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## **SOCIAL TRANSFORMA- TION BASED ON THE POLITICAL AGENCY OF A QUILOMBOLA WO- MAN FROM THE LOWER TOCANTINS: AN ANALY- SIS BASED ON AN EXPE- RIENCE REPORT**

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**Abstract:** Thinking about a process of decolonization from a feminist and intersectional perspective is a social and political challenge that requires reformulating, reconstructing and reviving Latin America within the political agency and articulation of multiple subjects. Observing the differences is fundamental if we are not to fall into reductionist commonplaces that disregard the diversity of the continent and its peoples. The aim of this paper is to consider the perspective of political action within the political action of a Quilombola woman, representing her community, and her account of the experience of participating in the March of the Daisies in Brasília 2023. This narrative was based on and analyzed by Lélia González (2018) and the idea of mestiza consciousness by Gloria Anzaldúa (2005), among other authors. The methodological perspective was the analysis of the experience report, with an intersectional bias relating class, race and gender, and contemporary decolonial thinking. The results indicate that the political and social participation of Quilombola women in different spaces strengthens their communities and allows them to continue strengthening themselves in defense of their identities and territories.

**Keywords:** Amazonia; Decolonial; Latin America; Feminism.

## INTRODUCTION

The Northeast Para mesoregion is home to the territory known as the Lower Tocantins, an area of the Amazon marked by strong black and indigenous influence, deeply connected to the Amazon rainforest and its geographical, water and topographical specificities. In this Amazonian micro-region, as in the whole of Brazil, slavery left deep marks, although numerically it was less significant than in other parts of the country (Costa, Domingues, Pinto, 2020). Specifically, there is a lack of sufficient data to help us quantify and think about

the material impacts of slavery in the Lower Tocantins (ibid, 2020). Gomes (2006) indicates that between the 19th and 20th centuries, the enslaved population of this area amounted to approximately 11,119 people and the city of Cametá had 4,038 enslaved people, accounting for 38% of the total population. In relation to the quilombos, Costa, Domingues and Pinto (2020) state that they were a strategy for denying slavery, becoming a form of political resistance for enslaved populations seeking better living conditions. Thus, these spaces became safe environments for the development of daily life with their daily rites, celebrations and re-significations of the daily life of violence from which most subjects sought to escape (ibid, 2020). The aforementioned authors show us that after the accession of Pará and independence, there was an increase in the flight and formation of quilombos in the Lower Tocantins region, where political resistance was formed as a result of the Cabanagem (an Afro-indigenous anti-colonial uprising) and opposition to the new political regime. Researchers highlight the district of Juaba, where the quilombo of Mola originated in the 17th century, which fragmented into the quilombos of Tomásia, Lagunho, Porto Alegre, Porto Grande, Itapocu, Bom Fim, Boa Esperança, Puxa Regue, Matias, Mocambo and João Igarapé. Other important quilombos in the region are Icatu and Putiri (in Mocajuba), Umarizal, Bailique Centro, Bailique Beira, Joana Peres, Retiro, Santa Fé, Igarapé Preto (the latter originated from the Paxibal quilombo). The existence and resistance of these quilombos and their influence on the history and territorial formation of the Lower Tocantins and the Amazon highlights the formation of different political, social and cultural systems native to the Amazon, Brazil and Latin America. In this way, it dialogues with the theoretical, political and cultural currents of decoloniality and critical black Marxist thought,

postulated by names such as Gloria Anzaldúa, Walter Mignolo, Lélia González, Arturo Escobar and Frantz Fanon, who will also be part of the theoretical framework that will guide us in the methodology and analysis of the experience report of a quilombola political leader from the Lower Tocantins. Literature review: Decolonial multiperspectives.

Decoloniality is an academic term to designate the multiple socio-cultural perspectives of rupture with the epistemic and socially structuring matrix of Eurocentric origin that predominates in different spaces in global societies, especially those marked by the process of colonization. Walter Mignolo (2017) is an important figure who claims that coloniality is “the darker side of modernity”, stating that capitalist development could not have taken place without the exploitation, extraction and genocide of non-European peoples. The theorist (Mignolo, 2017, p. 15) states that decoloniality began at the Bandung Conference (1955), where the countries of Asia and Africa met in search of a social alternative that was neither capitalist nor communist. Other authors bring a perspective rooted in Latin American epistemologies and histories. Mexican-American Gloria Anzaldúa (2005) proposes ‘mestiza consciousness’, where subjects with multiple identities (the fruit of intersections between colonial violence and social resistance) would be the agents capable of promoting social change, because they are linked to historically oppressed social groups and are able to articulate multiple needs, as well as move across territories to fight for rights and transformations in favour of social justice.

Also noteworthy is Colombian social scientist Arturo Escobar (2012), who investigates the dynamics of the intrinsic relationship between rationality/coloniality, where European development cannot be dissociated from the violence of colonization. For the author, decoloniality relates to understanding Latin

American identities and differences, as well as the possibilities of autonomy and resistance to capitalism, whether in real physical territories or cyberspaces.

From an emancipatory black perspective, we can include two important names within Latin American decoloniality: Lélia González (2018) and Frantz Fanon (1961). González is one of the most important black theorists in the history of Brazil and her conceptual legacy has left deep marks on the redefinition of social thought in our territory. Of particular note is the concept of *Ladino Africa*, which she proposes to guide Latin America based on the legacies of the black and indigenous peoples who originated in this territory. It is also González who makes relevant contributions on the role of black women as subjects who are exploited and inserted into multiple forms of oppression in the capitalist system in Brazil. For his part, Frantz Fanon (1961) also thinks critically about the legacy of the indigenous populations of different territories, Africans and Asians in line with the construction and search for social justice and the practical abolition of the effects of European colonial violence. One of his most important works, “*The Damned of the Earth*”, explores the dehumanization and alienation of native and diasporic African subjects, exploring anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles and the different ways of resisting the legacy of horror and underdevelopment after colonization.

These authors, although different in their social origins and even in their fields of activity, agree on the need to question Europe’s social development paradigm based on the colonization-modernity relationship, the need to analyse the harmful effects of this and the proposal to rescue ancestral cultures in order to create new ways of living across the planet, in search of social justice, socio-cultural emancipation, the autonomy of peoples and historical reparation for the violence suffered.

Relating the decolonial theoretical perspective briefly presented here to the introductory contextualization of the histories of Amazonian quilombos, this academic-scientific study seeks to propose the analysis of an experience report by a female quilombola leader. We will seek to explore how this account relates to the social transformation and movement of these subjects, converging with decolonial perspectives in the search for recognition of the rights of quilombo peoples and also for dignified living conditions related to the land, subverting the logic of exploitation and invisibilization to which many of these communities have been subjected.

### **METHODOLOGY: ANALYSIS OF A FIRST PERSON EXPERIENCE REPORT**

According to Grollmus and Tarrés (2015), the experience report is a first-person narrative communication technique to be used as an observation tool. This report is a little shorter for the purposes of a more succinct oral presentation, focusing mainly on the impressions and accounts of a quilombola woman and her journey to be able to take part in the Daisies March

The story begins: My name is Edheyla Farias Dutra, I am a black quilombola woman and I live in my quilombo, Vila França, trans-cameta, Br 422. Pará - Brazil. I'm going to tell you about my experience of going to Brasília for the Daisy March in 2023. I received the invitation and was able to go with a caravan of quilombola women from various quilombos, and I felt very happy and moved to be part of this movement. I had to hold a raffle in my quilombo to raise money for the trip and I managed to do it with the help of my community, friends and family. During the two-day bus trip, I made friends and met wonderful, victorious and warrior women, full of their stories of victories in their lives. (Dutra, 2024).

Following the genre of the experience report, it begins by identifying who is narrating what happened, when and how it happened. In this case, it can be seen that - as already presented in the introduction - quilombola communities continue to articulate their struggle for basic rights and to occupy spaces of power within the modern/colonial society that is the result of Brazilian colonization, in this case by going to Brasília for the daisy march. When the story tells us about the person's position as a member of a quilombo in the Lower Tocantins, the struggles to access the event and the articulations, we can also identify that Lélia González's (2018) ideas about black women as political resistance in Brazil are still relevant and contemporary to our reality, just as they were in the 20th century, when the author produced her work. Then, as the story develops, the author goes on to tell us how the march arrived and took place in Brasília

The daisy march I took part in was a wonderful and unique experience for me. I saw and felt the strength and energy of that crowd of women, seeking and fighting for their rights and demanding essential improvements for the social environment of which we are a part and which we help to grow. It was great to be part of that moment. The experience of being part of such an important act transformed me even more, and made me realize that a woman is never alone in her purpose, because the pain of a quilombola woman is also the pain of many women around us. I realized that together we are strong, and our voices can be heard. Doing the walk of hope, which for me was also that, with all those daisies for improvements for our communities, our municipalities, our states, our country, our children and for our place. It showed me and Brazilians that change for the sake of justice for all depends on unity, and that's what I saw and was able to take part in during the daisy march in

2023. It was great to bring and tell my quilombola community about this experience, and to let them know that they were well represented. Today I'm very sure that everything in life has a purpose, and my purpose at that moment was to be present at that event, and to add my voice to all those women. (Dutra, 2024).

In the development narrative, we see the first person being used to emphasize the positive emotions, despite the challenges encountered by these women and their communities, as well as the importance of representation. From a political point of view, this representative participation is not just symbolic, but is connected to a struggle for improvements in the territories and defense of the ways of life of these communities, as the author narrates. It also brings us back to Frantz Fanon (2022) who articulates the resistance of African subjects in diaspora, materialized in different ways, but always in search of autonomy, self-determination and against dehumanization and alienation. It also takes us back to Arturo Escobar, who points to the autonomous resistance of peoples affected by the harmful consequences of coloniality-modernity as one of the forms of decoloniality. This is emphasized at the end of the story:

My participation, as little as one might think, was also to demand improvements for my quilombos, quilombolas and in defense of the life of the Tocantins River. As it happens, as well as being a quilombola, I'm also a river dweller, I was born and raised in the quilombo of the waters and today I'm part of the Quilombo of the land. My identity has not changed and will not change wherever I go. Now I just have to say thank you for having had the incredible opportunity to take part in this unique event in my life." (Dutra, 2024)

The words that found the narrative also remind us of Gloria Anzaldúa (2005) and her idea of mestiza consciousness, since quilombola identity is crossed by multiple meanings.

In the excerpt above, we see the connection between this narrator's identity and the Tocantins River and the Amazon territory, but not limited to this group, since it also includes the riverside identity (communities that live connected to the river), thus being a *mesti*za identity that expands from the possibility of defending multiple spaces and fighting for social justice in different spheres, also generating political agency for this mestizo subject that expands its borders and possibilities for dialogue and transformation of the world.

## CONCLUSION

The report presented and the analysis from decolonial perspectives give us a dimension of the transformative impact in terms of subjectivity and political action of a woman from the riverside and quilombola, who managed to take part in an important political event to fight for her community and organize herself. Although this woman was present individually, she also represents a community and was present at this moment to fight for improvements and decent living conditions in an important space of power, Brasilia, the political capital of our country. As well as being relevant to giving visibility to the demands and needs of the quilombola communities of the Tocantins River at the 2023 March of the Daisies, this report gave rise to this academic paper, which rescues the history of black and quilombola resistance in the Lower Tocantins and amplifies the repercussions of this achievement by a black woman on an international level. Thus, the report and its analysis conclude that the movement of a black quilombola woman represents the rescue of ancestral memory, social transformation, political agency and questioning of social structures, in defense of the Amazon and its communities.

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