first few regional meetings. Eshe Lewis and John Thomas III explain, “Afro-descendant women have consistently attended the *encuentros* and have voiced their concern about the lack of workshops, discussions, and attention given to the women of African descent because of anti-black racism and gender discrimination. These efforts have been documented in the manifestos and summaries of these meetings and reveal demands for more diversity in both participant profiles, workshop, and panel subject matter began during the second meeting in 1983 in Lima, Peru.”²³² Similar to what was witnessed in mainstream Brazilian and U.S. feminism in the women’s movement, many of these initial meetings were comprised of university-educated middle-class white women. The most vulnerable women at these regional meetings were Black, Women of Color, Indigenous, working-class, and poor women. This inclusion and exclusion dilemma would later resurface at the third *Encuentro*.

In July 1985, nearly nine hundred women united “at a little-known, union-owned *colonia de vacaciones* (vacation resort club) on the Brazilian coast” to attend the 1985 Bertigo

²³⁰ “Report From Bogota: Women and Liberation in Latin America,” *Women’s International Information and Communication Service*, 1981.

²³¹ Nancy Saporta Sternbach, Marysa Navarro-Aranguren, et al. “Feminisms in Latin America: From Bogotá to San Bernardo,” *Signs* 17, no. 2 (1992): 408.

²³² Lewis Eshe and John Thomas III, “‘Me Gritaron Negra’: The Emergence and Development of the Afro-Descendant Women’s Movement in Peru (1980-2015),” *Journal of International Women’s Studies* 20, no. 8 (2019): 23.

conference.²³³ As noted in Chapter 2, Brazilian feminism was known in this region as being one of the most diverse, radical, and diverse movements. Women in Brazil were making great strides by entering political parties, and it became “both the envy and, to some extent, the model for Latin American feminist movements.”²³⁴ Brazilian feminists were at the forefront of engaging in local, regional, national, and transnational feminist movements. And yet, they lagged behind on embracing the global feminist move towards addressing unequal power dynamics between women. These class and social inequalities came to the surface when a group of women from a Rio de Janeiro *favela* (shantytown) arrived on a bus and asked to be allowed to participate despite not having the \$60 registration fee. The Bertioga meeting foregrounded the conundrum of social exclusion which was “literally parked at the entrance.”²³⁵ A significant number of Black and poor women were already in attendance amongst the nearly 1,000 women who participated in total—claimed the Brazilian organizers. Furthermore, organizers secured one hundred scholarships to enable working-class and poor women to attend, but they were weary to admit the women from the bus because they suspected the women were sent by political leaders to undermine feminist progress in establishing more rights.²³⁶

Thus, the organizers stood firm in their position that all participants needed to abide by the same rules, such as paying for registration and being free from political parties. Nearly a hundred poor and working-class women protested outside of the gate and stood in solidarity with one another even when the organizers attempted ease the growing tensions by offering five scholarships. Nancy Saporta explains:

²³³ Sternbach, Navarro-Aranguren, et al. “Feminisms in Latin America,” 414.

²³⁴ Sternbach, Navarro-Aranguren, 414.

²³⁵ Alvarez, Friedman, et al. “Encountering Latin American and Caribbean Feminisms,” *Signs* 28, no. 2 (2003): 545.

²³⁶ The Rio Lion’s Club, known to have ties to the state’s dominant political party) had supplied the bus. Additionally, “The organizers insisted that anyone who was not Brazilian would have difficulty understanding the complexities of Brazilian political parties had repeatedly disrupted national and regional feminist meetings in Brazil during the early 1980s.” Sternbach, Navarro-Aranguren, 414-15.

Battle lines were soon drawn: those who supported the organizers' decision and those who opposed it. The first position held that allowing the women to participate would constitute a capitulation to partisan manipulation, tantamount to admitting that feminism was indeed an elitist movement and that the organizers had made no effort to include working-class women in the *Encuentro*—even though poor and working-class women were present in far greater numbers than at either Bogotá or Lima [the second *Encounter*] [...] Others were members of Brazil's recently created black feminist collectives who argues that barring the *favela* women from the *Encuentro* was emblematic of the racism that pervaded Brazilian feminism.²³⁷

At this point in Latin American feminism, moving beyond gender-related topics had yet to be embraced and implemented. Some marginalized women present argued that the “mere inclusion of nonwhite, working-class women among the ranks of feminism” would do little to change the pervasive inequalities between women.²³⁸ Many marginalized women, especially Brazilian Black women, called for the critical examination of the hegemonic, heterosexual, classist, imperialistic, and Eurocentric narratives that were reproduced at these regional meetings. Afro-Brazilian women began decolonizing feminism by endorsing socialist principles. In this next section, a discussion on the evolution of Black feminism in Brazil will be explored up until the late 1980s through the scholarship from Gonzalez.

“*DARE TO STRUGGLE.....DARE TO WIN*”²³⁹

Brazilian Black philosopher, writer, and anti-racism activist, Sueli Carneiro is a pivotal figure in facilitating the development of Black feminism in Brazil. Carneiro attests to this new political protagonism of Black women that had begun as early as the 1970s and has since extended into present day. Carneiro coined the phrase, “Blackening feminism,” as an expression

²³⁷ Sternbach, Navarro-Aranguren, et al. “Feminisms in Latin America,” 416.

²³⁸ Alvarez, Friedman, et al. “Encountering Latin American and Caribbean Feminisms,” 545.

²³⁹ Ashaki Binta, Speech, in *Feminism and Women's Liberation* (Afrikan People's Party, 1979).

to explain the trajectory of Black’s engagement within the Brazilian feminist movement.²⁴⁰ This type of engagement happened at a local, regional, national, and international level. Black women across the Black diaspora understand that racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of violence are inseparable and that it is necessary to address more than one struggle at any given time. Latin American and Caribbean feminism(s) had an overall goal of producing new possibilities for developing political and personal relationships with women beyond immediate circles.

In 1983, Gonzalez, along with other Black women, created Brazil’s first Black women’s organization *Nzinga — Coletivo de Mulheres Negras* (Black Women’s Collective) in Rio de Janeiro,²⁴¹ notes Raquel Barreto. Sônia Beatriz dos Santos explains, “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.”²⁴² Black feminism in Brazil grew out of a Pan-Africanist political-cultural heritage that allowed Black women from different socio-economic backgrounds a chance to engage in feminist conversations.

Gonzalez was at the forefront of engaging in cross-cultural and international conversations. Between 1975 and 1984, she traveled and participated in nearly “ninety

²⁴⁰ Sueli Carneiro, “Blackening Feminism#,” PDF file, accessed February 3, 2022, 1.

²⁴¹ Raquel Barreto, “Lélia Gonzalez: A Brazilian Thinker,” trans. by Aline Scátola, *Analysis, Capire*, January 2, 2021.

The name of the Black women’s organization comes from Nzinga Mbande (Queen Nzinga). Nzinga was born in 1582 and ruled over Mbundu territory located in Angola until 1663. During the latter half of her rule. Queen Nzinga forged alliances with rival states and successfully fought off Portuguese colonizers in a thirty-year war. The Portuguese were attempting to seize land in Central Africa to expand the slave trade. Queen Nzinga was known for her excellent leadership and is even rumored to have personally led troops in battle in her 60s. Snethen, “Queen Nzinga (1583-1663),” *Black Past*.

Inge Tvedten states, “According to legend, Queen Nzinga ordered men in her company to act as a chair for her to sit on when the Portuguese governor offended her by not offering her a seat.” Tvedten, *Angola: Struggle for Peace and Reconstruction*, 20; 34.

²⁴² Sônia Beatriz dos Santos “Brazilian Black Women's NGOs and Their Struggles in the Area of Sexual and Reproductive Health: Experiences, Resistance, and Politics” (PhD diss., University of Texas, 2008) 337.

conferences, seminars, and political/institutional commitments in and outside Brazil: Rio de Janeiro, Bahia, Minas Gerais, São Paulo, as well as the USA, France, Italy, Senegal, Costa Rica, Denmark, Finland, Canada and Switzerland.”²⁴³ Notably, Gonzalez made regular trips to the U.S., such as attending African Heritage Studies Association meetings and often visiting the University of California located in Los Angeles to present papers. She frequently spoke about some of the perspectives that she gained from these visits to the U.S. Gonzalez stated, “With respect to the Black Movement in Brazil, our prospects are not the same as the Black Movement in the U.S. They’re not, because in the first place, if we are in effect the majority, we have to fight for our rights, we don’t have to stay in the ghetto, we have to begin to occupy spaces in society as a whole... We have more democratic proposals. We have to effectively initiate those democratic proposals.”²⁴⁴ Her observations on race relations in the U.S. reveal how she was cognizant of the distinct differences in Black peoples’ statuses across the Americas. Gonzalez pointed out there is a lack of racial representation in Brazilian politics, and she argued that more Afro-Brazilians need to begin the political opening process. At this point in Brazilian history, there had been very few elected Black officials. Gonzalez recognized, although Brazil has a much larger Black population, they lack political representation. Establishing a democratic Brazil and equally a more democratic transnational feminism became a goal for Gonzalez.

Part of that democratic progress, in Gonzalez’s view, was grounded in the Black feminist tradition of decolonizing language. In “La Catégorie Politico-Culturelle D’amefricanité” (The

²⁴³ Ana Martins, “Running Away with Language: Inventing Wor(l)Ds in the Work of Lélia Gonzalez in 1980s Brazil,” *Gender & History* 30, no. 1 (March 2018): 268, doi:10.1111/1468-0424.12342.

In 1986, “Gonzalez ran for Congress with the Partido Democrático Trabalhista [Democratic Labour Party], her campaign brochure singled out her mobility beyond national borders as a defining characteristic: ‘Primeira mulher negra a sair do país para divulgar a verdadeira situação da mulher negra brasileira’ [the first black woman to leave the country in order to speak about the true situation of the Brazilian black woman].” Martins, “Running Away with Language,” 267.

²⁴⁴ David Covin, *The Unified Black Movement in Brazil, 1978-2002*, (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2006), 120.

Politico-Cultural Category of Africanity), Gonzalez promotes the idea that the Brazilian struggle with racism and other forms of oppression are not an individual experience:

When I speak of my own experience, I am talking about a long process of learning which occurred in my search for an identity as a black woman, within a society which oppresses me and discriminates against me because I am black. But a question of an ethical and political nature arises immediately. I cannot speak in the first person singular of something which is painfully common to millions of women who live in the region, those “Amerindians” and “Ameraficans” (Gonzalez) who are oppressed by a “latinness” which legitimizes their “inferiority.”²⁴⁵

Akin to U.S. Black feminists, such as Gloria T. Hull and Barbara Smith who argued in 1982 that “Like any politically disenfranchised group, black women could not exist consciously until we began to name ourselves,” Afro-Brazilian women took pride in building a more inclusive feminism on their terms.²⁴⁶ In this construction, feminists pursued forging solidarity with others based on political interests rather than biological or cultural ties.

Defining political interests has constantly been a source of dispute for individuals involved in community organizing. Angela Davis and Elizabeth Martínez joined in conversation at a speaking event, “Building Coalitions of People of Color,” in 1993 held at the University of California, San Diego. At the end of the presentation, a moderator asked questions centered around barriers and effective strategies for building authentic and successful coalitions. Davis and Martínez shared the same vision that talking about differences is an important first step in the community-building process. In building alliances and coalitions, individuals must be willing to take up issues that are within and outside of their communities. For example, when asked,

²⁴⁵ Lélia Gonzalez, “La Catégorie Politico-Culturelle D’amefricanité,” trans. by Hélène Le Doaré, *Les cahiers du CEDREF*, no. 20 (2015), <https://journals.openedition.org/cedref/806>.

²⁴⁶ Gloria T. Hull, and Barbara Smith, “The Politics of Black Women’s Studies,” in *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women’s Studies*, ed. by Gloria T. Hall, Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith, (Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1982), xvii.

“How can different people of color come together to build a coalition when their communities have different needs?”²⁴⁷

Martínez responded,

There are various forms of working together. A coalition is one, a network is another, an alliance is yet another. And they are not the same; some of them are short-term, and some are long-term. A network is not the same as a coalition. A network is a more permanent, ongoing thing. I think you have to look at what the demands are, and ask: What kind of coming together do we need to win these demands?

Davis added,

As Betita has pointed out, we need to be more flexible in our thinking about various ways of working together across differences. Some formations may be more permanent and some may be short-term. However, we often assume that the disbanding of a coalition or alliance marks a moment of failure, which we would rather forget. As a consequence, we often fail to incorporate a sense of the accomplishments, as well as of the weaknesses, of that formation into our collective and organizational memories. Without this memory, we are often condemned to start from scratch each time we set out to build new coalitional forms.²⁴⁸

Their conversation reveals one of the tentative failings of the 1970s Black culture and second wave feminist movements that occurred in Brazil and in the U.S. Both of the emancipation movements organized solely around one identity (i.e., race or gender). Constructing movements with a singular axis prevents people from understanding the need to acknowledge and organize based on interlocking systems of oppression. As noted earlier, this limited outlook was also witnessed during the first half of the Latin American and Caribbean *Encuentros*.

Through Gonzalez’s scholarship, U.S. Black feminists learn about the “vibrant struggles for cultural recognitions, citizenship, and human rights, oftentimes founded and led by black women, have always been occurring.”²⁴⁹ During a 1989 interview in the documentary film, *The*

²⁴⁷ Angela Y. Davis and Elizabeth Martínez, “Coalition Building Among People of Color,” Center for Cultural Studies, University of California Santa Cruz, accessed March 2021.

²⁴⁸ Davis and Martínez, “Coalition Building Among People of Color,” Center for Cultural Studies.

²⁴⁹ Keisha-Khan Perry and Edilza Sotero, “Amefricanidade: The Black Diaspora Feminism of Lélia Gonzalez,” *Forum* 50:3, (2019): 60, <https://forum.lasaweb.org/files/vol50-issue3/Dossier-Lelia-Gonzalez-5.pdf>.

Black Divas of Brazilian Cinema, Gonzalez stated, “The black woman is the major focus of [social and gender] inequality in society. It is in her that these two types of inequality converge—not to mention class inequality, social inequality.”²⁵⁰ Afro-Brazilian feminists believed engaging in anti-imperialist work and establishing transnational solidarity with others who share the same vision of liberation must occur. Gonzalez believed part of that path towards liberation required individuals of African ancestry to embrace their heritage. She explained, “We are not born, but rather become, Black. This is a tough, cruel undertaking that continues to develop throughout our lives. This is where the matter of identity that you continuously build comes into play. This Black identity is not something that is done, completed. So, to me, a Black person who is aware of their Blackness is struggling against racism.”²⁵¹ Given the background information on the history of racialization in Brazil, it is easy to understand why some individuals would distance themselves from accepting a Black identity. In Gonzalez’s perception, becoming Black in Brazil is a purposeful and empowering act. When this acceptance occurs, the process of dismantling racism begins.

As noted in Chapter 2, white supremacy is a global phenomenon. Thus, dismantling barriers between the different Latin American, Caribbean, and North and South American countries became a priority for Gonzalez to achieve liberation for all oppressed groups. In the 1980s, Gonzalez began this process of redefining the language and meaning of feminism. Gonzalez believed, while quoting Molefi Kete Asante, “All language is epistemic. Our language must contribute to the understanding of our reality. A revolutionary language must not

²⁵⁰ Katarine Flor, “Racism and Sexism Make Black Women the Lowest-Paid Group in Brazil,” trans. Aline Scátola, ed. Julia Chequer, *Brasil de Fato*, accessed November 19, 2019.

²⁵¹ Barreto, “Lélia Gonzalez: A Brazilian Thinker,” trans. by Aline Scátola, *Analysis*.

intoxicate, cannot confuse minds.”²⁵² To begin the process of dismantling hegemonic and imperialist language, Black women have used identity politics to reconstruct and redefine what it means to be Black living in societies that continue to devalue their humanity.

Drawing from a Pan-African framework, Gonzalez expanded her vision of liberation into an international perspective. In “*La Catégorie Politico-Culturelle D’amefricanité*” (The Politico-Cultural Category of Africanity), Gonzalez coined *amefricanidade*, to unify those who have been negatively impacted by the history of colonization and racism. *Amefricanidade* refers to a combination of “the black diaspora and indigenous populations of the Americas, signaling their histories of resistance as colonized people combine word being.”²⁵³ This concept makes Black feminism in Brazil more inclusive than U.S. Black feminism because it combines the struggles of Indigenous Brazilians. Furthermore, Gonzalez extended this inclusion across the Americas to demonstrate that we are more similar than different, while at the same time, not prioritizing one racial or ethnic groups needs over another.

Pat Parker’s “Revolution: It’s Not Neat or Pretty or Quick” speaks to radical transformative action that is needed by feminists who share the same vision of dismantling systems of oppression globally. Parker believes feminist movements in the West have been co-opted by middle-class white women. According to Parker, (and as I have argued) this can also be said for the women’s movement in Brazil. Parker recognizes that this is a serious challenge to successful global feminist movements. She explains:

We do not have an easy task before us. At this conference we will disagree; we will get angry; we will fight. This is good and should be welcomed. Here is where

²⁵² Lélia Gonzalez, “La Catégorie Politico-Culturelle D’amefricanité,” trans. by Hélène Le Doaré, *Les Cahiers du CEDREF*, no. 20 (2015): <https://doi.org/10.4000/cedref.806.22>.

Molefi Kete Asante was one of the original theorists of the need to produce scholarship from an Afrocentric perspective.

²⁵³ Sonia E. Alvarez and Kia Lilly Caldwell, “Promoting Feminist Amefricanidade: Bridging Black Feminist Cultures and Politics in the Americas,” *Meridians* 14, no. 1 (2016): V, doi:10.2979/meridians.14.1.01.

we should air our differences but here is also where we should build. In order to survive in this world we must make a commitment to change it; not reform it -- revolutionize it. Here is where we began to build a new women's movement, not one easily co-opted and mis-directed by media pigs and agents of this insidious imperialist system. Here is where we begin to build a revolutionary force of women.²⁵⁴

As discussed at the 1985 Encounter, building revolutions requires women to be willing to welcome change. Authentic revolutions occur when people are willing to challenge systems in place that attempt to prevent them from accessing true liberations. Even though Parker's remarks were published in 1983, they are still true today. Afro-Brazilian and U.S. Black feminists must work together across their differences and continue the process of reconstructing a more diverse and inclusive feminism.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the evolution of Afro-Brazilian feminism grounded in a Latin American, Black diasporic, and Black feminist perspective. The *Encuentros* in Latin American and the Caribbean modeled important ways to continue the process of decolonizing knowledges and movements within feminist frameworks. My research has provided examples of Black women resisting their subordination by refusing to remain silent (something Black women have always practiced dating back to the colonial period) and creating their own versions of feminism that are anti-imperialist and originated from their lived experiences. Much of this rich history of Afro-Brazilian women's participation in feminism remains on the margins in U.S. Black feminist and Black diasporic scholarship. Part of this exclusion could simply be that feminism may mean different things for different people. However, the examples provided in this chapter demonstrate

²⁵⁴ Pat Parker, "Revolution: It's Not Neat or Pretty or Quick," in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, ed. by Cherríe Moraga, Gloria Anzaldúa, (New York: Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983), 242.

that Black women's hemispheric solidarity has begun between Brazil and the U.S. *Encuentros* provide a blueprint for forging more transnational and cross-cultural dialogues.

Conclusion

*We are Afrodescendants; this is a term that recognizes our ancestry. We are descendants of the people of African origin who were brought to Latin America and the Caribbean enslaved. We are descendants of the people who came deprived of their freedom, people with culture, traditions, languages, customs and dreams. From these people we descend, not from slavery itself.*²⁵⁵

This research aimed to examine the political and social benefits of fostering dialogue between Afro-Brazilian and U.S. Black women feminists to explore what these conversations reveal about Black women's status(es) in the Americas. Based on the cross-cultural, transnational, and interdisciplinary research on the statuses of Black women in Brazil and in the U.S., beginning in the colonial era and extending into the late twentieth century, it can be concluded that Afro-descendant women are marked by important historical and contemporary similarities rooted in legacy of slavery. Afro-Brazilian and North American Black women share an interconnected history of sexual, reproductive, economic, and epistemic exploitative experiences. Black women across the Americas have a great wealth of information to contribute to the scholarly world about their unique racialized and gendered subjectivity. U.S. Black feminists must recognize the importance of incorporating the knowledges of Afro-descendant women who reside outside of the national boundary to better understand how other Black women have developed systems of survival in countries that continue to deny their humanity.

Afro-Brazilian women have a long history of challenging interlocking systems of oppression, but their intellectual scholarship and theoretical contributions to the larger discipline of Black diasporic studies continues to be placed on the margins. Researchers in the contemporary moment must continue to close this divide in order to have a better understanding

²⁵⁵ Ana Irma Rivera Lassén, "Afrodescendant Women: A Race and Gender Intersectional Spiderweb," trans. by Manuela Borzone and Alexander Ponomareff, *Meridians* 14, no. 2 (2016): 67, doi:10.2979/meridians.14.2.05.

of the violent nature of white supremacy and misogyny that continues to prevent Afro-descendant women from achieving true liberation from their oppressed statuses. Part of this process of incorporating the knowledges of Afro-Brazilian feminists necessitates decolonizing traditional approaches in research. Claudia de Lima Costa and Sonia E. Alvarez provided me with the template to expand the way I approached this project and translate the experiences of Black women from Brazil into an intellectual dialogue with U.S. Black feminists. The authors argue, “In translation there is a moral obligation to uproot ourselves, to be, even temporarily, homeless so that the other can dwell, albeit provisionally, in our home. To translate means to come and go, to be ‘world’-travelling’ to live in the interstice, to be perennially displaced.”²⁵⁶ Scholars who are conducting research on different cultures, languages, ethnicities, races, etc., must learn how to “uproot” themselves because it brings new ontological and epistemological perspectives into their research.

Part of my decolonizing practice in this project was learning how to become comfortable navigating the unfamiliar territory of Afro-Brazilian women’s history. There is a tendency within U.S. Black feminist thought to center the voices and experiences of those who reside within the U.S. proper. When I first began this project, I miscalculated how challenging writing a comparative history would be and relied too heavily on the scholarship of U.S. Black feminists. I learned that I had to become a nomad in my research practices, such as willing to spend hours searching online to locate translated Afro-Brazilian women’s scholarship. I learned how to listen closely to authors and made note of important details and reoccurring themes (i.e., conferences, events, names, friendships, scholarship, footnotes, and reference lists) that they shared, with the hopes of intellectually tracing translated Brazilian scholarship. Indeed, this type of research

²⁵⁶ Claudia Costa, de Lima and Sonia E. Alvarez, “Dislocating the Sign: Toward a Translocal Feminist Politics of Translation,” *Signs* 39, no. 3 (2014): 557, <https://doi.org/10.1086/674381>.

requires patience and persistence, but it was very rewarding because I discovered primary and secondary source material written about or from Afro-Brazilian women, such as Lélia Gonzalez, Beatriz Nascimento, and Sueli Carneiro. This project has taught me the importance of being intellectually humble during the research process because it opens up the door to new possibilities of unifying struggles despite having different cultures, languages, and experiences that might have otherwise remained as scattered hegemonies.

Chapter 1 demonstrates for me how Afro-Brazilian history, despite its importance globally, is seldom mentioned in detail among U.S. Black feminists (exceptions include Kia Lilly Caldwell and Keisha-Khan Perry). In writing Brazilian colonial history, I relied on scholarship told from the perspective of men. Much of that literature focused on how Afro-Brazilian men have been negatively impacted by the legacy of slavery along with discussions on the physical and sexual violence that enslaved women experienced. I offer a counter-narrative by providing the various ways enslaved Black women contested the institution of slavery through collective and individual acts of resistance in both Brazil and the U.S. Given that Afro-Brazilian women continue to experience lack of access to higher education, it was difficult locating stories of resistance from Afro-Brazilian feminist academics. There were also other barriers, such as lack of translation. Chapter 1 demonstrates the urgent need for more scholars to participate in translating the histories of Black women during the colonial periods in Brazil because there are more stories out there besides the few that I was able to access. To better understand how interconnected Afro-descendant women's experiences were during the period of colonization, future studies must continue the process of creating dialogues between Afro-descendant women in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Many U.S. Black women historians, feminists, and activists have argued that to understand the status of U.S. Black women, researchers much look to the past to find answers about the present. In my research, I show that this statement is true for Afro-Brazilian women as well. The legacy of slavery in Brazil continues to haunt Black women across the Americas, and in chapter 2, I highlight how capitalism, racism, and sexism continued to shape Black women's lives from the 1970s and into the late 1980s. As noted in the Introduction, much of Gonzalez's scholarship is relatable to Afro-descendant women. For example, Doris Waddell Gilliam requotes Gonzalez: "Being black and a woman in Brazil, we repeat, is being [the] object of triple discrimination, as the stereotypes generated by racism and sexism place her at the lowest level of oppression."²⁵⁷ Despite the significant differences in Afro-Brazilian and U.S. Black women's personal histories, academic backgrounds, and displacement in political, social, intellectual, and physical involvement in liberation movements, this statement sounds similar to ones made in North America during this time frame, such as through the voices of Pauli Murray, Frances Beal, Audre Lorde, and Barbara Smith. This parallel history deserves to be mutually explored—here and there—and about this period is where I found the most accessible Afro-Brazilian women's knowledges.

In keeping with the practice of residing in a nomadic intellectual position, chapter 3 takes a different approach. Rather than discussing the evolution of U.S. Black feminism which has already been extensively covered, I center Afro-Brazilian women's voices. To do this, I incorporate Latin American feminism because Afro-Brazilian women had more contact with them than U.S. Black feminists at this time in global history. When areas allow for a cross-

²⁵⁷ Waddell Doris Gilliam, "I Have to Know Who I Am': An Africana Womanist Analysis of Afro-Brazilian Identity in the Literature of Miriam Alves, Esmeralda Ribeiro and Conceição Evaristo" (PhD diss., Florida State University, 2013), 34.

cultural linkage, I provide a U.S. Black feminist perspective where points of connection deem appropriate, demonstrating the possibility for future scholars to continue the process of creating a Black diasporic feminism.

Advancements in technology have allowed scholars from around the world to engage with knowledges that they would not have otherwise encountered within their disciplines. U.S. Black feminists must take advantage of the various ways technology gives them access to engage with Afro-descendant women's contributions globally in theory making. Admittedly, there will remain limitations on accessing certain knowledges, such as the reality of socio-economic inequalities. For those with the privilege of access, these new connections allow Black women to learn about each other's battles as well as ways to spark lasting social change. I believe that it is possible for U.S. Black feminists to incorporate knowledges originating from Afro-Brazilian women into their scholarship. Although it is a difficult and time-consuming task, learning and engaging in conversation with Afro-Brazilian feminists, and Afro-descendant feminists everywhere they reside, has the possibility to strengthen liberation goals.

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