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Black women in search of methodologies for the decolonization of feminism

ANA CLARA GOMES COSTA

Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) – Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
E-mail: anaclagc@hotmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-8481-687X

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Abstract

From a decolonial perspective, this article considers coloniality as the basis of universalizing feminism, which disregards black women in their speeches, struggles and approaches. The universalization of women leads us to gender coloniality, according to a white, academic feminism academic, which contributes to the maintenance of oppressive relationships directed at black women. The purpose of this analysis is to show, through a bibliographic review, that the decolonization of feminism can begin with methodological strategies for the valorization of the listening and speech of black women. I bring an existence-text that aims to reflect its own writing practice in the struggle for the decolonization of feminism.

Keywords
Communicative processes; Coloniality of the genre; Black feminisms; Decolonial feminism.

For the non-universalization of women

There must be a time when women are not universalized as a category and normative expectations, but when we value their potency as lives, differences, and subjectivities. We want the universes of women and their particularities to be respected and inhabited by equal rights and places. We wait for the time when woman will mean women, in all plurality, in all possible breadth and contexts. There must be a time when we are always protagonists of our own stories, of our own narratives, and not made invisible or inferior by hegemonic and racializing narratives.[1]

Someday we will have to put an end to dehumanization, to what is selectively violent to some. There has to be a time when we won't have to be afraid and maybe we'll all know the greatness of the idea of freedom, of being free. I highlight the questioning and concern with this idea, since the greatness of the notion of freedom, being the result of neoliberalism, is utopian, unattainable, but more tangible to white women in the face of privileges in front of black, indigenous, and non-white women as an all. Because while some are afraid, while some are vulnerable and while some are not free, all others who, in a privileged way, think they are free are not, according to the idea of Audre Lorde (2019).

Therefore, it is now necessary to question everything that categorizes, standardizes, and universalizes women and feminisms. Localized experiences cannot be taken as a parameter for all women, as stated by Luiza Bairros (1995). I return here to one of the questions raised by the author's intellectual production: "In a sexist racist society, marked by deep social inequalities, what could there be in common between women of different racial groups and social classes?" (Bairros, 1995, p. 458). To universalize is to homogenize realities, it is to naturalize violence against specific groups of subjugated and disregarded women.

Every box of feminisms, closed by universalization and by a white normative ideal, must be open to the complexity of social relationships and hierarchies. We must engage in deciphering and, above all, in overcoming the legacies that coloniality has left us. The idea of coloniality is the result of modern and Eurocentric capitalism establishing itself as a standard of world power since the constitution of America, according to Aníbal Quijano (2005). It comes from colonial domination and the institution of the notion of race as a criterion for the social classification of the entire population of the globe, but it proves to be more lasting than colonialism itself, which is its matrix of the constitution, according to the author. This is because coloniality refers to "a mental construction that expresses the basic experience of colonial domination and which, since then, has permeated the most important dimensions of world power, including its specific rationality, Eurocentrism" (Quijano, 2005, p. 117).

Therefore, opening the box of feminisms means engaging in a struggle against coloniality. It all starts with the movements for the emancipation of women, committing themselves to the struggle of women, black, indigenous, quilombolas, migrants, lesbians, trans, etc. This is because, even in the places of struggle against oppression, in feminisms, there are relations of domination, patterns of power, and hegemony.

Commitment to fighting oppression must therefore be linked to dialogue, above all, to letting oneself be heard, to listening to the speech of women who are historically and structurally vulnerable. Therefore, we black women also need to speak and be heard from within our reality of social experiences, from within our pains and powers. It is necessary to highlight the gaps that only a white feminism, effervescent of a eurocentric and a class-privileged mentality, create as its approaches, emblems, and demands do not decolonize social relations, but can intensify the attachment to coloniality and also increase intra-gender inequalities. That is why blackening feminism – an approach amplified by Sueli

1 The terms racializing and racialization refer to the imposition of categories by a dominant group on a subjugated group.

Carneiro (2003) – is increasingly a timeless and always current priority.

With a methodology intertwined with post-colonial studies and intertwined with the decolonization of feminist practices, this article proposes to intersect race, gender, and class to think about how coloniality inhabits the approaches of a universalizing feminism, which was born with the face and identity of eurocentric whiteness. For this, I use bibliographic research engaged, mostly, in Latin America, brought by black intellectuals such as Sueli Carneiro, Lélia Gonzalez, Conceição Evaristo, Luiza Bairros, Djamila Ribeiro, Ida Mara Freire, Giovana Xavier, academically invisible, first, by being black and women; second, by the predominance of the euro-north american axis in studies of gender and socio-racial relations. I also bring to the text non-black authors, representatives of post-colonial and de-colonial feminist studies, such as the indians Gayatri Spivak, Chandra Mohanty, and the argentinian María Lugones, both also far from the euro-north american axis of academic production. Black american authors such as bell hooks[2] and Angela Davis will also have their studies used in this analysis, but in complementarity, abdicating their leading role in the theoretical mainstream of the north axis so that, in this work of insurgent methodology, latin american authors lead the debate. The studies of European feminist authors such as Simone de Beauvoir and Françoise d'Eaubonne will be considered for the verification of a critical reading regarding a white and homogenizing feminism. Thinking methodology as a practice, I include myself in the emblematic exercise, in the field of communication, of not invalidating myself and my experiences in search of impartiality forged in the academic sphere. Thus, I also bring my first person, marking, in addition to my listening to the we, my place in a political, communicational, social, and academic confrontation. Inspired by Conceição Evaristo (2005a) and by Ida Mara Freire (2014, p. 548), "I also become a weaver, weaving this text-existence. In the search for an understanding of this brief existence of mine, I dance, write, weave words with frayed threads from the flower of the womb of my ancestors". In this article, text-existence, everyday situations will be considered, including personal experiences, which show how the communicative processes of sharing meanings, whether through the media or through interpersonal interactions, can be violent with black women. The first purpose is to address how a neutral feminism, not engaged with the oppression of women racialized as non-white, can also be exclusionary and violent, following the flow of social practices of coloniality of power (Quijano, 2005) and its communicative processes of the perpetuation of racism. Another purpose is to think about propositional steps for the decolonization of feminism, starting with the methodology of this text, as an exercise in decolonial practice. After all, we are multiple, plural, but we are not equal; we are not "sisters", as social networks have been calling us. Structures have made our difference bringing us to inequality. Let's disregard, then, the universalization of women in feminisms, now, so that one day we can be equal in the possibility of living in difference, diversity, equality, and true interculturality.

Universalization of women and gender coloniality

When talking about universalization in connection with feminism, I take some methodological care in writing this text, such as, for example, the italicized emphasis to refer to some terms such as woman and feminism, in the singular form, so as not to universalize them and to make unique boxes of truths, as they commonly appear around, whether in the context of interpersonal interactions, or in the media, or in the academic environment. I also do this to mark them as categories of analysis of universalization, since it starts from the universalizing premise that members of the female gender are constituted as a homogeneous group, - according to the analysis by Chandra Mohanty (2008) - and what unites all these women is the oppression of being a Woman -, a perspective questioned by Luiza Bairros (2005).

2 Gloria Jean Watkins, known by the pseudonym bell hooks, is inspired by the name of her maternal grandmother to create her codename and prefers to write it in lowercase, in order to confront linguistic and academic conventions.

Such care is given because I believe that feminisms should be engaged with social transformations. Thus, I also consider that feminisms, in their multiplicity, should strive for a constant praxis on thinking and acting in the nuances, between the lines of our colonial ties present in everyday actions. Because it is in the details, in the subtleties that our experiences, our discourses, and our daily lives are being decolonized. In this way, I start here from the colonial as a starting point of social relations, a fact inevitably related to the universalization of women, and I also see feminisms engaged in decolonial perspectives as effective practices for structural changes.

If colonialism is a starting point for our history as a westernized society, it is because the constructs of our senses, our knowledge, our subjectivities, and our narratives come from a civilizing and colonialist process, from the massacre of peoples, cultures, knowledge, and consciences. All this has to do with the capitalist economic system, which has always destroyed lives for the maxim of exploitation, accumulation, and profit. María Lugones (2010) alerts us, from a historical perspective, to the inseparable character of capitalism as a system of power, linked to an ideal of domination, which overestimates coloniality. The author uses the term coloniality

> following Aníbal Quijano's analysis of the world's capitalist power system in terms of the "coloniality of power" and modernity – two inseparable axes in the functioning of this system of power. Quijano's analysis provides us with a historical understanding of the inseparability of racialization and capitalist exploitation as constitutive of the system of capitalist power that was anchored in the colonization of the Americas (Lugones, 2010, p. 939).

The difference, therefore, must not be limited to a binary opposition. In readings about gender and its social relationship, such as that of Simone de Beauvoir (1980, p. 10-11), "the woman determines and differentiates herself in relation to the man and not the man in relation to her; the female is the inessential before the essential." For the French author, the woman is only constituted in opposition, opposing herself as the Other of the man. The woman would thus have a subordinate role in relation to the man.

Beauvoir's (1980) analysis can be questioned because it concerns a universalized type of being a woman. If we think of black women in the face of the Beauvorian category of the Other as the opposition of men, we will perceive a void. This emptiness, evidenced by the artist and researcher Grada Kilomba (2012) and emphasized by Djamila Ribeiro (2017), is due to the fact that the gender debate is carried out by white women and the debate about racism, by black men. As black women are neither white nor men, Kilomba (2012) considers them as "Other of the Other". Thus, black women "occupy a very difficult place in white supremacist society because they are a kind of double lack, the antithesis of whiteness and masculinity" (Ribeiro, 2017, p. 39).

That is why when considering the category of women to ground feminism as a struggle for the achievement of equal rights in relation to men – as an opposition – we reaffirm the structure of social hierarchies through binarism and universalization. What woman are we talking about in this generalizing feminism? What woman is closest to fighting on an equal footing with men, even if it's not an easy battle? We do not doubt that this woman matches Western feminism, which brings the narrative of the white, intelligent, cosmopolitan, free woman, owner of her own body and space.

> The use of the concept of woman implies both the dimension of biological sex and the social construction of gender. However, the reinvention of the woman category often uses the same stereotypes created by patriarchal oppression - emotional passive, etc. - as a way of dealing with gender roles In practice, the existence of a feminine and a masculine nature is accepted, making the differences between men and women perceived as facts of nature. From this perspective, sexist oppression is understood as a universal phenomenon without, however, the reasons for its occurrence in different historical and cultural contexts being evident (Bairros, 1992, p. 459).

It is worth remembering that the category of women is a Western invention, which privileges a "biological", that is, a biological determinism to think about the organization of the social world, as shown in the studies of the Nigerian researcher Oyèrónké Oyewùmí (2021). When the author maps African cultural systems, with emphasis on the Yoruba culture, she proves, in her research, that the social category woman - in this place of dichotomous inferiority as opposed to the category man - did not exist before the colonization of africans peoples. The fact is that taking a perspective on the issue of oppressed women is to privilege the Western mode of perceiving the world and also to privilege a singular type of being a woman.

When talking about women, it is not considered black, indigenous, migrant, lesbian, trans, etc. And when it comes to feminism, on the one hand, a western and white identity is marked, according to Sueli Carneiro (2003); on the other hand, this classic feminist formulation reveals "the theoretical and political insufficiency to integrate the different expressions of the feminine constructed in multiracial and pluricultural societies" (Carneiro, 2003, p. 118).

Since we are a multiracial and multicultural society, by universalizing women and feminism and linking them to western and white expectations, gender inequalities are disregarded, in the face of multiple racial, cultural, class, and local identities. Thus, empty discourses and practices are created that do not aim at social transformation. Coloniality is maintained through universalization, in order to ratify hierarchies and gender categorization.

María Lugones (2010) calls gender coloniality what is at the intersection of gender, race, and class as basic constructs of the capitalist power system. For her, thinking about the coloniality of gender allows us to analyze racialized gender oppression in capitalism and understand oppression as a complex manifestation of economic and racializing systems. In this sense, inequality is put on the agenda and people are perceived, in their differences, as historical beings and no longer as unilaterally oppressed beings. The author also considers that the possibility of overcoming the coloniality of gender is through "decolonial feminism".

Blackening feminism and academic practices

Combining issues of racism with issues of gender coloniality is a political struggle for historical recognition of the atrocities that colonialism and modernity have brought us. It is part of a project to transform social reality, the destruction of the complex structures of dehumanization of people subjugated by the system of economic power through racism and sexism, as structured and structuring instruments of domination.

> In principle, this pressing need to articulate racism to the broader issues of women finds historical shelter, as the racial "variable" produced subalternate genders, both in terms of a stigmatized female identity (of black women) and subalternate masculinities (of black men) with lower prestige than the female gender of the racially dominant group (white women). In the face of this double undervaluation, the assertion that racism lowers the status of genders is valid. In doing so, it institutes intra-gender equality as the first step of social equalization, having as a parameter the standards of social achievement achieved by racially dominant genders. Therefore, for black women to reach the same levels of inequalities existing between white men and women would mean experiencing extraordinary social mobility, since black men, in most social indicators, are below white women (Carneiro, 2003, p. 119).

Sueli Carneiro shows us how racism intensifies intra-gender inequalities for black women in relation to universalized feminism. To overcome the coloniality of gender and decolonize feminism, it is necessary for listening to show ways for historically subordinated subjects to use their speech as an agency. According to Gayatri Spivak (2010, p. 12), subalternity is experienced by the "lowest layers of

society constituted by specific modes of exclusion from markets, political and legal representation, and the possibility of becoming full members of the dominant social stratum". The Indian author representing post-colonialism also states that “the 'speech' of subaltern subjects would be their agency, that is, their autonomy in the face of the excluding society in which they find themselves” (Spivak, 2010, p. 14).

Thus, given the coloniality of power - discussed by Aníbal Quijano (2005) -, the coloniality of knowledge - which can be linked to the notion of epistemicide, by Sueli Carneiro (2005)[3] - and the coloniality of gender - in the terms of María Lugones (2010) -, to define ourselves and tell our own stories is to break with the silencing and subalternity imposed doubly on us black women. First, because of the condition of black women, and second, because of the condition of women, since “the awareness of oppression occurs, first of all, because of the racial”, said consecrated by Lélia Gonzalez, according to Sueli Carneiro (2003). In fact, political practices to fight oppression must be diversified from the point of view of women from subaltern groups, since they introduce, in feminisms, the dialectical process that promotes the affirmation of women in general as political subjects, but which also requires the recognition of diversity and inequalities among women, according to Sueli Carneiro (2003).

The old question raised by Gayatri Spivak fits very well here: “Inside and outside the circuit of epistemic violence of imperialist law and education, [...] can the subaltern speak?” (Spivak, 2010, p. 70). The policy of recognizing a place is important for black women because it defines our narratives since there is no way to detach us from our histories, from our condition, from our pain, and from our race. Our narratives speak for us. To speak about us for ourselves is to break the cycle of narratives that may even talk about us, but do not consider us. To register our existence and our anxieties in texts, mainly in the academic field, is to break with the place that the system of power has relegated us, far from the domain of speech and far from transgressing this fixation. Bringing our own experiences and narratives is to *disothering* black women, in this process of silencing the “Other of the Other”, which causes us to be disregarded in hegemonic narratives.

The place of production of narratives is also part of the power distribution structure that tries to silence us. Ida Mara Freire (2014) states the importance of listening to oneself.

> The distinction of one's own voice is presented in varying degrees, according to the degree of listening to oneself, so listening to oneself is the first step on the way towards listening to the other. It seems to me that the more I listen to myself, the more I listen to the other. Therefore, the perception of the self is always linked to the perception of the other. And perhaps this is why it is difficult to detach the other from oneself, reaching the point of saying and calling the other myself (Freire, 2014, p. 569).

Therefore, our steps to blacken feminism, including in the academy, begin by replacing black women as objects of research by themselves telling their own stories, according to the motto of the Visible Black Intellectuals Catalog, organized by Giovana Xavier (2017). We, leaving the places of non-speech, far beyond the places of speech; to the places of writing, listening to oneself, to the "escrevivências", a practice brought by Conceição Evaristo (2005a) that instigates, through experiences, knowledge, memories, subjectivities, and identities, the exercise of writing in the world. It's as if the black lead of the pencil told a story filling the void of the blank paper. Speech and writing, for black women, are synonymous with resistance and agency. Writing is, then, a political process of “taking the place of writing as a right, as well as taking the place of life” (Evaristo, 2005b, p. 2020). In this sense, the experience lived by a collectivity is the source of the construction of the narrated narrative.

The “escrevivências” are shown as ways to break the cycle of epistemicide of knowledge disregarded by the western model of modern science and coloniality, which never saw in black women any potential for thinking, or for producing knowledge. Chandra Mohanty (2008) states that the very practices

3 Carneiro, S. (2005). A construção do outro como não-ser como fundamento do ser [Doctoral dissertation, Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo]

of an academic feminism, of reading, writing, and criticism, are part of the power relations that can be faced, resisted, or supported by the dominant logic. This is because, for the author, there is no apolitical academy.

Djamila Ribeiro asserts that

> whoever has the social privilege, has the epistemic privilege, since the valued and universal model of science is white. The consequence of this hierarchy legitimized the Eurocentric epistemological explanation as superior, conferring on modern Western thought the exclusivity of what would be valid knowledge, structuring it as dominant and thus making other knowledge experiences invisible (Ribeiro, 2017, p. 24-25).

In connection with the invisibility of other experiences of knowledge that the model of science in vogue brings us, coloniality associates black women only with their racialized bodies and their possible bodily experiences, whether for work or to sexually serve men - especially white men -, or to feed, historically, the economic system of colonial relations, since, for Angela Davis,

> in the eyes of slave owners, slave women were not mothers at all; they were simply instruments that guaranteed the growth of the slave labor force. They were "birth makers/breeders" – animals whose monetary value could be calculated precisely on the basis of their ability to multiply their numbers (Davis, 2016, p. 12).

Historically, while white women sought to transgress the inferiority of the role of mothers and housewives and sought, based on feminism, the domain of productive work, enslaved black women were not seen even as people. Angela Davis further states that "the economic arrangements of slavery contradicted the sexual role hierarchy of the new ideology. The male-female relationships within the slave community did not conform to the dominant ideological model" (Davis, 2016, p. 16).

It is in the face of the historical trajectory of invisibility to black women and in the face of violence such as objectification at various levels, the coloniality of the body, the coloniality of knowledge, and the coloniality of gender that we need to think about methodologies and actions to break these structures inherited from the colonial, decolonizing, thus, feminism and the academy itself. To decolonize feminism is to make feminisms and the struggle of women amplify.

Methodology for the practice of decolonization

Thinking about how to do so that feminist practices are not consistent with the universalization of women and of feminism itself is a first thought-provoking exercise for a project of decolonization, whether epistemological, in academia, or in the sphere of everyday life through the communicative processes of the day by day. I say an exercise because, as we are massacred by the logic of coloniality, we tend to reproduce it through the communicative processes of everyday life; much of what we think and many of the meanings shared socially, in this perspective, can fall into this same logic.

I started to think of ways to propose a discussion, in this article, that would highlight black women as intellectuals. One of the strategies was to use a bibliography starring black researchers who, because they are far from the euro-north american axis of academic production, have little visibility in the production of scientific knowledge. There is, therefore, a power relationship based on the production of scientific knowledge that privileges the white, masculine, heteronormative imperative as a standard, in a relationship that feeds back the consolidation of the policy of citations in the academic world, for example, according to Ochy Curiel (2018). By this policy, third-world black women are little recognized as intellectuals, are less cited, less translated, and occupy, to a lesser extent, prominent positions, spaces of power, and leadership positions in research centers such as universities and regulatory bodies. Our agency is usurped and they place us as supporting actors, as victims, "a fact that creates a relationship of power of

knowledge from places of the privilege of sex, race, sexuality and geopolitics" (Curiel, 2018, p. 36).

Beyond the white and Eurocentric domain of the sciences, Lélia Gonzalez (1978, p. 75) alerted us to a contradiction that remains in the "political-ideological forms of struggle and black resistance in the New World. We remain passive in the face of the political-ideological posture of the imperialistically dominant power in the region: the United States". For her, a first reflection is that we have the idea that there would only be black people in the United States and not on the entire continent. The author points to a second reflection that is consistent with the "unconscious reproduction of the imperialist position of the United States, which claims to be 'The America'" (Gonzalez, 1978, p. 76).

Djamila Ribeiro (2017, p. 29) complements Lélia's reflections, thinking that an epistemological decolonization project needs to think about "the epistemic importance of identity, as it reflects the fact that experiences in locations are different and that location is important for the knowledge". Therefore, bringing black authors aligned with the Latin American reality is important to blacken and decolonize both feminism and scientific production.

Another important point about a decolonizing methodology is to show that, as intellectuals and, above all, as black women, our authors must have their names and surnames highlighted. This, following the maxim of Lélia Gonzalez stating that "blacks must have a first and last name, otherwise whites impose a nickname... to their liking" (Gonzalez, s/d, apud Bairros, 2000, p. 3). With their names in evidence and with the Latin American location being considered as a political strategy for the decolonization of thought, our black intellectuals weave their own narratives and bring up demands to overcome the coloniality of power, knowledge, and gender. It is in this sense that it is necessary to highlight the divergences of feminist practices when black women assume the leading role of speech in relation to a universalized white and hegemonic feminism. Therefore, we are going to encounter some inconsistencies that black and decolonial feminisms show us when faced with discursive practices and communicative processes of a universalizing feminism.

Decolonizing feminism

Politically and academically, universalizing feminism has coined concepts that are disseminated through communicative processes. Concepts and ideas such as patriarchy, sexual division of labor, female sexual freedom, free love, and sisterhood, among others, are discussed on social networks, in the media, in face-to-face interactions, in women's conversation circles, or in common thoughts about what feminist practice is. These themes have been gaining visibility, above all, due to their insertion in the mass media, such as in television programs that present feminism as a form of emancipation and liberation for women.

The television program Amor & Sexo, presented by the actress Fernanda Lima on Rede Globo, is an example of appropriation of the universalizing discourse of feminism in order to reach a greater audience and conquer more media consumers. Because, by neoliberal logic, discourses that value the fight against selective oppression can also be appropriated to increase public and selling products. It is not by chance that the premiere of the program Amor & Sexo, in 2017, with the theme "feminism", registered a record audience for the broadcaster.

Considering that, in order to decolonize feminism, we need to focus on the nuances and question the coloniality expressed in practices and concepts, it is necessary to always consider the praxis of displacements in feminist practices that exist in the social imaginary. These displacements make us question: in the concepts or situations that speak to us about patriarchy, where is racism? This confrontation makes it possible to analyze beyond the empty space relegated to black women and allows us to demystify the notion that what unites women as a singular group is common oppression, or the equality of their oppression, according to Chandra Mohanty (2008).

Therefore, following the methodological strategy of displacements, when talking about the

patriarchal imaginary in Brazilian culture, where is racism? Academically, we tend to be guided by the assertion that the emergence of patriarchy and male dominance occurs in connection with the management of agriculture carried out by men. According to western narratives, it is established that patriarchy begins with the man realizing "that it is not just any deity that fertilizes the woman, similarly to the male of his cattle that fertilizes the female"; with this, "he immediately attributes to himself the primordial role, that of a sower of grain in an inert ground" (D'eaubonne, 1977, p. 27). The french author links the subordination of women in "patriarchal slavery" with the emergence of private property. The marking of paternity becomes the requirement for the protection of private property and the family certificate - with the woman's possession and her unilateral fidelity - appears to fulfill the function of transferring inheritance from the parent to the offspring, in the author's perspective. For her, the woman is dethroned and "stops controlling the procreation fallen to the power of the male who over exploits the soil and over fertilizes the wombs in the name of 'grow and multiply' [...]" (D'eaubonne, 1977, p. 55).

However, this reading presents a western and unilateral perspective on ancient civilizations, with a focus on private property, abdicating the possibilities of other types of societies that were formed supported by other pillars, with other cosmovisions and cosmogonies, such as in indigenous and african societies. Alluding to the emergence of patriarchy to explain the relations of oppression of women in Brazil today is a big mistake because it disregards the entire trajectory of violence instituted, in the colonial period and in the slave period, to indigenous women and black women. We are led to think only of "patriarchal slavery" and its relationship with the transfer of inheritance, suggested by D'Eaubonne (1977) when the only inheritance left to the daughters and sons of black and indigenous women was pain, violence, and fear, which for Ida Mara Freire (2014), have some degree of kinship.

The fact is that this theoretical support for the emergence of patriarchy as a basis for the emergence of oppression against women brings other universalizing notions such as the idea of the sexual division of labor, female sexual freedom, the idealization of free love as a model of free bodies, detached from the monogamous notion of possession, among other ideas related to a pattern of white feminism.

How is it possible to talk about the sexual division of labor for black women, or talk about transgressing the roles of mothers and housewives, if, according to the studies of Angela Davis (2016), the starting point of all exploitation begins with the appreciation of the role of workers from slavery to them? The author claims that black women were exploited doubly, both sexually and for hard work.

> The behaviors of slave owners towards female slaves were: when it was profitable to exploit them as if they were men, being observed, in effect, without distinction of gender, but when they could be exploited, punished, and repressed in ways suited only to women, they were framed within their exclusive role as women (Davis, 2015, p. 11).

Manual labor has always been intended for black women, especially for black women. Sexual exploitation, on the other hand, served as a form of punishment and a weakening of the resistance of black women in the face of the owners of enslaved women. The rape suffered by them was replaced by the euphemism of the idea of miscegenation, venerated in the myth of Brazilian racial democracy, along with the ideal of whitening and the denial of blackness. Thus, discourses of whitening were constructed, shared in communicative processes from the minimization of black identity, replaced by the brunette, by the mulatto, by the discourse of "you are not even that black", or of "you are not black because you have fair skin". Lélia Gonzalez (1988) calls racism by denying the non-acceptance of being black.

> Latin American racism is sophisticated enough to keep blacks and indigenous people in the condition of subordinate segments within the most exploited classes, thanks to its most effective ideological form: the ideology of whitening. Carried on by the mass media and traditional ideological devices, it reproduces and perpetuates the belief that the classifications and values of the white West are the only true and universal ones. Once established, the myth of white superiority demonstrates its effectiveness

> through the shattering and fragmenting effects of racial identity that it produces: the desire to whiten (to "clean the blood", as they say in Brazil) is internalized with the simultaneous denial of their own race, of their own culture (Gonzalez, 1988, p. 73).

In the face of racism by denial, in order to keep the black person always on the sidelines, insurmountable places were also created for black women, mainly fixing them to the materiality of their black female bodies. According to the logic of whitening, it is said where each black woman belongs. If her skin is lighter, she is fixed on the stereotype of the sensual brunette or mulatto, available to men; if dark-skinned and older, she is fixated on the idea of the black mother, or the strong, tireless worker.

Thinking about this trajectory of black women as hypersexualized bodies, the claim for the exhibition of nipples and naked bodies in universalizing feminism, and the exacerbation of the discourse of "my body, my rules"[4] sounds minimally strange, since we have always had our bodies naked, violated and raped. Using the proposed displacements as a methodological strategy: where is racism in the demand for naked and free bodies, proclaimed by universalizing feminism? For bell hooks (2016, s/p), "From slavery to the present day, bodies of black women, dressed or naked, have been sold and bought"[5]. How can we talk about sexual freedom to wear what we want, to bare breasts and butts, if we black women are fixated on the idea of the body-enjoyment, which can be raped at any time? This, historically and in a naturalized way, without any collective commotion, without any sorority of universalizing feminism and without the hashtag "it messed with one, it messed with all of them"[6].

If for black women, "freedom is not having fear", a phrase said by singer Nina Simone, in the documentary *What happened, Miss Simone?*, directed by Liz Garbus and released in 2015, and also uttered in the verse of the song Decolonizada, released on the album *Território Conquistado* in 2016 by singer Larissa Luz, how to be free in the face of phobia and the possibility of violence? And more, how to be free and predisposed to the idea of love without possession, of free love, if black women are the ones who, in general, are least esteemed by men for relationships, according to research carried out by Claudete Alves da Silva Souza (2008).

Thus, racism by denial shows us the fact that black women's loneliness affects many of us. We've all been through the situation of being despised for possible relationships or passed over by men who publicly relate only to non-black women. How many of us have not been hidden by men's shame over us and our bodies or psychologically abused for making us believe we weren't enough?

It is out of fear of loneliness that many black women act in the name of a false universalizing sexual freedom. Black women sometimes cancel themselves out and enter into free relationships, even against their will, because they are trapped in the fear of being alone. The so-called female sexual freedom, once again, universalizes women and serves male interests, in order to legitimize emotional violence that has always occurred in the affective-sexual relationship between black men and women.

Our steps continue...

Faced with so many inconsistencies of universalizing feminism disregarding the history and lives of black women, our steps still have to go a long way towards decolonization. Searching my memories and my bodily memory as a black woman, I was able to find the root of violence, observing fear, just as

4 This hashtag was created as a campaign, giving notability to the documentary Olmo e a Gaivota, directed by filmmaker Petra Costa and released in 2015.

5 The author, in this excerpt, refers to the album Lemonade, by singer Beyoncé, released in 2016. hooks' criticism is based on the fact that the representation of black women in the singer's clips uses a feminist claim, but which exposes black female bodies in an eroticized position.

6 This hashtag is a social media marker that is usually used to create virtual campaigns, in order to give visibility to women's stories or complaints.

Ida Mara Freire (2014) did. It is in this sense that this text-existence arises, as "[...] inquiring if the body forgets, I looked into the eyes of my shadow, I talked to the violence that lives in me" (Freire, 2014, p. 582). In this ongoing conversation, it is evident that the coloniality of gender still overlaps with the multiple possibilities of plural feminisms. The feminist struggle for rights is thus collectively corroded and selective because it excludes plural forms of other existences of women racialized as non-white. Hence, a daily need for the decolonization of feminism.

With this text, I looked for possibilities of decolonizing feminism, from the perspective of my own writing as a type of academic practice. The methodological strategies presented here move towards contradicting universalizing feminist narratives, in a praxis that links theory and practice – in this case, in a metalinguistic process of decolonizing writing, so to speak. The writing of this existence-text is influenced by the writings proposed by Conceição Evaristo (2005b) because it is committed to the experience of black women, both at an individual and collective level. This writing process, even if undertaken by a single black woman, reflects an entire collectivity, because it brings, in the textual construction, common experiences that black women live.

The fact is that it is necessary to highlight the violence that the distorted notion of gender equality brings, and it is also necessary to know that "women do not and will not learn about power or about creating self-love and self-esteem through acts of violence" (bell hooks, 2016, s/p). According to hooks, violence alone does not create positive change. But thinking about a praxis about discourses that reinforce this violence can make possible ways of reaching the decolonization of life and, thus reaching structural changes that bring social transformations, step by step.

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Ana Clara Gomes Costa is a PhD candidate in Communication and Culture at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). She holds a master's degree in Communication from the Federal University of Goiás (UFG). She is also specialized in Heritage, Cultural Rights, and Citizenship, and has a bachelor's degree in Journalism, also from UFG.