

FROM CONTROL TO LIBERATION: A GENEALOGY OF IMAGES
DEPICTING RACIALIZED VIOLENCE
IN BRAZILIAN MEDIA

By

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines how Brazil's hegemonic media perpetuates racial violence by producing and naturalizing stereotypical imagery of Blackness and violence. Through a historical comparison of Black and mainstream media from the 19th to the 21st century, the study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Critical Race Theory (CRT) to interrogate media representations across key periods. It pursues two central aims: (a) to demonstrate how hegemonic media have systematically normalized anti-Black violence through recurrent dehumanizing archetypes, and (b) to illuminate counter-narratives of resistance forged by Black media as acts of communal self-defense. This study concludes by proposing frameworks for engaging with Black media through the lens of Critical Race Media Literacy (CRML). It outlines actionable pathways for CRML initiatives to center Black media consumption as both a form of self-defense and a strategy for harm reduction.

To my family, the foundation where I first learned to fight for justice and to dream big. To my niece, Maria, as a reminder: the firmer your roots, the greater your freedom. And to John, in whom I found my endless summer (yes, even in Michigan winters).

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A thin, distressed, unhoused Black man, dressed only in shorts and flip-flops, wandered through the streets of Leblon, an affluent neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on July 30, 2024. Clutching an empty dog leash, he moved restlessly from side to side, shouting and waving, “Has anyone seen a vira-lata caramelo [a caramel-colored mixed-breed dog]? He’s about this big!” Patrons sipping coffee at an upscale café courtyard observed the scene with unease, gradually leaving their sidewalk tables to seek refuge inside. Within moments, three private security guards and a police car carrying two military officers arrived. As the police approached him, the man cried: “I’m not doing anything wrong. Is my face in the newspaper? Did I kill anyone? Am I a thug? My face isn’t in the newspaper! My face isn’t in the newspaper!” Despite his protests, he was taken away by the police.

The man arrested for disrupting coffee hour in Leblon has learned through lived experience what many critical media scholars discuss in academia: that repeatedly and disproportionately portraying Black people as intrinsically violent in the media is one of the most effective ways of creating harmful stereotypes on race and criminality. The connection between race and violence is not inherent. It is socially constructed. One way of explaining this forged relationship is through representation theory. Stuart Hall (1997) explains that race and violence become interconnected through what he calls a system of representation. Hall explains that people do more than develop concepts (like violence and race or good and bad); they make connections between them. “It consists not of individual concepts, but of different ways of organizing, clustering, arranging and classifying concepts, and establishing complex relations between them” (Hall, 1997, p.3). Representation functions as a bridge: language provides symbols, relationships between symbols

create meaning, and shared systems of meaning enable collective interpretation. Hall calls this shared interpretive framework culture. In essence, society creates “a network of shared meanings or conceptual frameworks” (Du Gay et al., 1997, as cited in Hall, 1997), which shapes how people perceive and understand social realities.

One example of this dynamic is the association between Blackness and criminality, with mainstream media serving as the metaphorical bridge that reinforces and perpetuates this connection. Littlefield (2008) describes “the media as a system of racialization” (p. 675), a platform where racial stereotypes, particularly those targeting Black individuals, are historically created and sustained. When discussing cultural representations of Black individuals in the dominant media, Crenshaw (1991) also observes that “the problem, however, is not so much the portrayal of violence itself as it is the absence of other narratives and images portraying a fuller range of Black experiences” (p. 1256). The circulation of massive images of violence against Black individuals or committed by them, for example, without a symmetric counter-narrative, a concept that is at the core of Black radical traditions (Robinson, 1983), creates this toxic and unrealistic media environment.

These representations influence how dominant groups see Black individuals in society, and these negative stereotypes can lead to harmful consequences (Entman & Rojecki, 2001). Overrepresenting Black individuals as violent leads to “negative emotions” (Entman & Rojecki, p. xi) toward them. For example, representations in the media have significantly weakened support for protests related to racial equality. Research has shown that people tend to “associate protest with violence after seeing a Black protestor compared to a white one” (Valentino & Nicholson, 2021, p. 41). Questioning this daily fabrication of harmful stereotypes is “a method of social justice and social change” (Littlefield, 2008, p. 675). If these stereotypes are constructed in everyday life,

through the media we consume and the subtle interactions we engage in, then they must also be deconstructed in the same way: gradually, persistently, and through conscious daily effort.

That afternoon in Leblon, I saw the concept of systems of representation vividly play out before my eyes, as the man voiced a connection between the threat of being portrayed as a criminal in the news and the unwarranted violence he was enduring. The police saw only a Black man in worn clothes, appearing agitated, and that alone was enough to perceive him as a potential threat to public order. I stood frozen, heart pounding, bracing for what might happen next. Fear gripped me as I imagined the police and security guards turning the situation into another George Floyd-like tragedy, right before a crowd of onlookers. This fear was especially acute in Brazil, a country where police kill one Black person every four hours (Alves, 2023). In the days that followed, I could not stop thinking about what had become of that man. The unfair scene remained etched in my mind, and I wondered if recording it on my phone would have changed anything about what happened on that July 30th afternoon. Would it have offered him some protection or at least served as evidence of injustice? That lingering question has stayed with me.

The Paradox

In violent situations, capturing brutality through videos or photographs is often expected to serve as a protective shield (Gitlin, 1980), a form of undeniable evidence that makes it harder to dismiss or overlook incidents like George Floyd's death and the many others recorded before and after his killing. In this context, violent imagery is presumed to function as both a tool and a catalyst for significant social change. Since the advent of photography, television, and broadcast news, social justice activists have argued that such images offer a distinct advantage, believing that "the whole world is watching! — as though these visual records could act as protective amulets against the threat of unchecked armed force" (Gitlin, 1980, p. xiv). However, in the realm of racial

violence, decades of circulating such imagery have not led to revolutionary social transformation. Instead, we are left with “image after image after image without revolutionary change” (Brown, 2020, n.p.). This enduring pattern raises a critical question: if these images do not provoke radical transformation, what purpose do they serve in society?

In opposition to those who argue that these images expose violence and can bring justice to the victims, there is the argument that the massive circulation of images of racial brutality, since slavery and lynching, gave society a sense of “banality, normalizing them, and thereby reinforcing structures of white domination” (Maurantonio, 2014, p. 504). The existence of explicit images of racialized violence does not guarantee that the media will humanize the victim, with a tendency for hegemonic media to create narratives that reinforce racism to justify brutality against Black individuals (Phelps & Hamilton, 2022).

Going back to the example of the scene in Leblon, if the physical violence escalated on that day, the images of the brutality would probably be on social media and the news in minutes. Photos and videos would come with likes, shares, and comments. Violence becomes a viral, ephemeral spectacle followed by videos of kittens and memes. This phenomenon aligns with Marwick and boyd's (2011) term context collapse: a state in which online content exists without clear contextual boundaries, simultaneously addressing an infinite and undefined audience. However, the sensationalist use of images depicting violence against Black individuals in Brazil did not begin with social media. To understand the present and how images of racial violence became abundant, profitable content for social media platforms (Noble et al., 2024), it is essential to trace the historical roots and evolution of media portrayals of racialized violence.

This Dissertation: Putting the Pieces Together

This dissertation explores how hegemonic media, through the production of stereotypical images of racial violence, have fostered a culture that normalizes such violence in Brazilian society. Since the 19th century, brutal depictions of racialized violence have appeared in the country's media, evolving from illustrations and photographs to viral social media content. This study traces the media's historical trajectory, comparing representations in Black and hegemonic media from the 19th to the 21st century. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a methodology, I analyze media samples across different periods with two primary objectives: (a) to reveal how hegemonic media has normalized violence against Black people through the persistent use of violent stereotypical imagery, and (b) to highlight narratives of resistance developed by Black media over the centuries as a form of self-defense for Black communities.

This research began with a series of unsettling questions and a profound personal curiosity: When did Brazilian society start consuming images of racial violence? How long have these depictions of brutality been part of the media landscape? What purpose does the widespread circulation of these images serve, and what are the consequences for the Black population? While in Rio de Janeiro, I witnessed the arrest of the Black, unhoused man in Leblon, a moment that crystallized these questions and underscored the urgency of finding answers. During my time at the National Library, examining archives of Brazil's earliest newspapers and magazines, I sought to understand how images of racial violence have historically shaped harmful societal narratives — a core focus of this dissertation. This study traces the historical and technological evolution of such imagery, analyzing how media discourses on racial violence have created enduring stereotypes that harm Black communities.

Over the centuries, the hegemonic media, predominantly white in its workforce and ideological perspective (Newkirk, 2000), has consistently used images of racial violence to produce what Patricia Hill Collins (1986, 2000) terms “controlling images.” These representations function as tools of domination, crafted to instill fear and hopelessness, thereby maintaining the subjugation of Black communities. The paradoxical use of violent imagery — both as a means of advocating for social justice and as a mechanism for reinforcing white supremacy — remains complex, contentious, and often understudied. This research sheds light on these contradictions, providing a deeper understanding of their historical origins and contemporary implications. Moreover, where harm has been inflicted, reparative action must follow. Critically analyzing damaging representations serves not only as scholarly inquiry but as essential resistance work, equipping Black communities with discursive tools to reduce this harm and promote self-defense strategies.

Building on Stuart Hall’s concept of representation, Patricia Hill Collins argues that the practice of “organizing, clustering, arranging, and classifying concepts” within systems of representation results in the construction of stereotypical visual identities. Hill Collins illustrates how media representations are used to create and reinforce stereotypes that differentiate and subordinate Black women. She identifies recurring archetypes in media portrayals of Black women, including the “mammy,” depicted as perpetually subservient; the hypersexualized “Jezebel”; and the “Sapphire,” characterized as the angry Black woman. These controlling images are designed to categorize and rank social groups, reinforcing societal hierarchies.

Controlling images restrict the social roles available to us, diminish our ambitions, and shape our self-perception, ultimately limiting our freedom. Drawing inspiration from Hill Collins’ work, this dissertation identifies, analyzes, and categorizes the most prevalent controlling images

of racialized violence in Brazilian hegemonic media across various historical periods. Understanding the origins and significance of a stereotype is crucial to dismantling it.

From another perspective, where there is power, there is also the potential for freedom and resistance (Foucault, 1982). Building on this idea, this study also highlights how Black Brazilian media has long countered dehumanization by offering more dignifying representations, depicting Black intellectuals, beauty pageants, and scenes of everyday life. These images foster liberation and embody the ongoing pursuit of “the humanization of all people” (Freire, 2005, p. 49). Such resistance represents not only a political act but also an ethical one. I explore the contrasting ethical approaches of Black media and hegemonic media in their portrayals of Black individuals and racial violence. I argue that Black media operates from an “ethic of love” (hooks, 1994, pp. 289–298), while white-dominated media often commodifies and sensationalizes racialized violence, lacking a comparable ethical commitment.

Historically, Black media operated as mediatic quilombos, spaces where Black people established self-defense and collective strategies for survival. In colonial Brazil, Quilombos were alternative communities organized by fugitive enslaved people. In the U.S., these communities are often referred to as maroons. This dissertation responds to the call to “think about Black media as virtual mediatic quilombos, as they are the result of historical, social networks that, throughout the centuries, have enabled people of African descent in the diaspora to resist” (Velooso & Andrade, 2021, p. 213, my translation). In these virtual quilombos, Black individuals are overcoming oppression, reclaiming agency, and achieving freedom through critical awareness about what it means to be Black in a white supremacist society, a process that Paulo Freire (2005) defined as “conscientização” or “becoming conscious.”

Genealogy and Remediation

As the country with the largest Black population outside Africa and the last in the Americas to abolish slavery, Brazil continues to wrestle with the enduring legacies of its colonial past. In societies still burdened by the scars of colonialism and slavery, Black individuals remain disproportionately subjected to persistent violence, which includes brutal media representations. As Foucault (1982) observes, “we have been trapped in our own history” (p. 780), and Sharpe (2023) further notes that “the 'past' fails to stay in the past” (p. 62). This dissertation constructs a media genealogy of racialized violence in Brazil to reveal how this history continues to shape contemporary realities. Tracing the genealogy of these images helps expose the socially constructed nature of brutality against Black individuals, challenging the normalization of violence and making visible how it has been woven into the fabric of daily life.

Understanding how this violence was historically produced and identifying the institutions that contributed to its normalization is crucial for disrupting these harmful narratives. A key step in dismantling the association between Blackness and violence involves critically analyzing the discourses generated by these images over time and their societal impact. By doing so, this work seeks to denaturalize the spectacle of racialized violence and contribute to broader efforts toward justice and equity. When the hegemonic media normalizes images of racial violence, for example, without context or a serious discussion on why that happens and how to end it, it transforms Black death into content to be consumed side by side with kitten videos on social media. It spreads an ideological notion that being brutalized while Black is a natural aspect of everyday life. As Sodre (1995) highlights, “to take this identity [Blackness] as ‘natural’ is to forget or repress the historical fabric of its creation, paving the way for stigmatization and racism” (n.p.). Creating a media

genealogy of images of racialized violence is doing a “meticulous reconstruction of events that breach what is obvious, natural or inevitable” (Willig & Rogers, 2017, p. 105).

A theory of the history of images of racialized violence in the Brazilian media is something new. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) observes, “theories of history rarely examine in detail the concrete production of specific narratives... the process of their production rarely constitutes the object of study” (p. 22). To build this theory of images of racialized violence in the Brazilian media, it is necessary to look at how images are transformed by technologies that change through a process of remediation (Bolter & Grusin, 1996), which means that media is continuously refashioning itself. Remediation argues against the idea that new media is entirely original. New media get its affordances and cultural power from previous technologies: podcasts carry radio heritage (Cwynar, 2017), photos derived from paintings (Cardoso, 2015), and TV from film (Pečiulis, 2021). One example is Black individuals being marked as targets for violence century after century: from drawings and photos in the 1800s (Wells, 1892) to videos on TV (Entman, 1990) and images on social media (Daniels, 2013; Scott, 2018), with an abundance of representations - both fictional and non-fictional, in a never-ending circle of suffering.

When reviewing Bolter and Grusin's theory and considering the changes promoted by social media, Gallagher (2020) argues that the concept of remediation remains relevant for explaining new media in the digital era. Gallagher evaluates remediation in citizen media, using memes, for example, to make political criticisms. The author also brings The Cambridge Dictionary's definition of remediation as “the process of improving or correcting a situation” (Gallagher, 2020, p. 355). In Gallagher's assessment, this is what is done on social media, where each person can give new uses to remixed videos, photos, and texts. Bolter and Grusin (1996) built upon Foucault's ideas on genealogy, which is an “examination of descent” (Foucault, 1977, p.

146). As Roessner et al. (2013) highlight, genealogy, from a Foucauldian perspective, “uses history as a rigorous interpretive schema whose main objective is to trouble and disturb the origins of the seemingly inert objects, norms, and practices we are always immersed in at present” (p. 272). That means genealogy is a tool to challenge what is considered natural and inevitable. By tracing the roots of racist representations in Brazilian media, genealogy reveals how these narratives have systematically normalized violence against Black people, allowing us to challenge and dismantle them.

To study the history of journalism with a genealogical approach, Roessner et al. (2013) propose a “rigorous process reliant on historical evidence to form an interpretation about the broader relations of power and, in the case of journalism, public knowledge production” (p. 272). Considering this theoretical and methodological framework, I propose a media genealogy when looking at images of racialized violence in white and Black media over time. I suggest looking at the past to understand the present since “we need a historical awareness of our present circumstance” (Foucault, 1982, p. 778). By understanding the symbolic process of connecting Black individuals to violence that started with illustrations, evolving to photos and videos and, more recently, social media content, journalists and/or activists can reinforce their commitment to Black media as a site for resistance and self-defense.

Chapters Outline

Chapter 2 presents a multidisciplinary theoretical framework that supports the analysis of images of racial violence in this dissertation. The section begins by examining the concept of race through the lens of Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Crenshaw et al., 1995), a body of scholarship that explains racial inequalities from legal, social, and historical perspectives. CRT scholars trace the

roots of systemic racism to slavery and analyze how these legacies manifest in contemporary society.

To ground this discussion in the Brazilian context, the chapter brings a dialogue between CRT scholars, such as Cheryl I. Harris and Kimberlé Crenshaw, and prominent race theorists from the Global South, including Beatriz Nascimento (Smith & Gomes, 2021) and Lélia Gonzalez (1988). Their work offers crucial insights into the social construction of Black identity in Brazil, highlighting how race, class, and gender intersect in shaping lived experiences. This framework is key to the analysis, as the depiction of racial violence and the narratives it generates in Brazilian society are deeply intertwined with the colonial construction of Blackness as a marker of racial hierarchy.

Further into Chapter 2, I situate the concepts of race and violence within Stuart Hall's framework of systems of representation to better understand the role of images depicting racial violence in Brazil. The section proceeds with a literature review on controlling images and how other scholars have benefited from Patricia Hill Collins's work on representation to analyze different kinds of media and cultural products. I examine how power dynamics fundamentally shape these representations. These same power structures also govern the relationship between media institutions and the public, particularly determining who creates and controls these dominant images. Finally, I explore the concept of liberation, drawing on the ideas of thinkers like Audre Lorde (1977), bell hooks (1994), and Paulo Freire (2005) to conceptualize images of liberation.

Chapter 3 – Methods: In this dissertation, genealogy, as conceptualized by Michel Foucault (1977), is employed both as a theoretical framework and a methodological tool to reconstruct historical discourses on racial violence and gain a deeper understanding of how narratives about social groups have evolved over time. I examine how these discourses persist and

expand their reach, influencing wider audiences through modern technologies such as the internet and social media. This process involves remediation (Bolter & Grusin, 1996), which also functions as both a theoretical lens and a methodological tool for analyzing how older forms of media are reinterpreted and amplified in contemporary digital environments.

The analysis presented in this dissertation is based on case studies that compare the narratives shaped by hegemonic and Black media across different historical periods, focusing specifically on representations of racial violence. This study spans media from the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries, including publications from both predominantly white and Black media outlets. Chapter 3 describes how Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) can be applied to uncover meanings embedded in newspaper articles, magazines, and digital media. According to Van Dijk (1992), “talk and text is not a form of individual discourse but social, group discourse, and expresses not only individual opinions but rather socially shared representations” (p. 1150).

Based on remediation, I also describe how the affordances of each media type allowed different representations of racial violence. For example, paintings didn't allow as clear a representation of Black people's pain as photographs do; film and video, on the other hand, surpassed photography in terms of explicit representations of pain. Users navigate social media environments where images are never in a vacuum. They come with audio, text in the form of journalistic articles, subtitles, and generated content in the form of sharing and comments. I examine a) how media affordances shape the narratives constructed by different media types, using the CDA framework, and b) how each medium evolves from previous technologies through a remediation process.

In the sections where controlling images were identified, I applied an inductive coding approach to establish new categories of controlling images and develop corresponding archetypes.

The codes generated a typology and were derived from the media analysis, focusing on the stereotypes most frequently used to link Black individuals to violence. Categorizing stereotypes as distinct archetypes within a defined typology mirrors Hill Collins' approach in conceptualizing “controlling images” (e.g., Jezebel, Mammy). Naming stereotypes not only serves as a discursive strategy but also reveals which archetypes have endured historically.

Chapter 4 - 19th century: Chapter 4 investigates how the 19th-century dominant media in Brazil (re)produced discourses of racial violence by selecting and presenting printed images. The section starts with a brief history of media in Brazil, which for its first 300 years only had publications printed in Portugal and controlled by the royal family. The hegemonic media sample I analyze in Chapter 4 comprises more than 300 editions of the illustrated mainstream press of the 19th century, with titles like *Revista Illustrada* and *Semana Illustrada*, the most popular historical publications available in the National Library.

This chapter is also intended to explore what counternarratives the 19th-century Black Brazilian media introduced through the selection and presentation of printed images. However, the first Black newspapers, which date from 1833 and were created to defend the interests of former enslaved men, were not abundant in visual materials. Therefore, building a comparative framework based on the 19th century in this section was not viable.

Chapter 4, the most extensive part of this dissertation, also looks into how the 20th-century dominant media in Brazil enacted discourse around racial violence through the selection and presentation of images in the visual era, when photography became more widely available and technologies permitted printing images and text on the same page. The analysis focuses on the period from the 1920s to the 1950s, as these decades marked the rise of publications specializing in violent news, such as *Arquivo Vermelho* (The Red File) and *Vida Policial* (Police Life). The

first part of this chapter examines these periodicals, identifying the controlling images they produced through discourse. Some archetypes I identified for images of control include “The Inherited Criminal,” “The Beast,” and “The Jealous” — all original labels I created during the analysis. These outlets exploited violence against Black people for entertainment, reinforcing a harmful narrative that depicted Black individuals as inherently violent. I argue that *Vida Policial* and *Arquivo Vermelho* laid the groundwork for sensationalist police media in Brazil.

This section also explores the counternarratives introduced by the 20th-century Black Brazilian media through the selection and presentation of images in the visual era. The 20th century was not a pioneer in creating publications aimed at Black people. However, Black newspapers gained more strength in Brazil only around the second half of the 1900s. The Black media that comprised this analysis were *Quilombo*, *Senzala*, and *Getulino*, which circulated between 1920 and 1970 in Brazil. I also analyzed the newspaper *Abibiman* from the late 20th century in Brazil. These publications were among their era's most enduring and visually prominent Black media outlets, maintaining consistent publication schedules longer than most. Historians now recognize them as representative of the period's most significant Black media institutions (Pinto, 2006; Lopes, 2022).

Chapter 5 – Connecting Historical Media Frameworks. This final chapter bridges the historical analysis from Chapter 4 with today's media landscape. Focusing on Brazil's crime-focused television news programs, the section first examines how these shows carry the legacy of the police magazines of the 1920s and influence national culture. The chapter then shifts to the latest stage in this genealogy: social media, which integrates multiple forms of visual media, including illustrations, photographs, and videos. This section briefly presents case studies contrasting how white-dominated media exploit images of racial violence on social media with

how Black media outlets, such as *Alma Preta Jornalismo* (*Black Soul Journalism*) and *Notícia Preta* (*Black News*), produce images of resistance. These Black media platforms serve as modern-day media quilombos, offering counter-narratives and fostering community resilience.

This research stresses the crucial point that Black suffering should neither be exploited as a spectacle nor accepted as an inescapable part of daily life. As Christina Sharpe (2023) reminds us, “spectacle is not repair” (p. 80), highlighting the importance for scholars to critically examine how images are used in the pursuit of reparative justice and to consider the potential harm caused in the process. To counter the harmful media representations identified in this study, the final section of Chapter 5 introduces the importance of understanding the detrimental aspects of technology, particularly media, before making informed decisions about its use, along with strategies for digital self-defense for Black individuals and communities (Rodrigues & Parks, forthcoming).

This work also contributes to the field of Critical Race Media Literacy (CRML) (Yosso, 2002; Cubbage, 2022), a discipline that integrates race discussions into media education. While traditional media literacy focuses on helping audiences understand news production and media systems and how to spot misinformation, CRML adds an essential layer of analysis. It equips audiences to recognize how mainstream media perpetuate harmful stereotypes about historically marginalized groups. CRML underscores that racist media representations are systemic, not accidental, and deliberately constructed to sustain white supremacy.

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CHAPTER 2

BRIDGING THEORIES: RACE, REPRESENTATION, AND POWER

Understanding the impact of harmful racial representations in the media is like unraveling a thread from an ancient, tangled web. It requires tracing their origins and complexities within racialized societies. To do so, this chapter explores Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a framework for analyzing racial inequalities, incorporating perspectives from Global South intellectuals on race in post-colonial nations, and linking these insights to theories of power and representation. This theoretical framework serves as the foundation for the media analysis in this study, which investigates how race and violence have been historically intertwined in media portrayals in Brazil. Over time, these representations have reinforced racial hierarchies, perpetuating stereotypes that persist across history and continue to shape contemporary discourse.

As a framework, CRT (Crenshaw et al., 1995) has been used to examine how digital media perpetuates systemic inequalities, either by “maintaining the status quo or reproducing racism and colonization” (Mills & Godley, 2017, p. 111). Scholars have also applied CRT to analyze how hegemonic media outlets, such as *Fox News* and the *New York Post*, reinforce white supremacist ideologies, for example, by framing CRT itself as “racism against white people” (Smith et al., 2025). This theoretical framework has also informed the development of Critical Race Media Literacy (CRML) strategies to challenge stereotypical mainstream representations (Erba & Chen, 2022).

More specific to the Brazilian context, Acevedo and Ramuski (2010) conducted a literature review spanning 40 years of research on the representation of Black people in national hegemonic media. Their findings reveal that racial minorities continue to be portrayed in roles laden with social stigmas. They note that media messages consistently reflect the deep-seated racism within

Brazilian society, with some of the most common stereotypes depicting Black individuals as criminals and prostitutes. This investigation builds on existing scholarship by applying CRT to analyze media representations and their role in sustaining systemic racism in different historical periods. It examines the historical connections between race, representation, and power to critique Brazil's hegemonic media landscape while emphasizing the vital role of alternative media in equipping Black communities with tools for self-liberation from oppression.

To examine the connections between race, violence, and media representations, it is essential first to understand how race itself has been socially constructed, a central focus of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Kimberlé Crenshaw (1995) emphasizes that race is not a biological category but rather “a social construction with a material dimension” (p. xxvi). Physical differences, such as skin tone, do not inherently carry meaning; instead, systems of representation have been developed to associate whiteness with superiority. As Brooks and Hébert (2006) explain, “Identifiers such as hair and skin color serve as imperfect indicators of race. The racial categories we use to differentiate human difference have been created and changed to meet the dynamic social, political, and economic needs of our society” (p. 297).

Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Crenshaw et al., 1995) provides essential insights into how racial hierarchies have been constructed, particularly in the context of the Global North. Emerging from legal studies in the United States, CRT examines the historical foundations of racism, tracing its roots to slavery and its continued impact on contemporary society. It builds on the works of historical figures such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Martin Luther King Jr. and was formally developed in the mid-1970s by scholars like Derrick Bell (1992) and Richard Delgado (2001). Cooper and Hawkins (2014) trace CRT's origins, noting that it emerged as “a response to the limited ability of

critical legal studies (CLS) to address the effects of race and racism in the U.S. judicial system” (p. 83).

CRT exposes how racism has been codified into law, shaping societal structures and determining racial classifications. Crenshaw et al. (1995) highlight how legal frameworks defined who was Black or white, free or enslaved, human or objectified as property for economic gain. Ultimately, CRT reveals how American society was built on white supremacy, creating a system where “becoming white increased the possibility of controlling critical aspects of one’s life rather than being the object of others’ domination” (Harris, 1995, p. 277).

At its roots, CRT uncovers how law constructed race in the United States of America (Bell, 1992), emphasizing the origins of this matter in the 17th century. The nation searched for a more profitable and sustainable system than indentured servitude, when people worked without a salary to repay a loan, for example. The available workforce was insufficient to meet the growing demand for labor, and the shift from indentured servitude to African slavery occurred gradually (Harris, 1995). The first recorded enslaved Africans arrived in Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619. Initially, they were treated as indentured servants, but over time, laws were enacted that defined slavery as a lifelong and inheritable condition for people of African descent. By creating laws and social systems based on racial hierarchy, slavery became not only possible but legal.

Critical Race Theory also examines how North America, particularly during the 17th and 18th centuries, relied on pseudoscience to legitimize the supposed inferiority of the Black race as a justification for slavery. Techniques such as measuring skulls and linking physical attributes to intelligence (Roberts, 2011) were presented as “objective” evidence to establish racial differences. These practices reinforced the idea of white racial superiority, exemplified by the “one-drop rule,” which determined that anyone with even a single drop of Black blood was considered non-white

and subjected to systemic oppression. As Cheryl I. Harris (1995) notes, “It was their racial Otherness that came to justify the subordinated status of blacks” (p. 278).

By being relegated to subhuman status, Black individuals were treated as objects, and thus as property. Slavery represents the final stage in a process that transformed human life into a commodity, with laws codifying this dehumanization by linking racial identity to ownership. Social and legal systems constructed racial identities to justify and perpetuate how “race and economic domination were fused” (Harris, 1995, p. 278), highlighting that racial and economic subordination stems not solely from race but from the intersection of race and property. According to Harris, there are key ways in which race and property intersect to sustain structurally racist systems. First, she argues that whiteness functions as a metaphorical key by granting access to societal advantages, such as superior educational and professional opportunities, and ensuring white people’s right to occupy and enjoy specific spaces.

Whiteness also confers the power to exclude, allowing non-white individuals to be barred from certain spaces and resources, which reinforces systemic segregation and inequality. For example, this dissertation recounts an incident in which an unhoused Black man was forcibly removed from an upscale, predominantly white café, not due to any criminal behavior, but simply because his presence was deemed unacceptable. Racist media representations further reinforce this right to exclude by perpetuating harmful stereotypes that portray Black individuals as criminals or dangerous, thereby justifying their marginalization.

Harris also describes the “right to transfer,” wherein whiteness, as a form of privilege, is inherited and passed down through generations, thus perpetuating racial hierarchies. This privilege is further safeguarded by legal systems that have historically maintained white supremacy at the expense of marginalized groups. A practical application of CRT as an analytical tool can be seen

in Brazil's hegemonic media context — whiteness functions as property within Brazil's media ownership structure. Throughout the country's history, media ownership has remained concentrated in the hands of the same white families. This system illustrates how the right to use and the right to transfer operate, perpetuating racial inequalities and restricting Black representation in the media industry. CRT highlights how historical constructs of white privilege continue to shape contemporary society, demonstrating that racism is a persistent, everyday force that profoundly impacts the lived experiences of people of color. Understanding these enduring structures is crucial for challenging and dismantling oppressive ideologies, including those perpetuated by hegemonic media.

Intersectionality

This dissertation is also guided by Crenshaw's (1991) concept of intersectionality, which she describes as the “process of recognizing as social and systemic what was merely perceived as isolated and individual” (p. 1241). This study examines hegemonic media as a key component of a larger system that shapes racial meaning through narratives that center the “white, male, heterosexual, middle-class identity as the norm... and invoke stereotypes that vitiate people of color as dim, criminal, and depraved while exalting whites as intelligent, lawful, and moral” (Alemán, 2017, pp. 75-76). Investigating the violent and racist representations of Black people in the media is not about addressing isolated incidents but instead piecing together the broader puzzle to reveal the systematic nature of this violence, which has persisted for centuries.

As a field of study, intersectionality became central in the theoretical and political discussions about identity. For a long time, talking about race was talking about men, and discussing gender meant discussing the experiences of white women (Crenshaw, 1989). That is where prominent figures from the CRT tradition invited society to rethink social relations and

identities through an intersectional lens. Adding gender, class and other social markers to the equation, intersectionality deepens the understanding of social struggles and raises possibilities for liberation of Black individuals in society. The concept of intersectionality sheds light on the specificities of the struggles faced by Black women in the past and the present. It emerged from sociological circles in the early 1970s with the Black feminist movement. Crenshaw (1991) defines intersectionality as “the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of Black women's experiences” (p. 1242). That can be felt in the job market, as victims of sexual violence, in health care access, in media representations, and the list continues.

Crenshaw (1989) analyzes the enduring structures of inequality, highlighting “how gender and race intersect in shaping structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against women of color” (p. 1244). This framework informs the analysis presented in this dissertation, which considers gender and social class issues embedded in the media representations critically analyzed in the following chapters. For instance, the media analysis in Chapter 4 examines the earliest representations of Black people in Brazilian hegemonic media, revealing how these images already represented Black individuals as intrinsically violent and dehumanized. CRT is applied to explore, for example, why Black men were central to these narratives while Black women remained largely invisible.

In addition to its analytical power, CRT has become a target of political attacks, with book bans and laws designed to silence classroom discussions. Conservatives have mobilized to spread misinformation about critical race theory (CRT), falsely asserting that it promotes “reverse racism” and “Marxist ideology” in K–12 education. This rhetoric also rejects the notion of white racial privilege (Smith et al., 2025). These efforts aim to erase historical memory, restricting access to the past to limit the ability of Black individuals and their allies to challenge systemic injustice.

Miller (2021) highlights that “precisely because the past is so central to contemporary struggles for justice, it is all the more important to scrutinize which past is centered, who defines it, and how it is remembered, judged, recognized, and mourned” (p. 848). Attacks against CRT and attempts to mark atrocities of the past as an overcome issue is a common strategy of dominant ideologies. As Miller (2021) defines, “placing slavery or colonialism in the past is itself a method of reproducing racialized inequalities... Black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago” (p. 874).

Within the context of memory preservation, this study bridges past and present discourses on racial media representations in Brazil, preserving the historical record of how Black people have been depicted and offering a temporal perspective on the issue. As Bonilla-Silva (2015) observes, racism is mutable. It changes and develops over time. We must be aware of the new forms and strategies racism adopts, which result in the maintenance of racial inequalities that guarantee privileges and social hierarchies. One way of recognizing that racism is mutable is by looking at the past to understand the present and protect the future. Memory preservation is critical in this discussion.

Dialogues Between the U.S. and Brazil

The theoretical tools provided by CRT are valuable to contexts outside the U.S. Still, they are not the only approach to interpreting the diverse experiences of African diaspora communities, societies shaped by the forced migration of millions of Africans through enslavement. Brazil, home to the largest Black population outside Africa, is one of the countries where CRT has gained significant traction. However, while Brazil and the United States share similarities in their racial dynamics, key differences stem from Brazil’s colonial history. As the last country in the Western world to abolish slavery, Brazil continues to grapple with the lasting impacts of European

colonialism and white supremacy (Almeida, 2019). Much like in the U.S., the strategy to connect whiteness to property (Harris, 1995) was used in Brazil as a legal mechanism to keep Black individuals at the margins of society.

Mendes (2009) examines how Brazil transitioned from a slave-based economy to paid labor in the last decades of the 19th century, noting that this era was shaped by two major factors: “the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and the increasing demand for labor on Brazilian coffee plantations” (p. 184, my translation). To address labor shortages, Brazil initially sought to recruit free foreign workers, particularly from Europe. Mendes (2009) also explains the legal aspects of this strategy to privilege white European immigrants in the acquisition of land in Brazil post-slavery. “The Law Eusébio de Queirós (Eusébio de Queirós Act), which terminated the transatlantic slave trade, was promulgated just two weeks before the enactment of the Lands Act. This latter legislation imposed restrictions on small farmers' access to land ownership. Consequently, land acquisition shifted from cession, as was common since colonial times, to purchase and sale” (Mendes, 2009, p. 173, my translation).

This measure limited Black individuals' access to land since the majority could not buy even a small farm. On the other hand, how property laws were structured made it easy for white rich people to buy huge pieces of land and take advantage of producing vegetables, like soy, and raising meat (Mendes, 2009). Until nowadays, Brazil's wealthiest families have carried a European last name and an intergenerational legacy of land property. As the Brazilian activist and historian Beatriz Nascimento (Smith & Gomes, 2021) defines it, Brazil wants to impose itself on the nation's mind as a white society – an image that can only be sustained over the centuries by limiting access to history about the past and erasing attempts to build a collective memory of slavery and the enduring harms of colonialism.

Racial Democracy?

Brazil is marked by a perpetual denial of its racial formation, based on the displacement of the indigenous population and built on slavery. For a long time, elite white intellectuals, such as Gilberto Freyre (2016), set the tone of the public debate on race in Brazil. In the 1930's, Freyre defended the idea of Brazil being a racial democracy and minimized the violence of colonization, constructing a positive discourse on the miscegenation of the Brazilian people, and ignoring the fact that this process took place through violence. Proponents of the racial democracy myth, like Freyre, argued that Brazil's lack of formal segregation laws, unlike the United States, meant it was free from racism. They also falsely claimed that the incorporation of Black cultural traditions into Brazilian society proved the successful integration of Afro-Brazilians after abolition.

The idea of a racial democracy in Brazil dominated the discourse, erasing the brutal experiences that Black Brazilians lived geographically, culturally, and politically. Da Silva (1998) remembers that “traditionally, sociological analyses of race relations in Brazil, though acknowledging the existence of socioeconomic inequalities, have portrayed Brazilian society as the perfect example of racial assimilation” (p. 203). This kind of discourse ignores that the miscegenation in Brazil was a result of a past of slavery when white men owned Black and indigenous women as possessions, and rape was socially accepted as a way to breed newly enslaved people (Vainfas, 1999).

One focal point of discussions about race in Brazil is that the Latin American country used less explicit mechanisms of racial segregation than the U.S. But, as Almeida (2019) explains, racism in Brazil is institutional and structural, built on four main elements: “ideology, politics, law, and economics” (p. 44, my translation). “Racial inequality is a feature of society not only because of the isolated actions of racist groups or individuals, but fundamentally because

institutions are hegemonized by certain racial groups that use institutional mechanisms to impose their political and economic interests” (Almeida, 2019, p. 36, my translation). Affirming that racism is both institutional and structural means that institutions act through pre-existing societal structures. Institutions materialize a social structure with racism as an “organic component” (Almeida, 2019, p. 36, my translation). Brazilian intellectuals who lead discussions about the racial formation of the country recognize that institutions are fundamental to the consolidation of the supremacy of a particular racial group. Seeing racism as structural and not only as an individual problem is the central part of the anti-racist discourses in Brazil.

For a long time, Brazil was studied and culturally defined through comparison, anchored in the idea that there was a global center, the North, and that the Brazilian Black identity and existence should be viewed, shaped, and understood through the lens of what happened in that part of the world. However, cultural and critical studies that put the Brazilian reality at its center challenge the notion of Brazil's racial democracy, exposing it as a “fallacy” (Da Silva, 1998, p. 203). Thinkers like Denise Ferreira da Silva, Lélia Gonzalez, Beatriz Nascimento, and Abdias Nascimento challenged the status quo by contesting the myth of Brazil as a racial democracy, an act of resistance rather than a peaceful entry into the conversation in the 20th century. By creating the Movimento Negro Unificado – MNU (Unified Black Movement), in 1978, intellectuals like Gonzalez and Abdias Nascimento introduced new frameworks and concepts to address the complexities of Black Brazilian identity. During a military dictatorship between 1964 and 1985, Gonzalez, Abdias Nascimento and many others were subject to persecution and censorship. Nascimento was even exiled from Brazil in 1968 because of the military regime's repression of Black activists. The revolutionary thinking that would force Brazil to look at itself critically survived that repression.

“The Garbage Will Speak, and It’s All Good”

To understand Brazilian racial identity beyond myths and comparisons with the U.S., the philosopher and anthropologist Lélia Gonzalez (1988) developed the political-cultural category of *Amefricanidade*. *Amefricanidade* blends “América” and “África” to emphasize how African cultures shaped societies in all the Americas, resisting colonization and surviving slavery. According to Gonzalez, Brazil should not be seen as simply an extension of Africa. Instead, Brazil has reimagined its heritage to create a distinct and original culture.

Gonzalez was also among the first to strongly oppose using the word “America” as a synonym for the United States. She wanted to expand the debate on blackness beyond the centrality of Black African-American experiences in the United States. The concept of *Amefricanidade* highlights the cultural, historical, and social connections between African heritage and the experiences of Black people across the Americas. The term rejects Eurocentric narratives, celebrates Afro-diasporic contributions, and underscores the resilience of Black communities in preserving and transforming their cultural heritage.

Gonzalez also links the concept of *Amefricanidade* to language and identity. She invites us to look at the Portuguese spoken in Brazil within the concept of “*pretuguês*” (Black + Guese), noting that there is a predominant influence of African languages in how the Portuguese spoken in Brazil developed, distancing itself from European Portuguese. Gonzalez promotes solidarity and belonging within the Afro-diaspora. Her work is an intellectual critique of a contradictory Brazil that has long aspired to present itself as a racial democracy while prioritizing and glorifying its colonial heritage above all other cultural roots. As Gonzalez (2021, p. 149) exposes, Black people had to fight for the right to speak for themselves:

It is exactly because we have been spoken for, infantilized (from Latin infants, one who does not have its own speech, the child is the one who speaks in the third person because

it speaks through adults), that, in this work, we are assuming our own speech. That is, the garbage will speak, and it's all good.

The excerpt highlighted above is part of an oral presentation given at the meeting of the Working Group “Themes and Problems of the Black Population in Brazil” at the IV Annual Meeting of the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Social Sciences (ANPOCS), in Rio de Janeiro, in 1980. In this same speech, Gonzalez (2021, p. 149) highlighted the power of the hegemonic media – which doesn't allow Black people to speak for themselves – in creating violent stereotypes in Brazilian society:

The first thing we notice in this talk about racism is that everyone thinks it is natural. That the Black man deserves to live in misery. Why? Well, because his qualities are worth nothing: irresponsibility, intellectual incapability, childishness, etc. Hence, it is natural for him to be chased by the police, because he doesn't like to work, you know? If he doesn't work, he's a trickster and if he is a trickster he is a thief. So, of course, he has to be arrested. Like father, like son: a Black minor can only be an urchin or pickpocket. A Black woman, of course, is a cook, cleaning lady, servant, the woman at the turnstile or a prostitute. We just need to read the newspaper, listen to the radio and watch television. They don't aim for anything. Their place is in the favelas¹.

When Gonzalez uses the phrase “like father, like son,” she engages with a distinct perspective on the concept of the “right to transfer,” the idea that whiteness, along with its privileges, is inherited and passed down through generations (Harris, 1995). However, Gonzalez highlights that it is not only whiteness and privilege that function as inherited legacies; racist stereotypes, often embedded in violence, are also transferred and persist across generations. Her argument aligns with Audre Lorde's reflection on how racial stereotypes are continually passed down. Lorde recalls an experience in 1967 when she was shopping with her young daughter: “I wheel my two-year-old daughter in a shopping cart through a supermarket... and a little white girl

¹ There is no exact English equivalent for the term favela. While often translated as 'slum,' this reduction fails to capture its sociocultural complexity. Favelas are historically rooted, self-organized urban communities — predominantly Black and working-class — that emerge from systemic neglect and racialized spatial segregation.

riding past in her mother's cart calls out excitedly, 'Oh look, Mommy, a baby maid!'" (1984, p. 126). These examples illustrate the importance of historical research on racial representations, as tracing the genealogy of media portrayals of Black individuals reveals how these images have been reproduced and reinforced over centuries. However, achieving this requires first reclaiming and reshaping the way Black history is narrated.

Beatriz Nascimento, one of the most influential voices advocating for the revision of the role of Black people in Brazil's history, dedicated her work to "rewriting and reinterpreting the history of Black people in Brazil, a task that she connected directly to the question of Black liberation, freedom, and peace" (Smith et al., 2023, p. 5). Nascimento devoted her work to shifting the Black subject from a passive victim to an active political and social force of resistance against subjugation and colonization. As Nascimento highlights, "Black people are not synonymous with defeat" (Smith et al., 2023, p. 99). Similarly, analyzing media representations across different historical periods helps reveal the roles historically assigned to Black individuals in these portrayals while also exploring new possibilities for liberation through imagery in alternative Black media. Gonzalez's and Nascimento's theoretical frameworks are particularly valuable to this dissertation, as they provide a theoretical foundation for analyzing racial representations in the media, highlighting the differences in the discourses of hegemonic and Black media, and the intellectual traditions that shape them.

Systems of Representation, Controlling Images, and Power

The stereotypes constructed within this racist logic are part of what Stuart Hall, from a cultural studies perspective, defined as systems of representation. Hall highlights how meaning is constructed and communicated through language, images, and cultural practices. Representation is not merely a reflection of reality but a process through which power operates, shaping how

individuals and groups are perceived in society. Similarly, Patricia Hill Collins' notion of controlling images dialogues with this idea by examining how racialized and gendered stereotypes — such as the “mammy” or the “jezebel”— are strategically deployed to justify oppression, violence, and maintain social hierarchies. Stereotypical images create an “ideological justification for race, gender, and class oppression” (Collins, 2000, p. 70). These images do not exist in isolation; they are continuously reinforced by media, political discourse, and institutional structures, constraining how Black people, particularly Black women, are seen and treated in society. As Collins (2000, p. 69) notices:

Hazel Carby suggests that the objective of stereotypes is “not to reflect or represent a reality but to function as a disguise, or mystification, of objective social relations” (1987, 22). These controlling images are designed to make racism, sexism, poverty, and other forms of social injustice appear to be natural, normal, and inevitable parts of everyday life.

Cultural studies and Black feminist thought, including Collins' concept of controlling images, reveal how stereotypes operate within the racist systems that CRT identifies, shaping policies, legal decisions, and social inequalities. These representations do not simply reflect reality; they are intentionally produced, circulated, and weaponized to reinforce racial hierarchies. Together, CRT and cultural studies demonstrate how media and discourse contribute to the maintenance of systemic oppression and highlight the necessity of challenging and rewriting dominant narratives to advance racial justice. Collins (2000, p. 72) underscores the importance of studying controlling images, stating, “[S]ince the images themselves are dynamic and changing, each provides a starting point for examining new forms of control that emerge in a transnational context, one where selling images has increased in importance in the global marketplace.” When these controlling images become ingrained in everyday discourse, they are taken for granted, making them “virtually impossible to escape” (p. 90).

Hall (2003) similarly examines race as a process of meaning-making, emphasizing that racism operates as an ideology, one that is so embedded in social structures that it is often perceived as natural. He explains that “ideologies tend to disappear from view into the taken-for-granted ‘naturalized’ world of common sense” (p. 19), making racism one of the most deeply “naturalized” ideologies. According to Hall, media representations play a critical role in constructing and reinforcing these ideologies: “since the media’s main sphere of operations is the production and transformation of ideologies” (p. 18), it is necessary to interrogate how race is constructed in media. He argues that “images, concepts, and premises provide a framework through which we represent, interpret, understand, and make sense of some aspect of social existence” (p. 18), shaping public perceptions of race and racial issues. For example, when media normalize images of racial violence — circulating them without critical context or discussions on structural change — it reduces Black suffering to consumable content, placed side by side with viral videos on Instagram or X (Twitter). Social media exemplifies what researchers have termed “context collapse” (Marwick and boyd, 2011, p. 114), where multiple audiences interact and sometimes clash in a single communication space. This “many-to-many” communication model (Marwick & boyd, 2011) creates a chaotic environment where images of violence are regularly juxtaposed with kitten videos or the latest TikTok dance. This process reinforces the ideological notion that anti-Black brutality is an inherent and unavoidable aspect of everyday life.

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) further critiques media portrayals of Black individuals, noting that “the problem... is not so much the portrayal of violence itself as it is the absence of other narratives and images portraying a fuller range of Black experiences” (p. 1256). The overwhelming circulation of violent images — whether of Black individuals as victims or perpetrators — without counter-narratives creates a toxic and distorted media landscape. Collective and historical trauma

reverberates through images (Whigham, 2022). From 19th-century illustrations and photographs (Wells, 1892) to 20th-century televised news footage (Entman, 1990) and 21st-century viral social media videos (Daniels, 2013; Scott, 2018), representations of Black suffering have been incessantly reproduced, reinforcing a cyclical narrative of racialized violence. This process also gender-codes and racializes bodies in historically and socially specific ways.

Collins' work provides a crucial framework for analyzing these representations, but it is not enough to merely categorize recurring archetypes like the mammy or Jezebel. While these frameworks have been valuable in identifying persistent stereotypes, they must also be expanded to account for the specific racial and gendered archetypes that emerge in different diasporic societies. Each society shaped by the forced labor and presence of enslaved Africans has developed its own unique racialized and gendered representations. A more nuanced approach requires recognizing and analyzing these distinct cultural constructions rather than simply reproducing pre-existing frameworks across different contexts. This is why this dissertation identifies and categorizes the most common racial stereotypes in Brazilian media, making an original contribution to this field of research.

Critical Race Theory (CRT), Stuart Hall's theory of representation, and Patricia Hill Collins' concept of controlling images converge in their analysis of how race, power, and ideology influence media narratives and societal structures. Although each framework emerges from a distinct disciplinary background – CRT from legal studies, Hall's work from cultural studies, and Collins' from Black feminist thought – they collectively offer a nuanced perspective on the formation, reinforcement, and disruption of racial hierarchies through media and discourse. By integrating these theories, a powerful analytical framework emerges for examining the impact of

racialized media representations on social realities. More importantly, they provide critical tools for challenging dominant narratives and advancing racial justice.

From Control to Liberation

Representation is fundamentally linked to power. Theories of power and mass communication offer critical insights into how media influence operates, particularly in shaping public discourse, controlling narratives, and determining who has access to media ownership and representation. Van Dijk (1995) argues that understanding media power requires analyzing its role within broader social, cultural, political, and economic structures. He specifically examines how hegemonic media exert social power, which he defines as:

A social relation between groups or institutions, involving the control by a (more) powerful group or institution (and its members) of the actions and the minds of (the members of) a less powerful group. Such power generally presupposes privileged access to socially valued resources, such as force, wealth, income, knowledge, or status. (Van Dijk, 1995, p. 10)

In this framework, power is directly linked to control over valued social resources, and media ownership grants access to one of the most significant of these: symbolic power, or the ability to shape public discourse. In Brazil, media ownership extends beyond controlling the dissemination of information or entertainment; it represents the power to define societal norms, representations, and aspirations. White-owned media channels dictate how Black people are portrayed, how their achievements are excluded from narratives, the roles they occupy, and their perceived value in society (Rebouças, 2016). This power dynamic drives hegemonic media to prioritize journalistic narratives centered on whiteness, focusing on themes and perspectives that align with the interests of this racial group (Van Dijk, 1991). As a result of this white gaze (Eriksson & Åkerlund, 2023), Black people are disproportionately portrayed as criminals (Bjornstrom et al., 2010). Even when they are victims of violence, they are often depicted as responsible for their own victimization (Wright & Washington, 2018; Slakoff & Brennan, 2019).

This leads to the construction of a media discourse that frames violence against Black individuals as routine or inevitable, further normalizing their suffering.

Ideologies, such as white supremacy, circulate in society in the form of “symbolic power,” which Bourdieu (1991) defines as “the power to make people see and believe certain visions of the world rather than others” (p. 170). White supremacist ideas, for example, circulate through discourse, a central feature of how domination works. As Bourdieu (1991) defines it, “the dominant culture...contributes to the legitimation of the established order by establishing distinctions (hierarchies) and legitimating these distinctions” (p. 167).

Circulation is essential to understand how ideologies survive and spread over time. Bourdieu (1991) argues that “ideologies owe their structure and their most specific functions to the social conditions of their production and circulation” (p. 169). The circulation of racial representations (through discourse in the form of words and images, for example) is part of a “symbolic system” that enables “symbolic power” to be accumulated. One example is how racial stereotypes impact public opinions about Black victims of police brutality. Dukes and Gaither (2017) show that “the type of information released about a victim can significantly sway attitudes toward the victim and the shooter” (p. 789). It is a matter of a lack of symbolic power for Black individuals and lots of symbolic power for white police officers. Public killings are also an act of dominance and an exercise of power that reinforces the differences between whites (as a dominant ideology) and Blacks, who are socialized to define themselves by their distance from the dominant group. Since “relations of communication are always, inseparably, power relations” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 167), it is necessary to take a critical look at the role of media in the dissemination of white supremacist ideologies and what these images communicate about whose bodies can be lynched in a public sphere, and how this affects individuals.

Self-Representation and Liberation

Where there is power, there is freedom and the possibility of resistance (Foucault, 1982). In the face of structural oppression upheld by hegemonic media, Black people across the African diaspora have developed mechanisms of self-defense and liberation. Liberation can be understood in material terms, such as the Black anti-segregation movements in the U.S. and the Movimento Negro Unificado in Brazil, which fought for legal and public policy changes. However, liberation is also a cultural and symbolic struggle. Lélia Gonzalez argued that true liberation could not be achieved solely through economic or political means but must also address oppression's cultural, subjective, and historical dimensions. Gonzalez highlighted how racism in Brazil operates in a veiled and subtle manner, often concealed by the myth of racial democracy, making the struggle for liberation even more complex. For her, liberation requires recognizing the African contributions to Brazilian culture and dismantling colonial structures that marginalize Black people. She also emphasized the central role of Black women in the fight for liberation, acknowledging that the intersection of racism and sexism intensifies their oppression. Thus, Gonzalez envisioned Black liberation as a transformation not only of political structures but also of social institutions and collective consciousness.

Paulo Freire (2005), one of the world's most influential educators, echoes these ideas in his work on liberation through critical consciousness (*conscientização*). Freire argued that true liberation requires individuals to recognize oppressive structures, such as racism, and develop the critical awareness necessary to challenge them. By becoming conscious of oppression, individuals gain the tools to free themselves from internalized ideologies that perpetuate subjugation. Although widely applied in education, Freire's ideas are also relevant to journalism, as journalists function as educators shaping public discourse (Rodrigues et al., 2025).

Audre Lorde (1984) similarly rooted her vision of liberation in African cultural traditions, particularly the principles of Kwanzaa. She emphasized Kujichagulia (self-determination), which she defined as “the decision to define ourselves, name ourselves, and speak for ourselves, instead of being defined and spoken for by others” (p. 43). This principle aligns with Ujima (collective work and responsibility), reinforcing the communal nature of Black liberation (Lorde, 1984). Quoting Malcolm X, Lorde (1984, p. 135) observed that:

As Black people, if there is one thing we can learn from the 60s, it is how infinitely complex any move for liberation must be. For we must move against not only those forces which dehumanize us from the outside, but also against those oppressive values which we have been forced to take into ourselves.

Although “we are not responsible for our oppression,” Lorde added, “we must be responsible for our own liberation” (144). Black media plays a crucial role in this process by creating new imaginaries and expanding possibilities for Black existence beyond hegemonic frameworks. In *Toward Black Liberation*, Stokely Carmichael (1966) also emphasized the necessity of reclaiming Black identity from hegemonic media representations. He argued:

Our concern for black power addresses itself directly to this problem, the necessity to reclaim our history and our identity from the cultural terrorism and depredation of self-justifying white guilt. To do this we shall have to struggle for the right to create our own terms through which to define ourselves and our relationship to society, and to have these terms recognized. This is the first necessity of a free people, and the first right that any oppressor must suspend. (p. 639)

Historically, Black liberation has advanced through the establishment of independent institutions that represent Black communal needs within broader society (Carmichael, 1966, p. 642), including the creation of Black-owned media spaces. Black media shifts Black individuals from objects of representation to subjects of self-definition. As bell hooks (1990, p. 152) stated:

As subjects, people have the right to define their own reality, establish their own identities, name their history. As objects, one’s reality is defined by others, one’s identity created by others, one’s history named only in ways that define one’s relationship to those who are subject.

In this context, images of liberation are those that restore Black humanity, celebrate Afro-Brazilian cultural roots, and counter colonial narratives. Black media serve as virtual quilombos (Veloso & Andrade, 2021), alternative spaces where Black communities can establish their own cultural, political, and social representations. Historically, quilombos (maroon societies) were rural communities formed by enslaved people who escaped captivity in Brazil during the 19th century, many of which still exist today. However, Brazilian Black intellectuals such as Abdias Nascimento and Beatriz Nascimento conceptualized quilombos beyond physical spaces, seeing them as both symbols and strategies for survival.

In her extensive research on quilombos, Beatriz Nascimento (Smith et al., 2021) emphasized their role in creating autonomous communities that not only provided refuge but also fostered new ways of existing outside colonial frameworks. Abdias Nascimento (2020) argued that the unity of Black people in the diaspora is essential in resisting colonialism, combating racial discrimination, and addressing the historical marginalization of Afro-descendant communities. He also expands the concept of quilombo beyond its historical meaning, redefining it as a political and cultural metaphor for the ongoing struggle against racism and the marginalization of Black people in Brazil.

Abdias Nascimento viewed quilombos as powerful examples of Black self-organization and self-determination — spaces where new forms of sociability, economy, and culture were created beyond the reach of oppressive colonial structures. For Nascimento, quilombos served as a foundational reference for the contemporary Black movement, inspiring the creation of resistance spaces in politics, art, and media. His vision aligns with *quilombismo*, a concept he developed as a political project rooted in solidarity, collectivity, and the reclamation of Black memory and

identity in Brazil. In this sense, quilombos were not just historical sites of resistance but also blueprints for imagining and building a future centered on liberation and racial justice.

Building on Beatriz Nascimento's and Abdias Nascimento's work, Veloso and Andrade (2021) invite us to consider Black media as virtual quilombos. They argue that Black media can be understood as “aquilombamento virtual mediático (virtual media aquilombamento)” (Veloso & Andrade, 2021, p. 181), emerging from historical social networks of resistance among African-descended communities in the diaspora. Black feminist media, such as podcasts, have been analyzed in Brazilian research as virtual quilombos, digital spaces that serve as refuges for the Black population (Sales & Nunes, 2022). In a historical analysis of Black media in Brazil, De Andrade and Veloso (2022) emphasize that its primary goal is to produce communication that is actively committed to the anti-racist agenda (p. 1). In the U.S., a growing body of research has documented how Black individuals use platforms like Twitter to create digital spaces for cultural expression and collective dialogue (Brock, 2018; Taylor, 2022). However, more research is needed on how Brazilian Black media develop their strategies in traditional and digital platforms, particularly how they use images of liberation within a historical context. *Aquilombar*, the act of creating quilombos, is essentially about establishing safe spaces for Black communities. In this context, Black media serves as a virtual quilombo, providing a refuge for those who feel unrepresented or undervalued in mainstream, predominantly white media. It's a space for creating new representations and new possibilities for existing.

Based on the insights presented in this section, this dissertation offers practical and strategic measures for the self-protection and collective liberation of Black communities. These recommendations are grounded in the critical and cultural theories discussed in this chapter and shaped by the media analyses conducted throughout this study.

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CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO CATEGORIZING IMAGES OF CONTROL AND LIBERATION

Mass images of racialized stereotypes have been present in Brazilian media since the first illustrated magazines circulated in the country in the 19th century. Since then, those images have broadened from illustrations and photos in newspapers to videos on TV and, more recently, the viral social media multimodal content of racial brutality. This process is impacted by technologies and results in racial discourses circulating in societies. This dissertation traces a genealogy, a lineage of descent, of these images to situate their historical use and analyze the persistent discourse surrounding racial violence that has been perpetuated over centuries. The primary goal of this research is to examine the descent of racial violence imagery in Brazilian media. To achieve this, the study examined the most prominent representations of racial violence from the 19th century to the 20th century, considering that these were the roots of the commonly known present-day (21st-century) media representations of racialized violence in Brazil.

By tracing these representations back through history, the study seeks to uncover how Brazilian society has consumed and normalized such images within hegemonic media over time, while Black media has consistently countered narratives of death with narratives of liberation. To analyze the selected images across different historical periods and understand how the discourse normalizing violence has persisted for centuries, this dissertation employs remediation theory (Bolter & Grusin, 1996) as a mode of analysis. Media is always refashioning itself, and images are transformed by technologies that change through a process of remediation. Bolter and Grusin draw connections between Renaissance paintings, 19th-century photography, and 21st-century film to understand the modern U.S. media landscape. They explore the concept of hypermediacy, the

layering of multiple media elements within a single medium, and its role in shaping cultural expression. “What we wish to highlight from the past is what resonates with the twin preoccupations of contemporary media: the transparent presentation of the real and the enjoyment of the opacity of media themselves” (Bolter & Grusin, 1996, p. 21).

Based on remediation, new media get their affordances and cultural power from previous technologies. The representations they reproduce and enhance through technological advancements also carry cultural significance when they reach the public. Audiences that once viewed paintings depicting Black individuals in pain now encounter similar representations in photography, with more realistic and vivid details. This process continues with film and video: where static images once captured a single moment of violence, viewers now witness the full motion, the body collapsing, the desperate cries, such as “I can’t breathe,” a few minutes after the scene took place in the material world or even in real time. This progression highlights how media technologies amplify the emotional and cultural impact of these representations.

Remediation theory guided the analysis in this dissertation by examining how technological advances shaped both old and new representations across historical periods. For instance, when analyzing photographs from the 20th century, the study considered what elements of earlier 19th-century illustrations they preserved. Similarly, when examining videos on social media, the analysis identified discourses that echoed those conveyed by photos and illustrations from the past. This approach allowed for a critical exploration of how representations of racial violence change while retaining enduring cultural and ideological tropes and discourses. Meanwhile, by longitudinally creating counter-narratives of liberation instead of reinforcing oppression, Black media is also correcting a situation of misrepresentation.

At the core of remediation theory lies the concept of genealogy. Bolter and Grusin (1996) expanded on Foucault's notion of genealogy, which he described as an “examination of descent” (Foucault, 1977, p. 146). In *Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*, Michel Foucault (1977) proposes an alternative to studying history as a rigid linear narrative. He sees historical inquiry as fragmented and grounded in power relations. Foucault's genealogical method questions what society considers natural, highlighting how knowledge and power produce historical meaning. This approach ultimately serves as a tool for critique and resistance against oppressive structures.

As Roessner et al. (2013) emphasize, from a Foucauldian perspective, genealogy employs history as a rigorous interpretive framework aimed at unsettling and questioning the origins of what appear to be fixed objects, norms, and practices that shape our present reality (p. 272). In essence, genealogy serves as a tool to challenge assumptions about what is deemed natural or inevitable. In this dissertation, genealogy is a methodological tool to unveil the discursive media structures that treat racial violence as banal and unavoidable. Drawing on this theoretical and methodological framework, this dissertation builds a media genealogy to examine representations of racialized violence in both predominantly white and Black media over time.

When arranged chronologically, from the 19th to the 21st century, remediated images of racial violence create a symbolic genealogical tree, tracing the history of such representations within Brazilian media. The goal is not simply to present the evolution of these images in a straightforward, chronological manner, but rather to piece them together like a puzzle to understand the broader context and meaning they collectively convey. This study makes sense of images of racialized violence in different periods “not in order to trace the gradual curve of their evolution, but to isolate the different scenes where they engaged in different roles” (Foucault,

1977, p. 140). Rather than focusing solely on uncovering its origins, examining the persistent nature of this discourse and the power structures that sustain and reinforce its longevity is crucial.

As Foucault (1977) conceptualizes it, genealogy centers on the human body as a key site of historical inquiry. He writes, “Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body” (p. 148). When examining images of racial violence across time, this study encountered bodies that not only narrate a story but also embody and carry that history of representation within them. Tracing the origins of these representations, from illustrations to photographs, videos, and more recently to social media content, shows how these images have been remediated (Bolter & Grusin, 1996) across different media forms. This historical perspective offers a clear understanding of the enduring discourses that naturalized racial violence in Brazilian media. This knowledge can help journalists and activists strengthen their commitment to Black media as a space for resistance and self-defense (Rodrigues & Parks, forthcoming).

Tools: Critical Discourse Analysis Methodologies

This dissertation analyzes images of racial violence through the dual lenses of remediation theory and genealogy, employing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methodologies to decode their embedded meanings. Within communication studies, the two predominant approaches to discourse analysis are Norman Fairclough's (1995) framework and Michel Foucault's (1972) theoretical perspective. Comparing these, Ong et al. (2024, p. 31) note:

While Foucault predominantly examines discourses across historical time periods, Fairclough locates his analysis of discourse within social institutions, in which “orders of discourse” form into “ideological-discursive formations” (IDFs) (2013a, p. 26–27). IDFs are produced by particular “orders of discourse” becoming dominant within a social institution and ultimately “naturalised” within the institution’s processes and structures.

In this study, I treat media as a social institution with its own dominant IDs. My analytical framework centers on the dialectic between discourse production and subject formation: first, by examining how human actors generate media artifacts (e.g., newspapers) and disseminate dominant narratives; second, through a Foucauldian reversal that reveals how these discourses also construct subject positions, such as the criminalization of Blackness in hegemonic media or the emancipatory Black subjectivities forged through counter-narratives in Black alternative media. The methodological foundation of this study draws on the works of Teun Van Dijk, Norman Fairclough, and Ruth Wodak. These scholars are part of a movement that critically examines the social construction of power and domination in discourse through the “socio-historically situated use of language” (Wodak, 2003).

Fairclough (1995) emphasizes the “critical” aspect of this approach, which focuses on uncovering the connections between the social and the political. Van Dijk (2017) builds on Fairclough and Wodak (1997) to outline the core principles of CDA. This methodology focuses on the production of meaning in society, particularly in relation to social problems, and asserts that power relations are discursive. For example, the repetition of stereotypes helps define social hierarchies, such as those based on race or nationality. From the perspective of CDA, discourse not only reflects but also influences society and culture, aligning with Stuart Hall’s understanding of culture as a system of symbols that establishes shared values.

For Fairclough (1995), discourse analysis is a method of interpreting and explaining societal issues. His model proposes three steps when analyzing discourse: the description of the object of study, the interpretation, and the explanation of the social phenomenon. In this framework, discourse is a form of action, since representations in discourse have tangible consequences in the material world, shaping perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. In the field of

media studies, CDA has been used as a tool to reveal biases and ideological perspectives embedded in news reporting (Richardson, 2007). Previous research has also successfully used this methodology to reveal how media reproduce and reinforce stereotypes of historically minoritized groups, such as transgender people (Rodrigues, 2021) and Black Americans (van Dijk, 1992). Researchers have also applied CDA to examine social media platforms, investigating how sites such as Twitter and Facebook influence public conversations (Zappavigna, 2012).

As Van Dijk (2017) explains, “Through discourse, we acquire most of what we know about the world beyond our own personal experiences, and it is through discourse that many of our social opinions and attitudes are formed” (p. 56). This underscores the importance of analyzing discourse to understand how power operates and how social realities are constructed and perpetuated. “Talk and text is not a form of individual discourse but social, group discourse, and expresses not only individual opinions but rather socially shared representations” (Van Dijk, 1992, p. 1150).

Also related to the field of studies of CDA, Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) emphasizes “the broader sociopolitical and historical context, which discursive practices are embedded in and related to” (Wodak, 2001, p. 93). This approach integrates historical, sociological, and political insights to examine how discourse shapes and is shaped by social structures and power relations. It explores how historical events, ideologies, and power dynamics influence discursive practices over time. Like other CDA approaches, DHA makes sense of oppressive discourses and promotes social change by revealing hidden power structures and ideologies. We can only fully understand an image published centuries ago by examining its historical context. Without this framework, little meaning could be derived, for example, from a depiction of a dark-skinned person wearing loose white garments with bare feet in a Brazilian plantation setting. These images derive their significance from cultural and historical markers.

Through such contextual analysis, we can trace the roots of contemporary society's structural inequalities and envision alternative representational possibilities.

Therefore, CDA, with a heavy focus on DHA, oriented the analysis presented in the following chapters. By combining genealogy, remediation, and CDA frameworks, this research traces historical continuities in the representation of racial violence, examines how these images are repurposed across media, and critically decodes the discourses that naturalize racialized violence. Beyond simply describing and revealing structures of oppression, this work focuses on the discursive possibilities of liberation. If discourses can imprison, they also possess the power to aid in the emancipation of historically oppressed people, distancing these subjects from passive roles of submission.

Research Design and Rationale

The analysis chapter of this dissertation present case studies to exemplify images of control and liberation in Brazilian media. The aim is not to exhaustively list representations across three centuries. Rather, it is to draw inspiration from Patricia Hill Collins (1997), who identified and categorized recurring archetypes in media through the lens of Black feminist thought. The most significant contribution of this dissertation is the identification and categorization of uniquely Brazilian racist archetypes to challenge and dismantle them through the promotion of liberatory images. This approach prioritizes understanding patterns and discourses that persist over time, rather than compiling an extensive inventory of representations.

The selection of media samples was informed by the work of historians such as Ana Flavia Magalhaes Pinto (2006) and Joao Paulo Lopes (2022), as well as my direct consultations with Bruno Brasil, a media and archival specialist at the National Library (Biblioteca Nacional). Through three Zoom consultations with historian João Paulo Lopes, I identified the most visually

significant Brazilian publications from the 19th and 20th centuries. Lopes provided a curated reference list and highlighted crucial intersectional perspectives, particularly the underrepresentation of women in these visual narratives.

My engagement with Bruno Brasil's work began during my research on Brazilian media history. Brasil, a documentation technician at the Coordination of Serial Publications of the National Library Foundation (CPS-FBN) since 2006, authored several articles on the National Library's website. Particularly relevant to this dissertation was his analysis of early 20th-century Brazilian crime periodicals like *Arquivo Vermelho* and *Vida Policial* (1920s) (Brasil, 2020), which became foundational for Chapter 4's investigation. Through three virtual meetings and extensive email correspondence, Brasil provided crucial archival guidance. His recommendations significantly shaped my methodology, notably including microfilmed materials from Brazil's Popular Groups (BPG), a Library of Congress collection preserving ephemera (pamphlets, posters, and short-run periodicals) produced by Brazilian grassroots organizations from the 1960s to 2016.

In July 2024, I made a field visit to the Biblioteca Nacional to explore its archives in person. I sought to familiarize myself with both the digitized and physical archives, dusty relics stored for decades within the walls of a colonial-style building. The Biblioteca Nacional's (BN) collections trace back to 1808, when the Portuguese Royal Family transported cultural artifacts to Brazil following Napoleon's invasion of Portugal (Biblioteca Nacional, n.d.). Though the BN does not disclose the exact number of newspapers and magazines in its holdings, it remains one of Latin America's largest archives.

During my visit, I focused on the hegemonic newspaper *O Fluminense*, founded on May 8, 1878, in Niterói (RJ). As one of the few remaining titles not yet digitized by the National Library, examining this material in person provided a rare opportunity to engage directly with historical

artifacts. As the third-oldest circulating newspaper in Rio de Janeiro state (and the sixth-oldest in Brazil), its archive was overwhelming, a suffocating sea of brittle pages. Guided by Bruno Brasil, I first examined editions from the early and late 1990s – in a preliminary examination stage – to analyze the frequency of racial violence imagery in its reporting. Flipping through issues across years, I noted the pervasive presence of Black bodies depicted in violent contexts. This aligned with existing scholarship on the sensationalist brutality of 1990s Brazilian journalism (Nassif, 2003).

What truly captured my attention, however, were the century-old police crime magazines that Bruno Brasil brought to my notice: *Vida Policial* and *Arquivo Vermelho*. This was my first encounter with these specialized periodicals, and I chose to focus my final analysis on them, driven both by scholarly curiosity and a growing intuition that they might yield more revealing insights than well-documented newspapers like *O Fluminense*. Given the latter's established place in existing historiography, these lesser-known crime publications promised a fresher, potentially more provocative lens into racialized violence in Brazilian media. The majority of the media articles analyzed in the subsequent chapters of this dissertation are digitized in the Biblioteca Nacional (Brazilian National Library) and were consulted online between June 2024 and May 2025.

Samples. Chapter 4 examines and identifies the key images of control in 19th-century and 20th-century Brazilian media. The 19th-century analysis focuses on the most enduring dominant hegemonic media publications, starting with the magazine *Revista Illustrada* (RJ) (1876 to 1898). It lasted 23 years, with 739 numbers and 6 to 7 pages each. Only 2 or 3 pages per number had images. It is the only magazine that started before abolition, was published during the year of abolition, and up to a decade after slavery became illegal. The regular periodicity provides a

sample that crosses critical historical periods for the issue of race in Brazilian society. I analyzed 10 random copies from each year, making a total of 230 publications analyzed.

The sample also included 150 issues of *Semana Ilustrada* (1860-1875). This publication has 797 numbers available online, but none from the last year (1876). Ten issues were chosen randomly each year available. They had nine pages each. A pioneer in visual journalism, this publication capitalized on emerging technologies and growing public demand for imagery, which fueled the rise of the illustrated press. The advent and widespread adoption of printing images and text on the same page demonstrated society's growing appetite for visual content, marking a cultural shift toward visual literacy and a transformation in media.

The first part of Chapter 4 focuses on these two key publications selected for the following reasons: a) visual emphasis: They consistently incorporated images in every edition, prioritizing visual content as a central feature; b) historical significance: As the longest-running illustrated publications of their time, they centered on Rio de Janeiro (then Brazil's capital) making them culturally and temporally significant; c) accessibility: They were freely available online in digitized form, ensuring readability and ease of analysis. The PDF archives allowed search for key words like “preto” (Black), “negro” and “enslaved”.

Revista Ilustrada and *Semana Ilustrada*'s enduring presence and repeated documentation in scholarship (Pinto, 2006; Santiago, 2017) further reinforce the analytical value of these publications. The chapter does not bring examples of images of liberation produced by Black media in the 19th century, since the first Black newspapers from this period — *O Homem de Côr*, *O Cabrito*, *O Meia Cara*, *Brasileiro Pardo* e *O Lafuente* (selected based on the classification of historical relevance provided by the Brazilian National Library) were composed only by text, in almost every issue. As Lopes (2022) noted, many Black newspapers from the 19th century were

irregularly published, often launched to mark specific commemorative dates and limited to a single edition. Consequently, this analysis will prioritize newspapers with broader reach and greater periodicity, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the media landscape during this transformative period.

The Birth of Sensationalist Crime Magazines. Chapter 4, Part II, advances to the 20th century and focuses on a case study of two media outlets specializing in news about violence within that historical frame: the magazine *Vida Policial* (1925-1927) and the magazine *Arquivo Vermelho* (1918-1921). The two publications were selected based on their thematic focus and historical significance. Both prioritized extensive coverage of violence, providing in-depth reporting and generating substantial content on this subject. This specialized focus makes them valuable case studies for analyzing how violence was portrayed in the Brazilian press during this era. Both magazines mixed journalistic reports with short stories, literature, and fiction. In the context of the police magazines of the 1920s, Elena Shizuno (2009, p. 2) observes that “the social construction of crime and the criminal, based on the police story, was the constructor of a social imaginary and demarcated the positions of both those groups involved in fighting crime and those who are only spectators.”

Vida Policial was initially co-directed by Waldemar Pereira de Figueiredo, a lawyer, and Raul Ribeiro, an inspector from the 4th Auxiliary Police Station. The publication also relied on contributions from various professionals, including doctors, criminalists, and police officers, such as Evaristo de Moraes, Elysio de Carvalho, and Esmeraldino Bandeira, as documented by Shizuno (2009). *Arquivo Vermelho* was founded by the journalist Silva Paranhos, who built his career in the hegemonic mainstream media covering crime. Shortly afterward, Evaristo de Moraes assumed the role of editor-in-chief, with Heitor Telles serving as editor-secretary. The magazine featured

illustrations by renowned graphic artists, including Calixto Cordeiro, Julião Machado, Raul Pederneiras, Joaquim Guerreiro, Luiz Peixoto, Amaro Amaral, and Fritz (Brasil, 2020). The first issue of *Arquivo Vermelho* features a photo of the editors: all men and all white. The magazine had a circulation of between 12,000 and 20,000 copies throughout its existence.

The 1920s publication timeframe is particularly significant as it represents a transformative period for Brazilian journalism. During this decade, newspapers began adopting modern printing technologies, such as the Linotype machine, which revolutionized image production capabilities. This technological shift enabled faster printing and larger circulation, fundamentally changing the newspaper industry (Governo do Brasil, 2018). While these advancements in printing technology were occurring, other innovations were more slowly integrated into news production. Photography, for instance, remained relatively rare in 1920s Brazilian newspapers (Valle, 2021). The halftone printing technique for black-and-white photos existed but wouldn't become widespread until later years. In this context, *Vida Policial* and *Arquivo Vermelho* had more pictures than most other publications from the beginning of the 20th century in Brazil.

The combination of these factors – the publications' thematic focus on violence, their emergence during a pivotal technological transition in Brazilian journalism, and the specific technological limitations of the era – makes them particularly illuminating study subjects. Their content reflects both the evolving capabilities of newspaper production and the journalistic approaches to covering sensitive subjects during these transformative decades.

In contrast to hegemonic media, the analysis in Chapter 4 also includes some of the leading Black media outlets of that period in Brazil. Finding images in Black Brazilian newspapers from the 20th century was extremely challenging. There was an “avalanche of Black publications” (O Menelick 2º Ato. n.d.) between 1913 and 1964, when Brazil entered a dictatorship. However, most

publications only lasted one or two issues, and very few had images. It was necessary to explore a collection of dozens of publications cited in historiographies (Pinto, 2006; Lopes, 2022; O Menelick 2º Ato. n.d.) until I found the newspapers with the most images and that were historically relevant and therefore analyzed in this dissertation.

The complete run of 25 issues of the newspaper *Getulino* (1923 -1926), all preserved and digitized by the National Library, formed the basis of this comprehensive analysis. In July 1923, the weekly newspaper *Getulino* was established in Campinas, São Paulo, proclaiming itself as the “Organ for the Defense of Black Men.” This pioneering publication, produced entirely by Black journalists as it proudly emphasized, served as a vocal advocate for both local and national Black communities during its three-year circulation. Through its articles, short stories, and crucially, its abundant use of photographs and illustrations of notable Black figures, *Getulino* broke new ground as one of Brazil's first image-heavy Black periodicals.

The final sample comprises all ten issues of *Quilombo* (1948-1950), which are available online at the National Library's virtual archive. The newspaper, created by Abdias Nascimento, was a key publication for the Brazilian Black movement in the 20th century because it established dialogues with pan-Africanists and international Black movements, such as the Harlem Renaissance in the United States and the anti-colonial struggles in Africa. Abdias saw racism as a global problem, not just a Brazilian. The newspaper challenged the myth of Brazil's “racial democracy,” which claimed that there was no racism in the country. Despite having only two digitized editions available through the National Library, the newspaper *Senzala* (1946) was included in this study due to its exceptional material significance. Each of its remarkably substantial editions contained over thirty pages and featured numerous images, making it a particularly rich visual and textual source for analysis.

The sample also included 56 issues of *Abibiman*, a newspaper published from 1995 to 2008 by the Associação de Resgate da Cultura Afro (ARCA – Association for the Rescue of Afro-Culture) in Arcoverde, Pernambuco, Brazil. Its publication coincided with two key historical milestones: The 300th anniversary of the execution of Zumbi dos Palmares, a symbol of Black resistance in Brazil, and the 100th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in Brazil. The newspaper addressed themes such as Black consciousness, Afro-Brazilian cultural heritage, and critiques of the incomplete legacy of abolition, aligning with broader Black movement activism during Brazil's post-dictatorship era.

Black illustrated media gained power in the first half of the 20th century with two fundamental missions: to reconstruct the image of Black Brazilians and to advocate for their human rights. This period marked a technological turning point, as these publications gained access to integrated text-image printing capabilities for the first time. As historian João Paulo Lopes (2022) documents, this became possible due to the modernization of mainstream newsrooms' printing equipment in the early 1900s, which made second-hand presses more accessible to Black publishers. The political landscape shifted dramatically after 1960 with the military dictatorship's rise to power. Black media faced severe persecution during this period, with many outlets forced to cease publication. Notable figures like Abdias Nascimento were driven into exile, with Nascimento finding refuge in the United States.

Given these historical constraints, this analysis focuses on two key periods when Black media flourished most productively: the early 20th century (pre-dictatorship) and one example of the post-dictatorship era (*Abibiman*). This approach enables the examination of the movement's most significant contributions while acknowledging the political challenges that constrained its development in the mid-century.

To conclude, Chapter 5 bridges the materials analysis from Chapter 4 with the 21st-century digital media landscape. This chapter employs comparative case studies of viral news coverage across hegemonic and Black media outlets to illuminate fundamental divergences in journalistic ethics and normative practices. The selection of *Folha de São Paulo* as a case study stems from its documented involvement in recent racial controversies, serving as a paradigmatic example of systemic issues in mainstream Brazilian journalism. The cases were deliberately chosen for their high public visibility and symbolic potency in illustrating the chapter's core arguments about racialized media frameworks.

In this section, the analysis of Black media focuses on *Alma Preta* and *Notícia Preta*, and is grounded in their dual significance as both digital media leaders, boasting the largest social media followings among Black Brazilian outlets, and as practitioners of engaged community journalism that extends beyond traditional news reporting. This methodological approach provides concrete illustrations of the theoretical concepts while demonstrating how media ecosystems operate within different racial logics.

Data Analysis Procedures

This study employs a multimodal discourse analysis, integrating both visual and textual elements as interconnected meaning-making components. The analysis follows Fairclough's (1995) three-step model: a) Description of the objects of study; b) Interpretation of their discursive functions; c) Explanation of their social significance. For visual analysis, I apply Gillian Rose's (2022) critical framework, which emphasizes that image interpretation involves constructing meaning rather than uncovering objective "truth" (p. 2). Rose's framework for visual analysis emphasizes three critical dimensions: First, examining the production of images, including the technologies used and creators' intentions. Second, decoding the signs and symbols within images

to understand how they construct knowledge and reinforce power relations. Finally, this approach requires reflexive consideration of the circulation and impact of images, critically assessing who benefits from or is harmed by their dissemination.

Each image was systematically documented in a Word file, forming a dataset for each research question. During the discourse analysis, annotations were added to each image-text pair to track emerging patterns. Recurring stereotypes were cataloged in a categorized list, allowing for the identification of repeated tropes across the media sample. When examining images of racial violence in mainstream and Black media, this study considered four key dimensions when interpreting and explaining the data:

- A) Historical Context: The historical period in which the image was produced and circulated.
- B) Political and Social Context: The broader socio-political environment of Brazil, informed by Critical Race Theory and critical theories of Brazilian racial formation.
- C) Stereotypes and Discourses: The recurring stereotypes and narratives present in newspaper representations, such as the myth of racial democracy, racial hierarchies, and the association of Blackness with violence.
- D) Enduring through remediation: I also observed what characteristics new media inherited from old media and which discourses have survived over time.

Each image was analyzed through the theoretical lenses that underpin this dissertation, ensuring a nuanced understanding of how racial violence is depicted and perpetuated in hegemonic media. Drawing on Patricia Hill Collins' (1997) concept of images of control, stereotypical representations that reinforce racial and gender hierarchies, this study identified and categorized such images within the sample. The same analytical approach was applied to examine images of

liberation in Black media. These liberatory images celebrate African heritage, affirm Black identity, and reflect the aesthetic, political, and social emancipation of Brazil's Black population, aligning with the vision articulated by the founders of the Black movement in the country, which includes Abdias do Nascimento and Lelia Gonzalez. Grounding my analysis in Patricia Hill Collins' Black feminist epistemology while applying critical discourse analysis tools, I constructed a framework of media archetypes that reveals how journalistic narratives both reflect and reinforce Brazil's racial hierarchies. Each archetype emerges from careful discursive tracing that connects contemporary media representations to their historical roots in the nation's racial formation processes.

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CHAPTER 4

ARCHETYPES OF CONTROL AND LIBERATION: MEDIA DISCOURSES IN 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY BRAZIL

The history of the Brazilian press, especially its role in shaping racial narratives, has long been a subject of scholarly debate. Researchers like Ana Flávia Magalhães Pinto (2006), Alane Reis (2019), and João Paulo Lopes (2022) have examined the enduring tension between hegemonic and Black media, tracing how control over representation began with Brazil's earliest printed publications. As Pinto (2006) argues, Black suffering was first textualized, not visualized: 19th-century newspapers published brutal accounts of racial violence, such as a family of six Black individuals found shackled in a Porto Alegre shack, their anguish transcribed in print long before photography could capture such scenes. The scene Pinto describes was published by the newspaper *O Exemplo*, in 1892.

Pinto's work challenges the misconception that Black Brazilian press history only emerged in the 20th century. For instance, in her analysis of *A Pátria* (1889), which published the first photograph in the Brazilian press, a portrait of white abolitionists highlights the racialized erasure that Black media sought to counter. Pinto underscores the pivotal role of Black Brazilian intellectuals, whose ideas circulated in Black media well before abolition, laying the foundation for Black press activism in Brazil. While the first part of this chapter's analysis does not include Black media due to the absence of visual material (as early publications were text-based for technical reasons), these pioneering efforts remain essential to understanding the broader media landscape.

Pinto's research was a starting point for other researchers, such as Alane Reis (2019), to continue this genealogy. Reis notes that "the vibrant Black press in the early 20th-century has

been thoroughly analyzed, primarily by researchers focused on the memory of the Post-Abolition period and Black political organizing. This includes the various Associations of Men of Color, which were pioneering militant organizations that emerged after quilombos, brotherhoods, and terreiros” (p. 22, my translation). It is publications originating from these “quilombos, brotherhoods, and terreiros” that make up the second part of this chapter, when I look at the images of liberation in the Black media.

Reis’s research is part of a key dossier informing this dissertation: the Mapping of Black Media in Brazil, organized by the Permanent Forum for Racial Equality (FOPIR, 2020). This collaborative project, led by a coalition of anti-racist organizations, traces the historical struggle between hegemonic media, which perpetuates racist violence through stereotypes and controlling images, and Black media, which is inherently rooted in the fight to value Black lives as part of a broader liberation project in Brazil. The definition of Black media that orients this dissertation is also designed by FOPIR (2020, p. 7-8, my translation):

Black media are social communication spaces produced by Black people that deal with agendas and themes about the experience of Black people and the fight against racism. These media can reach local audiences, in community contexts, at state, regional, national or international level. When it comes to business media, they need to be more than 50% owned by Black entrepreneurs and management and coordination positions must also be held by Black people.

FOPIR’s (2020, p. 10) report also reinforces the importance of talking about Black media as a legacy and is an essential documentation of Black media defining itself:

We are aware of our legacy inherited from the Black press - a communication and journalistic practice that officially began in 1833 in Rio de Janeiro with the newspaper *O Homem de Cor*, but which has its roots in political organization even earlier: In the colonial and slave-owning era in Salvador (BA) of 1798, with the Manuscripts of the Búzios Revolt (Revolta dos Buzios), nailed to the walls of the city and sounding cries for freedom that echoed from the concentration camps-senzalas to the noble salons of society.

While existing research acknowledges the significance of images within this media landscape, it has yet to critically examine their discursive frameworks, specifically, how these

visual narratives reinforce or challenge structures of control and liberation. This gap is especially salient in light of postcolonial theories advanced by scholars like Lélia Gonzales and Beatriz Nascimento, who reframed Brazilian identity through the lens of *Amefricanidade*, centering the enduring influence of African diasporic cultures.

This chapter expands on this historical groundwork by examining imagery of control and liberation across hegemonic and Black media, tracing their discourses through pivotal periods: the rise of illustrated magazines in the 19th century, the emergence of violence-focused publications in the 20th century, and the leading Black media outlets that incorporated visual narratives. Given Brazil's distinct racial dynamics, shaped by its status as the country with the largest Black population outside Africa, it is crucial to analyze these media representations through theoretical frameworks connected to the nation's formation. Brazil's unique historical, cultural, and social complexities necessitate an approach grounded in theories of racial identity and power relations, enabling a deeper interrogation of how media narratives have both upheld and contested structures of domination and liberation. Based on this context, this chapter explores:

RQ1: How did 19th-century Brazilian illustrated magazines, as instruments of hegemonic media, produce and perpetuate racialized controlling images rooted in racial violence?

RQ2a: What controlling images rooted in racial violence were produced and perpetuated by early 20th-century Brazilian police magazines, as instruments of hegemonic media?

RQ2b: How did 20th-century Black Brazilian media construct visual counter-narratives of liberation to challenge dominant racial hierarchies?

Caricatures and Black Stereotypes: Drawing Racism For Fun

Nineteenth-century Brazilian illustrated magazines like *A Semana Ilustrada* weaponized humor to reinforce white supremacy, presenting racial stereotypes as harmless entertainment. Under the direction of Henrique Fleiuss, the magazine systematically ridiculed Black Brazilians through recurring archetypes: the “lazy slave,” the “childlike Black man,” and the “submissive Black mother,” all depicted in grotesque or comical scenes that naturalized racial hierarchies (Schwarcz, 1993). Through a close analysis of the magazine's visual discourse, my research identifies and categorizes recurring racist tropes in these media. I labeled each archetype based on the patterns observed across the examined pages.

The Faceless Child. One particularly revealing archetype, which I term “The Faceless Child,” appears as early as Issue 3, in *Semana Ilustrada* (1861). This Black child serves as a dehumanized companion to the white “Dr. Semana” (Dr. Week), the magazine's fictional protagonist. Stripped of individuality and agency, the child is enslaved, and embodies how recreational racism reduced Black existence to a crude caricature. These images were not mere jokes but tools of circulating stereotypes that justified oppression even in a nominally abolitionist era. A striking pattern emerges in *A Semana Ilustrada*'s cartoons: While white characters like Dr. Semana are drawn with detailed facial features (expressive eyes, defined noses, styled hair) their Black child companions are reduced to a blurred face.

In *Semana Ilustrada* (Issue 19, p. 152), the Faceless Child is the only person in the illustration without a face. Instead of eyes and a mouth, for example, the boy only has three white lines where his facial features should be. Erasing the characteristics that make someone unique is a strategy of dehumanization that causes people belonging to the same racialized group to be read socially as “all the same.”

Following a pattern, *Semana Ilustrada* (1861, Issue 34) refers to the enslaved Black child as “o moleque” (the brat) while mocking his attempts to give gardening advice. This dehumanizing portrayal was part of a broader context: in other issues (e.g., 17, 22, 33), the boy is compared to a monkey, reducing him to a racist spectacle for entertainment. “The Brat” is a recurring racist caricature throughout *Semana Ilustrada*'s run. His narrative arc culminates in a grotesque parody of family formation: marriage to an equally dehumanized Black girl, followed by the birth of their faceless child.

The 100th issue of *Semana Ilustrada* (1862) depicts two racially charged scenes. First, Dr. Semana celebrates the magazine's success while “The Brat” carries the elongated train of his tuxedo, a visual metaphor for subservience. Second, an explicitly violent image shows a Black man being beaten by his white “master,” accompanied by a darkly ironic caption: “I shake my master's jacket to take the dust out, and he shakes mine too - but with my body inside.” This juxtaposition of celebratory white success and Black subjugation through both labor and violence encapsulates the magazine's racist visual and textual discourse.

The Savage. *Semana Ilustrada* also systematically employed animalistic imagery to reinforce white supremacist ideology. In Issue 27, published in 1861 (p. 213), this dehumanization becomes particularly overt through the depiction of a Black man as a simian hybrid - a monstrous figure straddling the line between human and ape. The racist caricature shows this distorted creature climbing clumsily on furniture like an untrained animal, serving as the object of a white child's mocking laughter, existing as a grotesque background element to a “civilized” romantic conversation between white characters. The composition literally positions Blackness as background to white centrality.

The monkey-man hybrid invokes pseudoscientific theories of Black inferiority prevalent in 19th-century racial “science.” In several magazine issues, it is common to see caricatures of people of all racial backgrounds mixed up with animals. The monkey, however, carries a strong racist symbolism and was only associated with blackness. This representation became prevalent in the Brazilian hegemonic media environment with the publication of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* (1859), which introduced concepts such as evolutionary nature and natural selection. These scientific theories were misused to justify violence by framing it as an innate, genetic trait, particularly in marginalized groups (da Silva Gomes, 2022).

Revista Ilustrada similarly reinforces the same bestial archetype. In 1888, the year of abolition, issue number 507 featured an article about an anthropological expedition led by a certain “Dr. Steineu” to the Xingu region of the Amazon. There, he allegedly encountered “aboriginals, nearly all docile and manageable,” framing Indigenous peoples as “primitive men,” a problem to be “solved” by anthropology. The article includes illustrations of Black and Indigenous women with exposed breasts, rendered with exaggerated, grotesque features.

The Drunk. The 19th-century Brazilian illustrated press overwhelmingly portrayed Blackness through male caricatures, making their rare depictions of Black women particularly revealing. In *Revista Ilustrada* (1876, Issue 20, p. 7), Black women appear solely as alcoholics, and grotesquely drawn with oversized heads, exaggerated lips, and distorted proportions, fixated on obtaining cachaça (sugarcane liquor). One panel shows a woman consuming the drink voraciously, reducing Black femininity to moral degeneracy (addiction as inherent), physical grotesquerie (facial exaggeration) and social parasitism (“free cachaça” as sole aspiration). This imagery codified Black women as antithetical to bourgeois ideals of white womanhood (domesticity, purity), while also erasing their actual roles as laborers, caregivers, and abolitionists.

These images appear in the magazine's cartoon section. The illustrations include short captions, though many are now illegible due to fading over time.

Extensive research has documented the harmful stereotype linking enslaved Black people to drunkenness in the 19th century (da Silva Gomes, 2022; Avelar, 2019). As Maria Isabela da Silva Gomes (2022) explains in her literature review, this stereotype portrayed enslaved individuals as inherently prone to vice, vandalism, and alcohol abuse. It is a narrative reinforced through cultural representations. Ironically, while the ruling class consumed the most alcohol, by having more purchasing power, Black people were labeled as “drunk,” “undisciplined,” and “violent.” These perceptions persisted even when enslaved individuals were coerced into drinking by slaveholders, who used alcohol as a tool to suppress resistance. As da Silva Gomes notes, “drunkenness was cited as justification for punishing captives, with their behavior framed as a threat to public order” (2022, p. 134, my translation).

Living Scaffolds. *Revista Illustrada* (1876, Issue 11) also perpetuates one of the most enduring racist tropes: the Black wet nurse (Roth, 2018) as human furniture. The illustration depicts a group of Black women physically supporting white toddlers (1-2 years old). Their bodies function as platforms to elevate white children before a teacher. It represents a cruel irony: While the white children learn to read – a skill legally denied to enslaved people, as Bergamini (2017) shows – their Black caretakers remain frozen in servitude. I labeled this archetype Living Scaffolds, drawing on historical frameworks that depict the dehumanization of Black women, reducing their bodies to instruments of labor in service of whiteness. This includes roles like what Bergamini (2017, p. 119) terms “living instruments of work.” The nannies are reduced to living high chairs - their faces blank, their labor mechanized. This passive portrayal ignores historical reality. Despite widespread repression, at least two clandestine literacy centers operated for Black

people in the 19th century (Bergamini, 2017). The image's intent remains ambiguous - either reinforcing hierarchy through ridicule, or accidentally exposing its absurdity.

Semana Ilustrada also consistently reinforces the dehumanizing archetype of Black women as mere caretaking props for white children. This trope appears in its 127th edition (1863) and recurs in at least five subsequent issues. One particularly revealing illustration depicts an enslaved Black woman holding a white infant before baptism. At the pivotal moment of blessing, the white mother reclaims the child, visually asserting that only she can facilitate the baby's spiritual purity. This staging reduces the Black woman to a temporary placeholder and positions whiteness as the sole conduit of divine grace.

The “**Strange Fruit.**” *Revista Ilustrada* (1876, Issue 15, p. 8) includes a chilling visual of two Black men hanging lifeless from poles, a clear evocation of lynching. Terror serves the purpose of entertainment: The scene’s casual placement alongside “humorous” cartoons normalized racial violence. No context for the killings is given, rendering anti-Black violence ahistorical and inevitable. Since the very beginning of the Brazilian press, violence against Black individuals was presented as a spectacle. The *Semana Ilustrada* (1866, Issue 342, p. 5), also refers to a lynching as a “spectacle,” one that happens in a public square with an audience that seems entertained by the brutality.

I term this archetype Strange Fruit after Abel Meeropol’s 1939 protest poem, popularized by Billie Holiday in a song which likened lynched Black bodies to “fruit hanging from the poplar trees.” While the song specifically denounced the epidemic of racial terror in the U.S. South (where over 4,000 lynchings occurred between 1877-1950), the motif resonates transnationally.

The 1876 *Revista Ilustrada* lynching tableau, though rendered as “satire,” performs parallel ideological work: it frames Black death as inevitable (as natural as a “fruit”).

The Tramp. Across twelve identifiable issues of *Semana Ilustrada*, the Black child character (“The Brat”) is systematically framed as a “tramp.” Dr. Semana repeatedly interrogates whether the boy is truly working or merely “vadiando (loitering),” a term saturated with racialized meaning in post-abolition Brazil. This language directly influenced the 1890 Anti-Tramp Law (*Lei de Vadiagem*), which criminalized Black citizens for being in public spaces without documented employment, effectively re-enslaving them through the penal system (Paulino and Oliveira, 2020). Even when “The Brat” appears visibly doing heavy work, such as carrying a cannon in *Semana Ilustrada* (Issue 110), he is called lazy. The magazine's persistent questioning of the child's labor status reinforces this oppressive legal framework through visual satire.

The Grateful. In 1888, the year of abolition, *Revista Ilustrada* specially propagated an archetypal image of control: the Black man as grateful for his freedom. The publication dedicated numerous pages to exalting the moral nobility of white abolitionists, particularly Princess Isabel, the Empire’s regent who signed the Abolition Law on May 13, 1888. Yet abolition was not purely a humanitarian or patriotic act, as *Revista Ilustrada* suggested. Slavery had become economically unviable in Brazil, partly due to external pressures. On August 9, 1845, the British Parliament passed an act banning the transatlantic slave trade and authorizing the Royal Navy to seize slave ships. This disrupted the trade globally, including in Brazil, making abolition an economic necessity rather than a moral triumph (Gadelha, 1989).

Despite this reality, *Revista Ilustrada* framed abolition as a benevolent gift from whites to Blacks. *Revista Ilustrada* (1888, Issue 497, p. 7) even proposed that wealthy Rio de Janeiro families collectively finance a golden feather-pen for Princess Isabel to sign the law:

Honoring the noble and sweeping idea proposed by Dr. Luiz Pedro Drago... to acquire a gold pen for Her Highness the Regent to sign the law for the liberation of Brazil through a popular subscription... we have also opened a subscription in our office for this patriotic

purpose. In our opinion, every family home in Rio de Janeiro should contribute... making this an eloquent manifestation.

Similarly, *Revista Illustrada* (1888, Issue 506, p. 10) celebrated abolition as a moral awakening: “At last Brazil has understood how absurd and iniquitous it is to enslave men who are our brothers. The abolition of slavery will be one of the brightest pages of Pedro II’s reign.” Throughout these depictions, white figures were cast as saviors, while Black people were reduced to passive recipients of freedom, grateful and docile, although there are countless historical records of Black revolutions, quilombos (marron societies), and other acts of resistance (Pinto, 2006). While *Revista Illustrada* was a progressive, abolitionist publication, it still engaged in recreational racism (Moreira, 2019). This reveals a tension in abolitionist discourse, one that framed emancipation as a form of white redemption rather than a necessary recognition of Black humanity. Abolition was portrayed as a benevolent gift.

On many occasions, the visual imagery of *Revista Illustrada* (1888) reinforced the narrative of gratitude and passiveness. In issue 516 (p. 4), the publication featured a drawing of Black men building a wall with stones, captioned: “From the stones thrown at him, gratitude and patriotism are making a pedestal for the statues that posterity will one day have to erect for him [Dom Pedro II].” Also in the year of abolition, *Revista Illustrada*, Issue 504, depicted a white woman breaking chains, with Black men at her feet and angels hovering above, framing abolition as divine intervention. Issue 507 showed freed Black people placing flowers on an altar in honor of Princess Isabel on July 29, 1888. This narrative continues through issue 520, the year’s final edition, which featured Black men kneeling before a white man in gratitude.

This constructed image of the grateful Black man served as a tool of control, preventing revolt, demands for justice, or reparations. A freed people who bowed in thanks posed no threat to the existing social order. By centering white benevolence and Black passivity, *Revista Illustrada*

reinforced a myth that obscured the economic and political realities of abolition, ensuring that emancipation did not translate into true equality.

The Disappearing Narrative: Post-Abolition Silence

In the years following abolition, *Revista Illustrada* gradually stopped publishing illustrations and texts about slavery and its enduring consequences. It was as if abolition had erased the problem entirely, no further discussion, no reckoning with injustice. Issue 500 epitomized this erasure, depicting whites and Blacks dancing together in harmony, celebrating freedom as a closed chapter. The issue also promoted whiteness as progress, a common racist ideology of the time. One caricature illustrated this belief in two scenes. In the first one, a Black woman wears traditional African clothing, dancing with her hands on her hips, a depiction tied to stereotypes of enslaved people. In the second frame, she reappears without her turban, her hair styled in European fashion, wearing a Western dress. The caption reinforces the idea that Blackness must be “refined” to suit white tastes: “The gossipers call Bahia a ‘café-au-lait-colored hacienda,’ always surrounded by admirers... But when Mr. Campos Salles arrived, they transformed themselves, oh, the power of art! The transfiguration was complete. Luiz Vianna almost fainted with delight.”

This imagery reinforced the myth that abolition had resolved racial inequality. Black people were expected to assimilate into whiteness, both in appearance and behavior, while the systemic oppression they faced was ignored. *Revista Illustrada*’s declining coverage of slavery’s aftermath was not an oversight; it was an active silencing, ensuring that the struggles of Black Brazilians remained invisible.

Part II

RQ2a: What controlling images rooted in racial violence were produced and perpetuated by early 20th-century Brazilian police magazines, as instruments of hegemonic media?

During the early 1900s, Brazil's mainstream media remained deeply influenced by scientific racism and distorted interpretations of evolutionary theory. These ideas were particularly prominent in criminology, which weaponized pseudoscience to reinforce racial prejudices and harmful stereotypes. As da Silva Gomes (2022) recalls, Cesare Lombroso, a doctor specializing in psychiatry and criminology, published his most famous work in 1876 and his influence endured for the next century. "In his studies, the author focused on research into the identification of criminals by means of physical and genetic aspects as a prevailing trend in the criminology of the 1800s" (da Silva Gomes, 2022, p. 135).

This kind of racist pseudo-science generated the concept of "The Delinquent Man," (Lombroso, 2020) a person born to be a criminal. By examining two police magazines from this period, we can uncover how hegemonic media constructed and propagated racialized images of control, shaping public perceptions of race and crime through deliberate, discriminatory narratives. *Vida Policial* (1925-1927) and *Arquivo Vermelho* (1918-1921) are two illustrated magazines dedicated to covering violence in Rio de Janeiro. Those were the first publications of this kind in the country, and I see them as the continuation of a tradition of exploiting violence for entertainment in the Brazilian media that started in the previous century. This section analyzes hundreds of pages filled with bodies of all colors and kinds, many of which are already lifeless and exposed. Yet only Black bodies are consistently marked by race.

When the victim or perpetrator of a crime is white, their race rarely drives the narrative. But when Black individuals are at the center of the story, violence is persistently racialized.

Those two publications made news with a white audience in mind: they present the Black individual seen by the white man (Eriksson & Åkerlund, 2023) and, consequently, defined by whiteness through its colonial images of control. The magazines routinely identify the race of individuals involved in their stories, whether Black, brown, or white. However, a clear double standard emerges in how race is framed: for Black individuals, race is often linked to criminality, implying it as an explanation for their actions. White individuals, meanwhile, are more frequently portrayed as victims, while Black individuals are disproportionately labeled as criminals. By mentioning the race of the individual next to the name on several occasions (e.g., Preto Joao), as if Black were part of the name, the core of that identity. This pattern reinforces harmful stereotypes, presenting crime as racially coded rather than addressing systemic factors.

The most recurring archetypes identified in these two publications were:

The Thief. A widespread association in *Arquivo Vermelho*, from its very first issue, is to link Black maids with crimes of theft, consistently reinforcing the color of the “thief’s” skin in news articles. *Arquivo Vermelho* (1918, Issue 1, p. 11) brings the text:

Brazilian families have a very bad habit of taking on maids whose background they don't know. Often, they give shelter in their homes to very cynical thieves, who sometimes cause great damage. But we shouldn't blame only the victims of this facility. The police and the town hall are more to blame, because they don't organize the obligatory registration of servants, so that their conduct can be recorded in their passbooks.

The article follows to mention Carmen Rosalina Pires, a “light skinned Black woman, who got her hands on the following pieces of jewelry, which she hid behind a painting in the living room: a gold bracelet watch with 13 brilliants, two gold medals, a cord, a tie pin, a wedding ring, a brooch, a pair of earrings, five silver trinkets and an alarm clock.” The texts are always accompanied by photos of the women accused of theft. Most of them are Black.

Vida Policial (1918) also repeatedly perpetuated the racist and classist trope of domestic Black workers as inherent criminals. Another example appears in Issue 15 (p. 38), which features a photo gallery of domestic servants (predominantly women) accused of stealing from their employers' homes. The magazine frames this as a public service, stating: "This section provides an important service to home security by preventing families from employing these dangerous, known vagrant women." The discourse criminalizes poverty and justifies surveillance. In Brazil at that time, it was common for employers to search their maids' purses, for example, daily, to "prevent theft."

The institution of domestic work in Brazil remains fundamentally shaped by its slavery past, representing what historian Lorena Féres da Silva Telles (2024) identifies as an incomplete transition from slavery to paid domestic labor. Her research reveals how 20th-century domestic workers were trapped in a system where wages remained so inadequate that most could not afford housing, forcing them to live with employers. This arrangement effectively reinstated 24-hour servitude. The stigma of domestic workers is laden with racism and the legacies of slavery.

The archetype of the Black thief is not limited to domestic work. Black men are also frequently portrayed as thieves. In *Arquivo Vermelho* (1918, Issue 9, p. 15), for example, one of the Black men accused of theft is referred to as "Mulatinho." In Spanish, Mulato or Mulata referred to the male offspring of a cross between a horse and a donkey or a donkey and a mare. The racist expression is still used today in Brazil, although it has become less socially acceptable. Another example of this archetype can be found in *Arquivo Vermelho* (1918, Issue 3), which features an article accompanied by a photo of 11 men accused of stealing cotton; eight of them are Black. The headline says: "uma penca de ladrões," or "a bunch of thieves" in my translation. The publication condemns the accused, even before they have gone through the due legal process.

Arquivo Vermelho (1918, Issue 6, p. 15) features the case of Leonel Silva, whose crime was stealing peppers from a market stall. “The little man couldn't resist the temptation and stole from some of the stalls while the rich march in retreat was going on. He was arrested in the act and taken to the police, where, tearful, he confessed to the crime, attributing it to the temptation of the devil.” This archetype, in addition to being a thief, refers to the infantilization of the Black man, as exemplified by the figure of The Brat in *Semana Ilustrada* during the 19th century. The connection with the devil also dehumanizes the Black man, bringing him closer to the bestial and away from his humanity.

The police magazines examined in this section actively spread fear, urging the public to remain vigilant against so-called “criminals.” *Vida Policial* (1925, Issue 4, p. 49) defends its publication of accused individuals' photographs, stating: “The photographs are printed so that the public will always remember them.” This justification appears in an article detailing the arrest of 21 men, most of them Black, on theft charges. The text describes them in dehumanizing terms: “They are thieves who, with the greatest naturalness and cynicism, invade family homes and steal whatever they can.” The magazine further shifts responsibility from law enforcement to civilians, arguing: “No matter how effective the police are, each family must practice its own prophylaxis, policing itself, staying alert and vigilant against evildoers.” The article explicitly lists the suspects' names, including racially coded pseudonyms like “Pixe” (Tar), a reference to petroleum tar, a dark, viscous byproduct of oil refining, used here to reinforce anti-Black associations with filth and inferiority. And “Luiz Sujo” (Dirty Luiz), a blatantly racist label tying Blackness to dirtiness, a common degrading trope in early 20th-century Brazil.

The Drunk. *Arquivo Vermelho* (1918, Issue 2, p. 12) brings back an archetype from the 19th century. The publication tells the story of Joaquim Sylvestre Lima, a Black fisherman who

was denied entry to a gambling bar. After being turned away, he went to a bar, got drunk, and then purchased materials from a fishing hardware store and bought dynamite. He later threw it at the bar, injuring seven people. The article includes a photo of Joaquim's face and images of the victims, all Black, shown in moments of suffering. This coverage adheres to a troubling pattern: the newspaper disproportionately reports on crimes committed by Black individuals, attributing their actions to alcohol addiction, while sensationalizing their behavior and exploiting images of suffering.

Vida Policial (1926, Issue 43, p. 31) offers a typical example of how Blackness, violence, and drunkenness were persistently linked in crime reporting. The article details the murder of Lourenço Novaes, a "mixed-race" plantation worker, who was found stabbed in the heart. The text notes that Lourenço was romantically involved with a Black woman named "Preta Maria José." His employer confessed to the killing, justifying it by claiming Lourenço became "aggressive when drunk" and posed a threat, instead of being a useful worker. Accompanying the story are two graphic images of Lourenço's corpse. The newspaper boasts of displaying the crime scene from "multiple angles," adopting a sensationalist tone that treats the violence as lurid entertainment for readers.

These publications associate crimes with alcohol addiction with frequency, harking back to practices representative of the 19th century. By representing Black people as addicted to alcohol, their productive potential in post-abolition society is automatically questioned. Black bodies are seen as bodies in service, punished disproportionately when they transgress.

The Scapegoat. *Arquivo Vermelho* (1918, Issue 3) brings the story of João da Estiva, a dark-skinned man who was sentenced to 30 years in prison for a crime he didn't commit. The case involved a politician, Mendes Tavares, who kidnapped a woman and shot her husband. João da

Estiva was present during the incident but did not participate in the violence. Despite this, Mendes Tavares was acquitted. João da Estiva received the full 30-year sentence. Due to good behavior, João was released early, but the injustice remained. The article is illustrated by a portrait of Joao da Estiva, whose profession is in his name (estivador means dock worker). He is a dark-skinned man with his head held high, looking upwards with a sorrowful countenance. This story is no exception, many other issues of *Arquivo Vermelho* feature scapegoats. While the magazine criticized the justice system for scapegoating Estiva, it also perpetuated the same pattern by framing Black men as scapegoats in other articles.

Imagine this: You're struck by a stray bullet, seek help from the police, and instead of justice, you end up in jail. This is exactly what happened to Antônio Prado, in 1918. *Arquivo Vermelho* (Issue 4, p. 8) recounts his ordeal, but with a disturbing twist: the narrative drips with debauchery and victim-blaming, turning Prado, the wounded man, into a criminal. The text, with the title "Mysterious bullet?", says:

The authorities of the Fifth District were contacted today by Antonio Prado, a 24-year-old black man who lives in Rua Visconde do Rio Branco, in Nietheroy, who told them that he had mysteriously been shot when he was passing through the alleyway of Cotovello a short while ago. Antonio Rocha is, however, a suspicious individual to the police, so, by not explaining his case sufficiently, he left the impression that he had been wounded in one of his wild adventures.

The Soulless Body. The way early 20th-century crime outlets casually reported on Black Brazilians killed by police, often using images of their bodies as pure entertainment, reveals a disturbing truth: the idea that Black lives are disposable was not just accepted, but commercialized. This dehumanization wasn't incidental. It reinforced a social construct that persists today: the notion that Black suffering is inevitable, even spectacle. One example of this representation is in *Arquivo Vermelho* (1918, Issue 4, p. 10). The article, with the title "Dating in the funeral and... razor," says: "Mauricio Alves Correa, who was wounded by the bloodthirsty fury of the gang of

[police] agents led by civil guard Joao Augusto Pereira, when he was passing along Avenida do Mangue, died today as a result of the bullets he received.” The article quickly changes focus to say that there was a former lover of the victim at the wake and some “rioters.” The publication highlights a fight at the wake, which ended with one of the men stabbing another out of jealousy for a woman. Nothing is said about the body in the middle of the wake, shown in a photo in the article, or who killed it, a policeman.

Preto Juca. *Arquivo Vermelho* and *Vida Policial* repeatedly attach racial labels directly to names (such as “Preto João”) as if “Preto (Black)” were an inherent part of the individual’s identity rather than a mere descriptor. This linguistic habit does more than just note race; it fuses Blackness with criminality, reinforcing the toxic stereotype that criminal behavior is inherent to racial identity. By framing crime this way, the media obscures deeper systemic issues (poverty, over-policing, structural racism) and instead reduces complex social realities to a crude, racialized narrative.

One example of this is in *Arquivo Vermelho* (1918, Issue 5, p. 5). The text about the murder of Antonio Correia by a man called “Preto Juca” (Black Juca) says:

The mulato Antônio Correa, a 32-year-old married man who lives in the place called Buraco de Ouro, in Jacarepaguá, had an argument a long time ago with the troublemaker, who goes by the alias of Juca Preto, and as he was afraid of fighting with him, he vowed to take revenge at the first opportunity.

A photo of the corpse of Antonio, a Black man, accompanies the text. Here we have an example of two types of racist archetypes: the murderous Black man who carries the race in his name and the soulless Black body displayed for entertainment.

The “Strange Fruit”. In *Arquivo Vermelho* (1918, Issue 6, p. 17), a harrowing account unfolds: Manuel de Souza, a Black man, becomes the target of an attempted lynching after allegedly stabbing his friend, Raphael, to death. The article frames the killing as a grotesque

performance of masculinity — Manuel, described as “effeminate,” supposedly murdered Raphael to “prove his virility.” The reporting sensationalizes the violence, labeling the stabbing a “cannibalistic scene” and emphasizing the crowd’s reaction: “Dozens of onlookers, initially stunned, soon surged forward to lynch him.” Though the police intervened, saving Manuel from the mob only to deliver him to imprisonment, the narrative lingers on the spectacle. A picture of Manuel illustrates the piece: his head hangs heavy, eyes fixed on the ground, empty, avoiding the camera’s gaze. The magazine frequently publishes photos of lynching victims, even when avoiding the term “lynching” itself. Instead, it often uses milder terms like “beating” to describe these violent acts.

The Devil. *Arquivo Vermelho* (1918, Issue 8, p. 13) exemplifies a pervasive 20th-century media trope: the “demonic Black man,” a racist archetype specially fueled by anti-African religious bigotry. The article depicts a group of Black practitioners of Candomblé (an African-derived religion) imprisoned behind bars, their faith criminalized. Throughout the report, the text employs openly racist language, reducing devotees to pejorative caricatures and framing spiritual Afro-Brazilian tradition as inherently deviant. It says:

In Terra Nova, at house number 33 on Gaspar Street, the two aforementioned characters have long resided. It remains unconfirmed whether they are legally married. What is certain is that both are practitioners of Candomblé, a practice that has drawn a numerous group of n***** (negrada, in Portuguese), following from the immediate neighborhood. The neighbors constantly protested against the immoral scenes unfolding there: acts of sorcery and witchcraft, frenzied drumming, and abominable songs.

One day, the upstanding authorities of the 20th district resolved to put an end to such affairs, dispatching a police raid. The Candomblé is described as “from hell,” the objects as “bizarre,” and the Candomblé followers are labeled “creatures.” The tone is one of demonization. This example vividly illustrates the enduring link between past and present religious racism in

Brazil. In 2024 alone, attacks on African-derived religions surged by 80% (CNN, 2025), demonstrating how historical prejudices continue to manifest violently today.

Even children were not spared from dehumanizing racial stereotypes. *Vida Policial* (1925, Issue 40, p. 27) features a photograph of a Black boy, appearing no older than 12, accused of assault, with text that reads: “As if possessed by the devil, this boy committed violent acts in Christiano Ottoni Square near D. Pedro II Station, attacking passersby without provocation.” The photo caption reinforces this framing by labeling him “the precocious troublemaker, Antonio de Oliveira.” The article concludes ominously, stating the police would determine “a convenient fate” for the child.

Arquivo Vermelho (1921, Issue 65) powerfully illustrates how Black children have long been framed as threats. The photograph shows a group of Black boys detained for living on the streets - some standing, others sitting on the ground. The haunting caption “Where will they go?” underscores society's abandonment of these children while feigning concern. This image is particularly significant because it inverts the “children as future” narrative. While Brazilian society romanticizes childhood as the nation's future, these Black boys are marked as problems to be removed. Like many archival photos of marginalized people, their individual stories and fates remain unknown, reducing them to criminal types.

The Brat. The publications analyzed very often call adult Black men “moleque” (brat). The term both infantilizes and dehumanizes the people represented. *Arquivo Vermelho* (1919, Issue 20, p. 11) presents the case of Ventura Bezerra da Silva (“The Brat” Ventura), a Black former police sergeant accused of murdering Emília da Silva, a white woman from a prominent family. The publication's coverage employs overt racism using dehumanizing language. It repeatedly describes Ventura as “a repellent Negro” and “miserable Negro.” The text claims he possessed

“bestiality” and “no sense of humor, morals, or humanity.” The news labels him “Black in soul and skin color,” implying inherent corruption.

There is also class and racial bias, contrasting the “important” white victim with the demonized Black suspect. The publication expresses shock that a “disgusting Negro” could have romantic relationships. “Lately, it seems incredible that...this thug should have mistresses: the thug, in addition to the one who was the victim of his...ferocity, had another mistress, an old housewife.”

The Brat is a recurring archetype. *Vida Policial* (1925, Issue 1, p. 41) features an article titled “The Ramos Crime,” covering the murder of a shopkeeper and naming two Black men as suspects: The Brat Gimba and Álvaro Spindola. Gimba is referred to as “crioulo”, a term with deeply racist connotations, and is shown crying, his gaze distant, avoiding the camera. Spindola, meanwhile, is described as “cold-blooded and cynical,” appearing stern-faced in a tie. Though neither man had been convicted in court, the article frames their exposure as a matter of “collective defense,” effectively delivering a verdict before the justice system had its say.

The Beast. *Arquivo Vermelho* (1919, Issue 20) revives a dehumanizing 19th-century archetype: “The Beast.” Page 8 features Antonio Manoel Mucunã, a Black man characterized as having “bad instincts” and allegedly delighting in evil. The text describes his imprisonment in racist terms: “Moral abandonment left him brutalized - as black as his cell walls. The iron shackles on his feet failed to reform him, instead creating an irascible enemy of men. He became a caged beast, degraded by prison garb that bound his flesh and fueled his revolt against society. The law punished his body but never sought to redeem his soul.” Antonio, like so many other Black men in the newspapers, is portrayed as an inherent criminal, as if it's in his DNA to kill. Religious

morality is also at the center of the narrative, his soul needs to be purified because it is “black and dirty.”

Arquivo Vermelho (1921, Issue 66, p. 5), brings another crime and The Beast archetype is in the center of the narrative, a Black man accused of raping and murdering a 16-year-old teenager: “In everyday life, the robust and feminine forms of the energetic but shy teenager inflamed the bestial instincts of the hideous Black man.” The publication is broadly racist, going so far as to call the perpetrator a “monster” and a “beast.”

The Fatal Type. From its debut issue, *Vida Policial* (1925) demonstrated a clear agenda of criminalizing Black people. The magazine dedicated three pages to a feature titled “O typo dos assassinos” (“The Types of Killers”), which presented 12 archetypes of so-called “dangerous criminals,” almost all with Black facial traits. The article’s opening paragraph claimed: “A man is not born a criminal, but what is indisputable is that there are fatal types, individuals whose misfortune pursues to the end of their lives.” Blatantly targeting racial stereotypes, the magazine urged readers to treat these archetypes as a public safety measure, advising: “Cut out these pictures, carry them in your pocket, and when closing any deal, ensure the person does not resemble these types” (*Vida Policial*, 1925, Issue 1, p. 7). This directive framed racial profiling as “collective defense,” reinforcing prejudiced notions of criminality while encouraging active discrimination through facial recognition, a technology that has been challenged in recent times for reproducing racist patterns.

The magazine categorizes criminals into distinct “types,” each allegedly tied to Greek deities: Apollo (the Sun), Mercury, Venus, Diana (the Moon), Earth, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. According to *Vida Policial*, these associations supposedly reveal a person’s criminal nature. Some of the descriptions related to Black archetypes are:

- Type 1: Depicts a Black man labeled as “taciturn, foolish, envious, and spiteful,” with a “vengeful and ferocious” disposition. He is accused of “cold, calculated cruelty,” allegedly premeditating crimes and executing them stealthily.
- Type 2: Described as a man driven by “bestial, violent passions”, motivated by desire and revenge, with a “carnal appetite for violence.”
- Type 6: Broadly condemned as “vagabonds, begging in the streets, threatening to rob churches.”
- Type 9: Demonized as “thieves of maidens” who commit crimes “with the greatest cold blood,” and are even likened to “anthropophagic monsters, a hybrid of hyena and pig.” The text grotesquely claims: “This infernal monster will strangle and dismember its victims with its own hands while their bodies still throb.”

These classifications reinforce racist pseudoscience, dehumanizing marginalized groups while justifying discriminatory policing under the guise of “criminal typology.” Taking into account the fact that Brazil is an extremely mixed-race society and that more than half of the population is Black, a large proportion of Brazilian men could be read as one of these archetypes and identified as criminals on the streets.

Othello. The publications frequently depict Black men through reductive stereotypes: jealous, envious, and impulsive, reinforcing the racist “Othello” archetype. A telling example appears in *Arquivo Vermelho* (1918, Issue 5), which recounts a femicide case: “Black in color, they [the couple] had the greatest whiteness in their actions, feelings, and ideas. For him, fidelity was a sacred thing, but knowing the frivolity of women, he had always been wary of it.” Here, the perpetrator is paradoxically framed as “the loving Black man,” attributing to him “white” virtues like devotion and gentleness, while still blaming the murder on his inherent distrust of women.

This narrative directly echoes *Vida Policial's* practice of labeling Black male perpetrators as “Othellos,” invoking Shakespeare's tragic character. In Othello, the protagonist, a Black Venetian general, is manipulated into murdering his white wife, Desdemona, due to unfounded jealousy. The magazines weaponized this trope to pathologize Black masculinity, framing jealousy as an innate racial trait. It also reinforces respectability politics, suggesting Black men could only gain humanity through “white” virtues.

Archives of Pain

The crime magazines *Vida Policial* (1902-1922) and *Arquivo Vermelho* (1920s-1950s) served as powerful instruments of hegemonic media in Brazil, systematically racializing criminality through both imagery and text. These publications played a pivotal role in constructing and reinforcing a national consciousness that persistently associated Blackness with criminal behavior. Their coverage consistently pathologized Black communities by attributing criminal acts to essentialized notions of racial “degeneracy” - including alcoholism and supposed “natural impulsiveness” - while ignoring broader socioeconomic factors. This approach transformed violence and racism into a form of mass entertainment, establishing a disturbing media tradition that would endure throughout Brazilian history.

Part III - Black Media and the Second Abolition

RQ2b. How did 20th-century Black Brazilian media construct visual counter-narratives of liberation to challenge dominant racial hierarchies?

While hegemonic media systematically equated Blackness with criminality, Black-owned publications actively worked to dismantle these stereotypes and reconstruct Black identity in the 20th century. Newspapers and magazines served as crucial platforms for the emerging Black movement, which framed its mission as achieving a “second abolition”, a term commonly used in

the pages of the black media analyzed in this dissertation and routinely repeated by Addias Nascimento. This time abolition targets symbolic and representational oppression rather than legal slavery. Central to this project was the strategic celebration of African heritage and diasporic identity. This section included the newspapers *Getulino* (1923 - 1926); *Senzala* (1946), *Quilombo: Black Life, Problems and Aspirations* (1948 - 1950), and *Abibiman* (1995 - 1999). Together, these publications serve as valuable examples of key discourses in 20th-century Black media. As outlined in Chapter 3 — where I detail the selection criteria and historical context for each title — the chosen publications span Brazil's post-abolition era, democratic period, and post-dictatorship years. Among them are some of the country's first Black newspapers. Rich in imagery, they openly advocate for the liberation of the Black population from both symbolic and structural oppression. The liberation imagery most prominently featured in these publications included:

The Citizen. The Black press in this study fiercely contested the systemic exclusion of Afro-Brazilians from national identity. Even post-abolition, Black people, often treated as foreigners, faced government efforts to deport them to Africa alongside their descendants. *Quilombo* (1949, Issue 3) directly challenged this erasure in a seminal manifesto by Abdias Nascimento, published in the context of expectations about Brazil's 1950 elections. Nascimento's text declared: "Since May 13, 1888, the Negro has transitioned from slave to citizen, endowed with the right to vote and govern. Yet we ask: Has this man, who bled, toiled, and died to build Brazil, ever truly held a voice in its politics? Has his influence matched his numbers or his sacrifice? The answer is no."

Nascimento exposed how poverty and engineered ignorance, legacies of slavery, blocked Black Brazilians from exercising citizenship. The essay marked a watershed: For the first time, the Black demand for political participation was framed not as plea, but as a rightful claim to

belonging. This was more than electoral advocacy; it was the radical assertion of a national identity. By declaring “the Black man is not a foreigner, he is a citizen,” Nascimento dismantled the myth of Brazil’s racial democracy, insisting that Blackness was inseparable from Brazilianness itself. A photo of a Black woman with her head held high accompanies the text. The photograph, faded with time, is a black-and-white close-up that accentuates the woman’s striking features: her prominent nose, full lips, large eyes, and naturally curly hair. The image takes up the entire first page of *Quilombo*. The choice of a woman’s image (rather than a man’s) in an issue demanding citizenship for Black Brazilians is striking. Yet it aligns with the magazine’s focus on celebrating Black artists: the woman on the cover appears to be on a theatrical stage, subtly linking the fight for citizenship to the broader right to exist fully, not just in legal terms, but in cultural and artistic expression.

The Sacred. The Black publications analyzed in this sample are strongly committed to images of religious liberation, which combat the prejudice of the hegemonic media. In its pages, using texts and images, the Black media connects African-Brazilian religions to the sacred, distancing itself from the “demonic” view imposed by newspapers of the past. *Quilombo* (1948, Issue 1, p. 4) includes photographs and an article titled “How a Candomblé Party Unfolds,” documenting celebrations of the Afro-Brazilian religion in Recife (PE), Bahia, and Rio de Janeiro. The piece features a Black man dressed in white, identified as a Filho de Santo (a devotee in Candomblé). It also brings an illustration depicting participants in sacred garments, along with ritual objects. There is also a striking image of syncretism: a Black man, eyes closed in serene focus, plays a drum in front of dual religious symbols: Yemanjá, the Afro-Brazilian orixá (a deities of Candomblé), and Our Lady of the Rosary, her Catholic counterpart. In the background, two people hold each other, further emphasizing community and spiritual connection.

Years later, the magazine *Abibiman* (1994, Issue 4) continued to champion themes of Black socio-spiritual liberation. The issue featured celebrations of Afro-Brazilian religions and highlighted an interview where influential theologian Leonardo Boff reflected on Black spirituality:

Christianity should embrace the practices of Candomblé. Black religions hold some of the greatest lessons in the civilization this country has known. I look upon every Black person with deep respect, for divinity resides in their bodies, in their thought, yet it is constantly denied to them. They are labeled “lazy,” when in truth, they were the only ones who worked in this country.

The passage underscores Boff’s critique of colonial Catholicism while affirming the spiritual and cultural wisdom of Afro-Brazilian traditions.

The Artist. The analyzed publications celebrate Afro-Brazilian rhythms, such as samba, côco, and maracatu, as vital expressions of Black Brazilian liberation. *Quilombo*, *Abibiman*, and *Senzala* highlight how these musical traditions embody cultural pride, spirituality, and resistance, but above all, the beauty and enjoyment of life. For example, *Quilombo* (1949, Issue 2, p. 4) spotlights maracatu through the lens of a samba school, a cultural collective that preserves Afro-Brazilian music, religiosity, and festivity during Carnival. The article, which contains text and photographs of Black people dressed for carnival and holding drums, describes how the Unidos de Duque de Caxias Samba School debuted with a maracatu-themed performance, honoring this northeastern folk tradition. Key figures like the “King,” “Queen,” and “Doll” take center stage, alongside roles such as the “priestess,” “vassals,” and “slaves,” all performing in a “poor but well-kept space,” shown in photographs. Adjacent to this piece, another report depicts a samba circle, where participants “evoked the samba,” blending celebration with reverence. These portrayals reinforce a powerful theme: Black liberation is expressed through music, spirituality, and collective joy. Their music (samba, maracatu, etc.) isn’t just entertainment but a liturgy, invoking orixás, channeling communal strength, and baptizing spaces in cultural defiance.

In every issue, *Quilombo* showcases Black individuals in the arts, including painters, poets, dancers, classical musicians, actors, and actresses, as well as children dancing ballet or creating sculptures. For Black media, this represents a “second abolition,” a liberation from oppressive representations that have historically depicted Black people as brutish and intellectually inferior.

As *Quilombo* (1950, Issue 10, p. 3) asserts:

Black people in Brazil are becoming increasingly aware of their place in society, and they are doing so through culture, a vital gateway... Important testimonies remind white people that they have much to learn from Black voices... The global movement of Black consciousness progresses steadily, rooted in an ancient tradition born from close ties to the earth, blood, and struggle. Today’s Black culture embraces sexuality as a source of knowledge and a key to unraveling life’s mysteries, breaking free from past subjugation. It now forms part of a sacred ritual, elevating humanity’s connection to the divine. Through mimicry, dance, and music, Black artistry becomes a powerful force in the drama of initiation and fulfillment.

The pages of *Quilombo* and *Senzala* also served as a platform to celebrate the Teatro Experimental do Negro (TEN), a groundbreaking Brazilian theater company founded in 1944 by Abdias Nascimento. TEN sought to elevate Afro-Brazilian culture and identity while combating racism through theater and education. *Quilombo* hailed TEN as a civilizing force in Brazilian society, advancing racial equality by dismantling stereotypes and liberating Black people from the metaphorical chains of slavery. TEN shifted Black artists and their work from the margins to the center of national culture.

A powerful passage from *Quilombo* (1950, Issue 10, p. 11) brings a photo of Vanoye Aikens, a Black male dancer, captured mid-performance: shirtless, his gaze turned defiantly upward, left arm arched in a dynamic pose. His haughty expression and muscular poise radiate both artistry and rebellion. Alongside this image, *Quilombo* (1950, Issue 10, p. 11) declares: “The Teatro Experimental do Negro is an avant-garde movement dedicated to the cultural and economic uplift of Black men and women. Within its ranks, a conscious reimagining of Brazil’s racial ideology is unfolding, offering the world a pioneering model for addressing racial injustice.” The

dancer's body becomes political text. His posture, proud, unapologetic, demanding visibility, mirrors the movement's mission: to dismantle oppressive narratives through radical Black performance.

The dancer's posture also embodies the Black movement's defiance. At a time when merely naming racism was dismissed as "divisive," his radiant performance rebukes the myth of racial harmony, asserting Black pride as both celebration and resistance. Near Aiken's picture, *Quilombo* stated: Blackness is not hatred. It is not division. It is subjectivity. An experience. "A vital force that integrates into Brazil's social fabric, enriching it with profound humanity." The article further reflects: "Blackness, with its magic, its exuberance, its passion, sensuality, and mystery, has always pulsed through Brazilian culture. Yet only now, under global pressure, is it emerging into full consciousness, asserting its true visage."

Abibiman also fosters a positive Black identity through art and culture, deeply rooted in African traditions. *Abibiman* (1995, Issue 9) highlights figures like the "samba de côco (coconut samba)" players, illustrating how playing the drum symbolizes rebirth, transforming from an enslaved, marginalized existence into an empowered artist. *Abibiman* (1995, Issue 3) features Luiz Calixto, a master of coconut samba circles, whose work embodies cultural revival. The article, titled "Rebirth of the Coconut," states: "Long neglected by public authorities, coconut samba is experiencing a revival in Arcoverde, thanks to support from FUNDARPE. Luiz Calixto and Cicero, two masters of the local coconut circles, are reorganizing to bring this tradition back to the public." The piece concludes with a powerful reflection: "Until we embrace our origins, overcoming the racial and economic discrimination faced by Black people will remain an ongoing struggle."

The Movie Star. *Quilombo* (Issue 3, p. 1–2) introduced a bold new archetype of Black liberation: the cinematic Black star. Featuring Ugandan actress Eseza Makumbi, lead of the film *Atavismo*, which was about to premiere in Brazil at the time, the newspaper challenged reductive portrayals of Blackness in the media. The accompanying text declared: “The Black individual is not merely a ‘checkmark’ for diversity or an exoticized side character, but a vessel of profound, universal humanity. We honor Uganda for gifting the world a rare beauty: Eseza Makumbi, a radiant symbol of pride for all people of color.” *Quilombo* (Issue 1, p. 1) also celebrates Ruth de Souza “the great actress,” and highlights her film “Violent Land.” In the photo, Ruth appears with her head held high in a ball gown.

By spotlighting movie stars like Makumbi and Souza, during the 1950’s, *Quilombo* did more than celebrate actresses; it showcased a Black movie star in many other opportunities, redefining the value of Black and female protagonism from Africa to Brazil. This was a deliberate counter to racist tropes, asserting that Black actors belonged not as marginal figures, but as complex protagonists worthy of the global stage.

The Educated. The archetype of The Educated Black person appears several times in *Quilombo*, *Senzala*, *Getulino*, and *Abibiman*. This character was built up in the 20th century Black press from the start. Among the images published in *Getulino* (1923 – 1926), one of the most striking was that of the educated Black man, a symbol of dignity, progress, and resistance. In *Getulino* (1925, Issue 64, p. 1), journalist Gervasio de Moraes reflected on this powerful imagery, depicting three Black men in suits and ties under the headline: “The Black Man in the 20th Century.” The men are identified as Jose Augusto Marques, “an exquisite poet of whom we will publish a valuable autograph in the next issue,” Lino Pinto Guedes, one of *Getulino*’s founders, and Gervasio De Moraes himself, the author of the text.

Moraes contrasted the joyful determination of Black Brazilians in the post-abolition era with the pessimism that followed May 13, 1888 (the date of slavery's abolition in Brazil). Rather than seeking revenge, he argued, Black communities embraced education as their weapon: a "moralizing battle" to prove their intellectual and civic worth. Their feather pen is compared to a moral sword. The mission of *Getulino* is described as the "moral emancipation of men who had been enslaved until 36 years ago." Moraes directly connects education to liberation: "The hard-working spirit of the Black Brazilian found in education the only way... to demonstrate his ability and his civic and moral warmth." Moraes argues that, after abolition, Black families prioritized schooling, offering "further assistance to their country," in the face of what the publication defined as a "titanic force," which is racism. Moraes observes that, while spoken words fade, written knowledge endures across generations. He connects Black progress through labor (from "car repair shops to the creak of the pen on paper") as signaling an unstoppable march toward equality. Moraes argues: "Every day that passes is a glorious step, every year a hope." In *Getulino*, the "humanitarian and patriotic" abolition movement is portrayed as only the beginning of a broader struggle for recognition. The portrayal of The Educated Black men in *Getulino* defied racist stereotypes, asserting that intellect, not brute strength, defined Black potential. Moraes' words framed education as both a personal triumph and a collective duty, and the only path to humanization.

The inaugural issue of *Senzala* (1946) paired its manifesto with a portrait of symbolic revolution: A young Black man, impeccably dressed in a bow tie and dress shirt, grips a staff like a wise man's scepter. His broad smile and upturned chin, captured in the photograph's grained texture, visibly embody the publication's creed: "The Black Brazilian's struggle is primarily educational, with economics as its secondary concern" (Issue 1, p. 11). Here, professional attire

becomes armor; the staff, a symbol of authority. The image doesn't just illustrate the text, it performs the claim that education is emancipation. This philosophy also came to life on page 28, where a vibrant "Graduation Party" photograph shows elegantly dressed Black couples dancing in celebration. The edition meticulously honors each professional school graduate by name, particularly those who have completed dressmaking programs. By valuing both academic and vocational training, Senzala championed a comprehensive vision of education as empowerment, one that acknowledged diverse forms of knowledge and skill as equally valid routes to liberation.

The Elegant. *Getulino* (1923 – 1926) also frequently celebrated José do Patrocínio, an abolitionist, journalist, and intellectual, as the embodiment of elegance, intellect, and civic virtue. His legacy defied racial prejudice, proving that true admiration was earned not by wealth or skin color, but by character, intelligence, and service to society. Under the title "Good Example," the text affirmed that:

What inspires admiration and sympathy is not money, not color, not social status, but one's intellect, moral conduct, love for country, and dedication to the community. Patrocínio exemplified these ideals, becoming revered in Brazil and abroad for his contributions to abolition and Black empowerment.

Getulino (1924, Issue 63, p. 1) lamented how Brazil's historical narratives excluded Black achievement: "It seems everything conspires to erase the deeds that honor and uplift the descendants of Africa in this land." and "The most pivotal moments in the history of Black Brazilians are absent from books and newspapers." This erasure, the article argued, denied Black citizens their rightful place in the nation's memory, a silence *Getulino* sought to disrupt, giving Black individuals a "good example" to look at, when they needed representation.

The image accompanying the text is simple: the close-up black and white portrait shows José do Patrocínio with a serious countenance and dressed in a suit and tie. This image is not free of nuance. The concept of elegance has long been tied to Eurocentric and colonial standards.

During the 19th century, Europe exported its fashion, etiquette, and aesthetic ideals worldwide. This cultural dominance led colonized populations, including Black and Indigenous communities, to internalize European notions of refinement, often associating sophistication with whiteness. Frantz Fanon (1952) critically examines this phenomenon in *The Fact of Blackness*, analyzing how colonized individuals absorbed and reproduced European standards as a form of psychological assimilation. Even in early Black newspapers and periodicals (such as Brazil's *Getulino*), images of Black men in suits and ties were common, serving the dual purpose of representing Black individuals as dignified and assimilated into mainstream society.

By the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Black press increasingly challenged assimilationist myths, celebrating African heritage through imagery of traditional attire and religious practices, now framed as markers of Brazilian elegance. A striking example appears in *Quilombo* (1948, Issue 1, p. 2), featuring an article by Rachel de Queiroz, then one of Brazil's most prominent intellectuals — and a white woman — who documented the exclusion of Black people from beauty salons, elite clubs, schools, and workplaces.

Queiroz exposes whiteness as a form of property, gatekeeping access to social spaces. Her conclusion is damning: “The Black man, with or without a tie, is always Black. Neither money nor education will lift the barriers before him, those named here, and those left unspoken.” This moment captures a pivot in Black media: where earlier activism emphasized respectability and assimilation, now the press paired blunt structural analysis (like Queiroz's) with unapologetic displays of African identity.

The Joyful. In the newspaper *Quilombo* (1948–1950), Abdias Nascimento sought to foster Black self-awareness and pride among Brazil's Black population. In the first issue's editorial, titled “Nós (We)” (1948, p. 1), he declares:

We step forward, boldly and proudly, to confront those who assume, whether naively or maliciously, that we are inventing a problem. Racial discrimination in Brazil is an undeniable reality (Senator Hamilton Nogueira). Yet QUILOMBO's mission is not solely to oppose those who deny our rights, but rather to remind, or even reveal to, Black people themselves their rightful claim to life and culture.

Nascimento defines culture as infused with African heritage, expressed through art, poetry, thought, fiction, and music. This archetype has a lot in common with The Artist. However, the focus on joy warrants a separate label. "It is the ethnic essence of Brazil's most marginalized group. Yet it is increasingly dismissed, mocked by advocates of 'whitening,' these so-called 'aristocrats' who ignore how ethnic, cultural, religious, and political pluralism strengthens a nation." Nascimento aimed to showcase Brazil's "creative Black man and woman", not merely figures of amusement, but people who create joy and meaning for others and themselves collectively.

The first edition of *Quilombo* highlights numerous examples of this archetype. Among them is an image of a Black man dressed as a clown, a small, simple photograph of an aging figure in makeup and a hat, with a large smile on his face. This is Benjamim de Oliveira, the father of Brazilian clowns. Born to enslaved parents, he was the first Black clown in Brazil. The text celebrates Ironides Rodrigues for writing the artist's biography, contrasting Benjamim's "difficult life" with his vibrant nights on Brazil's streets, mandolin or cavaquinho in hand, spreading joy. It is deeply symbolic that a Black man, so often portrayed in mainstream media as violent or dangerous, appears in Black media as a joyful artist, dedicated to spreading happiness. This contrast is powerful: despite the pain he carries, the scars of slavery's legacy, and the weight of collective trauma, he stands as a figure of resilience and joy.

Senzala (1946) also reinforces the archetype of the Joyful Black Man. The newspaper defined its mission as the "social valorization" of Black Brazilians, striving for the "social rehabilitation of the Black man", a transformation that began with reclaiming their image. The very first issue (*Senzala*, 1946, Issue 1) makes this mission clear through a powerful visual

contrast: the word “Senzala” (a reference to slave quarters) appears alongside a portrait of a well-dressed Black man smiling upward, wearing a hat, bow tie, and suit. The man is Bill Robinson, a famous American dancer, in the movie *Storm of Rhythms*. Issue 1 ends with an image of Jose Silva, from the Teatro Experimental do Negro, in the ballet “Feiticeiro o Congo,” which celebrates Brazil's African roots. This deliberate imagery reconstructs Black identity, moving from historical suffering to present-day dignity and joy. The newspaper's manifesto declares (*Senzala*, 1946, p.1):

SENZALA summons its readers to fight for the uplift of a people whose collective existence has been defined by oppression, ignorance, poverty, basement dwellings, and the ravages of tuberculosis, all while the nation turns a blind eye... SENZALA calls for an intimate battle against the repression of Blackness, to walk among the masses, share their anguish, and demand the justice they deserve.

Mulata Queen or Pixie Doll. A recurring (and critically layered) archetype in the analyzed publications is the Black beauty queen, a figure that invites both celebration and scrutiny. The newspaper *Getulino* actively promoted Black beauty through contests, celebrating Black women's “grace and intellect.” One feature (*Getulino*, 1923, Issue 12, p. 1-2) showcases six contestants, with the winner, Lais de Moraes, described as “beautiful, delicate, and honorable, with shapely hands.” In her interview, Lais reveals herself as a devoted daughter and avid reader. She prioritizes caring for her mother over romantic relationships, values elegance and thoughtfully discusses her fashion preferences. Although her exact age isn't stated, the article describes Lais as having “a woman's soul in a girl's body.” This portrait highlights Lais' refinement and literary passion, qualities rarely acknowledged in Black women by mainstream media of the era. The newspaper has made a tradition of Black beauty contests. *Getulino* (1924, Issue 29, p. 1) featured a photo of Petronilha Gomes dos Santos, described as “a bearer of rare gifts of spirit and heart, she won the beauty contest by a large number of votes.” *Getulino* (1924, Issue 46, p. 1) crowned Lo Andrade as its beauty contest winner. Below her photo is the information that she is the niece of the newspaper's owners.

Black beauty contests also emerged as a significant feature in Black media throughout the mid-20th century, often reflecting the era's complex racial politics. A 1948 issue of *Quilombo* (Issue 1, p. 6) exemplifies this duality by celebrating Mercedes Batista, a talented dancer from the Municipal Theater's corps de ballet, while bestowing upon her the problematic title "Queen of the Mulatas." As this analysis has noted, the term "mulata" carries dehumanizing connotations, reducing Black identity to fractions of humanity. While such terminology was commonplace in early 20th-century Brazil, when discussions of racial identity were barely part of public discourse, contemporary understanding rightfully rejects this oppressive language.

Quilombo (1949, Issue 2, p. 1) also depicts six elegantly dressed Black women, adorned with jewelry and styled hair, smiling for the camera. The caption identifies them as contestants in a Black beauty pageant, with the winner, Miss Maria Tereza, positioned on the far right as the year's "Boneca de Pixe (Tar Doll)," another term problematic for comparing blackness to the rest of oil, called pixe (tar) in Brazil. In its third edition, *Quilombo* features a photo of Agostinha Reis with the caption: "The beautiful pixe doll [tar doll] who dances macumba like no one else had her birthday on the 18th of this month. QUILOMBO joins in the tributes paid to her by her friends and admirers." The use of the expression "tar doll", apparently, is affectionate and not derogatory.

In *Quilombo* (1949, Issue 3, p. 12), beauty is framed as a form of "social distinction," a means of aesthetic and social valorization for Black women. The magazine actively encouraged women with "cinnamon or jaboticaba-colored skin" (referencing the deep black hue of the Brazilian jaboticaba fruit) to embrace and assert their beauty. The use of terms like "Mulata Queen" and "Pixe Doll" raises questions about reclamation versus reinforcement of problematic labels. Is this an act of subversion, a deliberate inversion of derogatory terms, much like the magazine *Senzala*'s defiant embrace of a word tied to slavery? Or does it risk perpetuating

reductive stereotypes? This tension mirrors broader debates in Black cultural representation, where visibility often alternates between empowerment and reproduction of racist and sexist patterns.

The Feminine. *Quilombo* (1949, Issue 3, p. 12) features a photograph of six Black women seated in a nightclub, elegantly dressed and waiting for dance partners. The caption reads: “Women in the Elite are like grass,” and is loaded with irony. “Elite” refers to a renowned Rio nightclub for “people of color”, celebrated for hosting “the city’s colorful bohemian elite.” The comparison of women to “grass” (a plant that grows abundantly anywhere) satirizes the club’s lively, flirtatious atmosphere, framing it as a “playground” where men could easily find partners. While the image celebrates Black sociability in elite spaces, the caption’s casual sexism reveals the magazine’s male-centric perspective. Black women here are depicted as accessible and plentiful, reinforcing gendered dynamics rather than their individuality or agency. This moment captures a tension: even in progressive Black media, women’s representation often catered to male audiences, highlighting how far Black women still were from controlling their own narratives.

While less frequent, voices advocating for women's liberation did emerge in these publications. Even in 1946, *Senzala* was confronting the sexist stereotype of women as mere ornaments. In the article “Something Feminine”, by Sofia de Campos (*Senzala*, 1946, Issue 1, p. 21), the newspaper boldly asserts: “A woman’s role in society and in life today is nothing less than a testament to her strength and dignity. Modern demands, economic, moral, and material, require her full participation. It is only right, then, that she claims her freedom.”

The piece critiques regressive attitudes: “Some believe that, despite societal progress, women freed from paternal control should resign themselves to being playthings, pets, or mere vessels for reproduction. But the world does not belong to men alone, it belongs to women too,

and their right to happiness is just as vital.” The article concludes with a call to action: “Men must shed their selfishness and recognize women’s fundamental right to liberty as equal human beings.”

The Model Family. *Quilombo* (1949, Issue 4, p. 1-2) introduces a powerful new archetype: the thriving Black family, embodied by the Trindades. Solano Trindade, 41, is a multi talented artist from Pernambuco, in the Northeast of Brazil. He is pictured holding one of his sculptures. Described as “a poet in both word and life”, he gazes at the camera with quiet pride. Beside him stands his wife, Margarida, “a fellow dreamer from Paraíba”, her posture radiating dignity. It is a portrait of Black excellence.

A second photo captures the entire family (parents and all four children) beaming with joy. The caption highlights their eldest, 12-year-old Raquel, who is “already making waves at a youth writers’ congress with her thesis, which critiques children’s media.” A third image centers on their son, Liberto (meaning “Freed” in English), age 5, grinning widely amid neighborhood friends, a testament to the Trindades’ open and welcoming home. The text notes: “Solano doesn’t believe in miracles, yet lives one daily: a family united by love, creativity, and resilience.” This feature challenges stereotypes of Black family life, portraying artistic legacy, parents as cultural torchbearers, children excelling intellectually, and a home radiating warmth. The Trindades embody a counter-narrative to racist tropes of dysfunctional Black families.

The “Erê”. In every issue, *Abibiman* includes a Black Beauty section, often highlighting Black children, a deliberate reclamation of their image from harmful stereotypes that historically portrayed them as violent, dangerous, or even demonic. To cite just a few examples, *Abibiman* (1995, Issue 2, p. 3) displays a black-and-white photo of three children laughing and playing with balloons. Dressed in African-print clothing, one wears dreadlocks, radiating joy and cultural pride. Another issue (*Abibiman*, 1995, Issue 9, p. 1) depicts Black children dressed as angels, with a baby

symbolizing the Black baby Jesus at the center. The caption declares: “Christmas! And God continues to become human, like us.”

Abibiman extended its celebration of Black childhood beyond Brazil, honoring children across the African diaspora. A powerful 1997 cover (Issue 22, p. 1) features two striking images: a Colombian girl with traditional African locks and bead-adorned hair alongside a Zairian baby joyfully playing a drum. Beneath these vibrant portraits, activist Jurema Batista’s words challenge systemic racism: “Society is perverse, it pushes Black teenagers into crime before they have a gun in their hand, they are already marginalized.” This contrast between the children’s innocence and Batista’s warning encapsulates *Abibiman*’s dual mission: celebrating diasporic beauty while confronting the prejudices that threaten Black futures worldwide.

Also, the inaugural issue of *Senzala* (1946, p. 30) proudly displays a photograph of three healthy Black infants, winners of a child wellness contest organized by the Women's Civic Crusade. The caption declares them “Champions of Health,” a powerful counter-narrative that celebrates both the vitality of Black children and the strength of Black motherhood.

I named the archetype that represents the Black child in Black media as The “Erê,” after African religions. In Umbanda, the Erê is a childlike spiritual entity, characterized as playful, innocent, and wise. These spirits, believed to bridge the divine (Orixás) and practitioners, embody joy, healing, and guidance while retaining the purity of those not yet fully incarnated. The figure of the child, the Erês, in Black media represents a better future deeply rooted in its past, full of life possibilities and joy.

Conclusion

Communication technologies evolved with each century, and so did the possibilities for images of control and liberation. Throughout history, dominant media have worked to confine

Black existence through limiting archetypes - The Beast, The Faceless Child, The Thief, The Fatal Type, and so many others. These dehumanizing images persist through constant remediation: from 19th century racist caricatures to 20th century sensational crime photos. This temporal analysis establishes an examination of descent. The lifeless body of Antonio Prado photographed and exposed in *Arquivo Vermelho* carries the weight of history of previously unnamed Black bodies in a long lineage of dehumanizing imagery, echoing the racist caricatures that filled 19th century illustrated magazines.

As media technologies advance, so does the power of these harmful narratives. Where mainstream media insists on portraying Black men as inherently criminal, Black media counters by celebrating our full humanity, as artists, intellectuals, and joyful beings. This contrast reveals how different media wield technology: one to restrict, the other to liberate possibilities for Black Brazilian representation.

The rise of Brazil's first illustrated magazines coincided with a struggle over narratives defining whiteness and Blackness in the nation's popular culture and collective imagination. Media representations shaped shared perceptions, determining who bore the "face of a criminal," who was to be feared, and who was deemed worthy of admiration. It was not until the early 20th century that Black media gained the technological and discursive strength to compete more equally in this narrative war, one that sought to construct Black subjectivities in post-abolition Brazil. The country mythologized itself as a racial democracy, yet relegated Black people to second-class citizenship. This is why Black media relentlessly affirmed Afro-Brazilians as full citizens, deserving of dignity and rights.

As Pinto (2006) observed, the Black press was never merely about information — hard news or weather reports, for example. It was born with a mission: to liberate, both symbolically

and structurally. Its purpose was education and critical thought, rejecting the false neutrality of hegemonic media, which disguises its biases under the fragile pretense of impartiality. Above all, Black media offered something revolutionary: a mirror free from the white gaze, where Black Brazilians could finally see themselves. Claiming media platforms to speak and represent themselves was an act of collective self-defense, a direct challenge to narratives that reduced Black life to expendability. These Black-owned media operate as quilombos: liberated spaces where survival is reinvented, and where narratives no longer trap Black bodies as targets, but instead imagine them as free.

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CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION - CONNECTING HISTORICAL MEDIA FRAMEWORKS TO CONTEMPORARY RACIAL VIOLENCE AND DIGITAL RESISTANCE

The analyses in this dissertation demonstrate how Brazil's hegemonic media has perpetuated, for centuries, a harmful link between Blackness and violence by recycling deeply entrenched racial archetypes. This process normalizes the violation of Black bodies, a phenomenon so pervasive that its historical roots often go unquestioned. By exposing how such brutality became institutionalized, this research compels us to interrogate the role of media narratives in reinforcing a dehumanizing social construct that systematically marginalizes and devalues Black lives. Far from accidental, this reflects an intentional system of racial hierarchy. Hegemonic media not only upholds this structure but actively wields its influence to reproduce and legitimize destructive stereotypes.

As seen in Chapter 4, since the 19th century, Brazil's white elites have dominated mass-produced media, systematically linking Blackness to violence. Media ownership played a decisive role in this dynamic, as it determined who had the power to shape narratives on race and violence in Brazil. As discussed in Chapter 2, Cheryl I. Harris's (1995) concept of "whiteness as property" helps explain how whiteness functioned as a mechanism of exclusion, controlling access to representation. This dominance was so complete that this study found insufficient imagery from Black media of the period to allow for meaningful comparison.

In mainstream 19th-century publications, Black Brazilians were almost exclusively depicted within the confines of slavery. The era's most influential illustrated magazines rarely, if ever, acknowledged African heritage, culture, aesthetics, or religion, nor did they portray the full spectrum of Black experience, from suffering to joy. Instead, they reinforced a narrative of control,

centering the enslaved Black figure as subservient to whiteness, which positioned itself as the universal subject. Pseudoscientific theories of racial hierarchy supported this framing. Moreover, racist depictions were often dismissed as harmless humor, a deliberate strategy that minimized their symbolic violence. By deflecting criticism, this “humor” perpetuated the degradation of Black collective identity while reinforcing white dominance in the 19th century.

The 20th century perpetuated the naturalized association between Blackness and violence in the hegemonic media. A key yet understudied development in this history was the emergence of police magazines, owned and operated by white elites, which specialized in sensationalizing crime, particularly violence against Black people. These publications replaced earlier illustrations with graphic photographs (deliberately excluded here to avoid reproducing their dehumanizing spectacle outside critical analysis). Marketed as entertainment, these images reduced Black individuals to lifeless objects or, in rare exceptions, granted them humanity only through the association with whiteness (as in the trope of the “Black body with a white soul.”)

These early 1900s police magazines reinforced their surveillance role by portraying Black men as “enemy criminals” (Jacobs, 2008, p. 415), an internal threat to be targeted. They even encouraged readers to use the published images for a crude form of facial recognition, identifying who was deemed a criminal in society. This practice highlighted the magazines' function in surveilling, criminalizing, and punishing Black communities. Additionally, these publications often display lifeless Black bodies like trophies, further dehumanizing them. These controlling images reinforce the marginalization of Black Brazilians by shaping public perception. Through their widespread circulation, they restrict how Black people are represented in society, ultimately constraining their social aspirations and possibilities in the collective imagination. Through the

use of images of control in the hegemonic media, the association between blackness and crime/violence becomes inseparable.

In the context of genealogy, I argue that illustrated magazines from the 19th century and 20th-century magazines, such as *Vida Policial* and *Arquivo Vermelho*, established the foundation for 21st-century police TV programs, which similarly obsess over Blackness in relation to crime. One of the most prominent examples of this genre is *Brasil Urgente*, hosted by José Luiz Datena from 2001 to 2024. The program routinely relies on explicit depictions of violence, primarily broadcasting footage of arrests, often involving individuals accused of theft. These segments frequently show the alleged criminals with their faces exposed, sometimes shirtless and barefoot, as they are forced into police vehicles and interrogated by reporters and cameramen (de Vasconcelos, 2019; Pires, 2014).

In a widely circulated *Brasil Urgente* segment (TV BandNews, 2014), a channel with over 3 million YouTube subscribers, host José Luiz Datena declares, “The law only protects criminals in Brazil,” immediately before cutting to footage of Black men being arrested by police. Notably, these individuals had not yet faced trial or due process, yet Datena unilaterally condemns them as “criminals,” reinforcing prejudicial narratives without legal substantiation. Datena left *Brasil Urgente* to run for mayor of São Paulo, Brazil's largest state, in 2024. He lost the election, but capitalized on his popularity as a kind of self-appointed law enforcer, receiving 112,344 votes (G1 SP, 2024). Datena finished fifth among the mayoral candidates. But he still received significant coverage in the news and used this opportunity to launch his name on the political scene. Datena’s popularity shows the relevance of police show hosts in Brazil, and their potential to reinforce harmful racial stereotypes.

Francisco Rüdiger (2005) examines the grief, unease, and resignation embedded in crime journalism, analyzing how police news contributed to the normalization of racial violence in Brazil, especially after the rise of police TV shows in the late 20th century, which endures until the present day in Brazil. A wide range of studies on Brazilian television crime journalism highlights how the most popular shows critique the country's high crime rates and often focus on judicial impunity and the supposedly low lethality of police forces (de Vasconcelos, 2019).

Rüdiger's work situates these TV programs within Brazil's political landscape before and after the dictatorship, highlighting a shift in media priorities. As Rüdiger notes, between the 1980's and 1990's, Brazilian media increasingly surrendered to market forces and sensationalism, transforming the country into what Vasconcelos (1999) called a "satellite-broadcast electronic brothel or circus of horrors" (Rüdiger, 2005, p. 72, my translation). For Rüdiger (2005), police news functions as a "funeral dirge," lulling citizens into a state of passive resignation, a metaphor that captures how Brazilians became desensitized to televised brutality. By the 1990s, it was common for families to consume graphic crime coverage casually, even during meals, with police programs playing in the background like macabre daily entertainment. This dissertation provides a deeper historical context for the work of scholars like Rüdiger, demonstrating that the consumption of violent imagery, particularly racialized violence, stems from a longstanding media tradition of sensationalizing brutality.

Visual Continuities in 21st-Century Brazilian Media

The desensitization to violent imagery against Black bodies is a gradual cultivation. It begins with planted seeds of racist ideology that grow and mutate across generations. The form evolves, from caricatures to crime photos to viral videos, but the poisonous root remains unchanged: the persistent symbolic linkage between Blackness and violence. Whether framing us

as disposable lives or “born criminals,” this dehumanizing narrative maintains its core function: justifying our oppression while numbing society's conscience.

This mass consumption of images of violence, especially against Black people, has taken on new contours with the arrival of social media in the 21st century. Now, with social media, such content, once confined to living-room televisions and printed pages, floods our smartphones via *Instagram*, *X*, *TikTok*, and *Facebook*, for example, where graphic depictions of Black suffering circulate as disposable content (Rodrigues & Parks, 2025, forthcoming). Social media is permeated by poor and superficial narratives of racial violence, many connected to police brutality, representing the police as heroes and “criminals” as the deviant bodies of society. The consequence is the spread of moral panic and the support of part of the population for this violence (Matheus & Silva, 2014).

Encounters with images of brutal racial violence have become so normalized that for many people, that can be the first thing they see in the morning when they wake up and check their social media on their cell phones (Rai, J., 2021). On a typical Friday morning, on April 28, 2025, for instance, Brazil's largest news outlets reported that a Black woman in Bahia, home to the largest African-descended population outside Africa, had been falsely accused of theft by two white tourists (G1, 2025a). The couple approached Jucione Manuele, who works as a “baiana de receptivo” (a professional who wears traditional African-Brazilian attire to greet tourists and take photos with them), and asked to take a photo with her. The woman agreed to the photo and then walked away. Moments later, the female tourist noticed her missing wallet and immediately assumed that Jucione had stolen it. The couple returned to the vendor's stall, caused a public scene, and even filed a police report against Jucione. “I felt like garbage. They even made me take my clothes off,” Jucione said to G1, Brazil's most significant online news outlet. There is video footage

showing the moment Jucione undressed and was searched, as the scene occurred inside a store. The images circulated on social media.

Days later, surveillance footage exonerated the Black woman: another video, captured by a street surveillance camera, showed the wallet falling from the tourist's pocket onto the floor, where a passerby picked it up and handed it to a nearby shopkeeper. In this case, images served as protection, but they don't always shield the innocent. Where does the collective notion that Black people - that Black women - are prone to theft reside in the public imagination? How long has society perpetuated this idea, to the point where a *baiana* welcoming tourists becomes the first suspect? As this dissertation argues, the stereotype of the "thieving Black woman" or "thieving servant," in the form of Black visual representations in the hegemonic media, has circulated in Brazilian culture since the 19th century, embedding itself so deeply that it produces incidents like the one described, just one among countless similar occurrences.

Black media outlets approached Jucione's case fundamentally differently than mainstream outlets, consciously avoiding the exploitation of violent imagery. On April 2, 2025, *Alma Preta Jornalismo*, one of Brazil's largest Black digital media platforms, published an Instagram post featuring a photo of Jucione wearing a colorful headwrap, with her head up, deliberately showing her outside the violent incident (*Alma Preta*, 2025). Their caption directly addressed the racial dimensions: "A worker is accused of theft and forced to undress to prove her innocence. How much longer must Black women endure this humiliation?" This approach not only centers the racial injustice but also creates space for critical engagement with the incident.

However, this coverage leaves space for some critical reflection on the discourse of *Alma Preta*. This case reveals a societal equation that ties a life's worth to its economic productivity. By framing victims of violence as "workers" to express their value, we implicitly accept that only

lives deemed productive under capitalism deserve protection. The historical context makes this reflection especially urgent. Black labor in Brazil tells a story of coercion, from slavery to contemporary exploitation. Therefore, linking a life's value to labor can be seen as problematic if we consider the discourse in the context of Brazil's social issues. The unemployment rate among Black Brazilians remains consistently higher than that of the white population. In 2023, Black unemployment stood at 8.9%, compared to 5.9% for white Brazilians. This disparity reflects a structural issue in Brazil, where Black individuals, especially Black women, face greater barriers to securing and retaining employment (De Freitas Moura, 2024).

Another example is one of the most recent viral videos depicting racial violence in Brazil, which shows the final moments of Gabriel Ferreira Messias da Silva, a 19-year-old Black man killed by military police during an arrest in São Paulo's East Zone in November 2024 (G1, 2025b). When the police's body camera footage was released on May 23, 2025, it quickly spread across social media. The harrowing video captures Gabriel's pleas: "I'm a worker, sir. Why do this to me, God? Help me, please." In his moment of desperation, Gabriel instinctively invoked the toxic equation that ties Black dignity to economic productivity. His plea, identifying himself as a "worker," reflects a survival strategy ingrained by a society that often values Black lives only for their labor, and at the same time limits access to the formal job markets. Yet as the video's tragic conclusion proves, his 19-year-old body's "productive potential" meant nothing to the officers. This brutal reality is mirrored across social media, where comment sections overflow with support for police violence and even mocking laughter in response to Black suffering. Major Brazilian news platforms, such as *G1* and *Metrópoles* (two of the country's most widely viewed media outlets), have shared the footage, which has accumulated tens of thousands of views on YouTube and Instagram.

The body camera footage shows Gabriel unarmed and barefoot on the ground. Despite this clear evidence, police falsely claimed he was an armed criminal, invoking the racist trope of the Beast (the dangerous Black man), to justify his killing. To further reinforce this narrative, authorities circulated Gabriel's mugshot on social media, weaponizing his image to support their false claims. A simple Google search for “Black man killed in Brazil” reveals countless similar videos, highlighting the disturbing frequency of such incidents. These horrific images, which should provoke outrage and demand justice, instead become just another piece of content, consumed and forgotten alongside the endless scroll of social media feeds.

During a 2023 discussion at NGO Criola’s summer course on Fighting Anti-Blackness, I spoke with Dr. Joy James, a renowned scholar of revolutionary love and resistance to state violence, about the proliferation of viral images depicting racial terror. Her response was incisive: We are not being socialized to resist these images, she observed, describing them as the pornography of suffering. She criticized the idea that pulling out our phones and filming (or witnessing and spreading surveillance images) is considered the “best we can do” when brutality unfolds right in front of our eyes. James pointed out that these brutal viral images don’t spread just fear of the police, but also a deep sense of shame for our collective inaction, for the fact that a rebellion doesn’t start after each brutal viral crime. Her words underscore a painful paradox: while such footage exposes brutality, its circulation often renders Black pain a spectacle (Sharpe, 2023) rather than a catalyst for intervention.

Virtual Mediatic Quilombos and Self-Defense Strategies

Yet this sense of powerlessness must not overshadow generations of resistance. As Chapter 4 demonstrates, Black media have contested these dehumanizing visual narratives since the 20th century (and through the written word even earlier, in the 19th century). Today, Black-led digital

platforms are spearheading this struggle, deploying multimedia storytelling across social networks to reclaim narratives and reconstruct Black subjectivity in these contested digital spaces.

One of the most successful examples of Black media in Brazil today, in terms of audience and longevity, is *Alma Preta (Black Soul)* journalism, which recently celebrated its 10th anniversary and boasts a strong following of 723,000 people on Instagram. *Alma Preta* explicitly rejects the hegemonic media's pretense of neutrality (Wallace, 2020), taking an oppositional stance through its transparent ideological positioning. As stated in their mission declaration: “We reject the myth of neutrality in journalism. While maintaining scientific rigor in our investigations, we are committed to transparency regarding our standpoint. Our work embraces the complexity of social realities, exposing contradictions that 'objective' reporting often obscures” (Alma Preta, n.d., my translation).

This epistemological position challenges traditional journalism's false binary between objectivity and advocacy (Mindich, 1998), instead advancing a model of rigorous, positioned reporting that acknowledges structural power dynamics. Under the guise of neutrality and “listening to all sides,” Brazil's hegemonic media perpetuates and legitimizes racist ideologies. A striking example of this occurred on January 15, 2022, when *Folha de São Paulo*, one of the country's most influential newspapers, published an incendiary opinion piece titled “Racismo de negros contra brancos ganha força com identitarismo” (“Black Racism Against Whites Gains Strength with Identitarianism”) (Risério, 2022). Authored by anthropologist Antonio Riserio, the article claimed: “Attacks by blacks against asians, whites, and jews invalidate the thesis that there is no black racism, due to their oppression. Under the banner of anti-racist discourse, the left and the black movement reproduce a supremacist project, making identitarian neo-racism the norm rather than the exception.”

This argument not only erases the historical and structural power imbalances that define racism in Brazil but also defies empirical reality. Black Brazilians are 2.6 times more likely to be murdered than their white counterparts (Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública, 2020), a statistic that underscores the lethal consequences of systemic racism. Riserio's rhetoric distorts anti-racist struggles and reinforces the very supremacist logic it pretends to critique. The backlash was resounding: 186 journalists and staff members at *Folha* signed an open letter condemning the article (Poder360, 2022), exposing how mainstream media platforms perpetuate racist discourse under the veneer of "balanced debate." This case starkly contrasts the journalistic approaches of mainstream Brazilian media with those of Black-led outlets: While corporate outlets platform racist rhetoric under the guise of "balance," Black media consistently centers structural analysis and challenges dominant power structures. Establishing this differentiation is crucial because it highlights reasons to consume more Black media and to provide the conditions for these outlets to exist.

A glance at *Alma Preta*'s social media feed on *Instagram* reveals a diverse range of coverage, including politics, human rights, racial justice, education, arts, Afro-Brazilian religions, and foreign affairs. *Alma Preta* frequently centers Africa in its reporting, continuing the legacy of 20th-century Black media, such as *Quilombo*. In a newsletter sent to subscribers on May 27, 2025, editor-in-chief Pedro Borges informed readers that he was in the Democratic Republic of Congo documenting the ongoing conflict.

Borges wrote: "While mainstream media ignores this crisis, we are on the ground, at the heart of the conflict, listening to those enduring the pain, exposing the exploitation of natural resources by multinational corporations, and revealing how political and military instability devastates the lives of women, youth, and children." Unlike hegemonic media, *Alma Preta* covers

sensitive issues, such as racial violence and wars, with ethical rigor, avoiding sensationalism, graphic imagery, and exploitative storytelling. The publication has developed an Anti-Racist Stylebook (*Alma Preta*, 2023). The guide for good practices avoids, for example, highlighting a Black murder victim's past encounters with the police in news coverage related to police killings. That is a response to the hegemonic media, which systematically engages in criminalizing Black victims by disproportionately highlighting the criminal records of Black murder victims, a discursive practice that implicitly justifies their deaths through narrative framing.

This pattern is exemplified in headlines like “21-year-old man with police record is shot dead in Imperatriz” (G1, 2022), which transforms victims into suspects through selective reporting. As the Anti-Racist Stylebook (*Alma Preta*, 2023) argues, this practice reinforces the racist trope of the “Black Criminal,” while obscuring structural violence and state culpability in Black deaths. This approach serves as a model for how anti-racist journalism can operate with integrity and transparency.

The Anti-Racist Stylebook (*Alma Preta*, 2023) also give journalists guidance on how to fight religious racism: “When looking at African matrices religions, it is essential to cut and destroy the perceptions of the Western world that prevent the journalist from understanding, for example, the terreiro not only as a space for exercising religion, but also as a way of life and restitution of humanity” (p. 216, my translation). This commitment to Black spirituality continues the legacy of 20th-century Black media, which, as Chapter 4 of this study demonstrates, actively countered the religious racism perpetuated by hegemonic media outlets. A powerful example emerges in *Alma Preta*'s coverage of Mãe de Santo (a “priestess” of Afro-Brazilian religions) Celina de Xangô's book launch, which documents histories tied to Cais do Valongo, the 19th-century port where enslaved Africans arrived in Rio de Janeiro (*Alma Preta*, 2025). By centering an Afro-Brazilian

religious leader as both an intellectual and a cultural guardian, the outlet constructs an emancipatory visual narrative, evident in its vibrant Instagram portrait of Celina, adorned in a yellow turban and radiating warmth. This stands in radical contrast to the hegemonic media's historical demonization of Afro-diasporic religions, which Chapter 4 analyzes through its pervasive "The Devil" archetype, a racist trope designed to vilify sacred African-Brazilian traditions.

The stylebook also offers paths for addressing African-Brazilian religions beyond violence. "In the Environment section, it is possible to cover the relationship between African-Brazilian religions and nature. The traditional people and communities of African origin represent the reinterpretation of a Nagô, Fõn, Bantu society in the diaspora and pose a constant challenge to the reporting team to broaden their perception beyond what is conventionally understood as religion from a Western perspective" (*Alma Preta*, 2023, p. 217). This example demonstrates how journalism can foster possibilities for liberation through creativity and a more pluralistic approach to covering issues affecting Black people in the diaspora.

Alma Preta also features a dedicated section for Black children, labeled The Little Black Soul, a pioneering initiative in the history of Black media in Brazil. Designed for kids aged five and above, this segment provides educational content through interactive and engaging formats, including recreational activities, games, videos, and comic books. By fostering a virtual environment that celebrates Black childhood, *Alma Preta* continues a legacy of empowerment reminiscent of 20th-century Black media, as explored in Chapter 4 with the archetype of The Eres.

Another example of virtual mediatic quilombo is *Noticia Preta (Black News)*, founded in 2018 by Thais Bernardes. With a team of 23 professionals — including journalists, publicists, photographers, historians, educators, lawyers, accountants, and video editors — the outlet carries

forward the legacy of 20th-century Black media pioneers while innovating for the digital age. More than just a news platform, *Notícia Preta* serves as a mediatic quilombo, a historical community of resistance, actively combating structural racism through multiple initiatives. Bernardes established the School of Anti-Racist Communication, which offers courses for diverse audiences. Additionally, the team offers corporate training programs, developing customized communication strategies and educational initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion within organizational spaces.

Through my engaged consumption and systematic observation of *Alma Preta* and *Notícia Preta*'s social media content over the past year, I've noticed their distinctive ethical approach to covering racial violence. Their conscious refusal to reproduce graphically violent imagery represents both a strategic choice and an ideological stance, as *Alma Preta*'s Antiracist Stylebook shows. A May 11, 2025, Instagram post by *Alma Preta* exemplifies this approach through its coverage of 16-year-old Patrick Sapucaia, killed by police in 2022. Rather than reproducing the dehumanizing narratives common in mainstream crime reporting, the outlet centered Patrick's humanity, featuring childhood photos in his school uniform and leisure activities provided by his grieving mother. This deliberate framing counters the police's characterization of Patrick as a "thug," while simultaneously demanding accountability through its call for the officer's conviction (*Alma Preta*, 2025c). The post thus serves dual purposes: memorial activism and structural critique of racialized police violence.

This stands in stark contrast to the mainstream Brazilian media's persistent necropolitical framing (Mbembe, 2020), which plays the role of a "funeral dirge" in Brazilian society. Where traditional outlets sensationalize trauma, these Black media platforms consciously center preservation, resistance, and life-affirming narratives. Another example is *Notícia Preta*'s focus

on maternal health issues affecting Black women, who experience disproportionate rates of obstetric violence both in Brazil and globally (Martins, 2006). The portal adopts an intersectional lens, centering the lived experiences of Black women through personal narratives and data-driven insights that reveal systemic issues at both micro and macro levels.

This commitment to Black lives extends to publishing vital health resources, including content related to how to act during medical emergencies in *favelas* – a term often translated into English as slum, but not without criticism (Catalytic Communities, n.d.). These impoverished majoritarian Black communities are usually difficult to access due to inadequate urban planning, so it can be difficult for an ambulance to get in, and residents improvise stretchers and escape routes in situations that require rescue. A May 20, 2025, video (*Notícia Preta*, 2025a) exemplifies this approach, providing life-saving instructions while simultaneously documenting the stark resource deprivation in these areas. This dual focus on practical solutions and systemic critique embodies the outlet’s mission to address both immediate needs and structural inequities. Such intentional coverage, centering on the most pressing needs of marginalized communities, remains conspicuously absent from mainstream media agendas when covering racial issues.

Notícia Preta directly engages with this dissertation's central concerns by countering hegemonic media narratives, particularly through its critique of police-focused TV shows. A May 24, 2025, YouTube livestream (*Notícia Preta*, 2025b) featuring Thiago Torres, o “Chavoso da USP,” explicitly examined how police journalism programs, both on television and social media, function as tools of racial oppression. Torres argued: “Police programs exist to trivialize death, conditioning the population to accept violence... There's a Black genocide project at work in Brazil, as the Black movements have been telling us for decades now. The system depends on people learning to naturalize it” (*Notícia Preta*, 2025b). This exchange crystallizes the fundamental

narrative conflict explored throughout this study: where mainstream media profit from the commodification of Black death, Black media like *Notícia Preta* actively resist this necropolitical focus (Mbembe, 2020).

Media outlets such as *Alma Preta* and *Notícia Preta* have a strong online presence and operate as digital media quilombos (Veloso & Andrade, 2021). Those are spaces of resistance where Black subjectivities can not only exist but also take shape. For Black Brazilians, engaging with these platforms, even virtually, and reducing reliance on hegemonic media for coverage of racial issues becomes a form of self-defense. Participants in previous studies (Rodrigues & Parks, forthcoming) described turning to Black media as a harm reduction strategy in an online landscape where violent content, often algorithmically amplified for profit, is forced upon users without consent. By consciously choosing Black-centered journalism, they reclaim agency over their media consumption, resisting the exploitative cycles of mainstream digital platforms. Ruha Benjamin's (2023) approach to the concept of informed refusal, presented in her book *Race After Technology* to critique coercive technological systems, offers a valuable lens for analyzing media resistance. While Benjamin applies this framework to research ethics and oppressive technologies, it equally illuminates how marginalized audiences consciously reject harmful media. For instance, opting for Black-owned media over hegemonic outlets or taking social media breaks to avoid traumatic imagery of racial violence (Rodrigues & Parks, forthcoming) constitutes informed refusal in practice. These acts empower audiences, transforming passive consumption into deliberate resistance. But the very possibility of refusal depends on access to critical media literacy and awareness of systemic power structures.

CRML as Self-Defense

The analyses presented in this dissertation contribute to ongoing discussions in media literacy studies. Traditionally, media education has adopted a universal approach, often neglecting the role of race (Degand, 2020). To address this gap, Critical Race Media Literacy (CRML) (Yosso, 2002; Cubbage, 2022) has emerged as a framework that centers racial awareness, empowering non-white audiences to not only identify misinformation (e.g., fake news) but also engage with media more critically. This study offers tools to identify and decode the most prevalent and damaging racial stereotypes in Brazilian media, and to help people understand their significant, harmful potential.

Based on the CRML framework (Yosso, 2002; Cubbage, 2022), this research can inform educational workshops and community interventions. Prior community-based initiatives have emphasized dialogic models that encourage participants to identify racial stereotypes in media for themselves, rather than relying on predefined definitions (Cubbage, 2022). This approach rejects the concept of “banking education” (Freire, 2014), where the facilitator (e.g., a CRML workshop leader) simply transfers knowledge to a passive audience. Instead, it centers collaborative learning, developing Critical Race Media Literacy strategies grounded in the lived experiences of each community. This method aligns with Freirean pedagogy (Freire, 2005), where critical consciousness emerges through dialogue and action. For journalists and educators, this means facilitating workshops that prioritize participant-led discussions over lectures.

CRML is neither a rigid step-by-step guide nor a prescriptive formula. Rather, it calls on researchers and journalists engaged in media education to consider two key factors: a) intersectional realities, including race, class, and gender dynamics; b) the agency of audiences,

who, when equipped with critical tools, can recognize the intentions behind hegemonic media representations and make informed choices to resist systems both individually and collectively.

Within this context, this dissertation argues that CRML initiatives should approach Black media consumption as both an act of self-defense and a strategy for harm reduction within Black communities. By acknowledging the long history of dominant media shaping our identities and self-worth, it is hoped that Black people can distance themselves from these representations and work together to create spaces that offer broader possibilities beyond pain. As Black media historically has shown, art and performance can provide clues about paths forward.

It is not a coincidence that the identified archetypes in Chapter 4 sound theatrical and carry within them a performative quality. Black media, particularly in historical and iconic examples like Abdias Nascimento's Quilombo newspaper, has long used art as a means of engaging with the Black population, creating avenues to counteract the dehumanization perpetuated by violent and degrading representations in hegemonic media. This is evident in archetypes such as The Beast and The Devil, which reduce Blackness to performative caricatures of menace. In contrast, Black media deliberately circulates liberatory archetypes like The Movie Star or The Joyful Man, often embodied by artists with a "circus soul." Performance, in this context, becomes a tool for enchantment — channeling theater, joy, and charm as acts of resistance. The archetypes of liberation emerging from this research are deeply rooted in this tradition, exemplified by initiatives like Nascimento's Teatro Experimental do Negro (Black Experimental Theater), which fused media, art, and activism.

Racial archetypes are not merely abstract or performative concepts; they materialize in the world through racialized bodies, whether as instruments of control or liberation. Consider the unhoused man in Leblon, described earlier in this work, who cried out, "Is my face in the

newspaper?” To some, he might embody a grown version of The Faceless Child, erased, interchangeable with countless others sharing his skin tone. To others, he is The Thief, The Fatal Type or The Drunk, centuries-old stereotypes weaponized against Black men. What enables both the public and authorities to “decode” him in these terms is racial prejudice, amplified by the hegemonic media’s role in reinforcing such narratives. Publications like *Vida Policial* have historically functioned as tools of surveillance and punishment, cementing these damaging associations. Yet, just as hegemonic media entrenches oppressive imagery, Black media emerges to dismantle it. Liberation archetypes, such as The Artist, which subverts the stereotype of Black people as intellectually inferior, or The Eres, depicting Black children in their full, untainted innocence, offer a counterpoint, gesturing toward futures unshackled from these constraints. The framework of art-oriented Black media — along with its use of archetypes as pedagogical tools — can significantly benefit Critical Race Media Literacy (CRML). For instance, workshops could employ this artistic framework to teach participants how visual representations are constructed, as well as their potential to either reinforce control or inspire liberation.

Limitations and Final Considerations

This dissertation does not claim to construct a definitive genealogy of images of control and liberation in Brazilian media — a task that, from a Foucauldian perspective, would itself be an epistemological impossibility given the fragmented aspects of discursive formations. Instead, by examining representations from the 19th and 20th centuries, it traces a path that remains open for further exploration into these stereotypes and their lasting impact on Brazilian society. There are multiple possibilities for implementing a systematic analysis of Black media content, combined with digital ethnography, to map narrative patterns and representational strategies, and document community-building practices in digital spaces.

Future research can explore the Black media production practices by conducting in-depth interviews with Black media creators, editors, and reporters to examine: a) ethical frameworks guiding their work; b) editorial selection criteria; c) sustainable financing models. Another research area to be explored is the media ownership structures based on race in Brazil. It is still necessary to investigate the historical concentration of Brazilian media ownership, with particular attention to racial barriers in broadcast licensing, as the exceptional case of TV da Gente, Brazil's only Black-owned public television concession, exemplifies (Dias, 2020). Netinho de Paula, a prominent Brazilian celebrity in both music and politics, remains the only Black individual to have held a public television concession in the country (2005–2007). In interviews during this period, Pereira (2005) detailed the systemic challenges of securing support for a Black-centered public broadcaster. His decision to leave mainstream television (where he began his career) to establish his own media venture stemmed from his refusal to perpetuate harmful narratives that reductively associated Blackness with violence.

One particularly revealing incident involved a programming director at Record TV, Luciano Callegari, who asserted that audiences were “not keen on seeing Black people kissing” — a remark that prompted Netinho’s departure. He further criticized the exploitative nature of mainstream programming, noting: “To make matters worse, every Monday, at least eight people had to die [on screen]” (Pereira, 2005). This explicit racial logic in content decisions underscores the structural barriers Black media creators face in challenging stereotypical representations, a critical area requiring further scholarly engagement in Brazilian media studies. Such research is doubly imperative: it simultaneously preserves the intellectual history of Black media resistance while illuminating the enduring continuities between historical and contemporary struggles for representational justice.

This study also faced significant translation challenges when rendering culturally specific Brazilian terms, particularly those with derogatory connotations or complex historical meanings. While ongoing academic debates exist regarding terms like *favela* (informal settlement, slum?) and *orixás* (Yoruba deities?), no standardized translation approach has achieved consensus. Consequently, this dissertation employs contextually appropriate translations that prioritize conceptual accuracy over literal equivalence, acknowledging this as both a methodological limitation and an opportunity for critical reflection on linguistic decolonization.

Beyond the constraints of time, language, and methods, there is another, often unspoken limitation: the toll that working with images of racial violence takes on the researcher's mental health. Spending months analyzing hundreds of pages filled with images of brutalized Black bodies left a profound mark on me. We must address, far more seriously, how to protect the well-being of scholars engaged with such traumatic material. Ignoring history or looking away from its brutality is not an option for those committed to structural change through knowledge production. Yet we must also acknowledge the psychological weight of this work as a real limitation.

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