

Rethinking a decade of crises in the digital era: Dictatorship and feminisms in Brazil, and the “History in Quarantine” project

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil has become a neuralgic point of several crises in the political, economic, social and cultural fields whose beginning dates back to the 'Jornadas de Junho' of 2013. In the context of the pandemic, popular initiatives in a virtual environment have sought to reflect on the country's recent past in order to understand the complexity of these imbrications. This article draws from one of these digital projects, called 'História em Quarentena', which began in March 2020 and lasted a total of 20 weeks. After a consulting to the program's audience, two themes were chosen as being of great importance for Brazilian society: the memory of the military dictatorship and the development of feminisms and gender studies in the intellectual and social fields. Both themes, therefore, will be highlighted in this article.

Resumo

A pandemia da Covid-19 no Brasil transformou-se em um ponto nevrálgico de diversas crises nos campos político, econômico, social e cultural cujo início remonta às 'Jornadas de Junho' de 2013. No contexto da pandemia, iniciativas populares em ambiente virtual procuraram refletir sobre o passado recente do país, de modo a compreender a complexidade destas imbricações. Este artigo parte de um destes projetos digitais, chamado 'História em Quarentena', iniciado em março de 2020 e com duração total de 20 semanas. Após uma enquete junto ao público do programa, duas temáticas foram escolhidas como sendo de grande importância para a sociedade brasileira atual: a memória sobre a ditadura militar e a atuação dos feminismos e dos estudos de gênero nos campos intelectual e social. Ambas temáticas, portanto, serão destacadas no presente artigo.

Antonio Guterres, Secretary General of the United Nations, stated in a letter dated March 19th, 2020: "We are facing a global health crisis unlike any in the 75-year history of the United Nations — one that is spreading human suffering, infecting the global economy, and upending people's lives. A global recession – perhaps of record dimensions – is a near certainty" (UN, 2020).

In Brazil, the health crisis was added to a number of political and economic crises overwhelming the country since at least the popular demonstrations of 2013 related to the high living costs, followed by the political crisis that led to the destitution of Dilma Rousseff, the arrest of Luís Inácio Lula da Silva, the election of Jair Messias Bolsonaro in 2018, the militarization of the government staff, the criminal fires in the Brazilian Amazon rainforest and Pantanal, the nostalgia for the military dictatorship, the indigenous and black movements protests, the rise of feminist movements of the so-called "fourth wave" as well as conservative movements related to Pentecostal churches.

Therefore, the Covid-19 pandemic in Brazil has become the hotspot for these several crises worsened by the slow pace in implementing specific policies to counter the disease at a national level, which caused one of the highest death rates by Covid-19 in the world. After minimizing the disease throughout most of 2020, the Brazilian government was forced to give in to pressure and to purchase vaccines in a slow and bureaucratic move.

In about ten years, Brazilians have developed a feeling of unfamiliarity towards their own country and seem to be prisoners of negationist, catastrophic, personalistic, and ultranationalist discourses. Simultaneously, popular initiatives in virtual environments this past year have sought to reflect on the recent past, the multifaceted present, and the possible future from the ascertainment that such a crisis is no longer only economic and political, but also affects both individual and collective psyches.

The History in Quarantine Project was launched on March 23rd, 2020, when the first Covid-19 cases were reported in Brazil, and it is one of the first digital projects that appeared in this context in the country. Its focus was discussing, through digital platforms, themes deemed to be important for the contemporary Brazilian society dialoguing with the Public History practices already present in Brazil for more than a decade.¹ The program had a

¹ Some of the books on Public History present an overview of the historiographic initiatives for the scientific disclosure of the last decade in Brazil. See: Rovai and Rabelo, 2011, Santhiago, Rabelo and Mauad, 2016, Schmidt and Malerba, 2021.

duration of 20 weeks and was coordinated by six young Brazilianist historians of four different nationalities.

Along these twenty weeks, 104 interventions were made, including live chats in social media, debates, and interviews with more than 200 participants, including historians, anthropologists, sociologists, activists, journalists, writers, actors and actresses, musicians, filmmakers, teachers, etc. from ten different countries. The *Facebook* page where the program started had 17,000 subscribers in only a few weeks, in addition to the more than 1,000 subscribers on *Youtube*, and more than 1,000 others listening to the *Program Podcast*.

The atmosphere of meetings and discussions was fundamentally characterized by the effects of the accelerated closing of the Brazilian political conditions during Jair Bolsonaro's neo-conservative government and by the condition of confinement experienced by all the participants, which added the elements of drama and self-reflection to the project. The combination of subjects like the military dictatorship as unfinished business and the denial of the Covid-19 as a fatal disease by direct government representatives, beginning with the Brazilian President himself, was virtually always present in the HQ debates (*História em Quarentena*, acronym by which the program became known).

The discussions favored by the Program were the ones about Brazilian recent history, which is the very subject of this *Brasiliana* section and specially of the present article, regarding subjects such as authoritarianism, dictatorship, indigenous and racial issues, gender, and feminisms studies, etc. Studies belonging to the historiographic field related to the Brazilian dictatorship formed most of the series, while the programs related to gender and feminisms studies focused on the international dialogue with the presence of researchers from France, USA, Colombia, and Argentina. Additionally, it is also important to note the constant concern of inviting Brazilian researchers from many different regions of the country.

Therefore, the object of the present article is to discuss the history of the last decade in Brazil from the perspective of this digital experience born of the crisis originated from the pandemic in the world, which is a very dense and precise experience on time, as well as the role of social sciences in this discussion. The memory of the Brazilian dictatorship and the gender and feminisms contemporary studies are the subjects approached herein, since they are deemed as the more controversial ones in Brazil today. Twelve out of the 104 "History in Quarantine" programs were used here as main sources.

Thinking about the relation with the past in the digital era, the American historian Stefan Tanaka (2013, p. 35) states: "The internet is the largest repository of data, ever. Information is more readily available, the internet seemingly forgets nothing (...). Individuals now have to prevent their past which might possibly haunt their future".

Dictatorship in motion

When the National Truth Commission (CNV, *Comissão Nacional da Verdade*) was implemented, on May 16th, 2012, the dictatorship was considered by Dilma Rousseff's government (2011-2016) authorities as recent past and as a threatened memory. Ms. Rousseff stated that she had been a militant in the armed struggle against the Brazilian military dictatorship herself in the 1960s: "... we are not driven by revanchism, hatred or the desire to rewrite history in a different way, but we are driven by the urgent need to know this history as a whole, without concealment, without camouflage, without vetoes and without prohibitions" (Uol, 2012).

It was a major challenge: officially building a narrative of homage to the surviving victims and a legitimate search for the truth about those whose bodies were never found maintaining the tone of conciliation legally established by the Amnesty Law of August 1979 and politically reiterated in 2010 by decision of the Brazilian Supreme Court, which denied the revision request of said law made by the Brazilian Bar Association in agreement with several social movements (G1, 2010). In any case, the CNV emerged as part of a set of memory policies about the past and to seek the truth taking the country into a complicated game of memory disputes almost thirty years after the re-democratization in 1985.

In 2014, the 50th anniversary of the military coup, there was an eruption of intellectual, political, and cultural manifestations giving multiple meanings to the coup. Regarding this context, Mariana Joffily (2018, p. 206) reminded that the recent Information Access Law – which came into effect at the time of the implementation of the CNV – had given access to a huge documental contingent about the period. Moreover, the CNV scope of operation had been broadened by state, municipal, and institutional commissions. Also, the Brazilian President herself was a former militant against the dictatorial regime. All these facts could have increased the attention given to the coup and dictatorship themes to a level hardly seen before.

As for the academia and social movements, several intellectual and activist groups of various social science fields denounced the continuities between dictatorship and

democracy as a recent past or according to the notion of "past that will not pass" (Rouso, 2016, p. 115). In general, throughout the last decade, there has been an apparent academical effort to show how the long transition process back to a democratic regime in Brazil was characterized by a series of continuity aspects related to methods and violence committed by State agents, especially against the so-called minorities.

This was the purpose, for example, of the collection entitled '*O que resta da ditadura: a exceção brasileira*' (What's left of the dictatorship: the Brazilian exception), published in 2010 and organized by Edson Telles and Vladimir Safatle, well-known philosophers in the mainstream press. In one of the first articles, the political scientist Jorge Zaverucha says about the 1988 Constitution:

The Constitution [1988] kept many of the undemocratic military prerogatives that existed in the previous authoritarian Constitution [1967] and even added new ones. Its clear objective was to show that such constitutional clauses would make the consolidation of democratic civil-military relations impossible. (Zaverucha, 2010, p. 40).

The publications by historian Caroline Bauer throughout the last decade have endorsed this point of view highlighting the idea of a "reconciliation ideology" as the current support base, including memory policies that circumvent criminal liability actions of agents involved in violations of Human Rights (Bauer, 2015, p. 118). Also from the point of view of subjectivities, the philosopher Sílvia Queiroz stated in her PhD thesis that, in addition to impunity and victimization, the post-dictatorship era was not being constituted based on the voice of victims as a shared collective memory, resulting in the prevalence of the dissolution of the past by the present and the difficulty of opening to the invention of another possible country by rescuing experiences repressed by the writing of history and justice (Queiroz, 2019).

According to a series of studies that have problematized the relationship between history and memory in recent decades, Marcos Napolitano drew attention to the mismatch between a alleged hegemonic social memory of the military regime until then "frankly unfavorable to the ideological and symbolic principles that guided the Armed Forces in charge of the Brazilian State between the years 1964 and 1985" (Napolitano, 2015, p.17), and the social, political and cultural continuity of anti-democratic practices par excellence.

In other words, when thinking about the dynamics and vicissitudes of memory construction on the Brazilian military regime, Napolitano reinforced what many analysts had been pointing out about the post-dictatorship Brazilian State (as well as federal entities

in general), considering it “a legacy of military authoritarianism characterized by bureaucratic insularity (especially in the economic field), by the technocratic view of social policies and by the authoritarian view in the public security area” (Napolitano, 2015, p. 18).

The far right, however, was responsible for the implosion of traditional temporal segmentation achieved in Brazil. As analyzed by journalist Marcelo Godoy (2014), author of one of the most important books on repression during the dictatorship: '*A Casa da Vovó: uma biografia do DOI-Codi (1969-1991)*', the tribute to Colonel Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, a known torturer of political prisoners during the military regime, by congressman Jair Bolsonaro in his vote for the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in April 2016, was an act of war (ESP, 2016). The conflict started in 1964 would, thus, resume in almost all of its main signs during the presidential campaign for the 2018 presidential elections.

In Argentina, it is possible to say that this movement was carried out by the Madres de Plaza de Mayo, a group internationally known for the political and social struggle in search of the whereabouts of the children and the bodies of those who went missing during the country's dictatorial years between 1976 and 1983, in addition to the criminal accountability of State agents for the violence committed in Argentina during that time. Even to the present day, mothers and grandmothers will walk around the square counterclockwise demonstrating that time is also political and that the past has not yet passed (Bevernage, 2018).

Retrospectively, seen from its end, the Brazilian decade that began in 2011 also experienced this temporal overlap. Despite all the theoretical production and social activism, often sponsored by the State, the change from reading the dictatorship as a memory to the dictatorship as an unfinished conflict emerged socially with a surprising impact through the social and political reaction to the attempt to crystallize the conflicts symbolized by the dictatorship under the category of memory.

As such, the last few years seem to show their darkest face, and history and memory of the dictatorship tend to also include the transition as a moment to which we turn when discussing present and past violence. The dictatorship thus continues in motion.

Quarantine, History, and live chats on dictatorship

The *History in Quarantine* project was an independent initiative of a group of historians effectively detached from public or private institutions. Inspired by the subject of the dictatorship in the context of the last decade described above, all members are experienced in the production of interviews through academic works in the field of oral history, and because of the collective work on the *História da ditadura. Novas Perspectivas* website – a portal for the production, dissemination and sharing of knowledge about the recent history and memory of Brazil in operation since 2016.

The HQ members have, as an unavoidable cultural and political reference, the ambience of memory public policies carried out during the Labor Party (PT, *Partido dos Trabalhadores*) governments (2002-2016) in Brazil with emphasis on the work of the Amnesty Commission, in activity since 2001-02, and the National Truth Commission (2011-14), which significantly attracted public attention to the theme of the dictatorship, with important consequences in historiographic production (Joffily, 2018).

At the same time, living with the struggle of social movements, collectives, activists, and family members, who demand State agents to be held accountable for crimes committed by State agents during the dictatorship and the identification of the whereabouts of dead and missing people in those circumstances is also part of this formation. As stated by literary theory professor, Marcio Seligmann-Silva (2008, p. 73), we believe that this is the context in which a reframing of history from the point of view of memory and memory policies has been taking place characterized by valuing the uniqueness of traumas.

The extension of life in confinement, and, consequently, the HQ as a project with indefinite term goals, has led the team to take certain theoretical and methodological decisions. First, and the most important to this article, we highlight the growing concern in mapping, through different discussion proposals, a general picture of the dictatorship effects on the present as a way of understanding and operating History in its varying degrees of depth.

Accordingly, we operationalize the History of the Present as a certain way of dealing with the production of knowledge, pervaded by the social modalities of feeling and thinking about State violence and, therefore, *political violence*. In this regard, we agree with Maria Paula Araújo (2018, §03), for whom violence is political when perpetrated, in a large extent, by institutional agents of the State, especially by police and military authorities, at any time.

Given the impossibility of dealing with all the material produced by the HQ about the military dictatorship, and the criteria previously exposed, including the greater number of accesses and participation during the live chats, we selected the following debates for this intervention (All the debates used as source and/or mentioned in this article are integrally available at <https://www.historiaemquarentena.com/>): '*Violência de Estado e autoritarismo: 56 anos do golpe de 1964*' (State violence and authoritarianism: 56 years of the 1964 coup), which inaugurated the dictatorship theme in the HQ with the participation of historians from different countries: Odilon Caldeira from Brazil, Maud Chirio from France, and Manuel Loff from Portugal; '*Ditadura, grupos de extermínio e esquadrões da morte*' (Dictatorship, extermination groups and death squads), carried out as an interview with sociologist José Cláudio Souza Alves; '*Ensino da ditadura nas escolas*' (Teaching of dictatorship in schools), with the presence of historians who work in different regions of the country: Julia Ribeiro from Pernambuco, Alessandra Carvalho, professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro Application School, and Greice Adriana, from Porto Alegre; '*Construção e desmonte das políticas de memória. Mitos da ditadura - usos políticos do passado*' (Building and dismantling memory policies. Dictatorship myths - political uses of the past), a debate among women with very different trajectories of working with the dictatorship theme: Carla Osmo, a philosopher with a law degree, historian Glenda Gathe from Rio de Janeiro, and Maria Cecília Oliveira Adão, researcher on women's militancy against the dictatorship; and '*Mitos da ditadura - usos políticos do passado II*' (Dictatorship myths - political uses of the past II), with two of the most celebrated Brazilian historians of the dictatorship: Marcos Napolitano, professor at São Paulo University, and Rodrigo Patto Sá Motta, professor at Minas Gerais Federal University. Among those who answered the HQ program reception questionnaire, 36% chose this theme as one of the most important in the entire program.

From the point of view of the presented narratives, we highlight three elements that, from our perspective, were made evident by the set of interventions: the plurality of temporalities, evident in the academic and social treatment of the dictatorship; the permanence of a certain official speech praising the State violence represented by the dictatorship period and the denial of the trauma that results from this violence.

The plurality of temporalities

Throughout the highlighted interventions, we found out that the dictatorship theme moves through different temporalities presented from different approaches. Here follows some examples: Rodrigo Patto Sá Motta uses the idea of myth as a cultural element that

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needs no proof or criticism to point out the official incorporation by the dictatorial regime of the myth of racial democracy intellectually elaborated in the 1930s.

José Claudio Souza Alves, in turn, goes back to the formation of death squads in the 1950s to address the longevity, strength and social roots of the hero-killer discourse and the "cleaning of society" whose dirt consists in "marginality", generally represented by the black, poor, and peripheral population.

Carla Osmo advances through the 2000s reminding that the Judiciary Power continues, until now, invoking the Amnesty Law enacted by the dictatorial regime in 1979 to prevent justice from being done, by judging the crimes committed by State agents in that period. Thus, by means of the recorded dialogues, and the abundance of examples, sub-themes and theoretical approaches that are very different from each other, we consider that this set of videos constitutes a broad and unique panorama of narratives about the dictatorship that allow the understanding of this fundamental abstraction for the History that is the imbrication of different temporal series in the same present.

The praise of violence

The praise of State violence is pointed out by José Claudio Souza Alves in his research on death squads: "experts in producing damage and suffering to other people, State employees paid with public taxes" who carried out summary executions in peripheral regions; it also appears in the intervention by Maud Chirio, who is very concerned about understanding the military dynamics of the current Brazilian far right. According to her,

The fact that Bolsonaro's Brazil made possible the positioning against Human Rights, or that the Earth is not round, is part of the same logic that authorizes the distrust of progressive authorities. Bolsonaro's freedom means being free from the critical memory and condemnation of the dictatorship. [...] The worst thing about Bolsonaro and the military and civilian far right he represents is not only his denial, but his reaffirmation of certain elements. He denies the scientific truth, but he does not deny torture, he praises it, he does not deny repression, he says it was not enough (15'50").

As such, Maud upholds the exceptional inversion of Brazilian denial, which combines the distrust of scientific and knowledge production institutions with the

affirmation of the dictatorship as a symbol and representation of the State's legitimate authority to kill. The intervention also allows maintaining the tone of mockery, and humiliation of subjects and memories of the dictatorship opposition, which completes Bolsonaro's government official narrative regarding the recent past.

Such moral aspect of State violence praise dialogues with what Greice Adriana pointed out as a use of the past often taught to students in school. According to Greice's testimony about her teaching experience, the existence of two sides (usually military versus guerrilla fighters) in conflict before and during the dictatorship, thus justifying the dictatorial regime, has been part of the historical conscience baggage that children and teenagers take to school. It seems that the private, intimate, and domestic spaces have become an important diffuser of narratives about the dictatorship that corroborate the legitimacy of the State violence exerted on alleged left-wing armed fighters.

The denial of the trauma

The denial of the trauma is one of the most reiterated elements in the set of videos we produced. Although not presented in these terms, here are some records that, from our perspective, add to the idea of a current cultural and political atmosphere that denies victims the right to memory, elaboration, and reparation. Manuel Loff, in a less historiographic and more sociological reading of the present, highlights the context of the Covid-19 pandemic as a moment of official reinforcement, in Brazil, of the conservative discourse of national unity and family unity as resistance cells against the virus, and against evil, thus incorporating the anti-communist and anti-subversive narrative of the dictatorship to the idea of fighting the pandemic. These components – according to Loff – are fed and reinforced in Brazil precisely by those who deny and manipulate the events of 1964.

We believe that this is exactly the path of suspicion, the dichotomous social constitution that, close to extremist religious discourses, equates the left-wing political struggle or the opposition to the current government to evil, disorder, the clichés of historical condemnation of communism. As a result, feelings and sensations linked to fear and shame assault teachers in classrooms, protesters on the streets, memory movements of the victims of State violence, people just beginning to acquire some political awareness and even graduate students at the time of choosing their research topics.

In a more historically situated way, the denial of the trauma also resides in the inefficient treatment of memories of the dictatorship. This is what can be inferred from Glenda Gathe's intervention on the Amnesty Commission, responsible for granting reparation to victims of violations committed by the State between 1946 and 1988. According to Gathe, the concept of official reparation in Brazil is essentially based on the concepts of the Labor Movement, which is why the compensations were much criticized by social movements. Furthermore, they occurred in parallel with the growth of the denial of the dictatorship, the absence of accountability and punishments, continued confidentiality of documents, etc. The very perception of the ones to whom amnesty is granted is in dispute even today. From 1979 to the 1990s, the legislation would have stopped dealing with the ones to whom amnesty is granted as people who should be forgiven, beginning to treat them as people worthy of reparation. In 2002, however, this conflict between two conceptions of Amnesty was not yet resolved and the signs of Amnesty in Brazil would remain around forgiveness or reparation, prevailing the logic of conciliation and/or compensation. In both cases, the delegitimization of the Amnesty Law as a dictatorial law that promoted the military's self-absolution is unthinkable.

Gender studies and feminisms in motion

The beginning of the 21st century saw the emergence of the so-called "fourth feminist wave" in Latin America. It dialogued with an emergence of the gender studies scientific field within the various academic disciplines. However, as early as 2014, conservative reactions emerged in Brazil through religious action producing the political category of 'gender ideology' in addition to the propagation of moral panic and the exaltation of the traditional family (Melo, 2020, p. 02).

The conservative political project that encourages this interpretation won the 2018 elections in Brazil and is explicitly represented by the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights, whose minister is an evangelical pastor who worked in the National Congress for more than twenty years as a parliamentary advisor for conservative agendas. The fight against feminist agendas and the LGBTQI+ movement, however, is not restricted to Brazil as it reveals the existence of a conservative reaction at the transnational level (Melo, *idem*).

Although the definition of feminist "fourth wave" does not represent a univocal movement, it was used and mapped in the country through works such as the occupation-

book "*Explosão Feminista*" (Feminist Boom), published in 2018. The book was coordinated by Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda, representative feminist in the 1980s, and brought together more than 150 activists to discuss the various contemporary feminisms: black feminism, indigenous feminism, Asian feminism, transfeminism, lesbian feminism, etc. The book also counts on the testimony of seven militants of the movement who acted politically between the 1960s and 1980s in Brazil, that is, throughout the military dictatorship.

By mapping this 21st century feminism, the importance of the 2013 '*Jornadas de Junho*' stands out² in Brazil as a marker of the new feminist generation that began to organize itself through social media having street demonstrations as its target. Their multiple claims are specific to the Brazilian and Latin American context, especially aimed at violence and sexual harassment against women, the bill 5069/2015, which makes it difficult for victims of rape to have access to abortion guaranteed by law, among other claims. But militancy does not just happen on the streets. Feminist hashtags have successfully emerged in the 21st century and spread rapidly on social media around, for example, the denunciation of sexual harassment in schools, at work, and even within family (Bogado, 2018, p. 25).

Together with feminist demands, the strength of the black movement grows in Brazil, with black feminism being one of the main political players in the country today. In fact, feminism and anti-racism have in common the fact that they are social macro-movements made up of several smaller movements that existed in different historical periods and in different countries (Van Dijk, 2020, p. 04), hence their transnational character.

Although the criminalization of racism is also an achievement of the 1988 Constitution, the murder of Marielle Franco in 2018 characterizes the movement's new popularity. Marielle Franco was a black lesbian woman raised in Rio de Janeiro favelas who was elected for the City Council in 2017. Her murder re-sparked the demands of black feminism on national and even international scenes, including the creation of the Marielle Franco Institute (<https://www.institutomariellefranco.org/>).

Theoretical and methodological concepts also characterize the new feminist generation inside and outside the university, and guide many of its actions. In this regard, it is worth highlighting the concept of "intersectionality" constantly used in contemporary

² In present Brazilian History, the *Jornadas de Junho* began with several demonstrations in major Brazilian capitals against the increase in bus tickets. The demonstrations were first promoted by *Movimento Passe Livre* (MPL). It is estimated that 1.5 million people have taken the streets in 120 cities across the country. See: Espírito Santo, Diniz and Ribeiro, 2016. The movement, fully articulated on the internet, expanded throughout June 2013, and multiplied its claims, serving as a model for demonstrations in the following years, such as *Marcha das Vadias*, *Marcha das Margaridas*, *Marcha das Mulheres Negras*, *Primavera Feminista*, *Greve de Mulheres 8M*, etc.

Brazil. The concept gained academic popularity internationally in 2001 because of the World Conference against Racism in South Africa, and it was coined by the Afro-American intellectual Kimberlé Crenshaw, although similar reflections may be found in Brazilian feminists of the 1980s, such as Lélia Gonzalez and the concept of *amefricanity* (Ratts and Rios, 2016).

This concept covers the “structural inseparability of racism, capitalism and cysheteropatriarchy”, “it is a sensitive way of thinking about identity and its relationship with power” (Akotirene, 2019, p. 14), which, in an unequal country like Brazil, serves as a strong theoretical and methodological instrument for the contemporary black feminist movement (Figueiredo, 2020). The popularization of the concept is due, in a large extent, to extensive editorial projects linked to activists and aimed at educating young Brazilians in the anti-racist struggle.

Some features, however, unite the various fourth wave feminisms. First, there is a concern to maintain the horizontal movement, favoring the collective rather than the establishment of leaders. Second, there is the usage of a theatrical, spectacular (performative) political language, using the body as a platform for expression (Hollanda, 2018, p. 12). As mentioned earlier, the Internet and social media are essential to the organization and demands of fourth wave feminists. They make possible the immediate dissemination of actions, demonstrations, and protests, as well as the establishment of a dialogue with different feminist movements around the world.

This generation of feminists, that meet and negotiate at the virtual environment, benefits, of course, from a decades old struggle. Drawing an overview of the achievements of women in public and private spaces between 1987 and 2017, historians Joana Maria Pedro and Carla Pinsky (2017) highlight some contradictions in recent Brazilian history.

According to them, a 1980s feminist would be amazed with the greater presence of women in the media, politics, labor market, leading positions in companies and scientific institutions, in universities, and in social movements. At the same time, she would observe that this presence does not apply to all women from different ethnicities and social classes: “[she] would also see that extraordinary advances in the area of communications end up being used by many to spread sexism, encourage violence and promote the degradation of women. She would then be sure of the need to continue the fight” (Pedro and Pinsky, 2017, loc.1396).

Among the feminist achievements since the 1988 Constitution, the authors highlight the legal equality between men and women within the family, the extension of the maternity leave and the creation of the paternity leave, the prohibition of salary differences based on gender, the incorporation of domestic maids into Social Security, - the law was sanctioned only in 2015 -, the creation of the Law to Combat Domestic Violence, known as Maria da Penha Law (Law 11.340/2006) and police departments specialized in dealing with crimes against women, etc. (Pedro and Pinsky, 2017, loc.1432). However, the law regulating abortion, so dear to the most radical feminists of the 1980s, was never fully adopted in Brazil and continues to be a demand of contemporary feminists in face of conservative reaction increasingly present in Brazilian public and parliamentary spaces.

Summarizing the last ten years discussions in public space, regarding feminisms and gender studies and conservative fields, anthropologist Flávia Melo says:

The trajectory of these antagonistic forces – reaction and resistance – allows some considerations. First: the transnational campaign against gender studies demonstrates how sexual and reproductive rights have been attacked by religious countermobilization whose intellectual mentorship is carried out by the Catholic Church. Second: secular and far right forces have joined in these attacks using them as tools for aggressive neoliberal advances. Third: the observation of local dynamics makes it possible to pursue this trajectory and understand the coalitions of reactionary political forces as well as to better understand national contexts. Fourth: despite this situation, the achievements, resistances, and feminist alliances evidence the contesting and destabilizing force of actions carried out by women, by feminist and LGBT movements that have faced the religious counteroffensive, the radicalization of rights, and the restriction of rights with powerful strategies (Melo, 2020, p. 03).

Quarantine, History and live chats about gender and feminisms

Due to the importance of feminisms and gender studies in the Brazilian context over the last ten years, as mentioned above, one week of the History in Quarantine project was entirely dedicated to the theme. It should be noted, in this regard, that many of those invited to these debates are also significant personalities in the media, such as Djamila Ribeiro (writer, philosopher, black feminist movement activist, and winner of the Jabuti award in 2020), Jean Wyllys (former congressman, self-exiled after receiving death threats from conservative groups), Fábio Feltrin (university professor, publicly offended by the former minister of education, Abraham Weintraub), as well as gender studies researchers from

different regions of the country, such as Cecília Sardenberg (Federal University of Bahia) and Marta Rovai (Federal University of Alfenas) as well as foreigners.

In this regard, unlike the weeks dedicated to dictatorship and authoritarianism, the week dedicated to feminisms and gender studies favored Brazilian participants dialoguing with foreign ones. The focus on the decolonial perspective is noteworthy, since the decolonial activist Françoise Vêrgès was interviewed about the French context. It was also one of the last public appearances of the Argentine philosopher Maria Lugones, who lived in the United States, and was one of the best-known references in the area, before her death five weeks later. Lugones dialogued directly with Ângela Figueiredo, a Brazilian sociologist at the Recôncavo da Bahia Federal University, who is also an expert on the subject.

With 07 videos (477 minutes), out of the 104 recorded by the program, with activists, public personalities, and eminent experts in gender studies, we highlight here the observations we believe to be the most pertinent about the last decade of Brazilian history.

The videos used were the following: '*A invenção da ideologia de gênero*' (the invention of gender ideology), with Jean Wyllys, Fábio Feltrin and Karina Veiga Mottin; '*Violências de gênero*' (gender violence), live chat coordinated by the anthropologist Cecília Sardenberg, '*Gênero e política em tempos autoritários*' (gender and politics in authoritarian times), live chat coordinated by the historian Marta Rovai, '*Masculinidades e Feminilidades*' (masculinities and femininities), with the historians Fernanda Cássia, Abner Sótenos and Thiago Soliva, '*Colonialidade e gênero*' (coloniality and gender), with Maria Lugones and Ângela Figueiredo, '*Questões Raciais*' (racial issues), with Djamila Ribeiro and Maboula Soumahoro, and '*Feminismo Decolonial*' (decolonial feminism), interview with Françoise Vergès. 20% of those who answered the HQ program reception questionnaire chose this theme as one of the most important in the entire program.

The conceptual defense

A feature that unites the presentations aimed at the debate on feminisms and gender studies is the fact that the trajectories of the participants have been abruptly changed in recent years due to the conservative turn in Brazil. Some were persecuted, others were threatened, marginalized, publicly criticized, suffered censorship in the work environment or were forced to be cautious in their teaching practice.

In all interventions, it was equally emphasized the importance of the correct definition of terms such as feminism, gender, male, female, and decolonial, so that it would

be understood that the discussions came from broad reflection, whether academic or based on life experience of marginalized subjects, avoiding common sense or speech distortions. As an example, it follows Karina Veiga Mottin's speech, whose thesis deals with the theme of "gender ideology":

...it's important to start by pointing out that this thing called "gender ideology" is an attack category on our research. What we produce are gender studies, an area that is already well consolidated in Brazil. And "gender ideology" (...) is a conspiracy theory (...). I can talk a little bit about its effect on schools, which is where I work, where I come from, where I am present. I also think it is important to point out that when we talk about gender discussions at school, (...) it seems that there is a possibility of not having this discussion at school, but this possibility does not exist. Gender is at schools, whether we like it or not (...). It is present since the school organization, which is how we organize the classroom, queue for girls and boys, bathroom for girls and boys (5'00")

In fact, the confusion caused in the public space between "gender studies" and "gender ideology" is perhaps the reason for the most perverse effects on those who participated in the HQ, former congressman Jean Wyllys being the most known example of that. Likewise, the conceptual part of the debate on masculinities and femininities is highlighted, where the argument about the social construction of sexual differences is seen as fundamental for the understanding of gender studies by the general public, since the lack of knowledge of this starting point leads to the discursive manipulation typical of the Brazilian far right.

As such, historian Martha Rovai claims that the "History in Quarantine" project is not only a space for scientific dissemination, but a virtual meeting place from the perspective of public history, a field emerging in Brazil since at least 2011. Cecília Sardenberg also begins her discussion about violence by highlighting the importance of the concept of gender for the proper understanding of feminist studies, gender studies at universities and their diversity, and especially for thinking about the violence perpetrated against women, which is her subject of study, and the evolution of laws, struggles and discussions around the subject in Brazil since at least the 1970s.

In general, and in particular

In addition to the fact that one of the specificities of this "History in Quarantine" project week is the international dialogue, it is important to highlight that this dialogue was established by effort of all parties, regardless of the country or language of origin, to reflect on common aspects linked to the cultural, contextual, and national differences.

The clearest example in this regard seems to be the dialogue between Djamilia Ribeiro and Maboula Soumahoro about racial issues, broadcasted on April 27, 2020, a month before the murder of George Floyd in the United States. Both Ribeiro and Soumahoro are often present in the media in their respective countries as representatives of the black movement and dialogue through contextual examples from Brazil, the United States and France. They vehemently highlight the structural character of contemporary racism and its origins in the modern colonial system in addition to the issue of violence perpetrated against the black population and the importance of black women intellectuals in the anti-racist struggle at the transnational level.

Likewise, when thinking about the various decolonial feminisms, Maria Lugones affirms the movement diversity and the impossibility of defining it as a concept precisely because of this diversity. In this regard, Logones defines herself as a woman of color, and a feminist of indigenous and Latin American origin in the United States, as well as her interlocutor, Ângela Figueiredo, defines herself as a black woman of African origin and a feminist in Brazil. According to them, race is a fundamental issue for their feminist reflections and this historically placed principle brings them closer together.

Likewise, Françoise Vergès, through the analysis of her trajectory as a feminist and decolonial activist, always articulates racial issue with gender issue. This relationship is a fundamental principle for understanding the European post-colonial context, particularly the French context, in addition to understanding the criticism that is made to white liberal feminism today. It is apparent that the articulation between racism and feminism as transnational dynamics was highlighted by the HQ in this part of its program.

Final remarks

In this digital unfolding of a conjectural initiative linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, we highlight the importance of two themes for the understanding of the last decade of Brazilian history: the evocation of the military dictatorship in the present, and the controversies surrounding gender studies and feminist movements.

Regarding the first theme, it was noticed that historiographical studies have acquired growing political meaning and sensitivity linked to the perspective of the present, favoring the approach of historical themes concerned essentially with understanding the developments of the past in the present. In this case, the perception of the effects of past events on the moment we live is considered as important as the understanding of the historical events themselves (FICO, 2016).

This article highlights three elements present in the set of interventions regarding the last dictatorship in Brazil. First, the plurality of temporalities provides a certain historical elasticity to the theme avoiding rigid temporal boundaries, perspectives of causality and, above all, it makes the use of a neutral language unfeasible, which, in turn, results in the need to make the taking of an ethical and political posture explicit in face of the studied phenomena.

Other elements highlighted in the scope of the presentations about the dictatorship were the lasting praise of State violence as a discourse by the authorities reiterating historical stigmatizations of populations and peripheral territories, and as a social phenomenon reactivated in the current context of neoconservative advances in Brazil. And finally: the denial, in the democratic era, of the traumas experienced in the dictatorial period was discussed as a challenge to the notions that traditionally guide research in History, inviting (or forcing) researchers on the subject to interdisciplinary work so that we can expand the dialogue with basic historiographical notions such as time and past.

From a more factual point of view, the denial of the traumas of the dictatorship as a fundamental political factor of the present has fed the absence of accountability for crimes committed by State agents and frustrated timid initiatives to institutionalize a culture of human rights in Brazil.

Regarding the second theme discussed herein, the emergence of the fourth Brazilian feminist wave stood out in dialogue with the same movement at the international level. The constant clash between progressive and conservative forces in Brazil was also noted regarding specific issues such as the recognition of various gender-based violence, the approval of a broader abortion law, respect for the demands of the LGBTQIA+ community, etc. The political polarization reaches professionals in gender studies, political and mediatic personalities who are victims of attacks by conservative groups.

Two main aspects of the general theme were then highlighted, perceived from the point of view of realization of a specific program about feminisms and gender studies,

produced by the History in Quarantine digital project. First, the importance of often defining the concept of gender is perceived, so that it is not confused with "gender ideology", which is a term of accusation used by conservative groups. As for feminisms, the frequency with which the discussion on gender has been associated with the discussion about race in Brazil and at a transnational level was highlighted, with the racial issue being perceived as structural and fundamental for the understanding of Western contemporary world and the criticism of feminism itself in its liberal form.

The last decade critical review seems to have been accelerated by the overlapping of catastrophes evidenced by the Covid-19 pandemic, associated with the socially negligent and militaristic position of the current Brazilian government. In this context, many researchers from the most diverse areas have found, in Public History projects, paths for a more direct dialogue with society and especially with social movements from which new epistemologies have emerged.

As it seems, the 'History in Quarantine' project was constituted as a testimony of this picture, recording in audiovisual media a first collective effort to denounce historical violence, to deepen the historical knowledge related to it, and to disseminate and enhance a culture based in constant processes of democratization between progressive and conservative discourses.

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