

## EPISTEMOLOGY OF ESHU AND AUDIOVISIBILITY IN THE 2020 PANDEMIC: WRITEXPERIENCE AND GESTURES IN IMAGES ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS

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DOSSIER RELIGIONS: THEIR IMAGES,  
PERFORMANCES, AND RITUALS

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### ABSTRACT

Starting from writexperience<sup>1</sup>, from Conceição Evaristo and the Epistemology of Eshu, proposed by Reis Neto, we analyzed two audiovisual productions connected to Afro-descendant religions: “Negras Vozes: Tempos of Alakan”, directed by Beto Brant and “AmarElo: É tudo pra ontem”, directed by Fred Ouro Preto. Both 2020 productions emerged amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The article aims to reflect on the possibilities of aesthetic fruition sprouted in the face of the impossibility of face-to-face contact. The video came across images and sounds, and the communities appropriated this

1. Writexperience - Free translation of the term “escrevivência”, conceived by Conceição Evaristo which refers to writing connected to the experience.

**KEYWORDS**  
Writexperience;  
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of Eshu;  
Audiovisibilities;  
Pandemy; Digital  
Ethnography.

movement. This proposal of digital ethnography in creative liminalities experimented with different forms of sharing the sensitive.

*Kenguelê, Kenguelê, Xangô  
He is the son of Cobra Coral  
Look, the black man is working  
And the white man is just looking*

*(Unknown author)*

### **INTRODUCTION: COMMUNICATION OF ESHU ON SCREENS**

When entering a “terreiro”, a field, a house, a center, or a tent of an African-based religion, the first thing to do is to revere the orisha or entity Eshu. Eshu is the orisha of communication; he is the one who mediates men and other orishas. Eshu is the orisha of strength, virility, work, and also joy. African-based religions remain and survive through orality (Verger, 2019). The customs and learnings are spread from generation to generation, and teachings by text are scarce. Knowledge happens through the voice that echoes from the elderly and finds the younger ones, those who will continue this culture permeated by orality.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, the encounters in which the ancestral knowledge of African-based religions used to take place were initially interrupted. And other ways of making a presence were being created, among the spaces of axé, faith, and platforms with audiovisual images and social networks. It emerged, then, the possibility of sharing and connecting through technology, applications, and screens. Among them, platforms such as Youtube, Vimeo, Facebook, Instagram, and others, as the ones related to film festivals that needed to migrate to immateriality and mediations, were (re)invented. In these networks used to exchange videos, messages, and images, other communities have been conforming to new ways of sharing the sensitive (Ranci re, 2005). For instance, the movie “Incluindo Deus” (Including God), by Maur lio Martins relates the loneliness of his mother at the kitchen table at the house concerning the mass of 92,000 profiles who attend a consecration service by the Christian Congregation of Brazil, bring religiosity to the audiovisual agenda in the 21st century.

In this text, we turn our gaze to films that are in spaces of religious practice produced in the performance of carnival and at a show and its backstage. The first documentary is “Negras Vozes: Tempos de Alakan” (Black Voices: Times of Alakan), directed by Beto Brant with the Il  Ob  de Min Carnival Block, a film showed at an online film festival, forumdoc.bh.2020, Festival do Filme Document rio e Etnogr fico de Belo Horizonte (Festival of the Documentary and Ethnographic Film of Belo Horizonte). The second

film is the documentary produced from the performance of a Emicida Rapper's show, at Theatro Municipal de São Paulo; "AmarElo: É tudo para ontem" (AmarElo: It's all for yesterday), by Fred Ouro Preto and produced by Netflix, a commercial streaming video platform. The films follow the political path of remembrance, in gestures, images, speeches, and stories of the occupation of the Municipal's stairs by MNU, the Movimento Negro Unificado Contra a Discriminação Racial (Black Movement Against Racial Discrimination), in the 1970s, during the military dictatorship. We will turn our analytical intent in this text to this and other crossroads.

The perspective of knowledge that we evoke here is digital ethnography in creative liminalities (Migliano, 2020), searching for writexperiences in some gestures shown in these films. Digital ethnography is constituted as a field of work from the emergence of universal access, or almost, social networks that are multi-territorially situated and that, in this way, come to compose a subjective, cultural, and community body.

Facing digital social networks from the idea of creative liminalities is to believe in the power of humanity in relation and action in the world, considering that it is important to overcome the situation of a detention zone that can become experiences lived between spatial/symbolic zones. The creative liminality of the spaces between life in bodily co-presence and the simultaneity of messages exchanged via the internet is a condition that retains characteristics of both corporeal and social realities. As it is a containment or detention area, it enhances invention through references and exchanges of/with the diversity provided by encounters that were not facilitated before. In digital ethnography, facing the situations that occur in this creative liminality, between material life and that which circulates as bytes through telematic networks, is to recognize that the time of a flash (Didi-Huberman, 2011) can constitute a narrative fragment that expresses disputes over social meanings. The communication of these disputes and their outcomes make up the contemporary social reality (Migliano, 2021, 4).

In this sense, we will try to identify, in the creative liminalities in which we find ourselves, the writexperiences (Evaristo 2014) of black lives that perform their resistance in cultural and communicative practices that overcome colonial imaginary barriers. Reading their writexperiences released to the world we entered the realm of a dispute of meanings. Writexperiences that expand the audiovisibility space (Rocha 2019) in the current time. Writexperience is a term coined by Conceição Evaristo (2017), used to legitimize writing that is intertwined with experience, with its memories, and with the memories of its roots, its people, and its ancestry. We are using the term audiovisibility as the power of legitimacy/legitimation of audiovisual products in the consolidation of a

place of speech for bodies that have been suffering, for some time, from invisibility, silencing, and objectification operated by a system of scientific production based on modernity. Rocha states that:

To this evocation, we will propose an inflection, suggesting that bodies considered inferior have achieved important places of speech, constituting what I understand as an audiovisibility policy articulated to the occupation of technological means and audiovisual languages. This means that bodies that sing, dance, and publicly perform their combative and dissident existences face in a plastic way the silencing. This does not mean that this plasticity of resisting, making heard, and being able to speak is free from contradictions or conflicts (Rocha 2019, 55).

Modernity and the project of a Western world are the stages on which racist, male chauvinist, sexist, and xenophobic practices of violence and submission find a way to take place. Audiovisibilities go in the direction of transforming and overcoming these oppressions, presenting resistance and re-existence of bodies, imaginaries, and ways of seeing and facing the world.

### **EPISTEMICIDE, NECROPOLITICS AND APPARITION**

Since the processes of world consolidation oriented by European westernization, racism has established itself as a social practice. Enslavement, diaspora, violation, and epistemicide, cruelly determined on the African continent and its descendants, have, in the graduation of melanin, the indicator to the naked eye of inequality. In the documentary “AmarElo - é tudo pra ontem”, a film that premiered in 2020, in its introductory excerpt we hear Emicida’s voice narrating the text transcribed below:

And, somehow, my dreams and my fights started long before my arrival, but for this to make sense, I have to contextualize some things. First: I’m talking about the last country on the American continent to abolish slavery. Second: from a city [Campo Redondo, BA] whose wealth is based on the golden era of the coffee cycle, which had the same slavery as its labor force. Third: this abolition leaves millions of blacks to their fate and is followed by whitening policies through the encouragement of European immigration, the demonization of African and indigenous cultures, and the total erasure, not only of the memory of slavery but of all non-white contributions to the development of that country. [1’16”-2’].

This critique dialogues with what Mbembe exposes in his work “Necropolitics”, from 2018, about the colonization process. According to him,

contemporary social, political, and geographic organizations were built from necropolitics:

“Colonial occupation” itself was a matter of seizing, delimiting, and asserting control over a physical geographical area—of writing on the ground a new set of social and spatial relations. The writing of new spatial relations (“territorialization”) was, ultimately, tantamount to the production of boundaries and hierarchies, zones and enclaves; the subversion of existing property arrangements; the classification of people according to different categories; resource extraction; and, finally, the manufacturing of a large reservoir of cultural imaginaries. These imaginaries gave meaning to the enactment of differential rights to differing categories of people for different purposes within the same space; in brief, the exercise of sovereignty (2003, 25-26).

Also according to the author:

(...) contemporary forms of subjugation of life to the power of death (necropolitics) profoundly reconfigure the relations among resistance, sacrifice, and terror. [...] In our contemporary world, weapons are deployed in the interest of maximum destruction of persons and the creation of death-worlds, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjugated to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead. [...] Under conditions of necropower, the lines between resistance and suicide, sacrifice and redemption, martyrdom and freedom are blurred (2003, 39-40).

The necropower thematized by Mbembe compose the creative liminalities in which we are immersed at this beginning of the 21st century. The multiple dimensions of the writexperiences are constituted as a cultural force and life impulse in confronting the necropower.

At the opening conference of the colloquium “For an anti-racist communication: epistemologies, methodologies and cultural practices” of the Research Group Estéticas, Políticas do Corpo e Gênero (Aesthetics, Body and Gender Policies) of Intercom 2020, Liv Sovik (UFRJ) delivered the speech entitled “Reviewing the history of the culture of mass in Brazil: theory and contestation of the black stereotype”, broadcast live on YouTube on the UFRB TV channel and at the research group’s Facebook page. Sovik points out how the consolidation of racist imagery is established in mass entertainment communication from the realization of the Great World Exhibitions at the beginning of the 20th century. Among its attractions, seen by millions of people around the world, black people were in environments designed to simulate wildlife in Africa, in a situation of disrespect for human rights and native peoples, even after the processes of the abolition of slavery in the world. Currently, in 2021, even if, in certain circumstances, in a veiled way, the entertainment industry agrees with

this fact of the last century, establishing a pact with violence and oppression against black people, as we can follow in sensationalist journalism programs on TV.

The mass media dwells on and perpetuates an ethic of domination and violence because our image makers have more intimate knowledge of these realities than they have with the realities of love. We all know what violence looks like. All scholarship in the field of cultural studies focusing on a critical analysis of the mass media, whether pro or con, indicates that images of violence, particularly those that involve action and gore, capture the attention of viewers more than still, peaceful images. The small groups of people who produce most of the images we see in this culture have heretofore shown no interest in learning how to represent images of love in ways that will capture and stir our cultural imagination and hold our attention. (Hooks 2000, 95)

Written in 2000 and published only 21 years later in Brazil, the excerpt from the book “All about love: new visions”, by bell hooks, highlights the emphasis on production that disqualifies and diminishes bodies concerning those who have power and domination over others. Nevertheless, today we see the beginning of a change in the interests in the production of images and audiovisualities, as we present among the films we propose to analyze. It is worth noting that there was a path opening, or paths that were dug with a lot of sweat and fight, and that projected a perspective of resistance in this field.

People from South America who have African ancestry were and still are seen as inferior, as possible servants of the western white man, lacking in knowledge, says Santos (2015):

(...) people [...] were and continue to be considered as inferior, religiously regarded as soulless, intellectually regarded as less capable, aesthetically regarded as ugly, sexually regarded as objects of pleasure, socially regarded as without customs, and culturally regarded as wild (Santos 2015, 20-21).

In the whitening process that came to dominate social and cultural life, a culturally-rooted prejudice was established concerning communities belonging to Afro-descendant religions, practices, and political gestures of resistance to violence and physical and symbolic oppression of black people. As Mbembe said before about the “colonial occupation”.

In a western and colonized society, it is necessary to perceive and analyze the demarcations regarding the place of knowledge. This place is occupied by white and western men. As Grosfoguel says:

The inferiorization of knowledge produced by men and women across the planet (including Western women) has

endowed Western men with the epistemic privilege of defining what is true, what is reality, and what is best for others. This legitimacy and this monopoly of knowledge of Western men have generated structures and institutions that produce epistemic racism/sexism, disqualifying other knowledge and other critical voices against the imperial/colonial/patriarchal projects that govern the world-system (Grosfoguel 2016, 25).

It is worth noting that, because of findings like this, knowledge coming from places other than the white academy, and from people who are not part of the model mentioned above, are displaced to the margins, peripheral areas and are often even excluded and canceled. Also, according to Grosfoguel (2016), in addition to the genocide of the native peoples of America and Asia:

Three historical processes are constitutive of the knowledge structures of the world-system: the conquest of Al-Andalus, the enslavement of Africans in the Americas, and the murder of millions of women burned alive in Europe, accused of witchcraft (Grosfoguel 2016, 26).

In a project to decolonize epistemic models, the author (2016) emphasizes that science should not be static or determined only by the logic of rationality, but guided by social life that transforms practices and lives, with bodies and for bodies involved in it. These bodies are located in African territory and produce knowledge and perform stories from ancestral pasts. But, today, for the science of knowledge, what is extra-scientific and extra-academic is not considered true or real, which expresses how the colonial dimension of power determines a geopolitical concentration of knowledge.

Let's look at our audiovisability spaces, [forumdoc.bh](#), [Vimeo](#) and [Netflix](#). In the 21st century, we have, in these movie-sharing platforms, substantial differences in the number of movie views on each of them. While the free online documentary film festival financed by the Brazilian State had about 40,000 viewers in ten days of programming, Netflix once had 40 million views of a movie in one week. The Vimeo audiovisabilities sharing platform has two usage possibilities, paid and unpaid. This platform strives for a display quality similar to that of previous sharing platforms. Faced with this type of opportunity, the Vimeo platform (which articulates communities and forums) is considered a great space to allow universal access to films. The film remains available for free on this platform indefinitely. A different situation occurs with [forumdoc.bh](#) as well as [Netflix](#). Both have a set period to show movies. In Netflix's case, this time limit, sometimes not revealed, is due to established commercial agreements, restraining ancestral oralities. Let's continue in the tracks of the crossroads woven by the writexperiences in these possible creative liminalities.

The writexperiences proposed by Conceição Evaristo seek liberation from the bonds of colonial knowledge that restrict the academy to look at other types of knowledge. An example of this type of knowledge comes from ancestry, orality, experience, memory. It is necessary to open the paths; let's open the paths. Among one of these possibilities of decolonial epistemology, Reis Neto proposes the pedagogy of Eshu:

We ask Eshu to see us with good eyes and to give us a calm journey in these writings whose main objective is to reflect on the particular ways of educating in *axé* (in the “terreiros”) and on the proposition of another pedagogy, which we have been calling *pedagogy of Eshu* as a way of (r)existing regarding what has historically tried to dehumanize us (Reis Neto 2009, 09).

Eshu's way of drawing with his body the opening of paths, dancing among the incense's smoke, confronting the whitening project and the political force of the crossroads make up the writexperiences we seek.

Eshu is invoked to open and allow all rituals to take place. Dynamic, neutral, and intangible, chants, poems, sculptures, symbolisms, greetings, rituals, and myths allow us to approach their becoming. An individual and collective dynamic principle, Eshu carries and wears the symbolism of white, red and black. (Santos 2014, p. 6)

The assertive look that Eshu sends us as a way of teaching and learning is present in the relationship of acting for the first time, breaking down barriers, obstacles, “encostos”, and, therefore, liberating. In the next topic, we will consider the appearance of these gestures of Eshu's pedagogy in the scenes of the cultural and audiovisual products that we proposed to analyze.

These gestures appear inscribed in the performances of bodies that are emotional when narrating through images and moving images the emotions that their ancestors and predecessors experienced, as in the films and creations that we present in this text when they illuminated for the first time an area of darkness, even with only flashes, but flashes that reveal where to go in overcoming pain. Didi-Huberman, in “Quelle émotion ! Quelle émotion ?” (2016) he says that the images bring us pieces of memories composed in the bodies: “These gestures are like moving fossils. They have a very long history - and very unconscious.” Fossils from other times that, when updated in pandemic contemporaneity, transform and are transformed with those who are willing to read, get in contact and produce relationships of meanings, delivered to the movements of affections and emotions as in every opening gesture.

### **“WRITEXPERIENCES”, RITUALITIES AND POLITICAL MOVEMENT**

It's carnival. The parade of Bloco Ilú Obá de Min is shown in the film “Negras Vozes - Tempos de Alakan”; the street sequence begins with the

## KEYWORDS

Mangueira; religion and performance; religion and carnival; samba schools; religious materialities.

bodies on stilts carrying smokers and lit incense, perfuming and smoking the bodies. Experiencing these images and sensations communicated from the party thrills us as white women, intellectually involved with these bodies, songs, and imaginaries. The analysis of the scene seeks to generate a feeling of sharing those present with that specific moment.

“Smoke with Jurema herbs, Smoke with herb grace and guiné, Smoke with Jurema herbs, Smoke with herb grace and guiné, Benjoim, Rosemary and Lavender, Let’s smoke children of faith” (Author Unknown). This chanting *ponto* is manifested during the smoking ritual at the beginning of the *gira* or *xirê*. Smoking is of great importance in the ritual, the moving smoke, which comes from herbs on fire in the smoker, has cleansing and purifying power. This information is not written in any text that validates African-based religions, it is simply transmitted from generation to generation, between mothers and fathers in the saint and sons/daughters, sisters/brothers of faith.



**IMAGE 1**  
Frame from the documentary *Negras vozes - Tempos de Alakan* (“Black Voices - Times of Alakan”)

That’s why orality in these cultures is so important. The first writexperience, practice, gesture, teaching, ritual, episteme of Eshu is perceived. At the intersection with the film *Amarelo*, the smoke that opens the path in the epistemology of Eshu is in the dry ice that slightly smokes the beams of light, at the opening of the Municipal stage, the beginning of the show.

Regarding the particular way of teaching and learning in the *terreiros*, we highlight the place of orality, since it is the main medium for transmitting knowledge and *axé* (vital force) in the *terreiros*. [...] Orality goes beyond the classical notion of dialogue interaction when it brings to the scene the ancestors, the immemorial times. It is the dialogue embodied in the subjects living their space-time experience collectively, in/through alterity. Furthermore, the coexistence with other languages, such as graphics, plastic, is part of the production of the worldview and ways of life of Afro-Amerindian peoples. [...] Orality as a sign of Afro-Brazilian thought, as a constituent of the African and, later, Afro-Brazilian cosmivision is also reaffirmed by Hampaté

Bâ (2010) when he announces that man is his own word and is based on it a testimony of what he is (Reis Neto 2019, 5).

The knowledge present in the *terreiros* of African-based religions is seen as if it does not exist. This happens because this knowledge is related to blackness, which, in turn, is marginalized in scientific knowledge-producing environments, as mentioned above. In this scenario, it is important to understand that the school is not the only field of learning where educational processes take place, non-school spaces also play this role. The *terreiro* are crucial spaces for learning and also contribute to combating the colonial ideal of knowledge, considering that the school is constructed from a Western model and hence “violates other ways of being/living/educating the adepts of African-based religions” (Reis Neto 2019, 07). Still dealing with the place of the school as well as education and learning, Rufino complements Reis Neto’s reflection:

Education, for me, is the foundation of Eshu, as it is an event that operates in instances of unpredictability and possibility, it is dialogic and unfinished, intertwines the self with the other, and gives us the condition to weave our life as a responsible response to be given for those who challenge us. Education is an invention, world change, Eshu’s mischief practiced in the bars of time; it is an effect generated by those who pulse and claim a way of thinking and constituting their existence in the attempts to communicate and weave the most different possibilities of existence. In this way, education takes place playing in the street, becoming an animal, scribbling on the wall, feeling pain, desire, and joy, at the party, in the noise, in the difference. Education has various purposes, but not everything considered “education” can be guaranteed as something committed to the struggles for cognitive, social justice, and democracy (2019, 02).

The intrinsic culture in the African-based religions extrapolates and breaks with the Cartesian and binary logic and the moral and individualistic axiology of the West. For that, it is also valid to explore the feminine figure in the *terreiros*. In African-based religions, women gain strength, unique and exclusive enchantments. On the other hand, the woman seen by the Western discourse is submissive and obedient to the patriarchy and the sovereignty of the white man. Under this reasoning, Rufino reflects:

Colonialism is a project of death. In this system, oblivion, the scarcity of experiences, monorationalism, framing in a single possibility of being, the interdiction of ancestral knowledge, surveillance over communication, the imprisonment of bodies kill in many ways. We are taught to live in a world model that produces the disbelief/invisibility of diversity, this tone of subjectivation of dominant references makes us not even realize that it can be different (2019, 03).

The experience of the carnival parade at Bloco Ilú Obá de Min puts us in front of a situation driven by women, black women, artists, music, performances, and poets. The parade, guided by them, leaves from the

center of São Paulo, specifically from Praça da República, covering places and non-places, and ends at Largo do Paissandú, always on Carnival Fridays. This celebration of the Bloco Ilú Obá de Min is already part of the tradition of the São Paulo carnival, and it starts the holiday's parties and celebrations, on the local agenda.

In 2019, a film team, which had been following the Bloco for years, assembled a film that introduces spectators to the rituals of its carnival, associated with the opening of the *terreiros*. Another ritual of the Ilu Obá de Min is to pay tribute to the fundamental black women in Brazilian culture, who in that year were Marielle Franco and Conceição Evaristo, the latter bodily implicated in the summit of the 2019 parade. Conceição Evaristo wrotexperienced the reading of the letter delivered by the MNU (Unified Black Movement against Racial Discrimination) to the Brazilian military dictatorship, a delivery that paves the way for political recognition of the importance of black lives and cultures in the country's fabulation, respect for them and for the bodies that make them exist.



**IMAGE 2**  
Frame from the  
documentary  
Negras vozes -  
Tempos de Alakan  
("Black Voices -  
Times of Alakan")



**IMAGE 3**  
Frame from the  
documentary  
Negras vozes -  
Tempos de Alakan  
("Black Voices -  
Times of Alakan")

The body that personified Eshu at the beginning of the parade, and which stars in the scene after reading the letter, enlarged by stilts, when arriving in front of the Municipal Theater, transitions to the female body of Anastacia, a black woman enslaved and murdered by this condition of immeasurable oppression of Humanity. Grada Kilomba, in his book *Memórias da Plantação (Plantation Memories)*, narrates the portrait of the "Slave Anastasia".

This penetrating image reaches the spectator, conveying the horrors of slavery suffered by generations of enslaved Africans. With no official history, some say that Anastácia was the daughter of a Kimbundo royal family, born in Angola, kidnapped and taken to Bahia, and enslaved by a Portuguese family. After this family returned to Portugal, she would have been sold to a sugarcane plantation owner. Others claim that she would have been a Nagô/Yorubá princess before she was captured by European human traffickers and brought to Brazil in the condition of a slave. Others, on the other hand, defend that she was born in Bahia. Her African name is unknown. Anastasia was the name given to her during slavery. All reports say that she was forced to wear a very heavy iron collar, in addition to the face mask that prevented her from speaking. The reasons given for this punishment vary: some report her political activism in aiding escapes from "others enslaved; others say that she had resisted the sexual proposals from the white "master". Another version turns the blame to the jealousy of a lady who feared Anastasia's beauty. It is also said that she possessed immense healing powers and that she had performed miracles. Anastasia was seen as a saint among enslaved Africans. After a long period of suffering, she dies of tetanus caused by the iron necklace around her neck. Anastácia's portrait was made by a 27-year-old Frenchman named Jacque Arago, who joined a "scientific expedition" through Brazil as a drawer between December 1817 and January 1818. There are other drawings about masks covering the entire face of enslaved women, with only two holes for

the eyes; these were used to prevent the act of eating land, a common practice among enslaved Africans to commit suicide. In the second half of the 20th century, the figure of Anastasia began to become a symbol of the brutality of slavery and its continuing legacy of racism. She became a political and religious figure around the African and Aphrodispora world, representing the historical resistance of these peoples. The first large-scale veneration was in 1967 when the curator of the Museu do Negro in Rio de Janeiro organized an exhibition to honor the 80th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in Brazil. Anastasia is also commonly seen as a saint of the Pretos Velhos, directly related to the Orisha Oshala or Obatalá - orisha of peace, serenity, and wisdom - and he is an object of devotion in Candomblé and Umbanda (Handler and Hayes, 2009). (Kilomba 2019, 35)

Eshu became Anastacia, who is endorsed as Oshala, in a gesture of undressing in front of everyone in front of the steps of the Municipal Theater of São Paulo. In a gesture, the entire tour of the parade of greetings to all Orishas, from Eshu to Oshala, was updated, opening the paths for this/that now. Oshala is the orisha that rules Friday, suggesting the use of white for all those who practice Candomblé, Umbanda, and other Afro-Brazilian religions. Dressing in white is a cultural practice also performed by the majority of revelers and revelers who come to accompany the parade in the film. At this moment, the parade and the film stop in front of the Theatro, producing a deliberate and circumstantial pause.



**IMAGE 4**  
Frame from the documentary *Negras vozes - Tempos de Alakan* ("Black Voices - Times of Alakan")

During this pause in the parade, at the intersections of the stairs of the Municipal Theater of São Paulo, Conceição Evaristo, dressed in white, begins to read the letter sent to the military government in 1978:



Against racism

Today we are on the street in a denunciation campaign! Campaign against racial discrimination, against police oppression, against unemployment, underemployment, and marginalization.

We are on the streets to denounce the terrible living conditions of the Black Community.

Today is a historic day. A new day begins to rise for black people! We are leaving the meeting rooms, the conference rooms and we are going to the streets. A new step has been taken in the fights against racism.

The racists of Clube de Regatas Tietê must cover themselves, as we will demand justice. The murderers of blacks, beware, we will also demand Justice from them!

THE UNIFIED MOVEMENT AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION was created to be an instrument of the fight for the Black Community. This movement must have as its basic principle the work of permanent denunciation of all acts of racial discrimination, the constant organization of the Community to face any type of racism.

We all know the social harm that racism causes. When a person does not like a black person, it is regrettable, but when an entire society assumes racist attitudes towards an entire people or refuses to face it, then the result is tragic for us blacks:

Unemployed parents, helpless children, without medical assistance, without family protection conditions, without schools, and without a future. And this collective racism, this institutionalized racism gives security to the practice of racist acts such as those that occurred at Clube Tietê, such as the act of police violence that befell Robson Silveira da Luz, in the 44th Police District of Guaianazes, where this black, worker, father of a family, was tortured to death. On the 1st of July, Nilton Lourenço, another black worker, was murdered by a policeman in the neighborhood of Lapa, revolting the entire community and the people in general.

Cases like these are routine in our country that claims to be democratic. And such events make more evident and reinforce the justice of our fight, our need for mobilization.

It is necessary to look for forms of organization. It must guarantee that this movement is a strong instrument of a permanent fight for the community, where everyone truly participates, defining the paths of the

movement. That's why we call everyone to join the UNIFIED MOVEMENT AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION.

Therefore, we propose the creation of FIGHT CENTERS OF THE UNIFIED MOVEMENT AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, in neighborhoods, villages, prisons, *candomblé terreiros*, *umbanda terreiros*, workplaces, samba schools, churches, in every place where black people live; FIGHT CENTERS that promote debate, information, awareness, and organization of the black community, making us a strong, active and combatant movement, leading black people to participate in all sectors of Brazilian society.

We invite the democratic sectors of society (to) support us, creating the necessary conditions to create a true racial democracy. AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

AGAINST POLICE OPPRESSION

FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE MOVEMENT

FOR AN AUTHENTIC RACIAL DEMOCRACY

("Open letter from the MNU In GONZALEZ, Lélia; HASENBALG, Carlos. 1982, pp. 43-44").



**IMAGE 5**  
Frame from the documentary *Negras vozes - Tempos de Alakan* ("Black Voices - Times of Alakan")

The letter quoted is the appeal to the black people for the public act against racism in 1978. In this act, they delivered another letter to the military government, the letter read by Conceição Evaristo in the carnival procession. In the image, the remembrance of the occupation of the stairs is in a banner, and in the gestures of the bodies that accompany the reading of the letter in performance, act in presence. The parade of the Block Ilú

Obá de Min, in 2018, makes visible in the media the mark of 40 years of fighting against racism in Brazil.

Another film that makes audio-visible the event promoted by the MNU in 1978 is “AmarElo - é tudo pra ontem” (AmarElo – it’s all for yesterday) a narrative starring Emicida, produced by Laboratório Ghost and by Netflix, as mentioned. The film is made from the production of the show for the release of the album AmarElo, at the Municipal Theater of São Paulo. The film’s writexperience of Eshu comes from the idea of the show: it was the first time that black artists starred on the stage of the Municipal Theater, promenading and opening the paths of legitimizing their art and culture. Many of the artists and technicians involved in the project were getting in touch with that environment for the first time in their lives. And the emotions of these encounters and presences were captured by moving images, revering the achievement of that crossroads that transforms the paths to be taken from there.

In images from archives that refer to the day of delivery of the MNU letter, the film “AmarElo - é tudo pra ontem” reminds us of the historical importance of this event. The photographs of the reading of the letter in 1978, which are in *Negras Vozes* and *AmarElo*, refer to three moments, three experiences, three writexperiences that involve epistemology of Eshu and make reference to a place of extreme representation for whiteness: the Municipal Theater of São Paulo. It is a place that dissipates in many non-places and thus perpetuates embodied images around resistance, politics, aesthetics, and audio-visibility of blackness and the fight against racism: the apparition.

But there is another movement to update the writexperience of Eshu in Emicida’s film. From the stage, the rapper says that he needs to revere the elders, who had taken the first step in the fight that made possible the realization of that show. Then Emicida asks the four members of the MNU (who were at the delivery of the letter in 1978) to introduce themselves, and they stand together, hand in hand, from the middle of the main audience. In the show and in the film, the writexperience of opening paths is revered and reinvented, as it was the first time that the MNU was honored there, introducing the ritual of black memory in orality at the Municipal Theater. The epistemology of Eshu, which we recognize updated in this inaugural performance at the show, guarantees a new possibility of creating knowledge about the history of the anti-racist fight in Brazil: through voices, gestures, and bodies, as in a *terreiro*. At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, “AmarElo: É tudo pra ontem” had great repercussions on digital social networks. Receiving criticisms and acclamations it made visible in writexperiences this and other stories silenced by racial discrimination and consequent social and cultural invisibility.

The Ilú Obá de Min Block was the first women's carnival block in São Paulo created in 2006. In the history of this block, its guidance, as well as its purpose, has always been carried out by women. During the COVID-19 pandemic, this nonprofit association had to reinvent itself. Its presentations, without an in-person audience, were broadcast on social networks, co-creating other kinds of ties than the hand in hand performed in previous processions. Without the public in person, its presentations started to be broadcast through social networks, co-creating other types of ties in addition to the proximity of the bodies performed in processions before Covid-19. The block Ilú Obá de Min is also part of the writexperience that brings to light ancestral memories and traditional roots. Today, towards a lot of fight and resistance, these memories can be seen through the screens; memories that have been documented, recorded, and exposed in a film broadcast remotely and online.

Ancestry and tradition meet technology, and, through screens, meet the youth. The occupation of social networks by Bloco Ilu Obá de Min is a new form of positioning. Women, black women, artists, music, performances, and poets find a way of placing themselves and not being silent in front of others. Through the image, through the voice, through the resistance. As bell hooks considers: “Coming to voice is not just the act of telling one’s experience. It is using that telling strategically—to come to voice so that you can also speak freely about other subjects.” (1994, 148).



**IMAGE 6**  
Frame from the documentary  
Negras vozes -  
Tempos de Alakan  
("Black Voices -  
Times of Alakan")

### **WOMEN, WRITEXPERIENCE, RESISTANCE**

“Get out, man, the woman is coming, get out, man, the woman is coming, she is the Pomba Gira, queen of candoblé” (“Author Unknown”). This sung

*ponto* identifies the Pomba Gira – an entity extremely present in the *terreiros* of African-based religions. In this *ponto*, the passage “the queen of candomblé” can be sung as the “queen of cabaret”. The Pomba Gira is an extremely important entity in African-based religions. She is a warrior, undoes spells, and works with love, but, in the discourse from the West, her figure was associated to pejorative adjectives:

This was considered by well-thinking Brazilian society as the carrier of all the most negative characteristics that can be attributed to women: libertine, diabolic, perverse, she belonged to the group of witches, pythonesses, prostitutes, hysterics, crazies, she-devils, and others inhabitants of the nefarious realm of females persecuted throughout history (Dravet 2016, 99).

The Pomba Gira archetype from the original discourse of the *terreiros* articulated the relationship with women’s freedom, with their own sexual, love, and work choices, also bringing to itself the issue of female emancipation.

In what we can consider as a strategy to affirm the right of women to their bodily autonomy, in both sensuality and sexuality, as well as in the freedom to enjoy it, Pomba Gira assumed the image of the prostitute for herself before men and women, and explored the discourse of the woman’s of free life: sexual and sensual, without ceasing to be also maternal and caring. She became a counselor on matters of love and relationships, sexuality, the exercise of freedom. But she has also become the protector of prostitutes, transvestites, and all those who explicitly experience her feminine strength (Dravet 2016, 99).

The Pomba Gira brings with itself new possibilities of episteme about the body in which the female, the woman, acts. She makes shine the strength around the woman who goes beyond patriarchy, colonization, and the West. As Dravet states, the Pomba Gira considers the feminine in another way and questions what lies behind the woman’s tag recounted by the West. It brings the possibility of questioning the epistemology: “and lead us to a science that acquires another consciousness and asks for another way of looking at itself. Other. This word is openness, potential, creativity” (2016, 113).

In an interview given in 2017, when reflecting on writexperience, Conceição Evaristo brings up the writing and knowledge potential of black women, which dialogues with the mentioned archetype of the Pomba Gira and the freedom related to the resistance of women of all times:

It comes from the following: when I’m writing and when other black women are writing, hum... it comes to my memory the role of African women within enslaved Big Houses, the role these women had to storytelling to make sleep the ones from the Big House, right... the progeny were asleep with the black mothers storytelling. So, they were bedtime stories. And when I say that our texts, hum..., he tries to blur this image, we don’t write to put those in the

Big House to sleep, on the opposite, to wake them from their unfair sleep. And this writexperience, it will leave, it takes precisely the experience as a motto of creation. Or the experience from a personal point of view, or the experience from the collective point of view. (Evaristo In Remanche and Sipel 2019, 43).

Walter Benjamin (1996), when enunciating the power of documents in narrating experiences, inspired us to ethnograph the films in search of the epistemology of Eshu. Conceição Evaristo reminds us of the importance of giving ancestral body and voice to what is declared; this knowledge goes beyond the epistemologies that are still in force as protagonists in the academic and hegemonically media space. These paths were opened to compose passages to an anti-racist world. Our thoughts and bodies were awakened by emotions brought through the gestures and moving images from these films, which were launched in the context of new sociability: confinement and social isolation as a facing against the pandemic.

Would these manifestations be in front of the one who inhabits the memory, a way of having the African continent with us? This would be a possibility of episteme to be embraced by the fields of knowledge and by epistemology, a possibility of accessing the real through mythical narratives. It would be an epistemology of resistance, ancestry, orality, and, above all, decolonial.

[...] when we try to make culture an undisturbed space of harmony and agreement where social relations exist within cultural forms of uninterrupted accords, we subscribe to a form of social amnesia in which we forget that all knowledge is forged in histories that are played out in the field of social antagonisms. (McLaren 1992 apud hooks 1994, 31).

And since everything is not an end or a final point, we can give new meaning to it within the opening of paths, which must be constantly and vehemently opened, as if in a continuous act, as we are talking here about resistance and black memory. Emicida's first guest on stage in the film *Amarelo* was MC Tha. Here we borrow the lyrics from her song, *Rito de Passá*:

Open the paths  
Open the paths  
It opens the paths  
I shot the arrow  
Where did it fall, I cried out  
Lightning in the sky  
The rain will come  
My body went to the ground  
In the straw to heal

I washed my soul and then  
I rebuilt myself in the mud, I saw rocks rolling  
I danced with the current, I left myself to the sea  
I rebuilt myself in the mud, I saw rocks rolling  
I danced with the current, I left myself to the sea  
Singing and dancing to greet  
The time to come, which was, which is  
Touching to leave a mark  
The passing ritual <sup>2</sup>  
The passing ritual

(“Mc Tha, 2019”).

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In front of the screens, between the screens, through the screens, we are attentive to the movements of contemporary culture articulated with the processes of social mediatization of Afro-descendant religiosity, articulations between technicalities, institutionalities, socialities, and ritualities. We saw ancestry being revered, memories being rescued through the films discussed here, the experiences lived on digital platforms; in these times when we were hit by a viral pandemic.

We saw decolonization in motion; as Rufino (1987) states, this decolonization must emerge not only through academic veins but also through the veins and sweat of the body, in the constant practice of transformation. Decolonization is a revolutionary act. We saw a search for culture as a vector of protection, care, and love. It is a certain reverence for nature, the community, and the times that interlace: future, past, and present.

Between the Times of Alakan and the demand for everything to be done yesterday, we conclude here with the Yoruba saying mentioned by Emicida in the film: “Eshu threw a stone today that hit a bird yesterday.”

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