

**BLACK WOMEN  
MANAGERS: A  
REQUIRED PRESENCE!**

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*Organizers*

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## PREFACE

trajectory – challenges, particularities, and forms of access; 3. professional trajectory – types of access, experiences and positions occupied, strategies, symbolic violence suffered, and resilience; 4. formation of individual and collective identity – going through the theme of public policies of racial equality and religion; 5. a free reflection on herself.

The invitation made to the women who make up this collective biography sought to express diversity in generation and in professional experiences and sectors that they belonged to. Thus, the biographies bring fourteen stories of women who have and still work in different areas of public management, such as education, social assistance, culture, heritage, public safety, prison policy, municipal government, legislative advice, women’s policy, racial equality, and sexual diversity; and from different generations and places in Minas Gerais, although, for the most part, have built their life and work trajectories in the state capital.

Each chapter was written from the narratives of their own herstories, with the titles bearing their names: Macaé Evaristo, Daniela Tiffany, Diva Moreira, Nila Rodrigues, Larissa Borges, Cleide Hilda, Patrícia Santana, Xica da Silva, Eliane Dias, Maria do Carmo Ferrreira (Cacá), Yone Gonzaga, Magda Neves, Iara Viana, and Cleide Barcelos. The texts are the result of a construction by many hands, those of the biographers and the team of women and men, white and black researchers, who were attentive in maintaining the voices of the former. We hope, with this, to highlight their protagonism and, as *living memory*, register both the richness inherent to their experiences, as well as the meaning the events narrated as ascribed by the interviewees themselves. But also, to promote the discussion of the impacts of the combination of *race, class, and gender* on black women’s ascension to instances of power and public decision, structural racism, the character and importance of racial equality policies, as well as the criticism of the myths of “racial democracy” and “meritocracy” in the state’s action.

The project was financed with parliamentary funds and selected from the public call opened by the *Gabinete*, which aimed to guide the allocation of part of the resources of the individual amendments accessed by Congresswomen Andreia de Jesus and Aurea Carolina (PSOL<sup>5</sup>).

The work is the second volume of the *Sempre-Vivas* series, a compilation of collective biographies of women designed by EGEDI – State, Gender, and Diversity Group of Studies of the João Pinheiro Foundation. The group was created in 2014 and has become increasingly multiracial over time – what has allowed it to discuss, in a much richer and democratic way, albeit more challenging, the axes of gender and race in its articulation with management and public policies.

**#BlackLivesMatter  
Belo Horizonte, February 2021.**

5 Socialism and Liberty Party.

# 1

# INTRODUCTION

**Letícia Godinho**  
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## 1. Introduction

To investigate who are the black women in public service, we used the literature produced in-between the theorizations of black women intellectuals and the black women’s movement. Also, we utilized methodologies that could guarantee them a central role in the elaboration of research and work. The brief recovery of this literature, of the few existing examples that reinforce the persistence of challenges and the debate surrounding the methodological choice, oriented towards strengthening the presence of biographers, are the elements that the reader finds in this introduction. It was constructed to share choices and meanings, demonstrating the construction of the work’s trajectory.

### 1.1. A brief dialogue with literature

Although the presence of black women in public service has been on the agenda for a long time in the field of black women’s political organizations, it is a theme that has seen little discussion in academia. There are few spaces found in theses, dissertations, scientific journals, and books, for reflection on the conditions in which black women can access, ascend to, and occupy decision-making positions within the interior of the public administration.

It is possible to find in “black feminism”, an important discussion on the factors and structures that determine the living conditions of black women, their insertion in the workforce and in public life, among other issues. In its origin, this literature seeks to expose broader racist and sexist social structures, which organize and frame the scenario of the daily confrontations of these women and black people in general.

It is the contributions of this practical theoretical field that also explain, effectively, the lack of centrality and the little importance attributed to the theories and discussions brought by black women intellectuals, in a poor country, with a black and female majority. It shows by what mechanisms a widely oppressive social regime promotes the systematic silencing of this population in different fields of knowledge - academia, media, society, and politics. It is the epistemicide that Sueli Carneiro (2005) talks about, a process by which her perspectives or “places of speech” are promptly dismissed, ignored, or suppressed (Djamila RIBEIRO, 2017)<sup>1</sup>.

The foundations of black feminist thought are found in the first movements of black women, brought together by the concern to conceive ways of liberating their population from captivity, poverty, degrading exploitation, and the objectification of the black body. Furthermore, in the interest of creating new theoretical and methodological references to account for the realities of black women. On the one hand, “traditional” feminism was not mindful to ways of life and particular challenges of black women, given that it was founded from the perspective of white women - which, in claiming to be comprehensive, ended up taking on forms that were indeed oppressive. On the other hand, the black movement is also constrained by a limited perspective, that of the black man, which would yield little space for the recognition of women in this population. Thus, given the invisibility of black women's activism and the erasure of their agendas, it would be up to them to “blacken” the agenda of the feminist movement and “sexualize” that of the black movement, promoting the complexification of their political conceptions and practices (Sueli CARNEIRO, 2003 apud Cristiano RODRIGUES, 2010; Ana Cláudia PEREIRA, 2016; Patrícia Hill COLINS, 2019; Michele SILVA, 2007). In their emancipatory project:

They denounce sexist violence within the Black Movement itself and other social movements, in domestic relations, in internal disputes, whether in the workplace, movements, unions, and parties. They re-educate men and women black, white, and from other ethnic-racial backgrounds, as well as themselves (Nilma Lino GOMES, 2017: 73).

The articulation of the dimensions of gender, race, and class is part of the foundations of this theoretical, practical, and political effort. Black authors and activists are not only concerned with

showing how inequalities overlap in calcified layers of vulnerability that add up and re- target their life experiences; but also, how this triple articulation takes on historical, complex, and proper forms, as with the concept of intersectionality, coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (2002). In Brazil, the interdependence of this three-way oppression has its origins in the colonial process, forming a dependent patriarchal-racist capitalism, according to the incredibly original and precise diagnosis of Lélia Gonzalez (1988; 1984).

It is also established, in this perspective, the crucial claim of the presence - of the lived experience, embodied, whether personally or by peers, in the constitution of the ideas and guidelines postulated in the black feminist movement and thought:

By claiming different points of analysis and affirming that one of the objectives of black feminism is to mark the place of speech of those who propose them, we realize that this differentiation is necessary to understand realities that were considered implicit within hegemonic rules. (...) Speaking is not restricted to the act of emitting words, but of being able to exist. We think of a place of speech as refuting traditional historiography and the hierarchy of knowledge resulting from the social hierarchy (RIBEIRO, 2017; 32 and 36).

In addition to the organizations linked to racial issues and representative groups of black women, black women also have a strong participation in other significant movements of Brazilian black and peripheral civil society, such as the slums movement, domestic workers movements, community associations, Afro-Brazilian religious communities, the student movement, among others. These movements are present in the background of the trajectories of the women participating in this collective biography, although some of those biographies are not actively linked to any of them.

Contrary to the scenarios determined for this population, the practices and guidelines of the black women's movement and the black feminist theory unveil the context of these women's lives and point to fundamental themes surrounding the reflection on their place and role in public administration - for example, on the topic of meritocracy or on the process of developing public policies of racial and gender equality. By gradually occupying, albeit very incipiently, training spaces, work posts, and positions to speak, black women managers emphasize, in practice and in theory, the implications of the lack of representativeness and the importance of their guarantee, whether academia, or in the process of preparing and conducting public policies.

<sup>1</sup> At the authors' choice, the first citation of each reference will be made using the author's first and last name to evidence the existence of female scientists, in a context in which it is assumed that "the author" of a scientific text is usually a man.

## 1.2. Under what conditions are black women able to access public administration, ascend to, and occupy decision-making positions?

The statistics available indicate some of the challenges faced by black women in the labor market. Below, we discuss some of the data available, which are also scarce.

According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2019)<sup>2</sup>, black people in Brazil constitute the majority of the workforce. In 2018, they were 57.7 million people, 25.2% more than the non-black population. On the other hand, they were about 2/3 of the unemployed (64.2%) and the underutilized (66.1%) in the workforce, in that year.

Other data inform on the greater precariousness of the labor market from the point of view of black people and its consequences. In 2018, while 34.6% of employed white people were in informal occupations, among black women this percentage reached 47.3%. Of the managerial positions, the majority were held by white people - 68.6% against 29.9% of black people.

In the case of black women, they are the largest ethnic group in the Brazilian population, at 28%, and its largest workforce. They have a lower rate of participation in the economically active population (PEA, in Portuguese), higher unemployment, and lower average weekly hours - all of these, indicators of more fragile work positions (Mariana MARCONDES et al., 2013).

In addition to the more precarious access to the labor market, the vulnerability of this population is reflected in the occupation of less prestigious and remunerated positions. They are the majority among domestic workers - almost 60% of all workers in this position. They are the majority in care work in general, including domestic, health and education functions. These are positions which reinforce the roles of black women as “to serve”. In addition, about 13% of employed black women carry out activities for their own consumption or without remuneration (idem).

In Minas Gerais, black population totaled 52.3% of the population and represented the highest unemployment rate in 2018, 12.2%. In contrast, white people had an unemployment rate of 8.3%. In 2018, the average income of the black population was equivalent to 65.7% of the average income of the white population in that state (IBGE, 2019).

Black women were the majority among domestic workers with a formal contract (63.3%, among workers with a formal contract and 67.7% without a formal contract), and among auxiliary

family workers (34.5%). In contrast, they were a minority among employers, only 9.6% (IBGE, 2019).

Regarding the trends that specifically characterize the public administration scenario, one is that women in general have a greater participation in this sector. However, in the federal public sector, the highest paid, the participation of men is greater. Black women are the group with the lowest participation in this sphere, representing only 7.5% of workers, less than half of their participation in the public service overall (Tatiana SILVA; Josenilton SILVA, 2014).

Public service income reproduces this hierarchy of occupations. In it, white men are at the top, followed by black men, white women, and black women. Among professionals with higher education, black women earn, on average, less than half of a white professional (40%). This inequality is explained not only by the discrimination of gender and race, but also by how they are inserted in the occupation. Women, especially black women, are underrepresented among civil servants linked to the administration, as well as in the most prestigious activities and positions of management (Ana Paula VOLPE et al., 2012: 338). In addition, about 65% of black women employed in the public service are in the municipal sphere, which has the worst average earnings.

In Minas Gerais’s public sector, there was an increase in the number and participation of black women and men employed between 2014 and 2019, according to data from the IBGE Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNAD continua, in Portuguese)<sup>3</sup>. In 2019, black women represented about 35.5% of the public sector workers, the equivalent of 420.000 people; white women constituted 25%; black men, 25% and white men, 16% of this population.

Although the representation of black women in the public sector is high, when analyzed in terms of the distribution of occupations, according to the data, black women employed in public administration were distributed as follows: the vast majority in the group of science professionals and intellectuals (37% of all black women in the public sector)<sup>4</sup>; then, in the group of technicians and mid-level professionals (21%); among administrative support workers (13.5%); and in basic occupations (11.5%). Only 3.8% of black women occupied the position of directors and managers in the public service, equivalent to the rate of black men, higher than white women (2.9%) and lower than white men (4.9%) (IBGE, 2020).

In terms of qualifications, the average number of years spent in education by black women employed in the public administration of Minas Gerais (13.6 years) was only lower than that of

<sup>2</sup> Report “Social Inequalities by Color or Race in Brazil, produced by IBGE (2019), based on PNAD (National Household Sample Survey) data collected in 2018.

<sup>3</sup> We would like to thank Nícia Raies, researcher at the João Pinheiro Foundation, for conducting the survey of statistics for the state of Minas Gerais, with PNADc/ IBGE.

<sup>4</sup> This group includes teachers from all levels of education (primary, secondary and higher education).

white women (14). White and black men had, on average, 13 and 12.2 years of study, respectively. Despite this, black women had the worst average income, as well as the worst per capita household income. They received 46% of the income of white men, 62.5% of black men and 75% of white women (IBGE, 2020).

In combination with these data, qualitative investigations address the conditions and experiences in the scope and in the work environment, denouncing the persistent obstacles and discrimination based on race, gender, and class. Research carried out in different geographical contexts point to many convergences in this relationship, which leads to the interpretation that, even in different environments and contexts, black women are subjected to remarkably similar and therefore structuring discriminatory factors (Sueli CARNEIRO, 2019; Carmen DIOP, 2011; Irene BROWNE, 2000; J. Camille HALL; Joyce E. EVERETT; Johnnie HAMILTON-MASON, 2012).

These surveys strongly demonstrate that black women - even when highly qualified - suffer discrimination in access to employment, in their professional status, in the forms of hiring, in addition to reporting daily constraints in labor relations. They emphasize that black women with more years of formal education are systematically discriminated against at work and do not develop the careers that they could and should. In terms of precariousness and unemployment, diplomas do not protect them: they suffer from overwork, long periods of unemployment, and are much more prone to precarious working conditions and income.

The precarious forms and conditions of work make it difficult or even deprive them of affiliation with labor groups (unions and associations), which consequently hinders access to rights (labor, social security, among others). On the other hand, they are part of the repertoire of discrimination: the failure to recognize their competence to occupy certain jobs; the “symbolic” occupation of a job - that is, without decision-making power or corresponding functions; the disreputable applicant; the “appropriation” of authorship of their ideas; function deviations; and moral and sexual harassment.

The studies’ reports indicate that their reaction to the institutional racism that permeates such contexts involves the development of strategies and practical knowledge; these often take the form of “behaving according to the rules” of which they are the victims of, to persist in organizations. At other times, they generate forms of coping and influence changes in the work environment.

### 1.3. The methodological challenges of the research

Explaining the methodology used to carry out this work, which gathers stories of black women who held or occupy positions of relevance in public management, means sharing the choice of a path to ensure the greater presence of those biographed in the work. These stories, which can take different forms (Sumaya MORAES, 2009), here took the form of biographies. Based on oral testimonies, instigated by a pre-defined script, the biographies were written using the technique of transcreation, in a dialogical process woven between researchers and those who are biographed.

The use of oral history and biography as a method of investigation and the challenges inherent in writing oneself are important aspects of the research and, therefore, will be explored below. The peculiarities inherent in the methodological choices reinforce the importance of explaining the procedures related to the development of the research and the text itself, which we cover in the following subsections. Lastly, we develop some points about a writing that is intended to be feminist and blackened, in short, decolonial. With this, we hope to show how the choices made, some of them slightly “untraditional”, seek to converge with the perspective assumed by our investigation.

#### 1.3.1. Oral history and the use of biography in social research

(...) it is possible to verify that oral history is a field of work and a methodology that (...) is characterized by interdisciplinarity and the many possibilities of employment, from political history, through the history of social movements, through the history of workers, from institutions, to the history of memory, for example; that it falls within the field of the history of the present time; which is closely linked to the notions of biography and life history; that the oral source has specificities that differentiate it from other historical sources (Verena ALBERTI, 1997, p. 18).

Alberti's explanation above indicates that the use of oral history is a convergent methodology with the objective of this book: a theme whose literature is not only very scarce but lacks alternative sources available. This book seeks to portray memories and stories of the present time, and its strong political bias is evident.

Oral history is closely related to the biographical method. Biography, autobiography, and diaries, are traditional genres of the literary field, composed of accounts of a person's life (ALBERTI, 2000), and which consolidated themselves as such from the middle of the 18th century (Yuri BATISTA, 2018, p. 1). In the social sciences, Sumaya Moraes (2009) explains that biography had its use expanded as a method of investigation throughout the 20th century when it was recognized for, among other aspects, ensuring the articulation of

an individual's history with social history. The incorporation of contemporary themes in historical research, starting in the 1970s, brought not only an interest in oral history, but also an appreciation for biography (ALBERTI, 2000). Both methods consider individual experiences to be important in understanding the past and are, therefore, powerful tools for revaluing the role of subjects in history.

The act of interpreting your own history is also that of understanding the facts as “placements and displacements in the social space” (Pierre BOURDIEU, 1996, p. 190). They do not constitute themselves and are part of the plot of many other stories. The personal report expresses “a collective experience, a worldview made possible in a given society” (MORAES, 2009, p. 2). That is why the biography represents the possibility of a theory of social and historical action, which establishes a relationship between the psychological and social dimensions. It guarantees, to those who use this approach, the recognition of singularities, without disregarding the socio-cultural dimensions (MORAES, 2009).

When considering each subject as a carrier of a life project linked to social history, the biographical method also gains relevance when it comes to building or reconstructing the identity of a group. The collective biographies concentrate characteristics of a certain group, illustrating typical forms of behavior. Even exceptional or exclusive characteristics serve to show what is structurally and statistically specific to the group, by allowing the identification of latent possibilities of a culture and deducing, “in negative”, what would be more frequent (ALBERTI, 2000, p. 3).

In the expectation of valuing the contribution of personal reports and understanding elements common to the reality of the biographed women, this work was conceived as a collective biography. This means that the reports presented are important in themselves but also as a whole.

From a collective point of view, this means that it is possible to focus on the “common characteristics of a group of actors in history through the collective study of their lives” (Lawrence STONE, 2011, p. 115). The various types of information about the biographies juxtaposed, combined, and examined (for example, in the chapter that closes the book), constitute important results of this type of investigation. From an individual point of view, in turn, each chapter is a record of the uniqueness and power of each narrated trajectory. The narrated stories express unique events, embodying a lived time. In this sense, making these biographies available is also of political and pedagogical importance, in which the expression of experiences and the concreteness of individual experiences are valued, the critical, reflective, and inventive attitude (MORAES, 2009) in the context of teaching

practices hegemonically anchored in “generic” theories and ideals, supposedly universal. The biography challenges us to face “another knowledge”, according to Bruce Albert (2015, p. 513), “at the same time close and inaccessible”. It urges us to reconcile with the other, the other, which are also the non-generic, the non-universal and, for this very reason, multiple. Also with our own lives, knowledge, and memories.

### 1.3.2. The dilemmas surrounding self-writing

In the chapters of this book, the presence of the biographed as the first co-author and of writing in the first person can create the expectation that the work will gather autobiographies. This question, in fact, refers to an important controversy, placed both in the field of literature and in the human and social sciences. They are “the backstage of the first person”, which Philippe Lejeune deals with (1980 apud ALBERT, 2015), among many other authors. In the case of a text written in the first person, but in co-authorship, who would be the “true” author of the text? What is the role of the co-authors, the biographers - are they passive transcribers of memories that are transmitted to them or do they play an active role in the process of remembering and constructing the narrative?

Written in 1983, *The writings of self*, by Michel Foucault seeks to reflect on authorship in texts such as letters, diaries and any other ways of recording actions, thoughts, or feelings. He concludes that these textual genres would work for their authors as a process of venting or purging something he wants to share. They provide a greater knowledge of the person about himself, and a possibility to reflect on his own personality and his place in society (SILVA; MOREIRA, 2016).

But the author does not deal with co-authored writing, in which authors and characters in a biography are not necessarily the one and only person. In this regard, Pierre Bourdieu's discussion of the life story seems useful to us. Bourdieu (1996) points out that, in this method, the investigated is placed at the disposal of the researcher, who is the one who proposes a certain structure: for example, an order for the succession of events, which will not always strictly follow a chronological order of narration; the topics to be discussed and deepened, among others.

Thus, if in the “classic” life story, a privileged informant is asked to tell his or her life in order to extract material for the text; in alternative forms of research and writing, it is not intended to be absent from the writer or co-author. In fact, what would characterize classic biographical forms would be precisely “the fiction of an absence of fiction”, that is, “the illusion of a face-to-face without mediation” between the biographed and the reader,

according to Bruce Albert (2015, p. 535). In this same perspective, Alberti (1996) explains the difference between autobiography and oral history, justifying the use of co-authorship in this method. Both are exposed in the first person of the biographed, however:

(...) While in the autobiography there is only one author, in the oral history interview there are at least two authors - the interviewee and the interviewer. Thus, even if the interviewer says little, to allow the interviewee to narrate his experiences, the interview he conducts is part of his own account - scientific, academic - about past actions (Alberti, 1996, p. 4).

About the texts that make up this collective biography, we build the understanding that the author, narrator, and character are not one. Biographers and biographed establish a process of dialogical interaction that transforms the work and gives it multiple authorship. This construction was not simple, but it reveals our option for a path that, in addition to valuing the biographed as a black woman and the protagonist of the story being told, also intends to show that the approach built is the result of an interaction that produces a specific writing of the self, distinct from what could have been built by itself.

Thus, the first co-author is the biographed each one of the authors of the reports that constitute the concrete source of this biography; her voice. The biographers, whose initiative comes from the investigation, appear as co-authors - they present themselves as transcreators, whose non-existence is not intended to simulate. This encounter between the what's told and the scientific can be considered as the result of the organization of living memory and the availability and confidence of the biographed to follow a script constructed, at first, by the biographers.

However, such a construction, to be legitimate, must obey certain ethical principles. The meeting between biographed and biographers must be based on a kind of "tactical pact", defended by Albert (2015), which arises in response to the confidence placed by the former in unveiling her memories. Thus, one must not only do justice to the stories themselves, but to their political sense. In other words, in this kind of research, we, researchers, have become political allies of our interlocutors, as the foundation of this engagement.

Finally, if spreading the word - in this case, someone else's - always implies transforming it, there is a set of procedures and narrative solutions that guarantee the integrity of the writing, which we explain below.

### 1.3.3. Methodological procedures

Júlia Matos and Adriana Senna (2011) warn that, when using the method and the source of oral history, one must pay attention to the explanation of the methodological and procedural options that constituted the investigation. The fundamental procedures for carrying out this work concern the literature review, the production of the script, the selection of the women to be biographed, the conduct of interviews, the treatment of data, and the production and analysis of the text.

Of these various stages, the first was the revision of texts by Brazilian and foreign authors around the theme of the participation of black women in the world of work and public service, as well as on black feminism and the movements of black women in Brazil. The regular EGEDI study and discussion meetings, which began in August 2019, lasted 11 months and preceded the construction of the interview script. In this effort to study and mature hypotheses and questions for investigation, the contributions of Débora Menezes Alcântara<sup>5</sup> and Michele Lopes da Silva Alves<sup>6</sup> were fundamental.

The review supported the construction of the interview script, which addressed the following dimensions: 1. origins, family history; 2. school and university trajectory - challenges, differences, and forms of access; 3. professional trajectory - types of access, experiences and positions occupied, strategies, symbolic violence suffered, and resilience; 4. formation of individual and collective identity, public policies of racial equality, and religiousness; 5. a free reflection about themselves. In the process of discussing the script, there were important contributions from Merelane Emanuele Cardoso<sup>7</sup> and Camila Natália Ferreira Teófilo Alves<sup>8</sup>.

In the next stage, criteria were defined for the selection of women to be biographed. In this choice, what was sought was a diverse set when it came to generations, professional experiences, and sectors occupied by them in public administration. Thus, the book brings together biographies of women who worked and still work in different areas of public management: education, social

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<sup>7</sup> Social worker, she was Municipal Secretary of Citizenship Development and Social Assistance of the municipality of São João Del-Rey in Minas Gerais.

<sup>8</sup> Public Defender in the Office of Minas Gerais. Co-creator and coordinator of the Samba of Black Women project in Belo Horizonte.

assistance, culture, heritage, public security, prison policy, city hall, legislative consultancy, women's policy, racial equality, and sexual diversity. Women who belong to different generations and come from different places in Minas Gerais, although most have built their life and work paths in the state capital.

In view of the social isolation measures implemented since the Covid-19 pandemic, we had to choose to conduct oral history interviews remotely (using a video call application). The interviews were recorded in audio and video, with prior knowledge and authorization by the biographed, carried out between August and September 2020. The 11 researcher-biographers who made up the research team were divided into pairs to carry out the remote meetings with the biographed. Each pair was responsible for organizing the interview, as well as writing the biography of two to three women, taking two to four sessions, depending on each case. In total hours, around 44 hours were recorded.

The next procedure was to transcribe the reports. In the oral transcription, the recorded content was converted to textual form; the word is transported in its “raw state” (Leandro ALONSO, 2016). In this process, repetitions of words, specific expressions, and sketches were preserved. This effort resulted in almost 700 transcribed pages. In the next stage, the oral report generated from the literal transcription is reorganized. Phrases without discursive continuity are removed, or whose meaning was not strictly necessary for the report; characteristics of the oral record are softened to gain greater fluidity in the written record. However, we have chosen to preserve some styles of orality and we seek to maintain the style and voice of each one of them.

The first version of the text was consolidated with the transcreation. This is the stage in which the “extratextual elements” are incorporated: it is the moment of the “operationalization of culture”, of the conversion of speech into “resigned language” (ALONSO, 2016, p. 17-ss). In this process, from a vast and immense set of stories, the editors chose the central axes of the story to be told, in a central procedure to the oral history method, according to José Meihy and Fabíola Holanda (2013 apud ALONSO, 2016): to apprehend the visions, narrative constructions and idealizations, highlighted from the exposition of the facts. An effort of selection and composition, which combines both an aesthetic and political concern in the production of the text.

Part of this stage was the choice of what Alonso calls “vital tones” of the interview, phrases chosen to be used as epigraphs of the sections of the chapters. This is a “fundamental element in practice because it contributed to find the ‘narrative nexuses’, the central axes of the documents constructed and the thematic links presented by the interlocutors” (ALONSO, 2016, p. 16).

Finally, it is important to say that we seek to compose the narrative based on the chosen epistemological and methodological approach. The co-authors sewed the story told in each of the biographies, using the objective and subjective contents of the reported trajectories, the choices, values, and experiences during their professional life as the conducting threads. From the point of view of the set of biographies, systematic and thematic harmony between the chapters was sought, thus maintaining a certain coherence in the work, and making it capable of confronting the main intention of the book: reconstructing the itineraries of black women public managers, seeking to understand how they were covered, in a context of struggle for the rights of the black population. To this end, collective meetings were held at various times for reading and writing the texts, seeking to resolve doubts and uncertainties about the messages to be transmitted.

The first versions of the texts were sent to the biographed for validation. In all cases, this involved correcting inaccuracies and editing sensitive passages. In many, the reconstruction of complete stretches was necessary. This final stage is of fundamental importance in a research such as this, in which a collaborative method is chosen and the biographed and first author is, at the same time, deponent, social agent, and “object of study”.

With this, an inversion occurs in terms of the traditional logic of research, in which those researched are taken as the “object” of the researchers' view. Instead of simply “collecting data”, we were re-educated by those who agreed to participate and write with us. In addition, we believe that this way it was possible to avoid a complacent look at the black population, predominant in literature until very recently, avoiding the erasure of their protagonism.

#### 1.3.4. The method is personal, it is political, and it has a body: how to portray it in a feminist and blackened writing

In the research process, we learned how access to knowledge is not purely intellectual but passes through the body. In this research, we did not just reach the limits of our own reason, seeking to access those of the biographed. In meetings scheduled by a team composed in half of white people and of two men, not only intellectual interest and theoretical-political convergences marked the interpellation of the biographed. Whether confronting the hateful actions of whiteness or recognizing black sisters in the reports, the process was intensely moved and felt by our corporealities. This destabilization, however, helped to keep the attention alive on the objective of building a different point of view - and, above all, a more realistic one - of our history.

This is also why we seek to maintain the form of feminist and blackened writing. As in other social expressions, the colonizer's original language is gendered and racialized, that is, traditionally excluding. Therefore, an important feature of the writing of this book is the use of a degendered language, especially in the original Portuguese. The bibliographic references used are cited from their first names, and not just surnames, to evidence the existence (now majority) of women scientists, in a context in which it is assumed that “the author” of a scientific text is always a man. From the point of view of blackness, we avoid words that could be negatively associated with blackness, or that are exclusive because they reinforce the ideal of whiteness (such as “clarifying”).

It does not hurt to go through to the motions, already trivial, but which make feminist and anti-racist movements and theories converge: “the personal is political”, “the body is political”. “Accused” of not being able to formulate a theoretical, universal thought, women have always used the strategy of telling their personal stories to vocalize their perspectives, worldviews; in short, to give visibility to the body that materializes and conditions their unique existences. For this reason, the entire writing of the book seeks to value a personal point of view - hence, one more reason for the use of the first person, not only in the chapters containing the biographies. This also helps to explain the insertion of photos from the personal collection of the women biographed.

Finally, in making this book we discover a path in which oral history and biography meet black feminist tradition and thought. There, storytelling is the primary source of a memory and oral and written wisdom of the black people, which is also a strategy for reflection, for ancestral and political pedagogy. In short, they are the *escrevivências*<sup>9</sup>, which Conceição Evaristo talks about:

The term *escrevivências* [...] is a concept that has as its image an entire historical process that Africans and their descendants enslaved in Brazil went through. In fact, it is born from the following: when I am writing and when other black women are writing, the role of enslaved African women in the master's houses comes to mind. These women had to tell stories to put the people in the master's house to sleep. The offspring were asleep with black mothers telling stories. So, they were stories to fall asleep to. When I say that our texts try to blur this image, we do not write to make those in the master's house fall asleep; on the contrary, it's to wake them up from their unjust sleep. And this *escrevivência* takes as a motto of creation, precisely, the experience. The experience from the personal point of view or the experience from the collective point of view (EVARISTO, 2017 apud Mariana SOUSA; Maria BARBOSA, 2020).

Thus, in the chapters that follow on the individual life and work trajectories of black women in public administration, not only the professional dimension is considered. The family and social origins are presented, showing both its formative, ethical, and political role, as well as conditioning access to schooling – the main trigger for the activation of social mobility. The context of school and university education is exposed and interpreted, sometimes as a source of processes of

cognitive annihilation and trust, and sometimes as a cradle of activism and identity reconstitution. Other dimensions are reported: that of activism, which cuts across the entire adult and, above all, professional trajectory; that of sexual and romantic relations, as a deeply tortuous path; that of religion, promoting a reconnection with an erased past and inheritance, but also a collective future.

With this, we hope to contribute to the discussion about the complex plot of this racial-sexual-classist exclusion contract that strikes them head on, and potentialize ways out to build a more just and democratic society, for us all.

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<sup>9</sup> Neologism created by Evaristo that results from the juxtaposition of the words experiences and writings.

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# 2

## MACAÉ MARIA EVARISTO

Macaé Maria Evaristo dos Santos  
Renata Souza-Seidl  
Letícia Godinho

### 1. Origins

I was born in 1965. One year after the coup, in the countryside of Minas Gerais, in São Gonçalo do Pará – a small town, with 10,000 people, with a white and very conservative population. My family is one of the few black families in the town and they were really poor.

My grandparents had only my mother. They were farmers, worked in the fields, managed to buy a small farm. My father's family was from the Quilombo do Pimentel, which is in the region of Pedro Leopoldo and Santa Luzia. When they moved to Belo Horizonte, they lived in Pendura Saia, a slum that was in the South-Central region of the city. They went through the whole process of real estate speculation, which took the black families that lived there, to replace them with an upper middle-class neighborhood, which today is Cruzeiro. So, this is the domestic context I come from.