

Quilombola women and the struggle for territory from the perspective of decolonial feminism

Thaís Maira Rodrigues Held¹

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9822-1933>

Isadora Golim Campos¹

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8707-148X>

¹ Federal University of Grande Dourados, Department of Law, Graduate Program in Law, Dourados, MS, Brazil.

Quilombola women and the struggle for territory from the perspective of decolonial feminism

Abstract: The present work aims to analyze, from the point of view of decolonial feminism, the struggle of quilombola women for the recognition of their ancestral territories. Decolonial feminism manifests itself in the Latin American context, giving visibility to its subaltern representations, to Latin American, Afro-descendant, mestizo, and indigenous women, and in this scenario quilombola women are also included. In Brazil, decolonial theories and practices are drawn from theoretical discussions held by more classical theorists, such as Lélia Gonzalez and Sueli Carneiro, and contemporary ones, such as Carla Akotirene, to address issues that are closer to the reality of Brazilian women. The phenomena that support the theories are glimpsed in the daily struggles of black women, especially quilombolas, for the right to the recognition of their territories - denied by the State and which potentiates the various forms of violence, including gender violence. These practices are carried out by quilombola leaders in the private and public contexts and correspond to the notion of female empowerment linked to the collective context. For the analysis of the application of the theories and phenomena, the deductive method was used and as methodological procedures, the literature review and the analysis of available data and documents. We conclude that decolonial feminism should increasingly observe more the phenomena than the theories and that the feminine resistances in and through the quilombola territory go through struggles for the recognition of gender identities to mitigate the overlapping violence.

Keywords: Decolonial feminism; Quilombola women; Territory; Resistance.

Mulheres quilombolas e a luta pelo território na perspectiva do feminismo decolonial

Resumo: O presente trabalho objetiva analisar, do ponto de vista do feminismo decolonial, a luta das mulheres quilombolas pelo reconhecimento de seus territórios ancestrais. O feminismo decolonial se manifesta no contexto da América Latina, dando visibilidade às suas representações subalternas, às mulheres latino-americanas, afrodescendentes, mestiças e indígenas, e neste cenário se enquadram também as mulheres quilombolas. No Brasil, as teorias e práticas decoloniais se desenham em discussões teóricas realizadas por teóricas mais clássicas, como Lélia Gonzalez e Sueli Carneiro e contemporâneas, como Carla Akotirene, com a finalidade de abordar temas que mais se aproximam da realidade das mulheres brasileiras. Os fenômenos que dão suporte às teorias são vislumbrados pelas lutas cotidianas das mulheres negras, sobretudo as quilombolas, por direito ao reconhecimento de seus territórios - denegado pelo Estado e que potencializa as diversas violências, incluindo as de gênero. Estas práticas são protagonizadas por lideranças quilombolas no contexto privado e público e correspondem à noção de empoderamento feminino vinculado ao contexto coletivo. Para a análise da aplicação das teorias e dos fenômenos, foi utilizado o método dedutivo e como procedimentos metodológicos, a revisão bibliográfica e a análise de dados e documentos



This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium provided the original work is properly cited.

disponíveis. Conclui-se que o feminismo decolonial deve cada vez mais observar mais os fenômenos do que as teorias e que as resistências femininas no e pelo território quilombola passam por lutas pelo reconhecimento das identidades de gênero no intuito de mitigar as violências sobrepostas.

Palavras-chave: Feminismo decolonial; Mulheres quilombolas; Território; Resistência.

Mujeres quilombolas y la lucha por el territorio desde la perspectiva del feminismo decolonial

Resumen: El presente trabajo pretende analizar, desde el punto de vista del feminismo decolonial, la lucha de las mujeres quilombolas por el reconocimiento de sus territorios ancestrales. El feminismo decolonial se manifiesta en el contexto latinoamericano, dando visibilidad a sus representaciones subalternas, a las mujeres latinoamericanas, afrodescendientes, mestizas e indígenas, y en este escenario caben también las mujeres quilombolas. En Brasil, las teorías y prácticas decoloniales se extraen de discusiones teóricas realizadas por teóricas más clásicas, como Lélia Gonzalez y Sueli Carneiro, y contemporáneas, como Carla Akotirene, con el objetivo de abordar temas más cercanos a la realidad de las mujeres brasileñas. Los fenómenos que sustentan las teorías se vislumbran en las luchas cotidianas de las mujeres negras, especialmente las quilombolas, por el derecho al reconocimiento de sus territorios - negado por el Estado y que potencia las diversas violencias, incluida la de género. Estas prácticas son realizadas por líderes quilombolas en los contextos privado y público y corresponden a la noción de empoderamiento femenino ligado al contexto colectivo. Para el análisis de la aplicación de teorías y fenómenos se utilizó el método deductivo y como procedimientos metodológicos, la revisión bibliográfica y el análisis de datos y documentos disponibles. Se concluye que el feminismo decolonial debe observar cada vez más fenómenos que teorías y que la resistencia femenina en ya través del territorio quilombola pasa por luchas por el reconocimiento de las identidades de género para mitigar la superposición de violencias.

Palabras clave: Feminismo decolonial; Mujeres quilombolas; Territorio; Resistencia.

Recebido em: 25.02.2022. Aprovado em: 20.05.2022. Revisado em: 03.06.2022.

Introduction

The struggle for gender equality corresponds to social demands over time. Women's history, however, has been led and held in the spotlight over the years by and for white women, in demands that, although legitimate, excluded non-white women, who continued to be exploited by white men and women. As time went by, women's claims gained other contours and, according to the historical moment, became more and more complex, considering women's activities in public and private environments around the world.

Later, one observes the emergence of black feminist thought, which, contrary to the limitations of white feminism, preaches inclusion, diversity, and above all, collective social justice. These claims, thoughts, and actions correspond to some degree to the idea of decoloniality of being, knowledge, and power, disseminated by Anibal Quijano. Briefly, the academy appropriated his theories, incorporated them into their agendas and research, but a gender limitation persisted, which would later be combated and complemented by María Lugones' propositions. This is decolonial feminism, a racial, gender, sexual, and social intersection, especially in Latin American countries.

From a theoretical point of view, gender decoloniality is well accepted and debated in academia. In the legal and political sense, despite normative predictions, the material implementation of equality of gender, race, class, and other specific imbrications depending on social groups and claims has proven inefficient.

The Federal Constitution of Brazil expresses in its fifth article that all are equal before the law, without distinction of any kind, and men and women are equal in rights and obligations. However, the State does not provide its citizens with equal rights and opportunities. Practice shows that equity is not a reality in Brazilian society; there are many reasons for inequality in the country, such as class, race, and gender issues. These inequalities have their roots in the formation of Brazilian society, forged by the enslavement of men and women, by the land concentration policy, and by machismo and sexism, which make relations violent in public and private spaces.

Quilombola women find themselves at the intersection between gender, race and class, suffering from overlapping vulnerabilities, especially in the defense of their territories. Based on the analysis of decolonial feminism and intersectional studies, the provocation raised by this text, still in the literature review phase, is the materialization of the multiple vulnerabilities of quilombola women and what are the practices of empowerment in and through the territory.

In this sense, the narrative is based on the analysis of the quilombola women's struggle in and for territory, starting from decolonial, black, and intersectional feminism, to verify the proximity with the quilombola women's empowerment practices.

Gender coloniality and decolonial feminism

The evolution of the theoretical production on coloniality is greatly attributed to the studies of Aníbal Quijano who is a founding member of the Modernity/Coloniality group - M/C - constituted in the late 1990s and formed by Latin American intellectuals located in several universities in the Americas. The M/C group was responsible for a fundamental epistemological movement to revolutionize the social sciences in Latin America, because one cannot understand modernity without understanding coloniality.

Quijano developed the concept of Coloniality of Power that seeks to explain this historical relationship of how colonial power structures were built in modernity, the creation of new historical identities produced on the idea of race and the formation of world capitalism. For the scholar the idea of race is a mental category of modernity that emerged with the colonization of the Americas “the idea of race, in its modern sense, has no known history before America” (Quijano, 2005, p. 117). The idea of race supposedly originated as a reference to the phenotypic differences between conquerors and conquered, thus forming a new pattern of world power built with the constitution of America and the colonial/modern, Euro centered capitalism, thus forming the basic experience of colonial domination.

Anibal Quijano's studies were of utmost importance to understand these patterns of subordination arising from coloniality, however, when relating coloniality to the gender issue Maria Lugones understands that Quijano's theory was not enough to elucidate the problems surrounding the issue, firstly because it portrayed in its concept a definition of gender that was based on Eurocentric and heteronormative concepts, and also had an understanding of gender seen only in terms of sexual access to women.

Maria Lugones then developed the theory of Gender Coloniality, bringing gender as a central category to be analyzed. Lugones dealt with the dichotomy brought about by colonial modernity, firstly between the human and the non-human who were portrayed as the colonizers and the colonized, that is, the colonized peoples such as the Africans, and the indigenous peoples of the Americas were portrayed as non-human species, as animals, uncontrollably sexual and wild (Lugones, 2014). And later she brings the dichotomy between men and women making an analogy to the animal world of the male and the female, where the male was the figure of perfection and the female considered the inversion and deformation of the male. Thus, in the civilizing perspective, the colonized males — seen as animals — were still judged from the normative understanding of the “man”, the human being par excellence, in the case of the colonized females, they were judged from the normative understanding of the “woman”, the human inversion of men.

When analyzing that in colonization, there was the so-called civilizing mission which was basically the propagation of Christianity and in Christian thought sin and the Manichean division between good and evil served to mark female sexuality as evil, they designated colonized women as figures in relation to Satan, and sometimes as possessed by him (Lugones, 2014).

Simone de Beauvoir outlines the concept that woman is seen as the “other” because woman is not defined by herself in the gender category, but defined by the look of man, in relation to man, and in this line of reasoning Grada Kilomba brings the criticism to this concept, because for her blackness is already treated as being the other, where the black subject becomes what the white subject does not want to be related then the black woman would be the other of the other, thus placing her in double vulnerability for not fitting in as men or white women either (Kilomba, 2019).

Lugones explains how resistance to gender coloniality is complex, that unlike colonization, we still live with gender coloniality, it is what remains at the intersection of gender/class/race as central constructs of the world capitalist power system.

The semantic consequence of gender coloniality is that “colonized woman” is an empty category: no woman is colonized; no colonized female is a woman [...] Since there are no colonized women as being, I suggest that we focus on the beings that resist gender coloniality from the “colonial difference”. Such

beings are, as I suggested, only partially understood as oppressed, since they are constructed through gender coloniality. The suggestion is not to look for a non-colonialized construction of gender in indigenous organizations of the social. There is no such thing; “gender” does not travel outside of colonial modernity. (Lugones, 2014, p. 939).

Lugones’ proposal is that resistance to gender coloniality should be studied from the perspective of colonial difference. She proposes that gender must be decolonized, and to decolonize gender is to make a critique of “racialized, colonial, capitalist heterosexual gender oppression aimed at a lived transformation of the social” (Lugones, 2014, p. 940).

To decolonize gender is to have the historical insight between the relationship of oppressing and resisting at the intersection of systems of oppression, and one must learn from people. In this sense, feminism brings more than a narrative of women’s oppression, it also provides materials that allow women to understand their situation without succumbing to it. Thus, Lugones seeks to explain about the oppression of subordinated women through the combined processes of racialization, colonization, capitalist exploitation, and heterosexism, naming these combined processes “Gender Coloniality,” and the possibility of overcoming gender coloniality she calls “Decolonial Feminism” (Lugones, 2014, p. 941).

Lugones has made room in her theory for the intersectional discussion, as she brings in her study the critique of feminist universalism by women of color and third world women, “if woman and black are terms for homogeneous, atomized, separable categories, then their intersection shows us the absence of black women - not their presence” (Lugones, 2014, p. 935).

Rita Segato opens a contribution to decolonial thinking, for her it is enough just to introduce gender as another theme of decolonial critique, but one should confer a real theoretical and epistemic status to it by examining it as a central category that interferes in all aspects of the transformations imposed by the new colonial/modern order (Segato, 2012, 116).

Feminism is a movement in constant transformation, capable of elaborating the self-criticism necessary for its transformation and evolution, so much so that the expression “feminist movements” is currently used in the plural, since several branches have emerged from what was called the first wave of feminism, which began at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century and was called liberal feminism. Thinking about the development of the feminist movement in terms of “waves” synthesizes its achievements in terms of civil, political and social rights, however the periodization of these phases does not necessarily reflect a geographical synchrony of the feminist movement (Ballestrin, 2020, p. 02).

The beginning of the feminist movement was marked by being a movement of white, middle-class, elitist, Western, universalist women, what was referred to as the hegemonic feminism of the First World or Global North. Subaltern feminisms emerged in contrast to this thinking, they can be understood as those “women’s movements that identify in the existence of hegemonic feminism the promotion of another relation of subalternity over historically subordinated women” (Ballestrin, 2020, p. 04).

Ballestrin portrays the movement as the most important in terms of theoretical innovation, social intervention, political action and democratic resistance. With the constant changes, theorists were increasingly concerned about the need to transform this universal, global feminism into something more inclusive and representative of other regional, national, and local contexts, due to the diversity of the trajectories of feminist struggles.

From neoliberalism to colonialism, feminist critiques of global subalternities have also cut across the feminist movement itself. The discussion around the “Third World woman”-a category connecting feminism, postcolonialism, and Marxism- exemplified the incorporation of a geopolitical dimension into feminist theory and practice, creating an antagonism between hegemonic feminism and its subaltern variations. The (geo)politicization of the feminist debate highlighted irreconcilable differences in the construction of its cosmopolitization, exposing irreconcilable conflictive dimensions within the global women’s movement itself (Ballestrin, 2020, p. 02).

In this way subaltern feminisms developed in opposition to global and hegemonic feminism, understanding the need to understand the subalternities existing within feminism itself. Subaltern feminisms while denouncing the silencing of various expressions of feminism, also agency an irreconcilable antagonism towards a hegemonic feminism of the Global North.

It was understood that global feminism was not enough to reach all women and understand their vulnerabilities, because it was understood as being a white, ethnocentric, neoliberal feminism that neglected racial and colonial issues, and that for Ballestrin these points go beyond ethnicities, nationalities, and geographies. It was with this concern with coloniality that decolonial feminism, structured by Maria Lugones, emerged. This is presented as one of the ramifications of subaltern feminisms; this term is used in the plural because it encompasses a significant plurality of contemporary feminisms, including different women's movements.

Subaltern feminisms have some representations, stereotypes and constructions mentioned by post-colonial, Latin American and decolonial feminist literature in antagonism to hegemonic feminism. The geopolitical marker of subaltern feminisms in general concerns the regions of Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia, Oceania, and Africa, which project notions of the "non-Western," "Third World," and "Global South" worlds. In contrast, hegemonic feminism is associated with the "West," the "First World," and the "Global North," mirroring the claims of the feminist and women's movements in European countries, the United States, and Canada. While hegemonic feminism has a more universal and global projection, subaltern feminisms are seen as particular and local, and may be influenced by the dynamics of migration and diaspora (Ballestrin, 2020, p. 05).

Ballestrin put decolonial feminism as a subaltern feminism that articulates different Latin American feminisms such as indigenous, community, lesbian, black, among others. She presented the decolonization of feminism, knowledge, gender, and the state as the four important axes of intervention of decolonial feminism.

Thus, Maria Lugones' feminism came as a theoretical intervention on the idea of gender and sex from Anibal Quijano's concept; this and other subaltern feminisms led a theoretical change in the analysis of feminist movements, opening space for debates that were previously silenced. Subaltern feminisms gave visibility to agendas such as decolonial feminism, black feminism, transcultural, border, indigenous, lesbian, and Islamic feminism, among several others that seek to de-characterize the universality of feminism.

Black feminism from the intersectionality perspective

Black feminism developed to question hegemonic feminism that had long hindered the needs of non-white women. When the first manifestations of feminism appeared, the world was still in a slavery scenario; while white women were claiming civil and political rights, black women were still fighting for the abolition of slavery. For Djamila Ribeiro "Black feminism is not merely an identity struggle, because whiteness and masculinity are also identities. To think black feminisms is to think democratic projects" (Ribeiro, 2018, p. 06).

If we take the discussion to the analysis of the theory of waves of feminism, the first wave was called liberal feminism and began in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century in several countries, mainly in Europe and the United States of America, their main claims were for political and social rights and the most prominent demand was for women's suffrage. This struggle was restricted to white women because "while at that time white women fought for the right to vote and work, black women fought to be considered people" (Ribeiro, 2018, p. 34)

The second wave is called radical feminism derived from the word root, because at this time women began to reflect on gender roles, forming a root theory about female oppression. At this stage there was great theoretical development, the questioning about the relations of women's oppression, sexuality, the cultural construction of gender and domination, discussions about women's sexual freedom and reproductive rights, and it was also during this period that space was opened, albeit discreetly, for the inclusion of race and class in gender issues.

The identity theories initiated in the second wave paved the way for the emergence of the third wave which was marked by the questioning of feminism itself, feminists began to question that the movement represented only middle-class and white women. With this, the process of deconstruction of the "universal" woman began, the feminist movement understood that all women, of all classes and races were affected by the same problems and exposed to the same forms of oppression (Marques; Xavier, 2018).

Djamila Ribeiro mentions that black feminism began to gain strength in Brazil in the 1980s, that black feminists started to participate in the feminist movement after the III Latin American Feminist Meeting that

took place in Bertioga in 1985, at which time the current organization of black women emerged with the purpose of acquiring political visibility in the feminist field.

There is still, on the part of many white feminists, a great resistance to realize that, despite gender uniting us, there are other specificities that separate us and keep us apart. While white feminists treat the racial issue as a tantrum and dispute, instead of recognizing their privileges, the movement will not move forward, only reproduce the old and known logics of oppression. (Ribeiro, 2018, p. 35)

As mentioned above, black feminism gained more expression in the mid-1980s, and in Brazil the intellectual production of theorists such as Lélia Gozalez, Sueli Carneiro, Djamila Ribeiro, among others, stands out. Their studies make a critique of the universality of feminism and denounce the invisibility of non-white women in the movement, looking at the universal woman and gender in a hegemonic perspective is not enough to understand the realities of black women.

Sueli Carneiro defends the idea that in Brazil the colonial rape against non-white women and the miscegenation resulting from it is at the origin of all the constructions of our national identity, structuring the so-called myth of racial democracy. Lélia Gonzalez also addresses the coloniality theme by establishing the relationship between dominator and dominated, and how post-colonial Brazilian society views the black person, it normalized the black person who lives in misery because he possesses the “qualities” for it “irresponsibility, intellectual incapacity, childishness, etc.” (Gonzales, 1984, p. 225). And as for the black woman, she argues that racial democracy hides this symbolic violence that especially affects black women.

The place in which we situate ourselves will determine our interpretation of the double phenomenon of racism and sexism. For us, racism is constituted as the symptomatic that characterizes the Brazilian cultural neurosis. In this sense, we will see that its articulation with sexism produces violent effects on black women. (Gonzales, 1984, p. 224).

In Brazil in the year 1988 was held the First National Meeting of Black Women (ENMN), which was considered a major milestone in the struggle of black feminists, 450 black women from 17 states of the country participated, thus providing an impetus in the construction of their organization with its own reference and a national articulation (Coelho; Gomes, 2015).

Sueli Carneiro highlights the importance of the feminist movement in Brazil and how women have been the protagonists of several highly relevant struggles, and is proud that the movement in the country is identified with popular and democratization struggles. However, Carneiro, as well as other black feminists, understands that feminism was for a long time stuck to the Eurocentric, hegemonic, and universalizing view of women, making the inequalities within the feminine universe unnoticed, and thus, the voices of non-white women silenced and their bodies stigmatized, women who are victims of other forms of oppression besides gender remained silent and invisible (Carneiro, 2003).

The development of black feminism and the greater participation of black women in feminism is the phenomenon designated by Sueli Carneiro as “blackening feminism”. With the participation of black feminists in agendas and claims, the aim is to show the existing theoretical and political insufficiency, and to expose the diversities that occur within the feminine universe, built in multiracial and pluricultural societies.

The observation of black feminism and the reality of the double vulnerability and double undervaluation that non-white women suffer gave rise to the expression called intersectionality, in thesis, its concept already existed from the perception of black feminists that a non-white woman can be affected by an overlapping of oppressions, such as sexism and racism, or more vulnerabilities such as those arising from heteronormativity. The concept was created by American theorist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in the field of law. The theorist observed some court rulings in the United States and understood that the country’s Anti-Discrimination Law was inadequate because it treated race and gender separately, causing, in many ways, prejudice mainly to non-white women.

Contemporary feminist and antiracist discourses have failed to consider intersectional identities such as non-white women. Focusing on two dimensions of male violence against women – domestic violence and rape – I consider how the experiences of non-white women are often the product of intersecting patterns

of racism and sexism and how these experiences do not tend to be represented within the discourses of feminism or antiracism. Because of their intersectional identity as women and non-white within discourses that are shaped to respond to one or the other, non-white women are marginalized within both. (Crenshaw, 1994, p. 03 - 04)

Crenshaw uses several cases that exemplify the position of non-white women within a clash of interests, one of them is the case of rape, when the crime committed by black men to black women occurs the clash between antiracism and rape. The black community understands that the law operates to defend white women from black men, being a form of discrimination against men, so when black women report rape “they are not only disregarded, but sometimes vilified in the African American community” (Crenshaw, 1994, p. 26).

Crenshaw argues that when analyzing the patterns of violence, race and gender are taken into consideration, but these are treated as separate categories, and non-white women can be located in between both categories, occurring the intersectionality. Thus, his concept aims to analyze subordination in a connected way, to analyze the interactions between gender and race, as well as other possible marginalization that break away from the heteronormative pattern.

Carla Akotirene, a Brazilian theorist who studies intersectionality corroborates with the concept elaborated by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the sense that there is the overlapping of vulnerabilities in the lives of non-white women, but adds that to obtain a more detailed analysis of the situation of these women it is necessary to observe of the existence of a modern colonial matrix whose power relations are imbricated in multiple dynamic structures that deserve political attention, that it is opportune to decolonize hegemonic perspectives on the theory of intersectionality (Akotirene, 2019).

Akotirene argues that the understanding of intersectionality must include the most diverse subordinated groups that suffer from the multiple collisions of capacitation, religious terrorism, cisheteropatriarchy and imperialism. In this way, intersectionality is a tool to be used to identify the diverse oppressions and vulnerabilities faced by people who are outside the hegemonic pattern, such as black women, indigenous people, lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people, people with disabilities, people from religions of African matrix, among others. As Akotirene quotes “intersectionality is the intellectual authority of all women who were once interrupted. Intersectionality is sophisticated water fountain, methodological, proposed by a black intellectual, therefore it is so hard to swallow its flows made worldwide” (Akotirene, 2019, p. 64 - 65).

Quilombola women and the practices of empowerment through and in the territory

More than understanding decolonial theories and how they are engendered in thoughts inside and outside the academy, it is fundamental to consider that the practices of women all over Brazil in the struggle for quilombola territories and for other rights that imbricate intersectional claims should be the starting point for the real meaning of decolonizing, empowering, and above all, fighting for an inclusive society.

It is worth reinforcing the argument that *empowerment* practices are collective and go through awareness raising and university benches, because “[...] not all intellectuals have been educated. Not all black intellectuals are in academia” (Collins; Bilge, 2019, p. 52). Beyond discussions in academia, emancipatory practices must occur in all social spaces.

Considering empowerment from a perspective that is not only conceptual, but also practical and applicable, it is possible to think of the necessary dimensions that ramify this process and that allow us to have a notion of what paths are valid and, especially, what the dangers are, and even, the moments in which there may be fissures that facilitate the draining of meaning and of the real need for the process as an emancipatory instrument within a system of domination and oppression. The process of understanding and developing each one of these dimensions will culminate in the empowerment of subjects in symbiosis with the empowerment of the collectivity. And this process, besides being necessary, is inseparable from the struggles for sociopolitical emancipation. (Berth, 2019, p. 66-67)

For Joice Berth, the empowerment practices include the collectivity, meaning that it is not an individualistic notion of ascension, as imposed by liberalism - in which the idea of merit and success prevails, despite the differences in starting conditions - but rather a network that intends to provide opportunities to all, without exception, equivalent conditions, conquests that may even have a bias of individual protagonism, but that will

benefit a collectivity, which is observed in a very clear way in the quilombola communities, in which despite all the adversities, the feminine protagonism aims the common good, because as Nilma Lino Gomes (2020, p. 12) points out “[...] they know that social emancipation is a project of change in society and in the country that is built through collective struggles”. According to the National Coordination of Articulation of Rural Black Quilombola Communities (CONAQ):

The quilombola feminine empowerment practices correspond to the struggles against violence due to gender, but also those committed against women and men in the context of the struggle for territory, involving, for example, institutional racism, slowness in land regularization processes, quilombola education, health, and income generation (Conaq, ([2022?])).

The complexity of the struggles of quilombola women denounces the multiple vulnerabilities they suffer, making their protagonism more emphatic from a plural and inclusive point of view. The confrontation of obstacles to recognition, to non-violence of gender and macho-oriented and sexist practices within their territories, the overload of work, in addition to violence outside the quilombos, especially related to racism and sexism that transcend land conflicts, consists of a multiplicity of vulnerabilities and strategies that demand differentiated practices (Sousa; Lima; Sousa, 2020, p. 90).

Maria Aparecida Mendes (2019, p. 81), when researching the emancipatory practices of women from Conceição das Crioulas, in the state of Pernambuco, regarding the gender violence they suffer since childhood, draws attention to the fact that, among the various individual and joint actions, there is unanimity in relation to education, especially quilombola school education, as the main emancipatory instrument in a formative alliance among women, the same occurring in other territories, such as Mata Cavalo, in Mato Grosso, as reinforced by Manfrinate and Sato (2012).

Women’s mobilization also takes place outside the territories, especially in political environments in the local, regional, national, and international spheres, such as the quilombola women’s agenda at the United Nations.

In relation to the most recent mobilizations, it is worth noting that in the Covid-19 scenario, the quilombola women’s collective has been drawing political strategies for confronting the pandemic and in the face of the inertia of the federal government, which has exposed the structural problems and the denial of constitutionally recognized rights, a situation documented in the book “Portraits of the Pandemic - Perspectives of quilombola women,” released by the Pro-Indian Commission of São Paulo in 2021, which portrays the feminine look and protagonism in the face of the spread of the virus. In this context there was also the programming of the II National Meeting of Quilombola Women of Conaq: “Exist to Resist”, but because of the need for social distance, the use of digital media became an effective tool (UN Women, 2020).

Another internationally prominent practice is the integration of quilombola women into the Black Women’s Committee Toward a 50-50 Planet in 2030¹, which is linked to UN Women and represents a step forward regarding empowerment and collective strategies. These are just a few examples of recent women’s practices documented in the country’s most recent history, but we must draw attention to the fact that the female leaders of yesteryear were and are an inspiration in relation to emancipation, such as Tereza de Benguela, from the Quilombo do Quariterê, in Mato Grosso, as well as Dandara dos Palmares, often neglected by the macho erasure of history.

For Givânia Maria da Silva, quilombola leader from Conceição das Crioulas, in Salgueiro, educator and researcher:

[...] we cannot stop seeking emancipatory and decolonizing meanings of bodies and minds, breaking with the concepts and theories that have sustained and still sustain the white, male and Eurocentric supremacy, because they are the ones that prevent the construction of a more just and solidary society to be a dream of all and search of many. (Silva, 2020, p. 58).

In this aspect, the emancipatory practices, in themselves, aim to break, even if gradually, the macho, white, heteronormative, sexist, Eurocentric, racist, and capitalist structure in its most destructive essence, because the imperative is collectivity, not individualism; the struggle is led by black quilombola women, but it is inclusive. The struggle is in and for the territory, but it is for social justice.

Conclusion

In light of the decolonial theories brought to the discussion, the theories involving black feminist thought, and especially the thought and practices of Brazilian quilombola women, it is possible to notice that, in face of the historical, political, and legal moment, in addition to the channels of interaction, mobilization, and struggles inside and outside their territories, quilombola women perfect the ideals of black feminist thoughts and, under the bias of intersectionality in which they are inserted, are driven to fight for the recognition of rights and identities inside and outside their territories.

Transcending the individual notion — which has no place in black feminism, nor in the decolonial quilombola struggles, women lead their communities and act politically in favor of the recognition of their territories by the government, for access to health and differentiated education, to structural public policies, to gender violence, to work overload, to sexism, machismo, and land and institutional racism - denominations that derive from structural racism, in a complexity of daily struggles that are not an impediment to articulations at the national and global level, as can be seen from the protagonism in UN Women.

These emancipatory practices transcend any academic theories, which reinforces the path that the inverse is necessary to analyze the quilombola women: from phenomena to theories, and not the other way around. From leaders, academic or not, and their practices, to writers. However, many of them, due to the empowerment provided by much collective struggle, ascend to the academy and start writing their own histories and theories, in an unprecedented Brazilian decolonial quilombola feminism.

References

- AKOTIRENE, C. (2019). Intersectionality. São Paulo: Polém.
- BALLESTRIN, L. (2020). De(s)colonial Feminism as Latin American Subaltern Feminism. *Revista Estudos Feministas*, Florianópolis, v. 28, n. 3, e75304.
- BEAUVOIR, S. (2016). *The second sex: facts and myths*; translated by Sérgio Milliet (3ª ed.). Rio de Janeiro, Nova Fronteira.
- BERTH, J. (2019). Empowerment. São Paulo: Sueli Carneiro; Pollen.
- COELHO, A. M. S., & GOMES, S. da S. (2015). The Black Feminist Movement and its Particularities in Brazilian Society. In: VII Jornada Internacional de Políticas Públicas. São Luís.
- COLLINS, P. H., & BILGE, S. (2021). Intersectionality. Translation Rane Souza (1ª ed.). São Paulo: Boitempo.
- Comissão Pro-Índio de São Paulo - CPISP. (2021). Portraits of the pandemic: perspectives of quilombola women (1ª ed.). São Paulo: Pro-Indian Commission of São Paulo.
- National Coordination of Articulation of The Black Rural Quilombola Communities - CONAQ. ([2022?]). The Protagonism of Quilombola Women. <http://conaq.org.br/coletivo/mulheres/>.
- CRENSHAW, K. (1994). Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against non-white women. Translation by Carol Correia in 2017. <https://www.geledes.org.br/mapeando-as-margens-interseccionalidade-politicas-de-identidade-e-violencia-contra-mulheres-nao-brancas-de-kimberle-crenshaw%E2%80%8A-%E2%80%8Aparte-1-4/>.
- GOMES, N. L. (2020). Introdução. In: Dealdina, Selma dos Santos. (org.). *Quilombola women: territories of black feminine existences*. São Paulo: Sueli Carneiro; Jandaíra.
- GONZALES, L. (1984). Racism and sexism in Brazilian culture. *Revista Ciências Sociais Hoje*, Anpocs, p. 223-244.
- KILOMBA, G. (2019). Memories of the plantation: episodes of everyday racism; translation Jess Oliveira. Cobogó.
- LUGONES, M. (2014). Towards a Decolonial Feminism. *Revista Estudos Feministas*. Florianópolis, v. 22, n. 3.
- MANFRINATE, R., & SATO, M. (2012). The walk of quilombola women from Mata Cavalo delineating their territory through the trails of environmental education. *Rev. Eletrônica Mestr. Educ.* v. 28, p. 47-61.
- MARQUES, M. C., & XAVIER, K. R. L. (2018). The Genesis of the feminist movement and its trajectory in Brazil. In: VI Cetros Seminar Crisis and World of Work in Brazil challenges for the working class, Fortaleza.
- MENDES, M. A. (2019). *Marias Crioulas: emancipation and alliance among women in confronting domestic violence in traditional communities*. [Master Dissertation in Sustainable Development], University of Brasília, Brasília.
- UN WOMEN. (2020). Quilombola women report challenges at Covid-19 and present mobilization agenda for rights to UN Women. <https://www.onumulheres.org.br/noticias/mulheres-quilombolas-relatam-desafios-na-covid-19-e-apresentam-agenda-de-mobilizacao-por-direitos-a-onu-mulheres/>.

QUIJANO, A. (2005). Coloniality of power, eurocentrism and Latin America. The coloniality of knowledge: eurocentrism and the Social Sciences. Latin American Perspectives. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.

RIBEIRO, D. (2018). Who is afraid of black feminism? Companhia das Letras, São Paulo.

SEGATO, R. L. (December 2012). Gender and coloniality: in search of reading keys and a decolonial strategic vocabulary. e-cadernos CES [Online]. <http://journals.openedition.org/eces/1533>. DOI <https://doi.org/10.4000/eces.1533>

SILVA, G. M. da. (2020). Quilombola women: affirming the territory in the struggle, resistance and black feminine insurgency. *In: Dealdina, Selma dos Santos. (Org.). Quilombola women: territories of black feminine existences. São Paulo: Sueli Carneiro; Jandaíra. p. 51-58.*

SOUSA, A. C. de; LIMA, D. G.; SOUSA, M. A. R. de. (2020). The quilombola woman as a pillar of the community: resistance and overcoming violence. *In: Dealdina, Selma dos Santos. (org.). Quilombola women: territories of feminine black existences. São Paulo: Sueli Carneiro; Jandaíra. p. 89-96.*

Notes

- ¹ The Committee is integrated by the Articulation of NGOs of Black Brazilian Women (AMNB), Black Pastoral Workers (APNs), National Coordination of Quilombos, National Federation of Domestic Workers (Fenatrad), National Forum of Black Women, Black Unified Black Movement (MNU) -, black entities of the Advisory Group of Civil Society Brazil of UN Women, National Articulation of Black Feminist Youth (ANJF), Criola, Geledés - Institute of Black Women and Ìrohin. (UN Women, undated).

Thaisa Maira Rodrigues Held

thaisaheld@ufgd.edu.br

Doctorate in Law from the Federal University of Pará (UFPA)

Professor at the Faculty of Law and International Relations (FADIR), Federal University of Grande Dourados (UFGD)

UFGD

Rua Quintino Bocaiúva, 2100, Jardim América

Dourados, MS - Brazil

ZIP CODE: 79824-140

Isadora Golim Campos

isadoragolca@hotmail.com

Specialization in Law and International Trade at Anhanguera University (UNIDERP)

Master in Borders and Human Rights from the Federal University of Grande Dourados (UFGD)

UFGD

Rua Quintino Bocaiúva, 2100, Jardim América

Dourados, MS - Brazil

ZIP CODE: 79824-140

Acknowledgments

We thank the Universidade Federal da Grande Dourados, especially the Pró-Reitoria de Pós-Graduação e Pesquisa, for the institutional support to the research.

Funding Agency

Not applicable.

Authors' contributions

The authors coauthored the manuscript and both organized

the structure of the narrative, such as literature review and secondary data analysis, writing and reviewing

Ethics Committee approval and consent for participation

Not applicable.

Consent for publication

Consent of the authors.

Conflict of interest

No conflict of interest.