Aquilombar Democracy
Fugitive Routes from the End of the World

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Abstract

This working paper approaches the current global crisis as a potential territoriality for radicalizing concepts and for learning with ongoing fugitive routes. Through nonlinear paths, I aim to examine the contours of the *quilombo* not only as a slavery-past event but as a continuum of anti-colonial struggle that invokes other forms of re-existence and convivial coexistence in Brazil. In doing that, this research draws attention to an *Améfrica Ladina* epistemology and a decolonial methodology embodied by living archives and oral histories.

Keywords: quilombo | Afro-Brazilian feminisms | representative democracy

About the author

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Contents

1.   This is Not the Beginning

I begin this paper by recognizing that this is not the beginning. As a movement in the making, this working paper has been moved by and speaking with an assemblage of repertoires including counter-archives, historiographical genealogies, and poetic-political theories and practices. Hence, the body of this work is composed of a multiplicity of hands, steps, and writings. In this multitude, I would like to especially thank Erica Malunguinho and the members of Mandata Quilombo for the *fôlego* (breath) in our collective conversations; to Onir Araújo for generously sharing his memories and life struggles; and to all my colleagues from Mecila for the exciting collaborations, in particular to the inspiring *sentipensar* confabulated together with Léa Tosold and Encarnación Gutiérrez-Rodríguez.

By recognizing that this is not the beginning, this investigation draws attention to the brutal genealogies in which modernity has been historically built based on the invasion, colonization, hierarchization, commodification, dispossession, enslavement, and genocide of Indigenous and Black peoples and territorialities. In the words of the poet and essayist Dionne Brand, the erasure perpetuated by colonialism and slavery "signified the end of traceable beginnings" (Brand 2011: 15).

Brazil, the last country to formally abolish slavery in the West in 1888, is today one of the most unequal countries in the world. It has the fifth-highest rate of femicide and the deadliest police force for Black young people in the world and is considered the place where the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people are most at risk. Colonial violence, structural violence, institutional violence: an ongoing regime of total violence.

The violent possibilities and impossibilities of Black life have become even more exhaustive in the last years due to the dramatic combination of the rise of far-right neoliberal conservatism and the global COVID-19 pandemic. In striving for being-in-the-world, Black and peripheral women have been, in the words of the activist Silvia Baptista:

> reconstituting a *quilombo* as a *rede* [a web of support] […] while striving to preserve ourselves, concerning not only the pandemic but primarily hunger; and to reinvent another form of economy based on our communitarian, feminist, and popular traditions (Baptista and IPACS 2020; own translation and emphasis).

In this respect, and following the critique elaborated by Jurema Werneck, this paper does not romanticize the burden of Black and Indigenous women in the mythical form of a strong heroine or superwoman (Werneck 2010). Rather, by refusing the normative and the abstract question of "what can be done", this research brings attention to the

on-the-ground strategies of coexistence and re-existence in the current context of systematic violence.

Quilombo has been one of the most controversial concepts within Brazilian studies due to its multi-dimensional entanglement with geography, history, anthropology, sociology, law, and politics (Arruti 2015: 217). Without ignoring its complexity, this working paper focuses on the poetic and the politics of *quilombo* as an ongoing process of articulating and disputing modes of re-existence and convivial coexistence.

In a nonlinear path, this working paper is composed of two moments (epistemological-methodological remarks and final considerations), two imageries of the *quilombo* (the soil and the ocean), and three fragments of living archives (Maria, Marielle, and Erica). By experimenting with onto-epistemological folds and geopolitical breaks, this research intends to confabulate dialogues and articulations within anti-racist, feminist, and decolonial theories and practices from *Améfrica Ladina*.

2. Living Archives from *Améfrica Ladina*

In interrogating the geopolitics of knowledge, I draw attention to the epistemologies of *Améfrica Ladina*. According to Lélia Gonzalez, *Améfrica Ladina* is conceptualized, in *pretoguês* (Africanized Portuguese), as the historical and cultural dynamics between Latin America and Africa that produced an Afro-Latin-America (Gonzalez 1988). According to Gonzalez, *améfricanidade* manifests itself in strategies of resistance, whose concrete expression can be found in the *quilombos*, as well as in the *cimarrones*, *cuimbes*, *palenques*, *marronages*, and maroon communities spread throughout the continent (Gonzalez 1988: 76–79).

The official narrative based on a single history of the world can be disrupted within this framework. Archives embody the collection of symbolical elements in the colonial tracing of memories, narratives, and events. Since the 1800s, when the first countries in the Americas declared independence, the notion of the archive has been transformed into an institutional monument of national historiography and has actively contributed to creating a linear developmental narrative of the modern world (Anderson 1983: 159–160), as well as the idea of an unified national memory and identity (Gellner 1983: 1–7).

The official documentation on *quilombos* has been dramatically scarce in Brazil, as emphasized by the historian, archivist, and poet Maria Beatriz Nascimento (Nascimento 2018d: 113). Non-hegemonic narratives have not merely been dismissed but had their trails and traces burned in the official archives. On 1890, the Minister of Finance Rui Barbosa ordered the burning of all the official records of slavery from the Brazilian

national archives. Barbosa supported the destruction of the Brazilian slave archives on the argument that it was necessary to eliminate all the physical evidence so former masters could not use them at the time to seek compensation for the loss of their "property" (Lacombe et al. 1988: 11–26).

Both the Brazilian Slavery Archives and the Museu Nacional do Rio de Janeiro, home to the largest Indigenous archive in the country, were almost destroyed in 1890 and 2018, respectively.[1] Far from a mere coincidence, the politics of destruction and erasure of memories are hardly unique to Brazil. In the book *In the Wake*: *On Blackness and Being*, Christina Sharpe draws attention to the fact that scholars of slavery often "face absences in the archives as we attempt to find 'the agents buried beneath' the *accumulated erasures*, projections, fabulations, and misnamings" (Sharpe 2016: 29–30; own emphasis).

According to the scholar and human rights activist Sylvia Tamale, the Western systems of knowledge "use the indicator of the written record to separate the human eras of 'prehistory' and 'history'"; so it is no wonder that "traditions that depend on oral wisdom are perceived as lacking history" (Tamale 2020: 7). The assassination of Indigenous and Afrocentric epistemologies configure what Boaventura de Sousa Santos has called *epistemicídio*, a term that became popularized in Brazil by the work of the philosopher Sueli Carneiro (Santos 2013, 2017; Carneiro 2005: 61). The *accumulated erasures* of knowledge and forms of knowing have also been referred to in Améfrica Ladina by the grammar of epistemic violence (Castro-Gómez 2005: 83), Eurocentrism, and the coloniality of knowledge (Quijano 2005, 2014; Dussel 2005; Mignolo 2005; Lugones 2008), for instance. They configure a crucial dimension of the geopolitical engineering of whiteness.

Perceiving history as a territoriality under dispute, Beatriz Nascimento stated that "history […] should not be opposed to the history of the defeated because we did not lose yet" (Nascimento 2018e: 414). Similarly, the writer Antônio Bispo dos Santos, from the Quilombo Saco do Curtume, stated that: "even if they burn the writing, they will not burn the orality. Even if they burn the symbols, they will not burn the meanings. Even if they burn our people, they will not burn the ancestrality" (Bispo dos Santos 2015: 39; own translation). In resisting and re-existing the ongoing epistemicide, oral and corporeal techniques of knowledge transmission have insistently kept counter-narratives and memories alive.

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1 The burning of registration, customs control and tax collection books involving enslaved people was ordered supposedly to avoid that former slave-owners claim compensation from the government of the Republic. On 2 September 2018, a devastating fire ripped through much of Rio de Janeiro's Museu Nacional, or National Museum, claiming fossils, cultural artifacts, and more irreplaceable collections amassed over 200 years.

Drawing on that, I approach the archive as a process instead of a thing (Stoler 2009: 20). To speak of the archive as a process implies destabilizing its institutional enclosure. The poetics of the living archive embodies the dialectics between the oral and the written (Glissant 1990: 34), and, in this way, the body is perceived as the document in which the oral tradition finds confluence as a living archive (Nascimento 2018d: 252). As Léa Tosold's research on memory politics and *quilombo* suggests, the embodied memory does not entail a decoupling of the personal from the collective, but rather refers to the corporeal articulation with a social context and an ongoing intergenerational struggle. Accordingly, this would be a condition for the emergence of the body as a *quilombo* (Tosold 2021; Nascimento 2018g: 334).

The dialogue woven in this paper involves both scholarly works and published books found in libraries and living archives. Such a confluence was enabled by: (1) listening to 35 women engaged in grassroots movements from Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, and Manaus in 2018; (2) the poetic-politics of Maria Beatriz Nascimento's work, including the film *Ôrí* (1988) produced in collaboration with the filmmaker Rachel Gerber; and (3) the digital conversations carried out in 2020 with members of Mandata Quilombo, including Erica Malunguinho herself, and Onir Araújo – a lawyer from the Frente Quilombola and activist of the Movimento Negro Unificado.

3.   Routes and Fragments 1: The Living Archive of Maria

Maria Beatriz Nascimento was one of the leading historian archivist researchers on *quilombos* in Brazil. Yet, her significant contributions have still been largely ignored by the academic community. As she has mentioned in interviews, the epistemic violence and the whiteness structures of academia impacted her professional life and mental health. In Nascimento's words:

> [W]e live in a double or triple society. This white society imposes a standardized behaviour on you according to white normativity, and you, as a Black person, annihilate yourself, start to live another life, to float without a ground to land on, without a reference, and without a parameter (Nascimento 2018d: 249; own translation).

The historian was visiting three psychoanalysts when she decided to drop out of academia. As the activist and philosopher Angela Davis recognizes, "[n]o amount of psychological therapy or group training can effectively address racism […] unless we also begin to dismantle the structures of racism" (Davis 2016: 83).

In refusing the ossified boundaries of academic "science", Nascimento became immersed in poetry, activism, and the making of the film *Ôrí* (1989). Following Aimé

Césaire's note, "[p]oetic knowledge is born in the great silence of scientific knowledge" (Césaire 1990: 17) in which poetics can be perceived as a transformative mode of history (Glissant 1990).

After staying away for a decade, the historian and poet decided to return to academia, when she wrote one of her most fascinating pieces, "Por um território (novo) existencial e físico" (1994). However, her work and life were interrupted: in 1995, Beatriz Nascimento was murdered by a friend's partner while protecting her from his aggression. Accumulated erasures. *Epistemicídio. Feminicídio*.

4. The Imagery of the Soil: Geologies of *Quilombo*

By unpacking the notion of territoriality, this section brings attention to the imagery of the soil embedded in *quilombo*. According to Beatriz Nascimento, *a terra* (the soil) is the *fundamento* (foundation) of a *quilombo* (Nascimento 2018g: 335). Onir Araújo has referred to the transatlantic history between Brazil and Africa as a history of deterritorialization. Invasion and dispossession were used as political and economic power (Streva 2020b).

Officially, the term *quilombo* appeared for the first time in 1559 in an official Portuguese reference, related to fears of flight of enslaved men and women and anti-colonial insurgency. In a consultation from 1740 to the Conselho Ultramarino, the *quilombo* was defined as a community of at least five "runaway enslaved persons" (Moura 2001: 16; Nascimento 2018a: 67). More than given a definition, the *quilombo* was legally established as a crime. The criminalization was followed by the legal prerogative to kill a *quilombola* (a member of a *quilombo*) without facing any criminal charge or prosecution. Such an explicit necrojudicial allowance endured until the formal abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888 (Alencastro 2006: 345; Bispo dos Santos 2015: 49). Nevertheless, changes in the legislation did not prevent the continuity of the politics of extermination directed against Black and Indigenous persons until today (Streva 2018).

Framed by some scholars as the first form of a modern nation (Carneiro 1966; Anderson 1983; Streva 2020b), the *quilombo* has not been an isolated or sporadic phenomenon. According to the historian and sociologist Clóvis Moura, several villages, communities, and cities across the country can be found that bear the names of *quilombos* or *mocambos* (a subsection of a *quilombo*), in a broad and continuous movement (Moura 2001: 16–17). Moura listed various *quilombos* also situated in the Amazon region, demonstrating that the assumption made insistently by some scholars that no slavery took place there and that there were no *quilombos* in the area was erroneous (Moura 2001: 31–32).

The most famous and studied example of a *quilombo* community is the Quilombo dos Palmares, founded in the sixteenth century in the captaincy of Pernambuco, in modern-day states of Pernambuco, Alagoas, and Sergipe. Considered the largest anti-colonial and anti-slavery organization in the continent, the Quilombo dos Palmares resisted colonial attacks for more than one hundred years (Carneiro 1966; Nascimento 2018b: 350).

Despite the widespread focus on the virile and masculinized aspects of the *quilombo*, as in Zumbi dos Palmares, we conceive the creative struggle of Black women as the pillar of what the activist, poet, and writer Abdias do Nascimento described as the Pan-African revolution in Brazil (Nascimento 1980).

As Beatriz Nascimento argues, Black women had an essential role in providing enslaved persons with material conditions to escape and assemble in *quilombos*. For instance, they used to prepare *oferendas* (offerings for religious entities) as a means to leave food in remote and surrounding areas from the *casa grande* (the masters' house) (Nascimento 2018g: 335). Historically, *quilombo* communities have been formed and governed by women. Aqualtune, the daughter of the King of the Congo, was brought to Brazil and enslaved in the seventeenth century but managed to escape the masters' house and joined the Quilombo dos Palmares, where she became the leader of a *mocambo*. Despite her extraordinary story, Aqualtune was not an isolated case since women have been *protagonistas* at the forefront of *quilombo* movements in Brazil until today (Almeida 2018: 97; Silva 2020).

Even though the traditional scholarship on *quilombo* focuses on its warring, ultra-masculinized components, I follow Beatriz Nascimento in drawing attention to what she names as *paz quilombola* (the *quilombo* peace) (Nascimento 2018a: 75–76). In her words, "[*q*]*uilombo* is a warrior when it needs to be a warrior. […] The resistance. A possibility in the days of destruction" (Nascimento 2018f: 189-190; own translation). In this manner, *quilombo* refers to a countermovement against colonialism and to the articulation and confabulation of alternative forms to re-exist and coexist in *convivial livability*. A moment of peace that is a possibility in the days of destruction.

Abdias do Nascimento coined the term *quilombismo* to conceptualize the Afro-Brazilian praxis confabulated by the *quilombo* movement. Besides the various modes, shapes, and appearances of *quilombo* communities – *associações*, *irmandades*, *confrarias*, *clubes*, *grêmios*, *terreiros*, *centros*, *tendas*, *afoxés*, *escolas de samba*, *gafieiras* – the author argues that they all had the same social function: to preserve the livability of the Black community (Nascimento 1980: 255). The convivial politics of re-existence and vitality – *convivial livability.*

Therefore, the dimensions of the soil, earth, and territory of a *quilombo* encompass here much more than the classic notions of geographic location or private property (Guimarães and Cardoso 2001: 75). In the words of Beatriz Nascimento:

> The *quilombo* is a history. […] It also has a typology according to the region and according to the order, to the time, to its relationship with the territory. It is important to see that today *quilombo* means no longer a geographical territory but a *symbolic dimension of territory* (Nascimento 2018g: 377; own translation and emphasis).

Hence, *quilombo* is understood here within a broad scope, both materially and symbolically, one that involves much more than the official image of the "runaway slave" (Nascimento 1980: 263–264). Fugitivity, or the action of escaping, does not refer to the movement made to avoid a problem. Following the critical theorist and poet Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, "there is no outside, refusal takes place inside and makes its break, its flight, its exodus from the inside" (Moten and Harney 2013: 64). More than remaining alive, fugitivity refers to the exodus, the exile, to the movement towards the disruption of the Othering mechanism that objectifies Black corporealities and forms of living (Nascimento 2018a: 73, 2018g: 329).

The mechanism of Othering negates "the Other", the colonized (Memmi [1957] 2006), the native (Viveiros de Castro 2002), who is categorized as non-human, as property, and submitted to the zone of nonbeing (Fanon 1952), to the necropolitics of letting die (Foucault 1975; Mbembe 2003). At the same time, and in a mutually constitutive dialectics, it affirms "the One": the colonizer (Memmi [1957] 2006) who is portrayed as Human, as Man (Wynter 1999), as owner, and situated in the zone of being (Fanon 1952), in the biopolitical domain of making live (Foucault 1975).

Tracing routes for possible forms of livability, Beatriz Nascimento claims that there is a need "to think about ourselves in the human dimension" (Nascimento 2018d: 251; own translation). Different from the European universalistic narrative of humanism, the author explains that "[b]eing Black is an identity assigned by those who dominated us. For a different and better future, we must rethink ourselves within the human being condition" (Nascimento 2018d: 251; own translation).

By reframing "human being" from a noun into a praxis (Wynter and McKittrick 2015: 23), *quilombo* symbolizes the dispute of the very definition of humanity. Its fugitivity dimension refers to more than escaping the regime of commodification/objectification/thingification. *Quilombo* fugitivity refers to the very affirmation of the human condition while confabulating other inter-relations and alliances. Along with the Fanonian call for a revolutionary and anti-colonial humanism (Fanon 1952), Beatriz Nascimento conceptualizes *quilombo* as a practice of real humanism (Nascimento 2018c: 164).

5.   The Imagery of the Ocean: The *Transatlanticidade* of *Ubuntu*

Moving from the soil to the water, in the film *Ôrí* Beatriz Nascimento describes *quilombo* as the geographic space where "we have the feeling of the ocean" (Nascimento 2018g: 336; own translation). Remembering Derek Walcott's poetic remark "the sea is History" (Walcott 1992: 364), the grammar of the ocean has been continually evoked by Afrodiasporic writing: water imaginary, oceanic displacement, liquid violence, the hydropoetics of the ship, the open boat, Black Atlantic, Afro-Indigenous Atlantic, *transatlântica* (Nascimento 2018g; Glissant 1990; Gilroy 1993; Ratts 2007; Sharpe 2016; Baldraia 2020).

Moten and Harney describe an unsettled feeling of "never being on the right side of the Atlantic", a feeling "that produces a certain distance from the settled, from those who determine themselves in space and time, who locate themselves in a determined history" (Moten and Harney 2013: 97). "[T]o float without a ground to land on, without reference or parameter" (Nascimento 2018d: 249; own translation). The Othering fabrication of time and space continually (re)produces dispossession and displacement along with the fluid movements of the water. At the same time, it dialectically (re) produces possession and accumulation.

Interestingly, Sigmund Freud conceptualized the notion of "oceanic feeling", which was mentioned to him by Romain Rolland in 1927. Despite Freud's inclination to relate it to a religious source of illusion, I am more interested in his description in the sense of an indissoluble bond, of a communion with the outside world as a whole; as a memory of being one with the universe that is kept in our psychic life (Freud [1927] 2010: 11–18). The feeling of a connection with nature; the psychology of the ocean.

While debates on human and more-than-human relations are very much in vogue in Western scholarship – as in discussions on the Anthropocene, new materialism, posthumanism, transhumanism, etc – I stress the importance of decolonizing (Fanon 1961) this onto-epistemological discussion. Such debate is not new, neither for Indigenous peoples nor for Afrocentric epistemologies (Smith 2012).

The poetics of relation (Glissant 1990) embodied by the *quilombo* is here presented as a transatlantic materiality of *ubuntu* philosophical principles in *Améfrica Ladina*. As the philosopher Mogobe B. Ramose explains, *ubuntu* refers to the African knowledge based on collective interdependency, meaning "being in movement" in the Zulu language (Ramose 2015). Like the oceanic feeling, movement is perceived as the basis of everything in the world, from human beings to plants and rocks.

Contrasting with traditional Western literature on community, *ubuntu* does not conceptualize coexistence in terms of a social contract, fear, utilitarianism, monopoly of

violence, homogeneity, or nationalism. On the contrary, coexistence and living together is comprehended hand in hand with the principle of relationality, where all existent beings – humans and more-than-humans – compose the same social spiral, the same convivial social body in an inter-relational and interdependent way. Consequently, when one part is affected, the entire body is necessarily affected (Cornell and van Marle 2015; Malomalo 2018).

In the Bantu language, the radical *ntu* refers to the interrelationship between Oneself and the Other, also known as *axé*, which is the linguistic and philosophical principle of the vital force. Instead of the colonial mechanism of Otherness based on the Cartesian "I think, therefore I am", the *ubuntu* maxim is expressed as *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, in Portuguese as "*eu sou porque nós somos*" (I am because we are) (Ramose 2015; Malomalo 2018). This principle underscores the very vital force of life through its interdependence and interconnectedness that unsettle the ultra-individualistic sociopolitical regime of coexistence, the unsettled feeling of never being on the right side of the Atlantic.

Kilombo in Bantu means union (Nascimento 2018c: 126; Carneiro 2001: 18). Historically, the *quilombos* have been territorialities where persons from multiple trajectories, languages, and backgrounds formed coalitions, alliances, and articulations to re-exist and *live together* (Guimarães and Cardoso 2001: 96): a *paz quilombola*.

The transatlantic *ubuntu* as a critique does not reinscribe the colonial whiteness, masculinized and anthropocentric dialectics in which one category is considered superior to another. On the contrary, the relational and entangled notion of a *quilombo* community goes against the hierarchized, extractivist and developmentalist ideal of dispossession and exploitation. "Under the non-dualistic logic, which is also biocentric, humans are understood to be linked to nature, not in opposition to it" (Tamale 2020: 84).

6.   Routes and Fragments 2: The Living Archive of Marielle

With a political campaign and project based on the *ubuntu* maxim "*eu sou porque nós somos*", Marielle Franco was the fifth most voted-for candidate for Rio de Janeiro's city council in 2017. Franco was, in her own words, a "woman, Black, mother, *favelada* [a *favela* resident]" (Franco 2018: 118) who grew up in the Complexo da Maré, the largest *favela* complex in the city, and became a sociologist and human rights activist engaged with anti-racist and LGBTQI+ agendas. During her political mandate, she performed as speaker of the Women's Committee and played a key role in monitoring police and military lethality and abuse of power in Rio de Janeiro.

On March 14, 2018, after the public event Jovens Negras Movendo as Estruturas (Black Female Youth Moving the Structures), Marielle Franco was shot dead inside her car, together with the driver, Anderson Gomes. *Feminicídio*. According to investigations, the crime had been meticulously planned. Three years after her assassination, the First Criminal Chamber of the Rio de Janeiro State Court of Justice unanimously decided that the two former military policemen accused of the murders will face the jury for the crime (Leal 2021). Still, the question of who mandated the assassination remains unanswered (Pennafort 2021).

It is well known that white cisgender heteronormative men have dominated institutional politics not only in Brazil but elsewhere (IPU and PACE 2018). Even though elections do not define the meaning of representative democracy, they do present a solid frame through which the notion of modern society can be materially examined. According to the Women in Politics 2019 report, Brazil was ranked 133 out of 191 in participation of women in parliament, and 149 out of 178 when it came to the participation of women in ministries worldwide (IPU and UNWomen 2017: 256–257).

Moreover, the increase in female candidates has not transformed the masculinized and sexist way formal politics operates. Based on my fieldwork conversations with women engaged in grassroots movements in Brazil – more specifically in Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, and Manaus –conducted in May and June 2018, women who were either running for office or members of political parties unanimously described formal politics as an extremely masculinized and violent environment.

Franco highlighted the importance of a peripheric Black activist woman *ocupar* a place in institutional politics to disrupt this circle. Unlike the widespread political concept of *inclusão*, *ocupar* is comprehended in a more critical manner as the articulation of voices, bodies, political orientation, and positionality in formal politics. Instead of inclusion within a hegemonic system, occupying encompasses transforming the very territoriality in which the current regime has been based (Franco 2018: 120).

From this angle, the state is conceived as a site for political struggles and dissensus, and the notion of power as permeating and constituting the ontological, political, and legal bodies and relations. This understanding neither implies a blind reading of the relations of power involved in institutionalized politics nor ignores the real limitations established by the sphere of rights and the dialectics of exclusion-inclusion. Instead, it considers institutional politics as one of the territorialities for disputing, contesting, resignifying, and radically transforming from within the colonial structures of representative democracy.

Afro-Brazilian feminists have evoked the vocabulary of the *semente* (seed) for expressing the symbolic revitalization and the continuation of Marielle's legacy after her *feminicídio*. A seed encapsulates the organic continuum of the life cycle, the dynamics

and dialectics of "the root and the routes" (Glissant 1990). Similarly, the concept of grassroots is here understood as: (1) grass: territory, soil, life cycle; and (2) roots: *ancestralidade*, rhizomatic memories, and genealogy of legacies. Instead of rigidity or fixedness, it symbolizes a geopolitical location from the ground up, where peripheric bodies have been placed, and from where they have been continually moving towards re-existence and transformation. By combining ancestrality with movement, the notion of the seed invokes the imagery of the soil and the oceanic feeling regarding both the unsettled feeling and the *ubuntu* interrelation and interdependence spiral of a (not only) imagined community (Anderson 1983).

Like growing seeds, Indigenous and Black women comprised a significant number of candidates for the 2018 elections, which had the highest number of women candidates ever. While a far-right authoritarian populist was elected president, the country also elected its first Black transgender state legislator. Her name is Erica Malunguinho (Partido Socialismo e Liberdade, São Paulo), and her political project is called Mandata Quilombo.

7.   Routes and Fragments 3: The Living Archive of Erica

Erica Malunguinho da Silva was born in Recife on November 20, 1981 – coincidently, on National Black Awareness Day, the commemoration of the assassination of Quilombo dos Palmares leader Zumbi, and also the International Transgender Day of Remembrance. Her last name, Malunguinho, can be related to at least two primary references. It invokes the diminutive form, common in *pretoguês* (Gonzalez 1984), of the word *malungo*, "comrade" or "fellow" in the Bantu language (Lopes 2012). Malunguinho also alludes to the Quilombo Malunguinho, founded in Recife in 1836 (Carneiro 2001: 12).

By activating ancestral knowledges in the present, the artist, educator, and activist Erica Malunguinho delineates *quilombo* as a "social and political technology" (Malunguinho and Streva 2020; own translation). As a concept, *quilombo* has been revitalized as a technology of Black resistance that enables creative forms of agency, territorialities of coexistence – "a possibility in the days of destruction" (Nascimento 2018f: 189-190; own translation). Malunguinho founded in 2016 the Aparelha Luzia, which became one of the main references of a *quilombo urbano* in the country (Arruti 2015: 222–223). Located in the city of São Paulo, Aparelha Luzia enhances a social Afrodiasporic space where political, cultural, and artistic theories and practices are merged (Malunguinho and Souza 2019).

Moving from Franco's call to *ocupar* to Malunguinho's claim to *aquilombar* (using *quilombo* as a verb), I introduce two main strategies to *aquilombar* politics carried

out by Mandata Quilombo: the interplay between *alternância de poder* (alternation in power) and *reintegração de posse* (repossession).

The terminology of identity politics has been reduced to the very narrow domain of segmented politics. In this way, identity politics has been translated as the struggle for individual rights of so-called minorities. Drawing on that, the clash between identity politics and traditional politics configures a liberal distortion of identitarian discourses, which reinscribes the colonial mechanism of Othering within democratic politics. Following Erica Malunguinho and Asad Haider's critique, we question here the current use of identity politics as a way of narrowing the potentiality of peripheric mobilizations (Haider 2018: 25).

On the one hand, traditional politics is understood as a non-identity-based political mobilization. As a result, political movements carried out by white, cisgender, heterosexual men are reinscribed as neutral, universal, as if they and their struggles were entirely detached from racial, gender, class, and sexual features; as Malunguinho asserts, "those who have managed power for centuries – people who, astonishingly, also have identities" (Malunguinho 2020; own translation). Such dynamic configures what Malunguinho calls a "vicious circle of representation", and "institutional dysphoria" (Malunguinho and Britto 2020; Streva 2020a).

On the other hand, Black, Indigenous, lesbian, trans* and *travesti* women have been politically targeted as identity-based and framed as exclusively concerned with self-interested agendas, recognition, and inclusion as if they did not have a political project for the entire society. However, common political theory usage notwithstanding, the notion of identity politics was firstly introduced in a very distinct manner in 1977. In the political statement from the Combahee River Collective, a Black feminist lesbian socialist organization based in Boston, the concept was coined in the following way:

> This focusing upon our own oppression *is embodied* in the concept of identity politics. We believe that the most profound and potentially most radical politics come directly out of our own identity, as opposed to working to end somebody else's oppression. In the case of Black women this is a particularly repugnant, dangerous, threatening, and therefore revolutionary concept because it is obvious from looking at all the political movements that have preceded us that anyone is more worthy of liberation than ourselves. We reject pedestals, queenhood, and walking ten paces behind. *To be recognized as human, levelly human, is enough* (Combahee River Collective 1983: 3; my emphasis).

Beyond the critical approach to the romanticization of non-white women's struggles, this definition profoundly reverberates with the previous notions of living archive and

the body as a *quilombo* that enable revolutionary and anti-colonial humanism. *To be recognized as human, levelly human, is enough*.

The Combahee Collective further explained in their statement that: "[t]he major source of difficulty in our political work is that we are not just trying to fight oppression on one front or even two, but instead to address a whole range of oppressions" (Combahee River Collective 1983: 7). By emphasizing how important coalitions of movements are, the Collective disputed the segmentary understanding of identity, later framed by the critical race scholarship as "intersectionality" (Crenshaw 1989, 1991) and intersectional feminism.

Therefore, the initial definition of identity politics refers to a web of support built through coalition and articulation which does not dismiss positionality. In other words, *lugar de fala* (positionality or standpoint of speaking) (Gonzalez 1984: 224) entails not only the personal experience of an individual body but touches on the public aspects of experiencing the world from one locus and articulates practical survival with strategies of social transformation.

Oceanic feeling. "Since we [Black women] have been subjected to every kind of structural violence, we have created the ability to see the whole and realize that if there is no peace for us, there will be no peace for anyone" (Malunguinho 2018; own translation). Interdependence and interconnectedness: the *quilombo*'s fugitivity from the binary line that opposes the public to the private, the universal to the particular, the production to the reproduction, the political to the domestic constitutes a form of reimagining and reinventing democracy beyond the liberal framework.

Along these lines, the Mandata Quilombo proposes the notion of *reintegração de posse* as an extra-legal form of addressing the historical dispossession of Indigenous and Black people from their lands, memories, knowledges, and bodies (Streva 2020a; Alesp 2019). The feeling of being unsettled. According to the Brazilian legislation, *reintegração de posse* is a classic legal instrument to reclaim the possession of a property that was lost due to violence, clandestinity, or precariousness; such a right arises from the legitimate property ownership or possession.[2] However, instead of inscribing the rhetoric of individual rights, the resignification of *reintegração de posse* moves beyond the territorial boundaries of private ownership. *Reintegração de posse* enunciates an ongoing *quilombo* project – *paz quilombola* – for reclaiming erased narratives, dispossessed territorialities, and marginalized ways of living together.

As Moten and Harney radically acknowledge, "[t]he coalition unites us in the recognition that we must change things or die. All of us" (Moten and Harney 2013: 10). In the

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2 Cf. Código de Processo Civil, art. 560-566, Law 13.105/2015; Código Civil, art. 1210, Law 10.406/2002.

same sense, Erica Malunguinho explains that the Mandata Quilombo "does not imply leaving someone aside, but rather proposing a rebalancing of forces, which will consequently produce other horizons, effectively humane, because this is a struggle for life" (Malunguinho 2018; own translation).

The call to *aquilombar* invokes the notion of a coalition as the common ground of political dispute. At the same time, it invokes the geopolitical location from below, from where movement would necessarily cause the entire structure in which the neo-colonial nation-state has been based to tremble. *When one part is affected, the entire body is affected*: the *transatlancidade* of *ubuntu* as a movement in the making.

In 2020, more than one hundred Afrodiasporic movements came together in Brazil to establish the Coalização Negra por Direitos (Black Coalition for Rights). The Coalition revitalized the poetics and the politics of the *quilombo* by building communitarian articulations to transform the colonial afterlives of today radically. In doing so, it proposes a politics of life, the *ntu*, which is the vital force based on the principles of collaboration, *ancestralidade*, memory, orality, self-care, solidarity, circularity, collectivism, horizontality, and the respect of differences. The confabulation of alternative forms to re-exist and coexist in a *convivial livability*. Only then would another world be possible.

8.   The End of the World (As We Know It)

The so-called apocalypse of today's crisis symptomatically uncovers a much longer process from the recent rise of far-right authoritarian populism and the COVID-19 pandemic. Following Édouard Glissant's words from 1990, a virus can manifest the very nature of a system:

> Every "virus" […] is injected into a computer system; but it would also be possible for it to have been secreted by the system itself. […] What's more, taking a wild tack with this hypothesis, the virus would manifest the fractal nature of the system; it would be the sign of the intrusion of Chaos, the irremediable indicator, that is, of the asynchronous nature of the system (Glissant 1990: 139).

The "thought of Chaos" offers the potentiality to open to a new phenomenon: the "[r]elation, or totality in evolution, whose order is continually in flux and whose disorder one can imagine forever" (Glissant 1990: 133). As Beatriz Nascimento puts it: the *quilombo* is "a possibility in the days of destruction" (Nascimento 2018f: 189-190; own translation); "no matter how much a social system dominates, it is possible to create a differential system" (Nascimento 2018g: 334; own translation).

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