HIP-HOP URBANISM, PLACEMAKING AND COMMUNITY-BUILDING AMONG BLACK LGBT YOUTH IN RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

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Introduction

Rio de Janeiro brands itself as an inclusive haven for racial-sexual diversity, yet anti-Black racism, homo- and trans-phobia and misogyny are central in ordering urban space there. In fact, societal institutions, practices and discourses operate in tandem to transform Rio de Janeiro into a hostile racial-sexual terrain that directs violence toward Black, young and non-heteronormative people. They face devastating rates of lethal and non-lethal violence, with some of the highest recorded statistics emerging in recent years as the country has moved politically to the right.

Such violence has a long history in Brazil. However, it is at its height at the contemporary moment. Nothing exemplifies the racist and misogynistic, trans- and homo-phobic violence facing Black LGBT communities in Brazil as much as the assassination of Rio City Councilwoman Marielle Franco and her driver, Anderson Pedro Gomes, on the night of 14 March 2018. Elected in 2016, Franco was a radical Black lesbian and feminist activist-politician, mother and advocate for the poor. In addition to her activism, Franco remained a fearless critic of police corruption and brutality against the city’s most marginalized residents; that is, until 13 bullets pierced her and her driver. Nearly one year after these slayings, state officials have failed to make progress in any investigations, despite nationwide and global protests demanding justice for Franco and honouring her legacy under the hashtag #MariellePresente. Activists who, like Franco, navigate the intersections of Black, LGBT and womanhood understand Franco’s assassination as a symptom of global systems of oppression. From the perspective of Black feminist activists across and beyond Brazil, the gendered, anti-Black violence evidenced in Franco’s killing are:

part of a global phenomenon of anti-Blackness, manifested through routine violence against Black peoples, suppression of Black political voices, displacement from Black lands, exploitation of Black labor, erasure of Black cultures and histories, and gender and sexual violence against Black women, queer and transgender people.

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Franco’s murder forms part of a wider rise in violence against Black LGBT lives following the 2016 impeachment of leftist President Dilma Rousseff and the subsequent right-wing incumbency of President Michel Temer. Following impeachment, Temer’s administration made swift, severe cuts to education, social services and human rights institutions that all support long-marginalized Black LGBT youth. These cuts will surely continue under the new far-right President Jair Bolsonaro. The rhetoric of several politicians – including Bolsonaro – reflect and reinforce state violence. For example, these politicians have stated that Black women are thug-producing ‘factories’ and that they would ‘rather have a dead child than a gay child’.

In the face of these daily assaults, *carioca* Black LGBT youth face a recurring dilemma: how can they build political power when they are virtually locked out of state institutions and formal politics? This chapter details both the daily violences and spatial strategies of resistance among Black LGBT youth in Rio. Through Oliver’s ethnographic research, we show that these youth are consistent placemakers across spatial realms and scales, creating sites of self-making and political intervention through social media, art, popular education and celebrations. These spaces serve as political sites from which youth exchange experiential knowledge, share resources and position themselves both within and against the state in order to address the institutional forces that create precarious livelihoods. The chapter builds on and connects scholarship in feminist political geography, Black feminist theory and radical planning. We make space there for intersectional queer critique while, in turn, pushing queer scholarship towards an anti-racist and spatial sensitivity.

### Black feminist interventions in LGBT/queer studies

Brazilianist scholars have attempted to centre queer and sexuality studies from the urban centres of the Global North through ethnographic accounts of sexualities. Specifically in the context of Brazil, Parker (1999) and Kulick (1998) contextualize in historical and cultural terms their analyses of non-normative genders and sexualities across several Brazilian cities. Both offer readings of such lived experiences largely without assuming a queer politics as it takes place in North America. However, works like these are often problematic through failing to consider the authors’ own positionalities as White, cis-gender gay men, initially drawn to Brazil as titillated tourists, as well as the effects of anti-Black racism on the lives of the majority-Black LGBT people whom they study. These shortcomings result in a typical White masculinist ethnographic gaze that seems ‘colour blind’, leaving the authors unmarked and unaccountable and rendering LGBT people as ‘incomplete’ subjects, identifiable only by sexual and gender identities (see Stout 2014).

One main reason for the centring of White queer experiences – or elision of those of Black queer folks – in this literature can be explained by what Cohen (1997, 438) calls an ‘uncomplicated understanding of power’ and identity categories in mainstream queer politics. What is created as a result of ‘activating only one characteristic of their identity’ (ibid.) is a simplistic dichotomy between everything that is queer being assumed to be radical and just, and everything that is heterosexual being inherently oppressive and despised (see Oswin 2008). Left to grapple with this divide, while caught in the middle of it, are Black and other non-White, non-normative people.

Black feminist and queer scholars have long problematized simplistic understandings of power and identity categories and the tendency of queer theorists and activists to isolate and prioritize sexuality as the ‘primary frame through which they pursue their politics’ (Cohen 1997, 440). They have advanced forceful critiques that build a broadened, intersectional understanding of queerness, violence, power and identities via ‘standpoint epistemologies’, which call for critical
knowledge production that is situated and grounded in everyday, lived experience. This knowledge must be centred in the experiential knowledge of non-normative folk in an ‘attempt to locate authority or expertise with those who experience a circumstance’ (Miller–Young 2014; Richie 2012, 129–130).

**Black feminist geographies: interventions on space, race, gender and violence**

Critical analyses of space and place-making are vital here. Black feminist geographers contend that Black people’s sense of place is informed by racism, sexism and homophobia: present-day violences through which we can ‘locate and speak back to the geographies of modernity … slavery, and colonialism’ (McKittrick 2006, xiii). As McKittrick states, ‘Black matters are spatial matters’, in that space and place factor centrally in Black lives and, in turn, render us geographic actors whose negotiations can result in reformulations of their own subjectivities and space itself (McKittrick 2006, xii). In other words, Black geographies necessarily centre Black agency in geographies of both domination and resistance.

For example, Black feminist activist-scholars like Keisha-Khan Perry (2013), Erica Williams (2014) and Christen Smith (2016) offer important insights into how Black Brazilian subjects – Black women in particular – must make strategic choices to fashion themselves, cope and intervene to secure daily survival and livability. Working with Black sex workers, neighbourhood women and activist performers, all three see Blackness and Black spatial consciousness not as a mere effect of exclusion but rather as central to the constructions of the spaces, places and society that one takes for granted daily – like tourist landscapes, plazas and even celebratory ‘gay spaces’. Smith (2016) sees this as a dangerous paradox, which she calls ‘afro-paradise’. This is a ‘gendered, sexualized and racialized imaginary’, through which Salvador becomes a place of Black fantasy and consumption, as well as Black death (Smith 2016, 3). Black people in highly exoticized sites like Rio de Janeiro simultaneously become hyper-sexualized, romanticized, consumed and exterminated objects. However, this paradox is intentional; it is precisely this Black fantasy that serves as a smokescreen to facilitate the state’s extermination of Black bodies. Brazilian society, media and the state actively choreograph these celebratory performances and routine killings. It is in the midst of this erotic, genocidal landscape that Black people – especially Black women and youth – must carve out spaces of everyday survival, consciousness and political intervention.

Similarly, Katherine McKittrick (2013) understands this contradiction as indicative of a ‘plantation future’. Through this lens, the plantation becomes a material and symbolic site of violence and resistance, where the built environment, urban social processes and Blackness become inseparable. Because of and despite the violence that the plantation symbolizes, ‘painful racial histories hold in them the possibility to organize our collective futures’ (McKittrick 2013, 3).

Anti-racist feminist scholars of space also offer us pathways of resistance. Miraftab (2009) provides a conceptual framework through which we can begin to decolonize planners’ imaginations, which idolize the spatially ‘ordered’ and ‘legible’ Western city as the ultimate object of desire. With more decolonized constructions of the city, we can begin envisioning and enacting a collective ‘liberation’ that decolonizes the mind and our surrounding environments. Whether through rent parties, shelter provision, parades or outright occupation, what youth is doing in the city is often transgressive, counter-hegemonic and imaginative in ways that disrupt common assumptions about the roles of planning in shaping urban space. Black queer insurgent planning and placemaking constitute spatial critiques through everyday subaltern life, which illustrate how gendered anti-Black racism and homophobia are central in ordering urban space – in
effect, acting to decolonize the mind, the built environment and urbanism itself. In connection, in a more intimate sense, Sweet’s analysis of ‘kitchen-table’ resistance is useful. Here, the ‘kitchen table’ is an intentional metaphor, representing the literal and political site from which women of colour – Black young transgender women, in this case – exchange experiential knowledge in order to collectively address the institutional structures and forces that impact on everyday life, at both individual and communal levels. As such, ‘kitchen-table planning’ offers an alternative to planning as a White, Eurocentric, masculinist field (ibid.)

Intersectional feminist and queer scholarship across the Americas has thus made productive interventions that view the conditions of Black people’s lives as always already ambiguous, embedded in epistemological tensions. In such ambiguity, where trauma, pleasure, exploitation and survival coexist in daily life, Black people exercise their agency by appropriating and refashioning negative representations in hopes of building socio-spatial alternatives on their own terms – a ‘remix’, in a way, of the violence that centrally defines our existence (Bailey and Shabazz 2014; Walcott 2007). As spatial subjects, then, Black people engage in building sites of consciousness, survival and resistance in the face of trauma and violence. The geographical imaginations and practices of Black LGBT youth should, then, be understood as ‘social processes that make [space and place] a racial-sexual terrain’ (McKittrick 2006, xiv).

In what follows, we first highlight the form and nature of anti-Black and homophobic violence in Rio and its devastating impacts. We show how this violence is enabled by, and reproduced through, the particular racialized, gendered and sexualized imaginaries of the city. Recognizing Black LGBT youth as geographical actors who also have a significant stake in the everyday production of space, we turn to their work in creating spaces of tolerance, focusing on the creation of Casa Nem. This project brings to the fore the spatial agency and imaginations of Black LGBT youth, which in turn provide insurgent, reimagined geographies of violence, struggle and pleasure.

**Gendered racism as homophobic and transphobic violence**

The urban space of Rio de Janeiro, both material and imagined, is a hostile landscape through which Black people must constantly navigate and struggle to make life livable. Here, racism intersects and affects Black people differentially in relation to gender, class and sexual identities, as well as age. Black women and Black LGBT people remain the key target of gendered, anti-Black racism, which Gilmore (2007) defines as state-sanctioned or extralegal subjection of Black people to conditions that lead to their premature death. In 2016, 347 LGBT people – an unprecedented recorded number – were murdered in Brazil. The annual total has more than doubled since 2000 and is steadily increasing (Mott and Paulinho 2017). Of the 347 reported homicides, 50 per cent were of gay men and 36 per cent of transgender people and *travestis*. Higher proportions of transgender people and *travestis* were murdered, and are thus the most victimized. Many of those murdered were both poor and Black. The data provided by Grupo Gay da Bahia suggest that in Brazil a transgender woman is 14 times more likely to be killed than a gay man. Compared to the US, Brazilian trans women face a nine-times greater chance of being murdered (Mott and Paulinho 2017). Indeed, according to the international agency Transgender Europe (2016), between 2008 and 2016 Brazil witnessed 802 transphobic murders: more than any other country (in terms of relative numbers). Mexico and the US follow Brazil, with 229 and 132 trans murders respectively. Of the homicides of LGBT Brazilians last year, 32 per cent were between 19 and 30 at the time of their death, and 21 per cent were minors. In other words, young LGBT people constitute the majority of reported LGBT homicides. Similar to cases of
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Racist hate crime, many of these murders go unpunished due to the police and judges’ dismissal of these cases as potential hate crime.

Homicide rates aside, according to the Global Rights Partners for Justice and the Black LGBT Network for Brazil, 90 per cent of Brazilian transgender women are illiterate, due to discrimination and social isolation, and 68 per cent of transgender Brazilians are living with HIV (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 2015). These groups denounce the lack of federal legal protections for Black transgender women’s rights in Brazil, due to ‘discrimination and acts of violence based on homophobia and transphobia [i.e. sexuality and gender identity], which affects people’s rights to gender expression as well as effective access to jobs, education, and health services’ (Pomykata 2013; ibid.). Thus, particular gendered, sexualized, classed and age-associated racial formations transform the city into a battleground for survival for young Black LGBT people.

Rio de Janeiro as a ‘gay-friendly’ afro-paradise

Rio de Janeiro is not only a place of Black death, but is associated with sexual freedom and deviance. In fact, these spaces are co-produced, with carnivalesque Black fantasy being part of the process of the devaluation of Black life. These spatial representations and performances are not coincidental, but rather processes that re-present Rio de Janeiro as a sort of ‘gay-friendly’ afro-paradise. The gay tourism industry and the mainstream LGBT movement appropriate Black bodies and culture to demonstrate sexual diversity and tolerance. Yet, in doing so, they rearticulate racial-sexual hierarchies rooted in colonial violence and are enabling violence in the present day.

The Brazilian state, city government and tourism industry all strategically appropriate and resignify Rio’s racialized landscape as a ‘site of desire’ (Manderson and Jolly 1997) and of ‘erotic possibilities’ (Binnie 1997). Here, Blackness is central, being simultaneously celebrated, commodified and concealed from touristic sites and narratives (see Williams 2014). We see this simultaneous desire and disgust for Blackness in Rio’s city-sponsored gay tourism campaigns, with an all-White cast, set in Ipanema, with rainbow flags waving below palm trees and Afro-Brazilian samba music playing in the background to entice the prospective tourist. However, what is concealed is the gratuitous violence with which the police ‘pacify’ the neighbouring favelas, as well as the communities from which many low-wage employees commute daily. This performative production of touristic and gay leisure spaces relies upon the concealment of Blackness, on the one hand, but also on an eroticized hypervisibility of Black cariocas’ bodies and cultural labour (see Kelley 1994).

Carioca LGBT activists have increasingly appropriated key tourist landscapes for political action and visibility, such as Posto 8.5 – ‘the gay beach’ – in Ipanema, as well as Avenida Atlântica, which runs parallel to Copacabana Beach, developing key partnerships with city agencies to spearhead gay tourism and anti-homophobia campaigns. Rainbow flags, bronzed, muscular bodies, the boardwalk and palm trees are prominent in the city-sponsored gay tourism brochures. The spatial imaginary of gay tourism materials, gay nightlife sites and maps and word of mouth locate most ‘gay spaces’ within the affluent neighbourhoods of the Southern Zone: Ipanema, Leblon, Botafogo and Copacabana, with ‘the gayest street in Rio’ being Farme de Amoedo Street in Ipanema.

Yet these allegedly ‘queer’ spaces of tolerance and racial-sexual diversity are embedded in an urban terrain starkly segregated by race, class and gender. Simplistic binary notions of ‘queer’ space and ‘straight’ space, which are present in most of this literature, fail to recognize that queer spaces are also contested along lines of race and class (see Oswin 2008). Often, gayness
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in the city becomes mapped or demarcated in the Southern Zone, far from where most Black cariocas – including Black LGBT youth – live. As a result, even when Black LGBT people are present in these gay spaces, they are ‘out of place’ unless they are working as mobile vendors, service employees in bars and restaurants, domestic workers, sex workers or criminals from nearby favelas – the racial-sexual ‘spectacle’ that Beatriz Nascimento (1982) witnessed in Copacabana.

**Reterritorializing anti-Black landscapes: Casa Nem**

As documented among many queer, trans and non-heteronormative groups throughout the Americas, Rio’s Black LGBT youth have gone to great lengths to affirm themselves by reclaiming and occupying urban spaces. Black LGBT youth in both Brazil and the US have repeatedly demonstrated that ‘occupying space has [been] an important queer tactic’ (Valentine 2003, 417) – a process known ‘reterritorialization of heterosexual space’ (Oswin 2008, 90) – and, as we argue, a reterritorialization of anti-Black landscapes. The social nature of these places can vary widely, including liminal spaces like highway underpasses, highly public spaces like central plazas and neighbourhood streets, or conventionally private spaces such as residences and art studios. A small house, a highway underpass or even an alleyway can become a site of celebration, performance, entrepreneurship and political activism, often spilling over into adjacent streets and sidewalks. As Wesley Miranda, a São Paulo-based DJ and artist explained in a personal interview in 2017, ‘We can make something out of nothing, anywhere – what matters is that we find each other and create something together for ourselves’.

The potential of Rio’s Black LGBT youth to carve out and reclaim urban spaces becomes apparent through the case of Casa Nem. Under a name that itself presents a critique of the gender binary – *nem* means ‘neither/nor’ – gender-non-conforming people have occupied and transformed a small house in Lapa, a neighbourhood known for nightlife and sex work, into a multipurpose site. While the house’s name alludes to diversity and inclusion, its slogan states it clearly, declaring that ‘There are faggots, dykes, trans men, and there will also be trans women and *travestis*, too!’ (Casa Nem, nd). According to Leonardo, a frequent guest of the house and Black transgender activist, the house had originally been rented and managed by middle-class White gay men who used the house as a residence and arts space. After experiencing a series of transphobic attacks by other house guests (and the complicity of the gay men running the space), the survivors – all transgender women and *travestis* – occupied the house and refused to leave until the tenants agreed to apologize and do right by them in future. Instead of reconciling and creating a more inclusive space, the former occupants vacated the property, leaving the house to the new occupants.

Since then, transgender women (including *travestis*) have become the primary occupants, akin to house ‘mothers’ and elders, and continue to run the house as a repurposed shelter for transient youth needing shelter from the violence of discriminatory police, clients and bystanders. The house has now become a base for community-building, artistic expression and political organizing. It has also become a refuge for transgender women and *travestis*, many of whom identify as Black and are (in)voluntarily engaged in sex work, largely due to extreme barriers to formal employment and education opportunities. The house’s location in Lapa gives many sex workers, whether trans-feminine or as young cis-gender men, direct access to shelter, food and communal support in times of need. The house has been increasingly useful to sex workers as the demand for sex work, and the consequent violent policing of said sex work, have both drastically increased in the midst of recent mega-events and growing tourism.

While Casa Nem began primarily as a reclaimed refuge for homeless trans youth, the house has quickly evolved to serve the multiple collective needs of Rio’s marginalized LGBT
community – all under the leadership of trans and gender-nonconforming people of various ages, races and walks of life. House programming has used the arts, education and celebration to equitably fundraise and train its LGBT (and largely Black) constituency. A salient example of such programming is PreparaNem. With all-transgender pupils, PreparaNem is a free, intensive preparatory course for the ENEM, the universal entrance exam for all of Brazil’s competitive federal universities. Many of the students on the course have either lived in or frequented Casa Nem at some point. The course’s LGBT instructors, all volunteers, have attended elite public universities and/or have multiple degrees, equipping the students with the knowledge and strategies needed to overcome the barrier of the ENEM – and all free of charge. Despite its main objective, PreparaNem has better-than-superior test outcomes and has achieved more transgender youth entering university. In 2016, the course organizers and the first class of students
collaborated with local photographers and graphic designers to create and sell calendars featuring the students, dressed in attire attributed to their dream profession. Using their aspirations, networks and creativity, the house youths have actively participated and have helped to ‘pay it forward’ by fundraising for the coming classes.

Another way that the house collective has reclaimed spaces in the service of community needs is through celebrations akin to the ‘rent parties’ in the Black, working-class neighbourhoods of the US. At these monthly parties, house residents and members fully staff the function, deploying their craft as bartenders, event planners, entertainers, security, DJs or visual artists in order to create a fun, discrimination-free atmosphere for attendees. This intersectional feminist ethos is literally etched into the physical structure of the house, with both interior and exterior walls marked heavily with art and phrases against racism, homo- and trans-phobia, ableism, the criminalization of sex work and HIV, and other forms of violence and discrimination. At the same time, the house fulfils a second objective: to create a mechanism that provides equitable monetary support for house beneficiaries and programming. Rent parties pay the bulk of the R$5000 monthly rent, food and living supplies for house residents; the parties are fully staffed by house members. Non-transgender attendees pay a cover of R$10, while transgender and travesti attendees can enjoy the parties free of charge. However, as research partner Leonardo explained, many of the trans and gender-non-conforming attendees help to run the party in some way, taking shifts to sell beer, cattaba and caipirinhas as a means to raise additional house funds.

Casa Nem has evolved into a haven for political organizing around issues of racism, heteropatriarchy and human rights, as well as an electoral campaign base for socialist PSOL-endorsed candidates Marielle Franco, Marcelo Freixo (runner-up in Rio’s mayoral election) and Indianara Siqueira (house mother at Casa Nem and Rio city councilmember candidate). As a political organizing base, Casa Nem has been behind several protests, celebrations and broader organizing networks. Through Casa Nem’s community organizing work, Rodrigo Luther King, a 28-year-old trans man from the nearby favela of São Carlos, has connected with other Black LGBT activists, in particular with assassinated councilwoman Marielle Franco. Rodrigo describes Casa Nem as:

a space where I felt like I belonged. It is a shelter for people in vulnerable situations and living on the street. I lived there for a month, I learned, I grew, because inside the favela we do not get as much information. There I learned to stand up for myself and to fight for my rights, and now I … can pass this on in a clear way to my brothers, in a way that means people from my surroundings in São Carlos can understand me, embark forward from these ideas, and learn to stand up for themselves as well, seeing what their rights are and fighting for them.

Maxx 2018

In times of increased state violence and rollbacks of civil and human rights, youth’s experiences at Casa Nem have reaffirmed their existence and have equipped them with the conceptual tools needed to articulate their reasons for resistance. The April 2018 assassination of Marielle Franco demonstrated the benefits of such a support system. As Rodrigo further explains,

What happened to my sister Marielle can happen to any of us, even more because we are Black … So it is very important for us to have a representative like Marielle was. She was not only having an impact by being a city councilmember, but by representing exactly this excluded minority.

Maxx 2018
Conclusion

Violence and resistance are both spatial acts through which Black people must assert their own place in the world. Amid the contradictory landscapes of Rio de Janeiro, Black people must carve out spaces of everyday survival and political intervention. In doing so they create, and remake, place.

What then are the broader implications of Black LGBT youth's placemaking tactics, for geographers and other social scientists and theorists as well as for urban policy practitioners? How do youth's spatial practices challenge us to reconsider what counts as legitimate 'politics', 'community planning' and policy best practices? As researchers and practitioners, we must recognize our own implicit biases when defining politics, stakeholders and policy insights. What we may write off as mere child's play or feminized social work may be the key to restorative, transformative community development.

The placemaking of Black LGBT youth, in the wake of sustained and lethal violent attacks, teaches us to question seriously the conventional power relations between local governments and their constituencies. In Black feminist tradition, the source of critical knowledge needed to design socially equitable places lies not with state officials but rather with the disenfranchised constituents most directly affected by the socioeconomic issue at hand. What this implies for practitioners is that constituents are not mere tokens to provide passive ‘buy-in’ for the policy programmes predesigned for them; the problem, solutions and budgets must be directly informed by the everyday realities of the most disenfranchised. In essence, the task is the operationalization of what Black feminist scholars call ‘standpoint epistemology’: critical knowledge production, situated and grounded in everyday lived experience. This knowledge must be centred around the experiential knowledge of non-normative folk.

The infrapolitics of Black LGBT youth's placemaking also constitute what Miraftab (2009) and other critical planning scholars call ‘insurgent planning’: a broader political project, rooted in the everyday practices of subaltern subjects, that responds to the crises of neoliberal capitalism – crises that set up Rio de Janeiro as a touristic ‘afro-paradise’. Everyday acts of resistance and survival through pleasure, play, dance, fashion, performance or popular education create ‘hidden transcripts’, outside of the realm of formal politics, which challenge us to rethink what counts as strategies of resistance, creative responses to spatial inequalities and social movements overall. The redemptive spaces that youth produce serve as political sites from which youth can exchange knowledge, imagine and enact alternative worlds and position themselves, both within and against the state, in order to address the institutional forces that create precarious livelihoods.

The communal work of Black transgender women at Casa Nem, and related subjects and spaces, could easily be feminized and thus considered more akin to social work than community planning. Such a perspective is masculinist and misogynistic, missing the value of such cultural and economic labour as an intersectional critique of the politics of urban space and Brazilian society. As an intersectional spatial critique, the members of Casa Nem engage in insurgent ‘kitchen-table planning’ (Sweet 2015), providing a specifically intersectional critique of planning history, theory and practice. Sites like Casa Nem represent variants of a Black queer ‘kitchen table’, so to speak, from which Black LGBT youth can plan for themselves and their futures. Time and time again, youth use everything within their reach to create redemptive places amid a hostile landscape in ways that acknowledge diverse lived experiences and seek to enact more livable futures for LGBT people of all races, genders and backgrounds.
Notes

1 From this moment, the Ministries of Culture and of Women, Racial Equality, and Youth, which had long championed progressive social policy programmes, were terminated.

2 Right-wing Congressman – and current President-elect – Jair Bolsonaro from São Paulo stated publicly to journalists (in Portuguese), ‘Prefiro um filho morto do que homossexual!’ In a similar anti-Black and misogynistic vein, former Rio de Janeiro State Governor Sérgio Cabral stated that poor (assumedly Black) communities are ‘factories that produce marginal people’, and that ‘Do ventre da mulher negra nasce bandeira’ (‘thugs are born from Black women’s bellies’).

3 Samba is a musical and cultural tradition with roots deeply grounded in the cultures and religious practices of working-class Black Brazilians. Once banned as a moral hazard, it was appropriated in 1935 as central to the national identity of Brazilians, catalyzing its transformation into what we witness annually as the world-renowned samba school parades in the Samba Dome, a key tourist attraction for Rio de Janeiro during Carnival.

4 The Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio (ENEM), or the National High School Exam, is the principal barrier to a solid university education in Brazil. Due to disinvestment in public education and the lack of school resources, the vast majority of public high-school students do not achieve a high enough score to gain admission to Brazil’s prestigious public universities. The ENEM has impeded the vast majority of poor, Black and transgender youth from entering public universities and thus their socioeconomic mobility.

Key readings


References


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