# The Negation and Reassertion of Black Geographies in Brazil

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**Abstract**

Under the project of modernity the figure of the Black has been continually denied a geography of its own. This assumed inability for Black space to exist establishes the Black as the anti-human par excellence in the West. Indeed, the supposed non-being of the Black comprises the foundation of the Western project, as this a-spatial figure is the referent for all other forms of potential being. Despite the perpetual insistence of this Black a-spatiality and non-being by the West, Blacks have recurrently sought to create geographies and ways of existing unique to the Western, modern project. This paper takes the case of Brazil and demonstrates how Brazil, in its endeavor to establish itself as a modern nation, sought to erase Black spaces through various practices and discourses. Blacks, on the other hand, sought to break with this Slave existence and create various spaces of their own, a practice which continues into the present day. By interrogating the dehumanization of the Black and examining Black articulations of space and notions of spatiality, this paper demonstrates how Black geographies seek to create new ways of being in the world.

## Introduction

To be a marked Other in modernity has always meant to have one's being questioned or denied altogether. The Black, as the Other par excellence in the

modern project, has been seen as the quintessential non-being since European expansion around the globe. Central to the dehumanizing agenda of modernity is the endeavor of the colonizer to turn "the colonized into a kind of quintessence of evil… representing not only the absence of values but also the negation of values" (Fanon, 2004, 6). This was indeed the case in Brazil, where the establishment of the Brazilian nation was fundamentally premised on the marginality of the Black body and the attempted destruction of Black subjectivity. This genocidal ethic is central to what it means to be Brazilian today.

Still, as it is "the colonist who *fabricated* and *continues to fabricate* the colonized subject" (Fanon, 2004, 2), the oppressed, recognizing the inherent lie in rational universalism, seek to "dislocate the colonial world", asserting that "their world is fundamentally different" from that of the colonist (Fanon, 2004, 6). Such was the case in Brazil, as this paper demonstrates. In the context of Brazil, Blacks, deemed captive and fungible like any other piece of chattel, showed the ability to not only resist the agenda of modern Brazil, but to effectively create other worlds in the face of colonial oppression. Sometimes violent, and above all, creative, these Black spaces and cultural practices proved the "truths" of colonialism and modernity to be a lie. This paper explores how the Black came to be the figure of anti-humanity in the West, how the creation of the modern Brazilian nation was fundamentally premised on the assertion of the Black's inhumanity, and how this existence was rejected by the Black in Brazil, leading to unique spatial and social configurations.

## The Space of (non)being[2]

To be in a given society requires a spatial existence, as Carlos Walter Porto Gonçalves reminds us "El ser social es indisociable del *estar*"[3] (2008, 44). To lack

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[2] The content of this section is the result of a series of classes, an independent study, and a lecture event, all of which took place with Dr. Alvaro Reyes. The discussion of Frantz Fanon's work took place in the spring of 2012 in a graduate seminar on Fanon's thought and the decolonial struggles that were taking place while Fanon was writing. In this course I became familiar with Fanon's emphasis on the "zone of non-being" and what this means for the Black's (assumed lack of) subjectivity under modernity. Carlo Galli's work was introduced to me in the course "Global Crisis, Global Spring" which Dr. Reyes taught in the fall of 2012, at which time the idea of the division of the earth as a codifier of being and non-being was made evident to me. The engagement with Frank Wilderson is the result of an independent study I conducted with Dr. Reyes during the spring of 2013. It is from this work that I learned of the idea of slavery as ontology, and furthered my understanding of the idea of non-being, originally introduced to me through the work of Fanon. Finally, I became familiar with Carlos Walter Porto Gonçalves' work thanks to a lecture that Gonçalves was invited to give by Dr. Reyes at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the spring of 2013. It was just prior to this lecture that I read Gonçalves' work and, thanks to Dr. Reyes, was able to meet personally with Dr. Gonçalves. The three written works, in particular, lend themselves to a unique understanding of the creation of race and the status of the Black as a non-being in modernity, comprising a unique framework to which Dr. Reyes has introduced me, while the work of Gonçalves provides an important framework for attesting to the simultaneity of multiple worlds existing at once. For more discussion on both of these topics, see "Sovereignty, Indigeneity, Territory: Zapatista Autonomy and the New Practices of Decolonization" (Reyes and Kaufman 2011) and "On Fanon's Manichean delirium" (Reyes 2012).

[3] "The social being is inseparable from *being*". In this quote, Porto Gonçalves is linking the verb *ser* which means to exist as a being with the verb *estar* which means to exist in space

one's own space, then, runs the risk of lacking being in the eyes of those that are spatially present.  To be Black in the Americas has historically and geographically meant to be subjected to the desires and use of the white male patriarchal agenda which has dominated the American landscape since the European conquest of the known world.   Conquest, and the subsequent rise of modernity, meant the rendering of all ways of life contrary to European Reason as backwards and therefore subject to gratuitous violence and attempts at erasure.  It was because of this that the space of America was viewed as empty vis-à-vis the figure of the savage, which was a figure that evidenced the "*absence* of spatiality in its qualitative and originary sense" due to the fact that it lacked a politics legible to the West (Galli, 2010, 18).  This supposedly empty space of the Americas was to be appropriated and made legible by Europe, through its new artificial and scientific rationality.  This marked an apparent infinite opening of nature to the gaze and possession of modern Man (Galli, 2010, 19).  The possession of this empty space entailed many things.  Specifically, it meant "just war" against the populations already residing in the Americas, as the Europeans "[did] not encounter any other *justus hostis*, that is, any other state" (Galli, 2010, 40) and the enslavement of millions of Africans who became commodities central to the creation of the Americas and the modern world overall.

Both indigenous and African populations were "referents of Human Otherness to the new rational self-conception of the West", while at the same time there existed "a marked differential in the degrees of subrationality, and or not-quite-humanness, to which each group was to be relegated" (Wynter, 2003, 301).  In this schema it was the populations from Africa that occupied the most subordinate position vis-à-vis the West.   These were "consigned to the pre-Darwinian last link in the Chain of Being—to the 'missing link' position, therefore, between rational humans and irrational animals" (Wynter, 2003, 301).  This placed them in a position subordinate to that of the colonized indigenous as well as the white European.  Enslavement was at once justified by the Black's position in society while at the same time the Black's subordination to all other populations was reinforced by its condition as Slave.  It is important to note here that slavery, and the overall position of the Black in the Western edifice, was not solely about the economy or labor.  Rather, slavery had a symbolic value that ontologically placed the slave in society.  This ontological placement results in the slave being a priori dishonored, or stigmatized prior to any transgression; natally alienated, or denied any claim to ascending or descending generations; and subject to naked violence (Wilderson, 2010, 13-15).   Understood this way, there must be a distinction made between slavery, which anyone can be subjected to, and the ontology of slavery which, under the modern West, becomes the existence of those of African descent (Wilderson, 2010, 18).  Put another way, the figure of the Black slave serves a larger purpose than simply a piece of laboring chattel.  By occupying the most degraded position in society, it establishes a base to which the rest of the world refers.   The ontological structure of the West is premised on the Black

occupying this subordinate position, meaning that the Slave exists as the anchor for modernity.

It is because of this reality that Frantz Fanon asserts "a Black is not a man", but instead resides in "a zone of nonbeing, an extraordinarily sterile and arid region, an incline stripped bare of every essential from which a genuine new departure can emerge" (2008, xii). This zone of nonbeing is, essentially, "the livery the white man has fabricated for [the Black]" (Fanon, 2008, 17), an existence "woven…out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories" (Fanon, 2008, 91), which crushes any form of alternative metaphysics and renders the Black with "no ontological resistance in the eyes of the white man" (Fanon, 2008, 90). It would be folly to reduce the Black's assumed lack of ontology simply to a question of metaphysics, however. Wilderson (2010) evidences this in his discussion of the naked violence experienced by the Slave. Indeed, the intentioned destruction of any alternative Black subjectivity is both a physical and metaphysical process. It is the moment of the Middle Passage that signals this destruction.

## Middle Passage, Brazilian Slavery, and Slave Geographies

"[F]or Blackness there is no narrative moment prior to slavery" since Blacks went into the cargo hold of slave ships as African bodies and came out as Black flesh (Wilderson, 2010, 27, 313). The Middle Passage, then, is the inaugural moment when the Black becomes viewed as "negation, captive and fungible" and remains inherently associated with "captivity, mutilation, and the pleasure of non-Blacks" (Wilderson, 2010, 312). Understood as such, "Blackness marks, references, names, and identifies a corpse" (Wilderson, 2010, 315). What is more, the Middle Passage, which marks the birth of this stillborn existence, also is the moment in which "temporal and spatial capacity" is understood as lost. For a thing to possess a valued subjectivity it must possess a spatiality—that is, it must exist in space—and also have the "cartographic capacity" to make place, even if it is only at the scale of the body. Furthermore, it must possess temporality to the extent that it begins, exists, and then is no more, in addition to having the ability to narrate events (Wilderson, 2010, 315). The modern ethic seeks to deny the Black these above criteria by murdering the Black's capacity for a spatial and temporal existence. Regarding spatial existence, specifically, the Black remains understood in modernity as lacking the proper conditions necessary for ontological recognition.

Modern conceptions of cartography "unjustly organize human hierarchies *in place* and reify uneven geographies in familiar, seemingly natural ways". Modernity is therefore marked by "rational spatial colonization and domination" (McKittrick, 2006, x) which exist both materially and metaphorically, such that dominant discourses erase and despatialize any Black sense of place while physical domination seeks to fix the Black in its "natural" place (McKittrick, 2006, xiii-xv). These common sense workings of modernity are exercised and normalized through geographies of exclusion; geographies which situate Blacks and their desires as being "elsewhere" and thus props up ideas of what is normal—or what is

ontologically recognized (McKittrick and Woods, 2006, 4). The norm is that which qualifies a given subjectivity as existent in society, in the sense that how one relates to the norm either allows for the possibility of being or forecloses that possibility completely. The normative white proletariat, for example, suffers from the alienation and exploitation inherent to capitalism, as well as the subsequent loss of the commons under Empire. The "normal" struggle is therefore marked by a call for the redemption of time and space. To *re*deem one's time and space, however, means that both were once *deemed* in society. In short, it is normal for the alienated, exploited (white) subject to assert its temporal and spatial existence (Wilderson, 2010, 279). On the other hand, the Black is seen as having a captive, fungible existence with no recourse to time or space, as its most coherent temporality was the moment of "no time at all on the map of no place at all: the ship hold of the Middle Passage". If Blackness "recalls nothing prior to the devastation that defines it", there exists no analogy between the normal claims of the alienated, exploited white subject and the suffering of the captive, fungible Slave (Wilderson, 2010, 279-280). Put another way, Blacks, unlike other groups, have no claim to time or space in modernity's understanding due to their role as a non-existent figure. This is evident in the case of Brazil.

The Black was central to the creation of the Brazilian nation—"o 'ser negro' foi produzido no campo das idéias a partir das necessidades políticas" and "apresenta-se como ontologia de um ser que sempre, sem começo nem fim, foi inferior, foi sombra e negatividade"[4] (Santos, 2002, 16-17). Thus, it is obvious that the Black filled the same role in Brazil as it did for modernity as a whole—the ontological anchor for the project of the modern world, fundamentally the most degraded figure in society. The enslavement of the Brazilian captive "led inevitably to loss of personhood. The slave became a thing, an object, an item of cargo. He entered a state that nullified not only his possessions but his being" (Mattoso, 2002, 87). The new role of the slave "would be created by his insertion…into a society shaped by a white model" (Mattoso, 2002, 88). Geographically, this society reserved the spaces of the plantations, *senzalas* (slave houses), and marginalized urban locales for the slaves—all of which located the Black in a position of inferiority and subservience to the dominant structure of Brazilian society.

Enacting this domination required very specific social and spatial manipulation by those in power. Brazilian elites "found it advantageous to encourage hostility between different 'peoples,' as well as between Africans and creoles, blacks and mulattoes, freed men and slaves, in order to prevent them from forming a common front against the ruling establishment" (Mattoso, 2002, 124). One way this was done was for the master class to reward slaves and other Blacks that demonstrated a propensity for assimilation to the dominant society. It was "By

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[4] "the 'black being' was produced in the field of ideas for political necessity" and "presents itself as ontology of a being that always, without beginning or end, was inferior, was shade and negativity"

exhibiting obedience, humility, and loyalty [that the slave] could then win" the master's favor (Mattoso, 2002, 148). These slaves, that were said to be "adjusted" insofar as they internalized the values presented to them by their masters, were differentiated from those thought to be problematic. This led to "Social hierarchies within the 'subjugated' [that] were just as keenly felt as hierarchies within the 'ruling' class" such that relations amongst slaves or between freedpersons and slaves were often hostile (Mattoso, 2002, 107).

For example, creole slaves (those born in Brazil) were seen as being closer to the world of the white than the African slave. By conforming "with the expectations of white society, the creole separated [himself] from his black African brothers and tried to acquire a white soul" (Mattoso, 2002, 200). Another example of divisions among those of African descent were a result of African "Ethnic and religious hostilities [that] were carefully fostered by slave owners" (Mattoso, 2002, 205). Still another example was the social and economic mobility afforded to the mulatto class. Mulattoes were promised advancement in society on the condition that they adhere to a Eurocentric lifestyle and political agenda, so that "The industrious mulatto [could make] himself officially white" (Mattoso, 2002, 195). In parts of Brazil with particularly large populations of Blacks—like Bahia—"Skin color was an obstacle to social ascendancy only if the person who aspired to become fully assimilated was not accepted by the dominant social group" (Mattoso, 2002, 197). This led to an ethic of purification which had as one of its central goals "to force the new 'white' to break all ties with his original ethnic group and to cut himself off entirely from black culture, religion, customs, and friends" (Mattoso, 2002, 198).

The effects of the divisions are seen starkly in the failures of Black rebellions—"the slave community lacked cohesion and unity in its struggle against the authorities. It was unable to overcome its internal conflicts, its divisions between creoles and Africans, blacks and half-breeds, freed blacks and mulattoes" (Mattoso, 2002, 144). The result of this was that "those who should have come together drew apart" and a wide-ranging radical subjectivity was killed in the crib (Mattoso, 2002, 145). Another practice used to erase Blackness was the state's willingness and ability to do away with subversives.

The failed Malê Revolt of 1835—mentioned in more detail later—led to seven hundred Africans receiving some form of punishment, including executions and deportations to Africa and other parts of Brazil (Graden, 2006, 24). Similarly, in 1861 a woman named Constança was arrested in Bahia and accused of practicing Candomblé. Her deportation was requested by an official who saw this measure as a "means of purifying the nation". Deportation was one of the main tactics used by police to threaten problematic individuals throughout the 1860s in Bahia (Graden, 2006, 115-116). Removing those that openly espoused anti-societal tendencies was seen as an effective method to purge the nation of radical factors that might work against the establishment of a rational existence. Along with engendering divisions within the population of African descent, persecuting Black cultural expressions,

and deporting subversives, another method of purifying Brazil was European immigration and the celebration of miscegenation and the apparent extinction of racism.

**Post Slave Geographies**

That Brazil might become a nation dominated by Blacks not only in numbers, but politically as well, remained a reality that the elites were determined to avoid. Blacks represented a "heterogeneous" factor in society, as they were opposed to the labor conditions necessary for a modern nation and therefore constituted an "*inimigo domiciliar*" (home enemy) that was both a stranger to public interests and forever at war with the free population (Azevedo, 1987, 41-42). The necessity of labor was deemed as one of several "interesses alheios" (alien interests) for slaves, who were said to care little for individual freedom and alleged to be naturally lazy and prone to *vagabundagem* (vagabondage), marginality, and retrograde behaviors (Azevedo, 1987, 51, 78-80). What all of this signifies was an elite fear of ex-slaves and poor Brazilians establishing their own agendas and living contrary to what was considered "modern." For example, the desire for ex-slaves and the impoverished to work for their own self-subsistence was considered *vadiagem* (vagrancy) among landholders and the propertied—in any case, it certainly was not conducive to the accumulation of capital (Azevedo, 1987, 127-130).

The figure of the Black presented a domestic enemy insofar as it had its own political and economic agenda and desire to create and maintain its own spaces independent of, and indeed inherently contrary to, the national space to which the elites aspired. Brought to toil as chattel property, the Black population succeeded in establishing various forms of existence and diverse social practices against the dominant classes of Brazilian society, a reality described in more depth later in this piece. This was a reality which could not be understood or accepted by the ruling class. Keeping in mind that "Los paradigmas son instituidos por sujetos sociales, histórica y geográficamente situados y, de esta manera, la crisis de este paradigm es también, la crisis de la sociedad y de los sujetos que los instituyeron"[5] (Porto Gonçalves, 2008, 32), it is clear that Brazilian society as a whole faced an imminent crisis, should Blacks have succeeded in maintaining their own spaces and lived practices.

An influx of European immigrants was therefore seen as necessary by Brazilian elites in order to bring Brazil into a modern existence. This was a question of economy and culture, as Europeans were accustomed to the free labor practiced in modern societies and offered a purifying factor in the midst of the Blacks that were seen as degraded by centuries of slavery (Santos, 2002, 84-87). What these elites believed necessary was a *povo* (people), which the progeny of

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[5] "paradigms are instituted by social subjects, historically and geographically situated and, in this way, the crisis of this paradigm is also the crisis of society and the subjects that instituted them"

slaves simply could not offer due to their supposed backwardness. This backwardness was theorized by the likes of Louis Couty, who argued that even as freedpersons, Blacks demonstrated an inferiority evidenced by their lack of industry and productive ability as well as their cranial size. Furthermore, he argued that Blacks actually did not know how to be free and were inherently lazy, seeing all forms of work as punishment—and were thus not fit to be free workers in any society (Santos, 2002, 94-95). He continued that a civilizing effort needed to be made with regards to Blacks, but that it would take generations for this civilization to be achieved. In the meantime Brazil needed "massas fortemente organizadas de produtores agrícolas ou industriais que, nos povos civilizados, são a base de toda a riqueza"[6]. It was this "argumento de inexistência de um povo [que] é fundamental para a concepção…imigrantista"[7] (Santos, 2002, 98-99).

As a result of this commitment to modernizing the nation, huge groups of immigrants were sought out and enticed to move to Brazil—particularly in states like São Paulo (Azevedo, 1987, 172-173). This immigration policy was explicitly exclusive to Europeans that were "white." Dark-skinned groups and Asians were initially discriminated against (Azevedo, 1987, 146, 151). Aside from the question of work and labor, the question of blood was important to the cause of those supporting immigration.

## Multiracialism[8]

Under the modern edifice, the Slave, as a captive, fungible object is viewed as *incapable* of establishing its own space or temporal existence. This is due to the fact that the "multiplicity of worlds is what modernity has sought to annihilate all along, particularly in its often-articulated readiness to recognize manifold worlds as no more or less than the plurality of the forms of human experience….Heterogeneity is removed from reality as a flaw, an aberration of the universal and homogeneous totality of truth" (Judy, 1993, 84). Brazil, as a modern nation, could not be the site of "uma sociedade na sociedade" (a society in a society) which spaces like *quilombos* and *terreiros* (described in more depth later) represented during slavery due to their fundamental opposition to the dominant order (Azevedo, 1987, 46). It also could not become a society characterized by any other ontological understanding once slavery was abolished. The dilemma of indeterminacy, "the inability to adjudicate between equally effective yet mutually exclusive symbolic economies" (Judy, 1993, 283), means that, under modernity, that which is deemed illegible—say, Black space, time, being, etc.—must either be destroyed or somehow coopted and made legible. In the case of Brazil, we see that

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[6] "strongly organized masses of agricultural or industrial producers that, in civilized peoples, are the base of all wealth"

[7] "argument of inexistence of a people [that] is fundamental for an immigrantist conception"

[8] My introduction to the concept of multiracialism came from an independent study I did with Alvaro Reyes during the spring of 2013.

both were attempted. If the incomprehensible African had to be made "comprehensible in Western modernity's terms" through the figure of the Negro (Judy, 1993, 92), then in Brazil the incomprehensible radical Black had to be replaced with the memorial Black. This past figure resides in the tacit acknowledgement of the presence of African descendants in Brazil—a presence which is at once accepted and disavowed through the idea of the Brazilian racial democracy. In order to appreciate the ways in which the racial democracy seeks to erase Blackness, there must be an understanding of the project of multiracialism.

Multiracialism, which comprises a collection of political initiatives, academic endeavors, and media discourses, focuses on "race mixture" in contemporary culture and society. Above all, multiracialism reinforces long-standing tenets of anti-Blackness in part by targeting the antagonism that conditions "racial blackness" as a social identity (the one drop rule) without addressing the structural issues put into place by slavery (Sexton, 2008, 1-2). Blackness becomes an antiquated concept under multiracialism and freedom from the one-drop rule is seen as freedom from the necessity of being identified as Black (Sexton, 2008, 6-7). The Blackness against which multiracialism actually works is a "political identification" formed against the oppressive conditions experienced by populations of African descent (Sexton, 2008, 13). As a result, it is marked by a strict individualism, one that ignores the structural violence at the core of the white-dominated society (Sexton, 2008, 16). Multiracialism, therefore works "as a rationalizing discourse for the continued and increasing social, political, and economic *isolation* of blacks" in that it casts Blackness as an essentialist, out of date identity, ignorant of the complexities inherently present in individual bodies. Those of African descent hoping to avoid this reality are allowed to (incompletely) escape pending specific circumstances and actions.

Joy James posits that "Because some bodies fail to conform physiologically, different bodies are expected and are therefore required to behave differently under state or police gaze. Greater obedience is demanded from those whose physical difference marks them as aberrational, offensive, or threatening" (1996, 25-26). Hence, a Black body would be required to demonstrate a greater level of "obedience" due to its marked status than would a body deemed "normal." One way in which this can be done is to find a way to disassociate oneself from the excluded category. Jared Sexton draws on the example of interracial dating among American Peace Corps volunteers in Africa to demonstrate this very practice. While perhaps not accepted in the U.S., these relationships became acceptable in the face of the supposedly savage, promiscuous, deceitful Africans as an *American* connection—a connection of those deemed civilized, restrained, and honest vis-à-vis the African "sub-human" (Sexton, 2008, 172-175).

Bodies can therefore remain marked and yet not condemned to the condition of *les damnés*, so long as they find a way to disassociate themselves from this condemned category. Ascribing to the multiracial agenda is one way of doing this, as it rejects a Black subjectivity—a subjectivity founded on the understanding of

the captive, fungible condition of the Black in modernity. If being marked as being of African descent puts one in a marginalized position in modern society, then emerging from this position with a political commitment to destroy the structure on which that marginalization is based places one in an even greater antagonistic position to society. To avoid becoming the enemy of society par excellence, one must prove one's loyalty to that society. In the case of Brazil, multiracialism and the idea of the racial democracy are part of this proof of loyalty.

### Brazilian anti-Blackness and multiracialism

Brazilian multiracialism is different than the American variant critiqued by Jared Sexton in that while multiracialism in the U.S. is largely a phenomenon resultant from the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s, Brazil has been grappling with the issue from its early days[9]. This is due to the preponderance of those of African descent in the country and the need to establish forms of control that were not coercive on the surface. Allowing for a Black political subjectivity to remain viable would have been a sure death sentence for the Brazil concerned with Order and Progress[10]. Thus, the conditions for a liminal category that would help to enervate a radical Blackness were put into place.

Several practices were enacted with the intent to destroy Blackness as a political subjectivity. Playing different potentially subversive groups against each other in the slave regime was one way in which radical action was curtailed. Gratuitous violence against those deemed dangerous to society was also employed. European immigration and the subsequent valorization of miscegenation was another avenue for creating divisions among those of African descent. Finally, the cultural and physical destruction of Blackness through the creation of a "Brazilian" identity served to tie all of the above practices into the effective genocide of the Black in Brazil.

Public figures like Domingos José Nogueira Jaguaribe advocated European immigration so that the majority mestiço population of Brazil would gradually whiten instead of being forced to breed with Blacks (Azevedo, 1987, 72-75). In fact, only through miscegenation could the Black have any value in Brazil, according to these elites. As a nation, "o embranquecimento seria uma solução plausível para negros e brancos, para que os últimos não fossem destruídos pelo enegrecimento e para que os primeiros não sucumbissem à herança nefanda que o

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[9] For a thorough treatment of *mestiçagem* in the formation of the Brazilian identity see Kabengele Munanga's *Rediscutindo a mestiçagem no Brasil* (1999). Munanga explores the various currents of thought among 19th Century Brazilian elites regarding the establishment of a Brazilian identity based on the race mixture of Blacks, whites, and indigenous groups, all of which privileged European cultural and physical characteristics

[10] Order and Progress was the mantra adopted by the Brazilian state in its attempt to become a modern nation, and today exists as the slogan emblazoned on the Brazilian flag. "Order," in this case, defines the stability of nature, while "Progress" marks its movement. Progress could be achieved through rational Reason and represented the capacity for people to perfect their knowledge of social life (see Santos, 2002, 39)

destino os reservou: o sangue africano"[11] (Santos, 2002, 127). With the influx of European immigrants securing the ascendancy to whiteness already in place in Brazil, *mestiçagem* could become "o ponto de equilíbrio da sociedade brasileira" (the point of equilibrium for Brazilian society) as argued by Gilberto Freyre (Santos, 2002, 149-151). This blood-mixing would produce "homens fortes, inteligentes e altivos"[12] (Azevedo, 1987, 75), with "O senhor representando a força, a virilidade, a brancura, a inteligência, o engenho, a crueldade sádica; e o escravo, a doçura, a sensualidade, o negror, a esperteza, a passividade masoquista"[13] (Santos, 2002, 154). With the apparent celebration of this miscegenation and creation of a new race was an attempt to forge a population identifying with the fatherland—Brazilian society—so that *mestiçagem* is the mechanism through which the Brazilian nation is founded. This idea of a racial paradise, in which mixture between races is supposed to occur naturally and without prejudice, "contribui não só para a invenção de uma nova 'identidade' para os negros, brancos, e mestiços, como também para a configuração de toda uma identidade nacional baseada em uma falsa democracia"[14] (Santos, 2002, 160-161).

What the above demonstrates is not a true paradise. Instead, the de facto reality of life in Brazil is that each individual must "obedeça os limites estabelecidos pelo caráter de sua cultura, de sua origem, de sua étnia, de sua cor"[15] (Santos, 2002, 161). Given the preceding accounts of the formation of the Brazilian nation and its relation to its population of African descent, it is evident that the creation of this new "race" was "biologically and culturally, politically and economically…set by and on the terms of white European descendants" (Goldberg, 2009, 200). Historically it is clear that the "spatial marginalization and povincialization of black communities" in Brazil has been complemented by the insistence on the importance of *mestiçagem* (Goldberg, 2009, 227). This reality leads to João Costa Vargas to describe the "hyperconsciousness of race" in Brazilian society. This idea argues that while race consciousness is disavowed in the Brazilian national narrative, race actually figures prominently into how Brazilians classify and position themselves in the world (2004). The persecution and destruction of Black spaces and the populations tied to these places addressed the spatial component of Blackness in Brazil. The stigmatization and attempted erasure of Black religious and cultural practices addressed the cultural component, as did the valorization of European values, denigration of Africanity, and celebration of miscegenation.

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[11] "whitening would be a plausible solution for blacks and whites, so that the latter would not be destroyed by blackening and so that the former would not succumb to the nefarious inheritance that destiny reserved for them: African blood"

[12] "strong, intelligent and haughty men"

[13] "the master representing the force, virility, whiteness, intelligence, ingenuity, the sadistic cruelty; and the slave, the sweetness, sensuality, blackness, cleverness, the masochistic passivity"

[14] "contributes not only to the invention of a new 'identity' for blacks, whites, and mestizos, but also for the configuration of a whole national identity based on a false democracy"

[15] "obey the limits established by the character of their culture of origin, of their ethnicity, of their color"

In sum, to create Brazil as it is today required the removal of any vestiges of Africanity and a radical Black subjectivity. It is because of this that the Black generally occupies the space of a memory in the Brazilian nation. This is the marked memory of the enemy overcome; a remembrance of the success of the Brazilian project realized. The threat to modernity has been banished to the nation's collective past, present only as a distant memory and rarely spoken about[16]. In this national narrative the Eurocentric agenda of Order and Progress has essentially tamed the supposedly sub-human radical practices. Despite this attempted erasure, Black spaces have a rich and continued history in Brazil.

## Resistance and Black Geographies in Brazil[17]

While modernity is based on the lack of Black being, the approach of groups like the Afro-pessimists, which sees no emancipatory potential in Blackness (Wilderson, 2010), may be *too* pessimistic. There is no doubt that the project of modernity is fundamentally tied to the Black's captivity and fungible nature, yet there remains a perpetual struggle on the part of the Black to not only refuse this reality, but to create the existence of a new world altogether. Katherine McKittrick is adamant that the rules which establish what is normal are alterable and that geographies which are disqualified under modernity are there to be told (2006, x). Despite the assumed a-spatiality of the Black of modernity "more humanly workable geographies can be and are imagined" and lived by those deemed inexistent (McKittrick, 2006, xii). The fact that bodily self-possession and other forms of spatial ownership are virtually unavailable to the violated figure of the Black means that the struggle of Black populations are rooted in discourses and practices of ownership—something that is unnatural to traditional geographical understandings (McKittrick, 2006, 3-4). Black geographies redefine space in the sense that they move away from Western, modern understandings of what space is and who exists in it while exploring and reimagining the politics of place (McKittrick and Woods, 2006, 6). The existence of Black geographies reminds us of what Porto Gonçalves asserts when he says "vemos emerger nuevos paradigmas y junto a ellos, nuevos sujetos que reivindican un lugar en el mundo"[18] (2008, 32). The presence of these new paradigms and subjects and its resultant *geograficidad* (geograficity) "nos obliga[n] a considerar la simultaneidad de los eventos"[19] of the

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[16] This is not to suggest that *all* vestiges of Blackness and Africanity have been completely erased. Events like Carnaval and musical expressions like *samba*, when portraying a "civilized" and "disciplined" African society are not only accepted but encouraged, as "safe" Blacks are seen as being able to offset the more dangerous elements of society (see Graden, 2006, 205). In this sense, certain elements and practices of the Black population in Brazil remain salient in the national discourse on Brazilianness, while the radical elements— those spaces and practices fundamentally opposed to Order and Progress—have remained the targets of erasure.

[17] My work on Black geographies in this section comes largely out of my master's thesis, conducted under the guidance of Alvaro Reyes, which dealt specifically with the idea of Black geographies' connection to radical Black political movements.

[18] "we see new paradigms emerge and along with them, new subjects that claim a place in the world"

[19] "obliges us to consider the simultaneity of the events"

world (Porto Gonçalves, 2008, 49).  The simultaneity of different worlds existing at the same time—despite the supposed impossibility of this in modernity— is what is at stake in the struggles of Black geographies.  The case of Brazil offers an example of this very phenomenon.  The historic struggle of Blacks in Brazil is one of the attempts to create an existence in direct antagonism to the worldview which underpinned the project of the modern Brazilian nation.

What sprung up from the oppression described in the previous sections were numerous instances of attempts and successes in creating Black geographies independent of the violent existence inherent to Brazilian society[20].  In the colonial era Brazil "was continuously threatened by various forms of resistance to the fundamental institution of slavery" and "through much of its early history was beset by the chronic instability of slave society and the threat of slave recalcitrance or resistance" (Schwartz, 1970, 313).  So great were the attempts of Blacks to liberate themselves and so concerned were the elites "about a decreasing capacity to maintain order" that Brazilian officials were forced first to terminate the slave trade between Africa and Brazil and later to abolish slavery altogether (Graden, 2006, 10, 18-19).  The actions of slaves during this time were "the most radical and violent rebellions in Brazilian history, before or since" (Graden, 2006, 22).  These actions took multiple forms and demonstrate how Black Brazilians rejected their ontological placement under modernity by establishing their own spaces and ways of being.

Slave revolts presented particularly worrisome prospects for Brazilian elites.  Between 1807 and 1835 there occurred more than twenty rural and urban slave revolts in the state of Bahia alone (Graden, 2006, 22).  From the 1840s through the 1850s, a perpetual fear and various rumors of slave uprisings persisted (Graden, 2006, 26).  This paranoia was, in part, a result of the Malê Revolt of 1835—the largest urban slave revolt in the history of the Americas (Graden, 2006, xx-xxi).  This revolt was led by Muslim slaves and over six hundred slaves and freed persons took part in the insurrection which did battle with a combined force of police, cavalry, and National Guard soldiers.  Betrayed by two female ex-slaves, the revolt lasted just over three hours and the participants were violently punished over the course of a few months—around seven hundred Blacks faced some form of retribution for the uprising (Graden, 2006, 22-24).  This revolt proved to haunt all of Brazilian society from then until abolition, as elites feared that this event signaled the possibility of Brazil becoming another Haiti[21] (Graden, 2006, 22).  Laws were subsequently passed that made it illegal for slaves and freedpersons to

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[20] For a historical discussion of the establishment of Black urban territorial configurations, see Raquel Rolnik's "Territórios Negros nas Cidades Brasileiras" (1989).  Rolnik discusses the built environment of both Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo as perpetrating violence against the Black populations living there, while also privileging the resistance and creative efforts put forward by these oppressed communities

[21] The Haitian Revolution (1791-1804) was the first and only successful slave uprising in the Americas that resulted in the establishment of a free Black republic.  For a comprehensive look at this historical moment see *The Black Jacobins* (James, 1989) and *The Haitian Maroons* (Fouchard, 1981)

travel at night without a passport and prohibited public gatherings that included drumming, as it was believed these measures would curtail the activities of "subversives" (Graden, 2006, 107). Police vigilance and harassment also marked the ways in which Black radicalness was curtailed (Graden, 2006, 27). Even the built environment of the city was changed due to the prospect of slave uprisings. In Salvador in 1848, water pipes were installed throughout the city to both provide drinking water to those living there, but also to prevent slaves that sold water from having access to private residences (Graden, 2006, 39). Violent uprisings were not the only events elites, feared, however.

Religious practices and spaces were also seen as threats to the order of Brazilian society[22]. Candomblé[23] was deemed a dangerous, immoral act by elites, as it was a "focal point" of agitation and deprivation (Graden, 2006, 103-104). The *terreiros*, or religious houses, were problematic for authorities, especially when *crioulo* slaves (slaves born in Brazil as opposed to Africa) were present there. Public security hung in the balance in this regard, as Candomblé "presented a special danger because of its capacity to overcome traditional ethnic and racial divisions that historically had impeded alliances between Africans and crioulos" (Graden, 2006, 108). The space of the *terreiro*, then, constituted a threat to the status quo, which sought to create and maintain divisions between Africans and Brazilian-born Blacks. In addition to this inversion of class-based divisions, Candomblé and *terreiros* also subverted the gender hierarchy supported by Brazilian society, as women played central roles in the religious practices (Graden, 2006, 115). The fact that Candomblé had its own followers, pieces of land, techniques of work, and system of distribution and consumption vexed officials so greatly that repressive measures against the religion and its spatial existence in *terreiros* became a practice central to the police of Bahia (de Mattos, 2008). Aside from disrupting the imposed societal divisions produced by Brazilian society, Candomblé presented another danger. In 1859 a police delegate wrote a letter to the secretary of police in Salvador, stating that these religious ceremonies eventually evolve into *quilombos* (Graden, 2006, 109). These quilombos signified the establishment of alternative societies, presenting perhaps the most salient threat to the establishment of the Brazilian nation.

*Mocambos* and their confederated form in *quilombos* existed as alternatives to the outcasts of Brazilian society. These were communities in which runaway slaves, freedpersons, indigenous groups, and poor whites would gather to escape the oppressive conditions present in dominant society. Both *mocambos* and *quilombos* existed all over the country from the beginning of slavery until the present day, with the most famous example being that of the *quilombo* of Palmares

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[22] Religious spaces were also important in the context of other Black struggles in the Americas. Again, see James 1989 for a review of the importance of religion in the Haitian struggle for freedom

[23] For a thorough discussion on practices of Candomblé and the fears it stirred in Brazilian elites, see Edmar Ferreira Santos' (2009) book *O poder dos candomblés*

in the state of Pernambuco, which lasted for almost the entire seventeenth century and had perhaps tens of thousands of inhabitants (Kent, 1965; Robinson, 2000). *Mocambos* and *quilombos*, "Unlike individual acts of violence or simple escape…no matter what the ultimate goals or self-perceptions of their inhabitants, were joint acts against the existing social and economic order" (Schwartz, 1970, 333). Moreover, these were spaces of alliances between different oppressed groups in Brazilian society, since "For the runaways and unreduced tribes there was a common ground of opposition to the European-imposed system and slavery which led naturally to cooperation", despite "Portuguese attempts to turn the Indian into an ally against African resistance" (Schwartz, 1970, 325). In addition to the fact that these settlements provided the opportunity for an alternative society in Brazil, they also presented military opposition to the dominant powers. Farms, towns, and plantations were all targets for the raiding efforts of the inhabitants of *mocambos* and *quilombos*. This was due to the fact that in areas like Bahia the majority of "mocambos were located close to centers of population or the surrounding plantations" (Schwartz, 1970, 321). Other *quilombos*, like Palmares, were located far away from colonial settlements, but militarily defied the aggression of the various expeditions sent against them. Dominant society's main method of dealing with these "runaway communities was simply to destroy them and to kill or reenslave their inhabitants" (Schwartz, 1970, 326). As a result of this, *quilombos* like Palmares were continually at war with different groups sent to destroy them. The prospect of these independent settlements remaining free was too much for the elites of Brazilian society to endure. The struggle between a radical Black subjectivity and the oppressive agenda of Brazilian society continues into the present. Given the relentless nature of the ethic of erasure employed by dominant society, some have termed the Brazilian national agenda a genocidal one. Nonetheless, resistance and alternative Black spaces remain a consistent feature within Brazil.

## Present-day Problems and Struggles

If "genocidal violence is about cleansing, the creation of an order based on a notion of purity" (Bogues, 2010, 70), then Brazil is truly a site of genocide, as the concept of purification was central to the creation of the Brazilian nation and the subsequent treatment of Blacks there. Purification, in this case, has as its target "a population that can be killed with ideological legitimacy" (Bogues, 2010, 70). Blacks, seen as an inherently backwards population, and ostensibly only capable of retarding the birth of a nation due to their regressive tendencies needed to be erased wholesale from the Brazilian landscape. In this act of "genocidal violence there is no life to mark, since all life has been erased to create the conditions of the violence" (Bogues, 2010, 72). The Black, the figure which must lack a temporal and spatial existence in modernity and thus must lack being altogether, has no life to be extinguished. In the genocide of the Black, the assumption is not that a being is eliminated, but rather a threat to the Order and Progress of society.

Because "anti-Black genocide is at the core of our society's foundations" society seeks to constitute and perpetuate itself "according to the often silent expectations that Blacks are not fully human and therefore not worthy of full inclusion in it" (Vargas, 2008, xi). This reality comprises what João Costa Vargas terms "genocidal continuum." This theory enumerates "various genocidal phenomena [existing in] a permanent, totalizing, and ubiquitous event" so that even quotidian acts become central to the destruction of Black populations in society (Vargas, 2008, 10). While Vargas is talking about a global society in the sense that anti-Blackness has existed worldwide since the advent of the Conquest, this reality is no less stark in Brazil.

Abdias do Nascimento remarks on the *linchamento social* (social lynching) experienced by the Black Brazilian (1978, 73) which pervades the national psyche, culture, and economy and is resultant from the white controlling class in Brazil (Nascimento, 1978, 93). The Black is hereby systematically and routinely destroyed as a person—being taught to accept and expect an inferior position in society (Nascimento, 1978, 94). Any hope of being successful as a person of African descent entails becoming a "negro de alma branca"[24] (Nascimento, 1978, 97)—read: a *Brazilian* and *not* Black or African. The genocidal continuum present in Brazilian society obviously does not stop at issues of culture. The social lynching described by Nascimento is accompanied by a very real physical lynching of these same Black bodies. Those of African descent "are still and increasingly the main and disproportionate victims of preventable diseases, malnutrition, joblessness, AIDS/HIV infection, and clinical depression (Vargas, 2008, 15). Moreover, state-sanctioned violence is a common experience for Black populations as well. Between 2002 and 2010, sixty-five percent of the homicides in Brazil occurred against Blacks (Waiselfisz, 2012, 10) and in Rio, between January and August of 2003, the police killed nine hundred people, seventy-five percent of which lived in the predominately Black *favelas* (Vargas, 2008, 17).

These examples demonstrate the extent to which anti-Blackness and the continual attempts at the reassertion of the inhumanity of the Black is present in Brazil, the myth of a racial democracy notwithstanding. Brazil, like the rest of the modern world, exists as a space hostile to that which it cannot understand, and so remains on the path of genocide. Still, as in the past, the Black in Brazil has demonstrated the ability to create its own spaces that defy this genocidal agenda, evidencing the intransigent resistance to oppression central to radical Blackness.

Keisha-Khan Perry describes how spatial exclusion remains at the core of gendered and racial stratification in Brazilian cities and how this oppressive experience informs the creative strategies Blacks—and particularly Black women—employ to build "more democratic landscapes" (2013, xvii). Perry evidences how grassroots organizing at the neighborhood level, along with civil

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[24] "black with a white soul"

disobedience, is employed in urban Salvador, Bahia to protect historically Black neighborhoods from the urban renewal agenda of both private and public interests. By rallying around affirmations of culture and land claims, these largely women-led neighborhood organizations reject the white patriarchal agenda of Brazilian elites and stake claims to their own spatial notions and articulations.  This contributes to the perpetuation of the communities' traditional local practices of production such as artisanal fishing while at the same time protecting their lived spaces. It also rejects the agenda of the dominant power structure in Salvador, which continually seeks to reassert the Slave status of Blacks by geographically shifting them based on market demands.  Perry's work demonstrates the ways in which Black actors in Brazil continue to challenge racial, cultural, social, and gendered norms—thereby rejecting the imposition of the genocidal continuum Vargas (2008) describes and establishing spaces unique to the Brazilian landscape.

**Conclusion**

The founding of Brazil as a colonial territory was inherently tied to European conquest and expansion around the world.  As the philosophy that underpinned this colonization was rooted in an understanding of the indigenous Americans as backwards and devolved and Africans as a-spatial and inhuman, stuck in a hierarchy with regards to European rationality, the European appropriation of the world was deemed not only possible, but necessary.  What was disqualified in this instance was any recognition of prior spatial, temporal, or philosophical understandings that existed among the dominated and colonized populations.  This disqualification continued in the face of the struggles and creations of the indigenous, African, and Diasporic populations who rejected Western Reason.  The Afro-descendant populations living in Brazil established ways of being separate from the dominant society through the creation of spaces like *mocambos, quilombos*, and *terreiros*, as well as religious and cultural practices like Candomblé.  Furthermore, they demonstrated staunch resistance to the Eurocentric worldview, as evidenced by the numerous slave rebellions in colonial Brazil. These practices continue today in various permutations, such as the struggles of the Black women in Salvador, Bahia.

Modern Brazil, unable to understand, account for, or accept the existence of a Black subjectivity in complete contradiction to the Order and Progress it dreamed of, undertook the task of reasserting the captive, fungible nature of the Black Brazilian, as the ontological position of the Slave founds modernity and thus must remain intact.  This meant nothing less than the continual endeavor to destroy the incomprehensible Black—the Black which defies the lie of modernity.  Through the systematic destruction of *quilombos* and *terreiros*, the stigmatization and erasing of Candomblé as a viable religious practice, the social, physical, and discursive whitening of the nation, and suspension of the ability to talk about the reality of race, the Brazilian nation continues the attempt to extinguish any possibility of a truly Black space appearing.  If space is required for a subject to

truly come into existence, Brazil as a nation has sought to keep the Black in a captive, fungible condition by destroying an capacity for a radical Black space to come into being.  Brazil could only come into being via the negation of Black space.  Yet, while Brazil remains a self-proclaimed multiracial (anti-Black) nation today, the Black in Brazil has historically and currently continued to establish its own spatial articulations in its perpetual struggle to establish its own unique form of being.  These articulations have shifted over time, yet they remain similar in the sense that these Black actors and the spaces they establish seek to move away from the modern ethic and create spaces illegible—and supposedly foreclosed—by modernity.  Challenges to racial, economic, cultural, and gendered norms typify these Black geographies.  Through these alternative practices, Black geographies offer continually renewing examples of the possibility and reality of other ways of being in the world.

## Acknowledgements

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