DOI: http://10.47456/argumentum.v15i1.39418

Argumentum
Artigo

Lélia Gonzalez and Sueli Carneiro, two black roses sowing Spring[1]

Lélia Gonzalez e Sueli Carneiro, duas rosas negras semeando a primavera

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Abstract: The article addresses the contribution of two black Brazilian intellectuals: Lélia Gonzalez and Sueli Carneiro. Two fundamental black roses in the construction of the black movement in the 1970s and in feminist discussions guided by black women. Many concepts presented today as a novelty were developed by these scholars and activists, who provide us with theoretical-political elements to understand and overcome the intrinsic and current relationship between capitalism, patriarchy and racism.
Keywords: Lélia Gonzalez. Sueli Carneiro. Black Movement. Feminism. Black Women. Social Work.

Resumo: O artigo aborda a contribuição de duas intelectuais negras brasileiras: Lélia Gonzalez e Sueli Carneiro. Duas rosas negras fundamentais na construção do movimento negro nos anos 1970 e nas discussões feministas pautadas pelas mulheres negras. Muitos conceitos hoje apresentados como novidade foram elaborados por estas estudiosas e militantes, que nos fornecem elementos teórico-políticos para compreender e superar a intrínseca e atual relação entre capitalismo, patriarcado e racismo.
Palavras-chave: Lélia Gonzalez. Sueli Carneiro. Movimento Negro. Feminismo. Mulheres Negras. Serviço Social.

Submitted on: 2/11/2022. Accepted on: 4/4/2023.

Introduction

The debate about ethnic-racial relations has been gaining ground in Brazilian Social Work, especially since the 1990s: from the heated discussions about revising the minimum curriculum for the profession to the massive entry of young black women into universities, passing through growth of campaigns, manifestos, Conselho Federal de Serviço Social/Conselho Regional de Serviço Social (CFESS/CRESS) actions, debate forums, seminars,

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etc. In recent years, the production of knowledge in the area has also grown, with the publication of dossiers in academic journals and collections, consolidating a theoretical and political body on the subject. Alongside (and as a result of) these changes, there was a change in the profile of social workers in Brazil. In the penultimate national survey, with regard to ethnic-racial belonging, 72.14% declared themselves white; now, more recent data reveal that more than half of the professionals declare themselves black, that is, as black and brown. There were "[...] 2.255 records, which represents 50.34% of the participants" (CONSELHO FEDERAL DE SERVIÇO SOCIAL, 2022, p. 30).

These transformations were not able to eliminate the persistence of a gap regarding the theoretical-political contribution of important black intellectuals, inside and outside Social Work. We know very little about who they are and we know even less about their studies that could help us understand the impact of racism in our professional space and in our daily lives. Although the theoretical production of this segment is abundant, the literate environment of the Brazilian *intelligensia* insists on ignoring it. This erasure conceals fundamental characters, struggles and resistances in the uprisings and insurrections throughout Brazil. In this regard, "[...] black women are absent as protagonists of historical processes and as intellectuals, whose theoretical formulations are quite relevant for understanding the structure of domination and exploitation in Brazilian society, from the colonial period to the present day" (GONÇALVES, 2021, p. 75).

In this regard, bell hooks emphasized that this is the logic of "[...] capitalist patriarchy with white supremacy [...]" (hooks, 1995, p. 468), in which culture acts to make it impossible for women, especially black women, to act as intellectuals who exercise their creative minds. The explosive symbiosis between capitalism, racism and patriarchal violence instilled "[...] in everyone's consciousness the idea that black women were just a body without a mind" (hooks, 1995, p. 469). The unfolding of this symbiosis is also felt in the classrooms. The author writes that, in exercises carried out with her students encouraged to cite black writers, without specifying the gender, invariably the names that came up were all men, with great difficulty in quoting black intellectuals. It took a lot of encouragement for them to be able to remember some writers, even famous ones like Alice Walker, Toni Morrison and Angela Davis (hooks, 1995).

This article aims to break some of the invisibility barriers of black Brazilian intellectuals, by presenting the theoretical and political creativity of two authors who are not well known in Social Work: Lélia González and Sueli Carneiro. Two black roses that sprouted from the fight against racial and patriarchal violence within the dynamics of social classes.

2 In the desert, two roses: individual experiences, common trajectories

Born within the working class, the condition of poverty profoundly marked the childhoods of Lélia Gonzalez and Sueli Carneiro. On the first day of February 1935, in a large family of eighteen children, Lélia de Almeida was born in the capital of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, the seventeenth daughter of Mr. Accacio, a black railroad worker, and Mrs. Urcinda, a housemaid of indigenous descent.

While the girl Lélia had to migrate with her family to the city of Rio de Janeiro in 1942, at the age of eight; the girl Aparecida Sueli Carneiro, would be born eight years later, on June 24, 1950, in Vila Bonilha, Lapa region, in the capital of the state of São Paulo, the firstborn among

the seven children of Mr. Horário, a semi-literate black railroad worker, and of Mrs. Eva, a black seamstress. Lélia's family had to move with their relatives from the capital of Minas Gerais to Rio de Janeiro in order to escape extreme poverty and join the oldest brother, who had become a soccer player for the Clube de Regatas Flamengo. Sueli's remained in the suburbs of the city of São Paulo.

The condition of black women was felt very early on by both. Lélia grew up in an environment that she would later write about, emphasizing that society naturalizes black girls to be domestic servants from childhood: "As a child, I was a nanny for a madam's little son, you know that black children start working way earlier" (GONZALEZ, 1986, p. 8). Sueli, in turn, grew up seeing the exploitation and submission of black female bodies and had the example of her own mother in her home, as her father did not allow his wife to work outside the home and, therefore, Mrs. Eva had to quit sewing to serve her husband and her home, taking on the household chores entirely on her own. The sexist example she had with her father and the advice she received from her mother awakened perceptions in Sueli that accompany her to this day, in addition to the topic being a constant object of her analyses. Perhaps it was the first childhood experiences (a mix of racism, patriarchal violence linked to working-class conditions) that powered the interest of our ebony roses to write about the condition of Brazilian black women.

The shock that the patriarchal domination aroused in Sueli made her realize the need to study and have a profession and not depend on any husband. The same happened with regard to the racism that led her to learn to defend herself as a girl. As soon as she started attending school, as a black child, she gained the stigma of being a quarrelsome one: "I was always a mischievous, brave and quarrelsome girl. I had, by conventional standards, a boyish demeanor." (BORGES, 2009, p. 25). With this profile, she stood out at school to protect herself and her siblings.

> I had the responsibility to defend my siblings, to take care of them. If a sibling came home crying because someone had hit them, there was no doubt: I would go there, take revenge and hit anyone. That was the profile of the girl I was: not used to playing with dolls and performing functions designated for 'girls' and behaving like them (BORGES, 2009, p. 25).

Sueli had the opportunity, still during childhood, to be alphabetized by Eva, who was very fond of reading (SANTANA, 2021). Lélia, on the other hand, belonged to a family in which reading was not part of everyday life. Her brothers and sisters went to school up to the second year of elementary school. Most of the daughters of black workers could not attend school, having to sell their workforce from an early age. Lélia, however, benefited from her soccer-playing brother's social ascension and had the opportunity to study at one of the best schools in Rio (RATTS; RIOS, 2010). Sueli went to study at a school in Largo da Lapa, in the city of São Paulo. The two realized how much the school was a place for white children. It was at school that Sueli had her first explicit contact with racism. Despite being a good student, the school was not the place that attracted her. In this regard, Bianca Santana wrote that: "[...] Sueli went to school, got good grades, but the relationships that mattered to her were not there. Much on the contrary, she felt permanently summoned to prove her ability" (SANTANA, 2021, p. 47).

Racism also marked Lélia Gonzalez's school life. She realized how much the Brazilian pedagogical discourse was responsible for her brainwashing, because as she deepened her knowledge, according to the author, the more she rejected her condition as a black person. Later, already in college, as she points out, "[...] she was already a thinking person, already perfectly whitened" (GONZALEZ, 2018, p. 82). She became the "[...] nice black girl, very smart, [that] the teachers liked" (GONZALEZ, 2018, p. 82). To be accepted, "[...] she wore a wig, straightened her hair, liked to walk like a lady" (GONZALEZ, 2018, p. 82).

Sueli Carneiro, after completing regular education, entered the Philosophy course at the University of São Paulo in 1971, the year in which she also took part in a public tender to become an office assistant at the Treasury Department. She graduated in 1980 and proceeded to a master's degree in the same area. The opportunity she had to get in touch with African philosophers, unknown to black people and hidden in the academic environment, led her to reflect on the racist structure of the academia and the elitization of white intellectuals, mostly men, which also does not privilege studies coming from black people[2].

Lélia Gonzalez has two degrees in her initial curriculum: she graduated "[...] in History and Geography in 1958, and in Philosophy in 1962, at the former University of the State of Guanabara (UEG), current University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ)" (BARRETO, 2018, p. 15). In addition, she took a master's degree in Social Communication and a doctorate in Political Anthropology (LOURENÇO; GONÇALVES, 2020). The author also turned to the studies of Lacanian Psychoanalysis, which helped her understand the neurosis of Brazilian racism. With this background and being able to rely on her fluency in English, Spanish and French, Lélia taught at the Faculty of Philosophy, Science and Letters at Universidade Gama Filho, in Rio de Janeiro; and was a professor of Brazilian Culture at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro.

Each of them had a love life marred by racial tension. At a good friend's birthday party, in 1971, Sueli met Maurice Jacoel. He hesitated in accepting the invitation to a dance and was direct: "I don't like white people"; to which the persistent boy replied that he didn't like it either (SANTANA, 2021). After one, two, three dances, to Sueli's surprise, the boy started talking about black culture and, in particular, about candomblé. The started dating. However, "[...] all the lyricism and enchantment that affect couples at the beginning of an idyll were shaken by the negative repercussions that the relationship caused in the family" (BORGES, 2009, p. 41). That choice represented a taboo in Sueli's family. Hell broke loose. There was a raging collective disappointment: her mother panicked; the father rebuked her loudly; the siblings followed the same discontent. Despite feeling guilty, Sueli decided to react and defend her freedom and autonomy. Her family had crossed all possible boundaries and she could not allow them to decide for her who she would marry. With regard to Maurice's Jewish family, the situation was no less difficult.

> [The parents] invoked every racial and religious arguments at their disposal to convince their son that the marriage would never work. As they firmly believed that it was an institution for the rest of their lives, they suggested that, instead of getting married on paper, the young people lived together, so they could see if that was really what they wanted (SANTANA, 2021, p. 72).

[2] This perception led her to defend a doctoral thesis on epistemicide, entitled *The construction of the other as non-being as the foundation of being*. See Carneiro (2005).

With Lélia Gonzalez, racism was even more tragic. Before turning black, like most black women in the 20th century in Brazil, Lélia went through a profound whitening process[3]: she straightened her hair, wore a wig, etc. Not understanding the racist structure of the Brazilian social formation, she did everything to be accepted within the white middle class. However, this procedure "[...] was not enough for Lélia Gonzalez to be treated as part of the select white group. All the effort she made to adopt the aesthetics of whiteness did not protect her from the pain of racism" (GONÇALVES, 2020, p. 225). Lélia herself describes her marriage as representing the polarization of racial relations in Brazil:

> But when it came time to get married, I went to marry a white guy. There, then what was repressed, a whole process of internalizing a 'racial democracy' discourse came to the fore, and it was a direct contact with a very harsh reality. My husband's family thought that our marriage regime was, as I call it, 'concubinage', because a black woman does not legally marry a white man; it is a mixture of concubinage and nastiness, ultimately. When they found out that we were legally married, then a violent cane came over me; of course, I became a 'whore', a 'dirty black woman' and things like that... (GONZALEZ, 2020, p. 286-287).

While Maurice's family realized that their son's relationship with Sueli was irreversible, they began to treat their future daughter-in-law well; Luiz Carlos' family never accepted the marriage, making the relationship unbearable to the point where he committed suicide. A tragedy that forever marked the life of Lélia Gonzalez, who began to walk the way back to her origins seeking to darken, which "[...] meant a profound personal, aesthetic, theoretical and political change" (GONÇALVES, 2020, p. 226). As Gonzalez herself noted:

> From then on, I went to have sex with my people, that is, I went to have sex with candomblé, macumba, those things that I thought were primitive. Cultural manifestations that I, after all, with a background in Philosophy, having sex with such a sophisticated Western cultural form, of course, could not look at as important things. But anyway, I went back to my origins, I searched for my roots (GONZALEZ, 2018, p. 83).

The author decided to adopt her husband's name, thus becoming Lélia Gonzalez, as a tribute to Luiz (RATTS; RIOS, 2010). From this painful episode, her interest in Psychoanalysis arose. Initially, she sought analysis to deal with the issues that had become clouded regarding the second man she had a relationship with, a light-skinned black man who did not recognize himself as such; on the contrary, he sought to deny the origins that connected him with black culture and stereotypes. Lélia, submerged in this situation, did not understand how her previous husband, who was white, encouraged her so much in the study of racial issues and in her own recognition as a black woman, and the current one did not support her and, moreover, distanced herself from any manifestations of black culture (RATTS; RIOS, 2010). Gradually, what was just a search for personal understanding, turned into an interest in studies on psychoanalysis.

Lélia realized that this area of knowledge was an opportunity not only to get to know herself more and recognize herself in her blackness, having her attention drawn to the mechanisms of racialization, but also to understand that she was facing the key to understanding the very

[3] With Sueli Carneiro the same thing happened. In his biography, there are important passages in this regard, such as, for example, the fact that he has his own salary and thus alleviates the family's financial problems and also being able, for the first time, to buy a wig and abandon the braids of childhood. and the tortures of the iron comb, giving "[...] enough with straightening" (SANTANA, 2021, p. 65).

neurosis of a racist society. Her involvement with political organizations was consolidated from that moment on, in the late 1960s. Something that was not ignored by the security sectors of the military regime.

> Lélia began to be observed by the Department of Order and Social Policy and information about her appeared for the first time in the institution's files in 1972, when a request was made to investigate her possible involvement in the 'recruitment of supporters of the Marxist doctrine', at Universidade Gama Filho, where she taught Philosophy (GONÇALVES, 2021, p. 79).

Sueli Carneiro's political involvement took place in other ways. Her marriage to Maurice was marked by symbolism, it was practically an act of rebellion against racism. The apartment they went to live in in the center of São Paulo welcomed a lot of people, including those who needed to hide from the military (SANTANA, 2021). They hosted a couple of friends who had been living underground since 1969. As Sueli and Maurice were not part of any political organization, "[...] sheltering the couple in a reckless situation was a way of collaborating with the resistance" (SANTANA, 2021, p. 77). This also did not go unnoticed by the Department of Order and Social Policy.

The individual trajectories of Lélia Gonzalez and Sueli Carneiro seemed to follow the same course, but along different paths. The crossroads of racism, patriarchal violence and capitalist class exploitation placed them in the same universe of struggles in the late 1970s, when the emergence of the Unified Black Movement was announced on the steps of the Municipal Theater of São Paulo.

3 Our two roses and their black and feminist militancy

At the end of the 1960s, Lélia Gonzalez was already aware that she had to walk the way out of the whitening she had gone through. The attempt to whiten it was not enough to protect her. The pains she suffered as a black woman were deeply felt and became the subject of political interventions and studies (GONÇALVES, 2020).

Those were times of the Military Dictatorship and, therefore, of an enormous setback for democracy in the country, when, already in the late 1970s, there was a great commotion in São Paulo, after the murder of a black worker who, "[...] accused of stealing fruit in a fair, was arrested in the Police District of Guaianazes and suffered so much torture that he died" (SANTANA, 2021, p. 95). This and many other episodes of violence led a group of people, who until then had been having isolated discussions about the racial issue, to organize a demonstration against that and countless other crimes arising from racism. On June 18, 1978, this group, together with approximately 2,000 people, gathered on the steps of the Municipal Theater of São Paulo, where Sueli and Lélia were present. The act was a milestone in the emergence of the *Unified Black Movement* (Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU)) and marked "[...] a paradigm shift in the Brazilian black movement, a powerful inflection in the discussion of race and class" (SANTANA, 2021, p. 96). After the formation of the MNU, Lélia Gonzalez

> [...] assumed the position of executive director in the first election of the National Assembly of the Unified Black Movement, still in 1978. From then on, she worked in the articulation and, in particular, in the political formation of activists, through lectures, courses, meetings and productions of texts, which were disseminated in different spaces and, above all, in the black press, in particular in the MNU newspaper (RATTS; RIOS, 2010, p. 84).

The author was also close to the Black Movement in Rio de Janeiro, Bahia and São Paulo. Gonzalez was also one of those responsible for claiming the date of November 20 as a commemoration of freedom marked by the struggles of black people (GONÇALVES, 2020).

Sueli Carneiro, unlike Lélia Gonzalez, was never an organic militant of the Unified Black Movement. However, this was an important point of convergence between the two scholars. In addition to Sueli's trajectory being strongly marked by being present in the first act, the Movement was very important for the theoretical paths she followed, in addition to expanding the author's political understanding.

For Gonzalez, the MNU was of significant importance, especially at a time when she understood herself more and more as a black woman and began to theorize in her writings the issues in this regard in a racist, patriarchal and classist society. Sueli Carneiro, as for her, "[...] was already sufficiently feminist to perceive the sexism that hovered there. Perceptions and annoyances that had not yet been formulated" (SANTANA, 2021, p. 99). This intellectual's discomfort went against the perceptions that Lélia had been formulating about the issue of black women. Despite composing, compacting a common agenda and strengthening herself with the Black Movement, Lélia did not take long to realize and to be bothered by the sexist aspects present in her structure.

From this perception stems the "[...] formation of contemporary female groups with political purposes [that] occurred within the Black Movement in the late 1970s" (RATTS; RIOS, 2010, p. 95). The guidelines on women were urgent, as they began to realize that black women were contradictorily excluded within the very movement that should welcome them. In addition, they felt another discomfort: the wives of the militants were mostly white women. Their focus on the real needs of black women was practically non-existent and "[...] although black women were companions and collaborators in the struggle, white women had a strong presence in the black male imagination" (RATTS; RIOS, 2010, p. 95).

Lélia Gonzalez, understanding the implications of this patriarchal scenario, participated in the first meetings of black women from Rio de Janeiro between 1973 and 1974. From then on, she began to write texts and give lectures on the agendas that were dealt with in the occasion (RATTS; RIOS, 2010). In the 1980s, other autonomous collectives emerged, which thought about particular issues related to the existence of black women, and increasingly felt the need for autonomy as a collective of black women, as the black movement continued to reproduce sexist practices and discourses. However, they also realized that they needed to detach themselves from the feminist movement, which did not pay attention to the racial issue, reproducing and/or naturalizing racist practices. The new aspects of feminism in Brazil boosted new discussions that covered the experiences and rights of women, but did not welcome black women nor did they consider their more specific agendas (CARNEIRO, 2019).

Sueli Carneiro's militancy also flourished in this field involving black women's issues. It is considered "[...] a historical, cultural and political heritage that opened forests and paths for the propagation of black feminist thought and the struggle for civilizing and humanitarian milestones" (RIBEIRO, 2019, p. 5). Lélia Gonzalez, in turn, is presented "[...] as a daring intellectual, with a free laugh, with a strong presence in the Feminist Movement, in the Black Movement, in the Black Women's Movement" (GONÇALVES, 2020, p. 225). The strong presence of both in the Brazilian political scene gave them a prominent role in the fight for the

country's redemocratization, in debates on racism, in discussions about black women and in subsequent management spaces focused on public policies.

4 Two black roses sowing Spring

In the last years of the Military Dictatorship, a political opening was gradually consolidated and, in this process, progressive sectors and entities began to formulate government proposals. Although a part of the feminists defended that the movement should not get involved with the government to preserve its autonomy, another part went against this principle and presented their demands to André Franco Montoro, candidate for the government of the state of São Paulo. Elected governor, Montoro appointed on September 12, 1983, the State Council for the Condition of Women of São Paulo, the first in the country (SANTANA, 2021).

Created without the participation of black women, the Council caused a public revolt by important exponents of this segment, such as black radio host Marta Arruda. The latter, "[...] very popular at the time, launched a campaign in the press. Not directly against the government, but calling black women to the insurgency" (SANTANA, 2021, p. 127). The noise was so loud that it became impossible to ignore. Black women who, until then, had not been following the discussion around the creation of the Council, found themselves summoned by the radio host. They requested an audience with the Council and received the explanation that there was no discrimination in the state body: "[...] the absence of black women was the result of their own lack of organization" (SANTANA, 2021, p. 128). After this meeting, Sueli Carneiro and other militants founded the Coletivo de Mulheres Negras (Black Women's Collective), on October 6, 1983, emptying the argument that they were not organized. They claimed immediate representation on the Council. Racial tension was installed in the government agency.

In her biography, Thereza Santos (2008), the first to represent black women on the Board, described how difficult it was to deal with the boycotts and constraints imposed by white board members, who did not disguise discrimination and racism.

> In a meeting they started to discuss the issue of birth control, I signed up to speak and a councilor on the board spoke quietly to the councilor next to her: 'let's close this issue because another one is coming with a problem of black women'. I replied: 'My name is not another one, it's Thereza Santos, and I'm going to raise the problem of black women in this matter. Because when you talk about birth control it's always from the poor and we are the majority of them; if you don't know, we have countless black women with consequences of the controls developed by this society aimed at the poor, that is, us'. I spoke about the reality of uteruses that became dry, of women whose health was destroyed, and I made it clear that if it wasn't their problem, it was ours. And that I would not accept any proposal that had not been discussed by groups of black women (SANTOS, 2008, p. 91).

A great achievement for black women in that period was the volume, fought for by Thereza Santos and written by Sueli Carneiro, *Mulher negra: política governamental e a mulher (Black women: governmental policy and women)*, which made up the collection *Década da Mulher (Decade of the woman) (1975-1985)*, organized by Nobel publishing house and the advice. It was "[...] the first study in the country to disaggregate social indicators of gender, race and class, that is, to put on paper the numbers of inequalities between white and black women in Brazil" (SANTANA, 2021, p. 131). The book, published in 1985, demonstrated the "[...] need for

a racial bias in any proposed policy, in addition to structuring specific policies for black women. Feminist politics began to be blackened" (SANTANA, 2021, p. 133).

Sueli Carneiro was elected councilor in 1986 and created the Commission for Black Women's Affairs, increasingly improving the body and the guidelines discussed by black professionals to work in various areas, such as: "[...] women's health, family planning, education, work, violence, day care" (SANTANA, 2021, p. 133).

In the same year of the creation of the Council in São Paulo, Lélia Gonzalez created in Rio de Janeiro the Nzinga[4] Black Women Collective, of which she was coordinator. The choice of name derived from "[...] the concern to rescue a historical past repressed by a 'history' that only speaks of our oppressors. The famous queen Jinga (Nzinga) played a major role in the struggle against the Portuguese oppressor in Angola" (GONZALEZ, 2020, p. 108). At the time, both the feminist movement and the black movement realized the need to approach the most precarious layers of society. However, the task was not that simple. Nzinga's experience, however,

> [...] achieved something unique: on the one hand, a political grouping of women from different social positions was formed (residents of the hills and middle-class neighborhoods, manual machinists with low education and women with university education); on the other hand, diverse experiences of associative formation were gathered (women from the feminist movement, the black movement and neighborhood and favela movements, etc.) (RATTS; RIOS, 2010, p. 98).

Gonzalez cultivated an intense relationship with the feminist movement, from which she gathered reflections on inequalities between men and women and went on to introduce analyses on the determinations of class, race and sex. Lélia's political and intellectual strength transformed her into something much greater than her two original movements: black and feminist (RATTS; RIOS, 2010). In this regard, Luiza Bairros wrote:

> When most of the MNU militants still did not have a deeper understanding of black women, it was Lélia who served as our spokesperson against the sexism that threatened to subordinate the participation of women within the MNU and the racism that prevented our full insertion in the women's movement. But through many long conversations and her texts, we learned how to incorporate a certain way of being feminist into our lives and our activism, we articulated our own interests and created conditions to value the political action of black women (BAIRROS, 2018, p 426-427).

Although daughter of Oxum[5] *et pour cause*, Lélia Gonzalez moved like the wind of Iansã and in a "[...] circular movement, political activism and theoretical formulations presented themselves as a constantly swirling spiral" (GONÇALVES, 2020, p. 226). She arrived at the feminist movement with readings of Simone de Beauvoir, Heleieth Saffioti and many others. He got to know American black feminism before any trend. These feminist matrices certainly contributed to the development of her analyses on the place of black women in Brazilian society.

[4] The group's name was a reference to the name of the African queen who fought against colonial power in Angola.

[5] The author, numerous times, introduced herself and was presented as the daughter of Oxum. Among the many references, see especially Felippe (2003, p. 9).

Hence her inclusion on the editorial board of the feminist newspaper *Mulherio*, a feminist production based at the Carlos Chagas Foundation in São Paulo, which conveyed reflections on inequality between men and women. Lélia's contribution to the newspaper consisted, above all, in problematizing "[...] the issue of black women as a specific category in the fight against social inequalities between the sexes, a theme that she managed to extend to all other feminist debates" (RATTS; RIOS, 2010, p. 103).

Gonzalez was one of the nominees by black women in Rio de Janeiro to participate in the National Council for Women's Rights, created in 1985. It was time to do something different in São Paulo, and Gonzalez's intellectual production and political engagement guaranteed her a place in this space with deliberative power. With a four-year mandate, from 1985 to 1989, it addressed topics such as "[...] work, education, sexuality, black women and violence" (RATTS; RIOS, 2010, p. 107).

Lélia Gonzalez and Sueli Carneiro had, therefore, active participation – as the latter still has today – in several spaces and black and feminist political organizations. However, despite all the effort to join feminists, black protagonism had no space: "The feminist agenda disregarded the anti-racist struggle, more than that, race relations were the abyss that separated white women from black women" (GONÇALVES, 2018, p. 15). From now on, the idea was consolidated, with the strong participation of our two black roses, of an autonomous organization of women, materialized in the 1st National Meeting of Black Women[6], where, finally, these came out of invisibility.

5 By way of conclusion: Lélias and Suelis announcing Spring

The militant trajectory of both authors was built in different places (in the family, in the black movement, in feminism, in academia, etc.). Each one saw black women's need for autonomy: Lélia founded Nzinga; Sueli created the Black Women Collective; both participated in the construction of the National Meeting of Black Women. In a circular movement, militancy gave way to theoretical reflection at the same time that the production of knowledge supported the political practice of our two black roses. And there were so many theoretical contributions from the two black authors that it is impossible to systematize them in the short space of this article.

It is only worth noting that Gonzalez's wanderings led her: 1) to coin the political-cultural category of *amefricanity*, a creativity of the oppressed people to fight against enslavement, extermination, exploitation and oppression; 2) to re-signify the social place of the black mother, responsible for introducing *Pretuguese*[7] into the country, a hallmark of African culture in Brazil; and 3) to propose an *Afro-Latin-American feminism*, that is, a feminism that considers the common pain of millions of non-white women living in Latin America and that, given their social position, articulated with racial and sexual discrimination, are the ones that most brutally suffer the effects of capitalist exploitation (GONZALEZ, 2018; 2020).

> This place of the black woman is marked by the intensification of labor activity. Before going to work as a maid, she has to finish her household chores, which include fetching water from the waterspout, preparing food for her children and partner,

[6] It took place in the city of Valença (RJ), between December 1st and 4th, 1988. See Gonçalves (2018).
[7] T.N.: 'Pretuguese' is an adaptation of the word 'pretuguês', which is the combination of the words 'preto' (black) and 'português' (Portuguese).

> washing, ironing, etc. and going to the boss's house to take care of her children, without being able to take care of her own (ADRIANO; LOURENÇO, 2021, p. 296).

Carneiro, although she kept her feet firmly planted in São Paulo, where he founded Geledés[8]– Institute of the Black Woman, never ceased to dialogue with the rest of Brazil and the world (LOURENÇO; GONÇALVES, 2020). The philosopher provided us with 1) fundamental criticisms of *epistemicide*, that is, a set of practices that deny the forms of existence of black people, which expropriate and reduce this population contingent to subjects devoid of knowledge and knowledge (CARNEIRO, 2005); 2) the formulations about the *matriarchy of misery*, when racism, patriarchal violence and capitalism produce

> [...] on black women, a kind of social asphyxia, with negative consequences on all dimensions of life, which manifest themselves in emotional consequences with damage to mental health and lowering of self-esteem; in a lower life expectancy, of five years, in relation to that of white women; in a lower rate of marriages; and above all confinement to less prestigious and less remunerative occupations (CARNEIRO, 2011, p. 127-128).

And we also owe to Sueli: 3) the proposals for *to blacken feminism* so that the demands of that hegemonic movement would also cover black women, with a daily life marked by precarious livelihoods (CARNEIRO, 2003).

Both authors' studies on the past of enslaved women and on the historical continuity of stereotypes about black women provide subsidies to our area of training and professional intervention not only to understand the ties that unite racism, patriarchal violence and capitalist class exploitation, but above all they set us, the new Lélias and Suelis, the task of overcoming them and, therefore, of sowing Spring.

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