

DEFENDER NOSSO PEDAÇO DE CHÃO: QUILOMBOLA STRUGGLES IN BAHIA

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ABSTRACT

Adam Bledsoe: Defender Nosso Pedaco de Chão: Quilombola Struggles in Bahia
(Under the direction of Alvaro Reyes and Altha Cravey)

This research examines the territorial understandings and practices of three “quilombo” communities in the state of Bahia, Brazil, as they seek to protect their way of life amidst a series of land grabs enacted by public and private actors. These quilombos, which were started by slaves and runaway slaves over two hundred years ago, are located in the Bay of Aratu—an area that took on national importance as a site of industry and shipping in the mid-20th century. Because of this, the communities have spent nearly sixty years struggling to defend their territories against the enclosures, environmental degradation, and irreversible topographical changes that typify state, military, and industrial presence in the area. While the tactics and discourses employed by the quilombos reflect the realities of present-day Brazil and attend to the shortcomings of the country’s “progressive” government, I argue that the quilombola struggle is part of a much larger legacy of Black Geographies. I define Black Geographies as the spatial expressions of those that recognize the inherent violence of modern territorial practices and notions of human hierarchy and seek to create a world not defined in these exclusive terms. Using qualitative and participatory methods, I explore the ways in which the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu analyze the oppressive qualities of Brazil’s prevailing political and economic climate and how the communities’ own territorial arrangements work to protect against these violent expressions while simultaneously creating geographies that value and promote Black life.

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It has been the greatest privilege to learn from them, and it is something I hope to do for a long time.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	xi
Quilombos and Rural Black Communities in Bahia	1
Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu	2
Introduction	3
Project Background	3
Positionality	8
Methodology and Framework	11
Chapter Breakdown	18
On not essentializing quilombismo	20
Chapter 1	22
The State of Bahia, Region of Aratu, and its role in Order and Progress	25
History of the Quilombos' Struggles	32
Rio dos Macacos	34
Land Grabs	35
The Violence of the Navy	37
Ilha de Maré	43
Tororó	46

Chapter 2.....	53
The Black in Brazil	54
Post-Abolition	58
Immigration.....	59
Multiracialism and Racial Democracy	60
Pre-Abolition Black Struggle in Brazil.....	65
The anti-Blackness of the Military Dictatorship.....	69
The Brazilian Transition to “Democracy”	74
Quilombola Legislation Today.....	76
Chapter 3.....	79
Extractivist Economies and Social Assistance	80
The Closed Nature of Sovereignty	84
State Sovereignty	85
Sovereignty of Industry	88
Social Death	92
Political Legibility and the Persistence of Slave Status	97
Demanding Visibility	99
State Cooptation of “Quilombos”	101
The Nature of Quilombismo	105
Enforcing a Conservative Black Geography	108

Anti-Black Violences of Bahia.....	109
Sovereign Violence in the City	110
Labor in the City	117
Gendered Marginalization	119
The Black Family?	120
Chapter 4.....	123
Quilombola Labor and Gender Relations.....	125
Quilombola Women’s Labor	128
Quilombola Motherhood	130
Quilombola self-defense	131
Rio dos Macacos	134
Rio dos Macacos and the state	136
Rio dos Macacos and ultra-state actors.....	158
Rio dos Macacos and civil disobedience	163
Rio dos Macacos internal organization	167
Productive Practices.....	168
Defense Practices.....	172
The Contested Politics of Rio dos Macacos	174
Ilha de Maré, sovereign actors, and civil disobedience	175
Ilha de Maré, internal organization, and quilombola solidarity	193

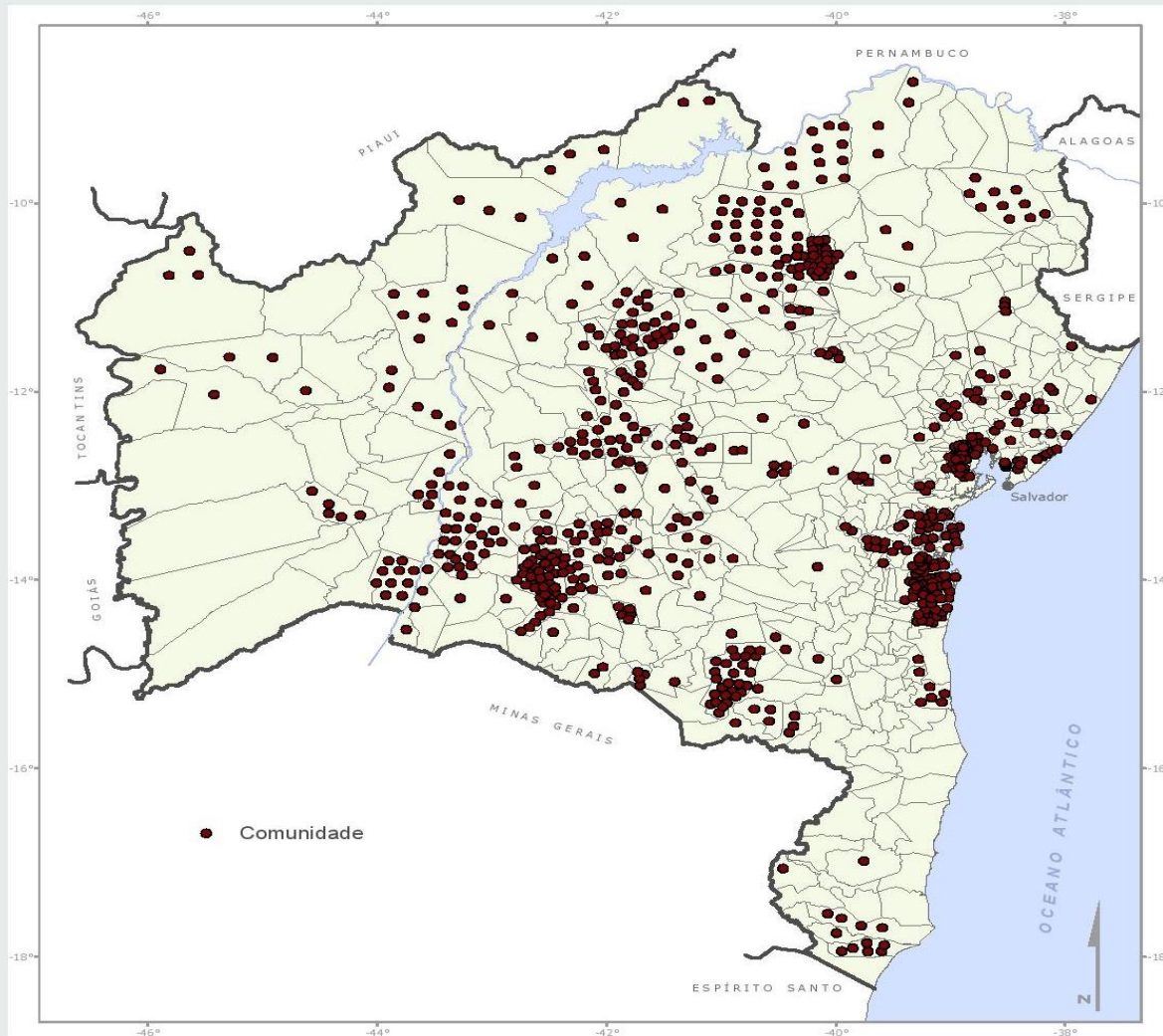
Tororó and internal organization.....	197
Tororó and quilombola solidarity	202
Conclusion.....	209
BIBLIOGRAPHY	215

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 The quilombola house the Brazilian navy destroyed in January, 2014.....	42
Figure 3.1 “Blitz” carried out by Brazilian military police on a public bus.	114
Figure 4.1 Mapping project undertaken in Rio dos Macacos	142
Figure 4.2 Mapping exercise in Rio dos Macacos	142
Figure 4.3 Rio dos Macacos mapping exercise in preparation for public audience	143
Figure 4.4 Quilombo fruits and community products at Rio dos Macacos public audience	146
Figure 4.5 Rio dos Macacos’ blockade of the naval villa in Janaury, 2014	167
Figure 4.6 Ilha de Maré protest and blockade of the Port of Aratu	178
Figure 4.7 Debris used to further blockade the Port of Aratu.....	178
Figure 4.8 Street protest by Ilha de Maré	186
Figure 4.9 Street occupation by Ilha de Maré.....	187
Figure 4.10 Unfurling of a banner during Ilha de Maré’s occupation of the mayor’s plaza	189

Quilombos and Rural Black Communities in Bahia – 2010 (Map by GeografAR)

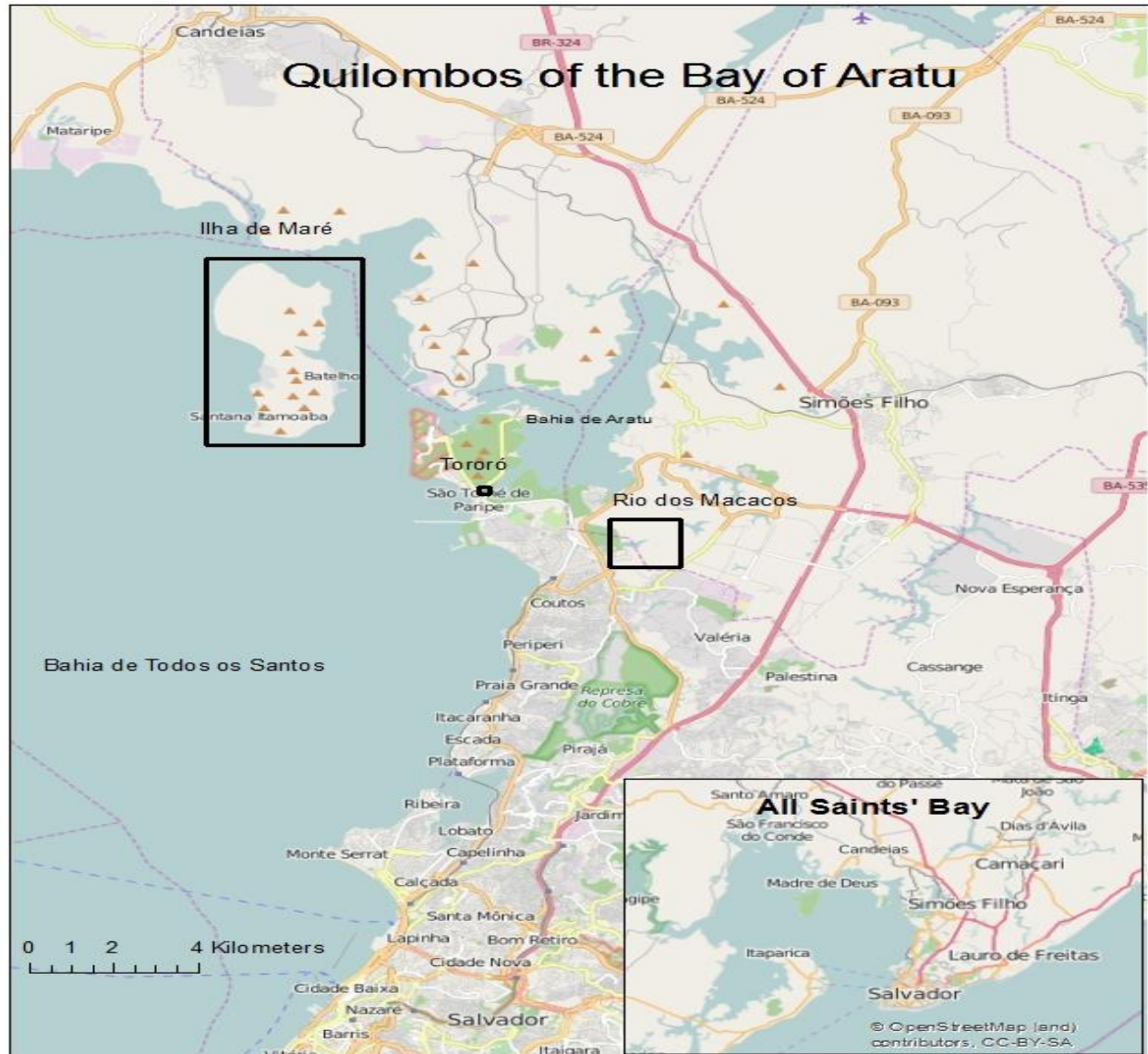
COMUNIDADES NEGRAS RURAIS E QUILOMBOLAS IDENTIFICADAS POR MUNICÍPIO, 2010
ESTADO DA BAHIA



Fonte: Base cartográfica. SRH, 2004.
Dados. INCRA, Fundação Cultural Palmares,
CPT e Projeto GeografAR, dezembro de 2010.
Elaboração: Projeto GeografAR, 2010.
Obs: Localizações dos dados não georreferenciadas.

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Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu (Map by Adam Bledsoe)



Introduction

This dissertation takes its title from the lyrics of the Anthem of the Campaign for Fishing Territory¹. The song begins *Chegou a hora de defender/Nosso pedaço de chão/A terra é nossa isso por direito/Respeite nossa tradição/A nossa luta é por terra e água/Do litoral ao sertão/Lutamos juntos por igualdade/Com liberdade garantir o pão*² (Neves et al. 2012). Often repeated at quilombo³ meetings and actions, these few phrases touch on many of the aspects of what it means to exist as a quilombola in Bahia, Brazil. As the following pages will show, the struggle over land, water, territory, and what it means to exist as a quilombola in Brazil remain central components of the lives of the three communities I profile. The quilombos of Rio dos Macacos, Tororó, and Ilha de Maré, all located in the Bay of Aratu—which forms a part of the much larger All Saints’ Bay—have existed for centuries in the area and in that time have defended against the various iterations of anti-Blackness that have manifested themselves in Bahia. This work seeks to contextualize the quilombos in the present Latin American moment while also demonstrating how the quilombos continue the tradition of Radical Black struggle

¹ This is the official anthem of the Fisherman and Fisherwoman’s Movement—a national movement aimed at regulating fishing territories for traditional communities.

² The time has arrived to defend/Our piece of ground/The land is ours by right/Respect our tradition/Our struggle is for land and water/From the littoral to the interior/We struggle together for equality/With liberty guaranteeing bread

³ The word quilombo is of African origin and has had several significations throughout the history of Brazil. During the days of slavery, quilombos were understood legally and colloquially as settlements of escaped slaves. As I show in this dissertation, the word (and concept) has been subsequently picked up over generations to signify various things. What has remained constant throughout the history of the word, however, is the connotation of a space inhabited by Black peoples and an attendant set of unique cultural and productive practices.

which is a phenomenon central to the modern epoch. Specifically, I argue that the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu evidence the continuation of marronage—the establishment and protection of Black space and politics and independence from modernity’s anti-Blackness—in the present moment. Before discussing chapter order and content, I first explain the background to this project, my positionality in Bahia, and my methodology and framework.

Project Background

I have been spending time in Bahia on and off for almost eight years. My first trip there took place in 2008 during which time I had an internship with a local NGO. In many ways this initial trip set the stage for my interests that have since become research questions and, now, this dissertation. Early on in my time in Salvador I became fascinated by the inequities I witnessed daily, as I was able to travel between the wealthier inner city, where I lived during that time, and the lower-income, auto-constructed neighborhoods on the city’s periphery, where I had many friends. While issues like the income gap and police violence seemed to be regular topics of conversation among the people with whom I was familiar, questions of race and racial inequality were constantly approached with caution. It was constantly explained to me that racism was not so much a problem as was income inequality and the difficulties that that brought. Despite the denial that race was a conditioning factor of Brazilian society, I remained interested in the topic as I saw it manifest spatially in where people were and were not expected to be, how they were expected to behave, and how they were treated by their fellow citizens and the police. With this in mind, I came to the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill planning to study the spatial aspects of Brazilian racism and racial violence.

At the University of North Carolina I found a community of scholars that were not only interested in questions similar to the ones I was asking, but willing and eager to interrogate them

in their various permutations. Among the different seminars, reading groups, conferences, lectures, and informal conversations I had in Chapel Hill I began to slowly piece together a framework for analyzing what I had seen and heard while in Brazil. In particular, the reading lists and seminars offered by Dr. Alvaro Reyes played a vital role in my understanding of the issues of anti-Blackness and Black political movements. It is unsurprising that a great many of the works I draw on in this dissertation are pieces that I read in Dr. Reyes' seminars and the independent studies I conducted with him during my time in Chapel Hill. The strategically picked constellation of readings, along with the various conversations we had on the topic, helped me to make sense of the racism I saw firsthand in Brazil. The continuing relevance of colonialism and the Middle Passage to our present world presented itself to me in the works of (among others) Frantz Fanon, Carlo Galli, Sylvia Wynter, and Carl Schmitt. That anti-Blackness can exist in a country with a majority Black population became much clearer to me after reading the works of Jared Sexton, João Vargas, and Frank Wilderson. The centrality of territory and subjects' territorialities to creative struggle was made evident to me in Dr. Reyes' own work, as well as the writings of the various Latin American movements I was introduced to in his 2012 *Global Crisis, Global Spring?* course.

In addition to the courses, independent studies, and conversation with Dr. Reyes on these topics, I was able to hone my thoughts through a variety of reading groups with my fellow graduate students. Meeting to discuss geographical approaches to race in the work of Ruth Gilmore and Laura Pulido, and examinations of biopower in the work of Michel Foucault helped to sharpen my analysis of how power takes shape geographically and corporeally. Finally, but certainly not least importantly, my seminars with Dr. Sara Smith and Dr. Banu Gökarişel introduced me to issues of gender and violence as they pertain to geography. The work of Heidi

Nast, Jacques Rancière, Arun Saldanha, and Hannah Arendt stand out among the readings from Dr. Smith's 2011 course and Dr. Gokariksel's 2013 class that have come to bear on my current line of thinking. From the readings, courses, and conversations mentioned here, I came to the conclusion that our world is continuing to feel the effects of a violent hierarchical ordering that was inaugurated with European colonization of the globe. Despite the devastation that has followed us into the present moment, I came to see glimmers of hope from the most oppressed sectors of society who, by recognizing the violent underpinnings of the modern world, take it upon themselves to lay the foundations for entirely new existences. The list of authors and interlocutors above is not meant to be exhaustive, nor is it meant as an attempt to prove my depth as a scholar. Rather, I describe those that have influenced me as an insight into the nature of the texts I have drawn on in the present work and the lines of argument I employ.

Of course, learning is constantly occurring outside the halls of the university, and my experience researching race, racism, and Black struggle in Brazil was no exception. Despite not becoming familiar with the Quilombos of the Bay of Aratu until relatively late in my graduate school career, I did continue yearly trips to Bahia with the intention of familiarizing myself with the dialect of Portuguese spoken in Bahia and meeting people active in Black political organizing in Salvador. After speaking to a number of activists, it quickly became clear to me that, while the majority of the city of Salvador was of African descent, to self-identify as *Black* was nothing short of a political statement.¹ This was, I learned, a product of Brazilian anti-Blackness, as Brazilians of African descent were actively discouraged from identifying as Black. Instead, Afro-Brazilians were conditioned to aspire to whiteness; that is, they were encouraged to adopt white aesthetic norms and disassociate themselves from outwardly “black” religious, cultural,

¹ The word used by those who self-affirm in this way is *negro* or *negra* as opposed to *preto* or *preta*—a word often used to describe people of very dark complexion.

and political expressions. This was, unsurprisingly, rejected by the activists with whom I was familiar. Instead, they affirmed their status as Black Brazilians, pointing out that Brazilians of African descent suffered greatly from numerous forms of state and non-state violence and insisting that these racial problems needed amelioration. As I became increasingly familiar with the critiques put forward by these activists I began to look for instances of community building and creative expressions of Black politics in the city. It was my connection with the Federal University of Bahia and, subsequently, the quilombos of Bahia, that would introduce me to the creative elements of Black struggle as they manifest themselves in Brazil.

When the Brazilian geographer Carlos Walter Porto Gonçalves came to Chapel Hill as part of the Geography Department's colloquium series organized by Dr. Reyes, I, along with a number of other graduate students, was able to discuss his work and the state of social movements in Latin America. During one of our meetings, I asked him about Quilombo Rio dos Macacos, as I had become familiar with their situation from the Black activists in Salvador. Dr. Porto Gonçalves confirmed that he was personally familiar with them and that he knew a number of people in the Department of Geography at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) that worked with "traditional" communities². Upon returning to Bahia in the summer of 2013, Dr. Porto Gonçalves put me in touch with the geographers at UFBA and I was thus introduced to the research group A Geografia dos Assentamentos na Área Rural³ (GeografAR). While we disagreed with certain aspects of each other's political analysis (particularly with regards to the legacy of quilombo communities in Brazil), the group was an invaluable source of information

² "Traditional" communities can be one of a number of communities in Brazil, including, but not limited to, indigenous communities, quilombo communities, fishing communities, communities living in swamps, and communities that live from foraging. For a full list of the communities included in the "traditional" category, see the Brazilian Ministry of the Environment's webpage (MMA 2016).

³ The Geography of Settlements in the Rural Area

regarding current work on Black and indigenous communities in Brazil and was always eager to introduce me to various quilombo communities. It was through them that I met the members of Rio dos Macacos and, as a result, the other Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu.

Nearing the end of my time in Bahia in the summer of 2013, I attended an event at UFBA in which four members of Rio dos Macacos were participating. After introducing myself and telling them about my interest in their struggle, they invited me to visit the community the following day. As I explain in the dissertation, since the late 20th century, the quilombo has essentially been encompassed by the Brazilian navy's villa, making access to the community very difficult. Because of this, I met a member of the quilombo in a neighboring section of the city and we entered the community together. The quilombolas expressed their surprise that I, as a foreigner, would show up alone—something they said few people did. My first trip to Rio dos Macacos lasted only briefly, during which time the quilombolas took me to the different parts of the community and told me about their history of struggle with the Brazilian navy. It was during my return to the community in 2014 that I became more familiar with the struggle they and their quilombola brethren were waging.

When I arrived in Bahia in January of 2014, I had the intention of working solely with Rio dos Macacos. However, I quickly realized that their struggle as a quilombo was fundamentally tied to the struggles of other communities in the area. In the process of documenting the various protests and public audiences of which Rio dos Macacos partook, I became familiar with the presence of Ilha de Maré and Tororó—two other quilombos in the area. The three communities were very active and vocal in their support of one another, such that it took me some time to figure out who was a member of which community, given the constant presence they had in each other's territories and public actions. In the same way that I

participated in and documented the struggles of Rio dos Macacos, so, too did I engage with the activities of Ilha de Maré and Tororó. During my time with these quilombos, I came to realize that while the history and concrete actions of these communities were unique, they were all nonetheless struggling to defend against the systemic racism central to Brazilian society, in an attempt to create a viable future for themselves. Moreover, I saw their struggles as predicated on maintaining their autonomy from the anti-Blackness of Brazilian society. As I show in later chapters, self-subsistence, political autonomy, and distinct religious and cultural practices—all of which signify, to various degrees, separation from the racist violence of Bahia—typify the quilombos’ past, present, and future aspirations.

To say that I was treated with anything other than warmth and acceptance by these communities would be a grave falsehood. I was welcomed into their territories and, as I felt, into their quilombola struggle. As I shared meals with the quilombolas, marched in their protests, recorded their legal proceedings, and simply sat and talked with them, it became clearer and clearer to me that they truly had a unique vision and understanding of the world. In spending my time with them, I came to see them as practitioners of modern-day marronage. That is, their communities’ being is defined by their insistence on the value of their lives and their ability to establish the conditions of a dignified existence, despite living amidst a fundamentally anti-Black world. Before discussing this dissertation’s theoretical framework and the ways in which I conducted my work in Bahia, I first briefly reflect on my experiences as a Black scholar in Brazil.

Positionality

During my time in the field, I had to grapple with the fact of being both a person of African descent, a male, and a foreigner in Bahia. These realities led to interesting results as far

as how I was treated and viewed by the quilombolas and the various actors against whom they are struggling, as well as how I interacted in the everyday spaces of Bahia. Being of African descent meant that I was not automatically viewed as “out of place” or “foreign” by those that were not aware of my status. Because of this, I was able to access locations and have personal interactions that I may not have otherwise had, had I fit the profile that so many Brazilians seemed to have of “Americans” (that is, a person of European phenotype). By not sticking out as a person of European descent within an overwhelmingly Black city, I was able to use my phenotype as a means to access spaces and engage with people in a way that gave me unique insight into life in Bahia. As I show in this dissertation, by “blending in” to the city of Salvador, I was witness to several examples of quotidian life that inform this study and help to illustrate present-day iterations of anti-Blackness as it exists in Brazil. One example of this is the ways in which the banality of violence from police and drug traffickers played out in front of me (see Chapter 3). Because I did not appear as outwardly different from the people of Salvador, the practitioners of this violence did not seem to have any qualms about carrying out the violence that typifies their way of life. This fact speaks to Kia Caldwell’s assertion that Black researchers often experience, firsthand, the racialization they seek to investigate while in the field (Caldwell 2007, xxii). These experiences inform how I understand the quilombos as unique to wider society in Bahia. As I argue in Chapter 4, while the quilombos certainly deal with specific actualizations of anti-Black violence, the mundane violence that I saw and experienced in Salvador does not take place in the quilombos. The nature of their communities protects against such phenomena, and thus evidences the unique territoriality that the quilombos have. My status as a Black person also gave me access to spaces that are otherwise difficult to navigate.

The effects of my positionality in Salvador were made even more evident when I visited Rio dos Macacos. While the community is encircled by the naval villa and therefore requires entering through military checkpoints guarded by soldiers, I was usually able to pass through the checkpoints with little problem. In the event that I was stopped, I explained that I was visiting people that I knew in the quilombo. My appearance and my ability to speak Portuguese made such interactions more easily navigable for me, as I did not appear to be aberrant to the soldiers that reviewed those entering the villa. The soldiers usually thought I was the family member of a quilombola, and generally gave me little trouble when entering. As a person of African descent, I was able to use my appearance to pass the navy's checkpoints and thereby interact relatively easily with the community—a privilege many non-Blacks and foreigners do not have (Gay 2015, 30). This fact was vital to my interactions with the community, and my overall time in Bahia. Being able to frequent Rio dos Macacos meant that I learned much about them, their struggle, their hopes for their community's future in personal interactions with various members, and also led to me becoming familiar with the other quilombos in the Bay of Aratu.

As far as my positionality with regards to the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu, it was not and is not clear to me how my positionality as a person of African descent influenced the quilombos' view of me. The quilombolas rarely made any mention to my race, save to note that I was light skinned. While this acknowledgement, in and of itself, points to a consciousness about my racial background, I never heard any direct statements from the quilombolas regarding my race or how it influenced their feelings towards me. It is possible that my existence as a (light-skinned) Black person helped establish rapport with the quilombo communities. It is also possible that my racial status made me at once an insider and an outsider, given my nationality (Joseph 2016, 79). Still, as I never discussed this fact with any of the quilombolas, I have have

no idea in what way it affected their ideas about me. Regardless of how the quilombolas viewed me racially, I nonetheless felt welcomed by them and was able to make important connections with their communities. My ability to work with, and be accepted by, the quilombos led to collective discussions on race.

While my race was not discussed in any detail, I frequently discussed issues of race and racism with the quilombolas. Among the countless conversations I had with the members of Rio dos Macacos, Tororó, and Ilha de Maré, the topic of race was a common one. As a Black person concerned with issues of Black struggle and freedom, it was an incredible experience to interact with, contribute to, and learn from the history and struggle of the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu. As Black liberation and freedom are global struggles to which I am deeply committed, the ability to engage with a group of communities whose very being means remaining dedicated to the respect and protection of Black life was an extremely important experience for me. By immersing myself in the quilombos' struggle, I see myself as partaking of a Black, transnational commitment to analyzing and critiquing racial hierarchy in its various manifestations (Hodge-Freeman and Mitchell-Walthour 2016, 1-2). While my time spent in Bahia might be termed "fieldwork" by some, the nature of the quilombos' struggles, my own political and intellectual interests, and my interactions with the communities led to what I understand as a continued set of exchanges and interactions in which we collectively shared ideas and partook of activities that pushed forward the quilombola struggle. This approach informed my methodology, as well as the frameworks through which I have structured this dissertation.

Methodology and Framework

The time I spent with the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu involved me learning from their unique articulations of quilombismo. When I say I learned from them, I mean this in the

purest sense of the word, as most of my interactions with the communities involved me sitting and listening to them describe their history, struggles, and aspirations, and having dialogues with them regarding these same issues. I found these to be richer experiences than interviews or focus groups—methods I did not even attempt to employ, as I felt that it would make an otherwise intimate relationship awkward and artificially formal. In addition to my personal interactions and discussions with the quilombos, I attended a number of events in which the quilombolas engaged with their oppressors, as well as the general public.

During 2014 and 2015, I attended public audiences with the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu, as they confronted various levels of the Brazilian government to demand recognition of the numerous oppressive factors they were facing. These audiences were held in government buildings and, to a lesser extent, in the communities themselves, and often brought the quilombolas face to face with officials from the Salvador mayor's office, National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform, Brazilian navy, and a variety of other state actors. Again, my positionality as a Black person seemed to help me in these situations, as I was never openly acknowledged by the state actors, or anyone else in attendance, as being foreign or out of place. Little attention was called to my presence at these meetings; a fact that allowed me to observe and record these numerous interactions unmolested.

I also accompanied the communities when they took to the streets and seas of Bahia to protest the marginalizing agendas of the Brazilian state and private corporations. These actions were sometimes planned—other times they were spontaneous. Regardless of how far in advance the communities planned them, these protests served to momentarily bring the existence and spatial capacity of the quilombos into view for those living in Salvador. By inserting themselves into public space, the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu state that they are not remnants of the

past, nor a-spatial actors, contrary to what dominant Brazilian actors may think or do. All of the statements from the quilombolas and the accounts of the public audiences and protests present in this dissertation are directly from my own experiences in Bahia. Unless indicated otherwise, the quotes from the quilombolas and the government officials, the observations of public audiences and protests, and the daily practices of the quilombo communities come directly from my own experience with the people and institutions in question. This in no way means that I was present for *all* of the meetings, protests, and activities of which the quilombos partook—in fact I know I was not present for all of them. I am simply clarifying that my renderings of the quilombos' struggles come directly from my own participation in them. This dissertation, therefore, draws on the many ways in which I experienced, engaged with, and thought about the phenomenon of quilombismo. While their struggle is unique to them and their respective situations, I nonetheless see their existence as part of a much larger existence of Black Geographies.

This dissertation draws on, and contributes to, the field of Black Geographies. Far from being simply an academic discourse, Black Geographies entail the political, intellectual, and ethical analyses and practices of populations deemed non-existent and inhuman, acknowledging that these same groups are always and everywhere creating their own sense of place (McKittrick and Woods 2007, 4). I draw on Black Geographies because of its usefulness as a mode of critique of the spatial, social, and political effects of the assumed non-being of Black populations and its commitment to recognizing the unique ways in which Black populations create their own notions and practices of being. Because the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu wage their struggle in spatial terms, discursively and concretely insisting on their ability to establish unique, non-capitalist, anti-racist territories that acknowledge and reify Black political life, their existence fits within the purview of the Black Geographies framework. My decision to put my

work in conversation with this corpus enriches the field, as most of the literature on Black Geography focuses on the modes of critique and creativity in the context of North America. The blues of the Mississippi Delta (Woods 1998; 2009); the spatial expressions of Black women in the plantation economies of the United States (McKittrick 2006); the spatial analysis of Malcolm X and the Black Panthers (Tyner 2006a; 2006b); and the shifting legal landscape of the United States prior to and after abolition (Delaney 1998) comprise some of the major themes that have, until now, defined the field of Black Geographies. By discussing an example from Latin America, this dissertation textures the approach put forward by Black Geographies by considering how anti-Blackness manifests itself in the Brazilian context and how Afro-Brazilians construct a politico-spatial existence in the midst of that anti-Black violence through modern-day marronage.

In addition to contributing a Latin American example to the otherwise North American-centric field of Black Geographies, this work discusses Black struggle in the context of our present political economic moment. More specifically, the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu offer a case in which new and still changing political and economic realities are emerging in Brazil and Latin America, entailing new iterations of marginalization and dispossession of the masses, as well as new articulations of popular struggle. While these forms of oppression and the attendant resistance and creativity are unique to their given moment, they nonetheless comprise part of a long legacy of human expressions put forward by the Latin American masses. In this dissertation, therefore, I situate the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu as a new expression of a much larger, long-lasting Latin American struggle; an approach taken up by a number of scholars that focus on Latin America (see Hardt and Reyes 2012; Reyes and Kaufman 2011; Cusicanqui 2012).

In locating the quilombos' struggles as part of long-standing movements against closed, colonized notions of humanity and being, this dissertation also contributes to bodies of literature that insist on the inherent openness of radical Black struggle. This approach emphasizes the ways in which radical Blackness rejects static notions of freedom, humanity, and gender, and instead focuses on always shifting, innovating ways of existing in the world (Wynter 2001; Bogue 2012, 2010; Fanon 2007; Roberts 2015). This dissertation speaks to such an approach by paying attention to the multiple ways in which the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu have historically and presently waged their struggle. Furthermore, while the quilombos' existences have always worked to express and defend the humanity of their inhabitants, the various ways in which they articulate that humanity are always changing—including in the current neoliberal moment. It is because of this openness, and the ways in which the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu offer new articulations of autonomous Black struggle in the current moment that I understand them to be practitioners of modern-day marronage.

This dissertation, by engaging with a case of Black struggle in Latin America that simultaneously seeks to address the marginalizing effects of global capital while acknowledging and working to protect the unique territorial expressions of multiple communities, contributes to an increasingly growing body of literature on the topic (Escobar 2008, 2; Escobar 2010, 10; Perry 2009). This corpus is significant in that it contributes concrete examples of the ways in which the oppressed, racialized sectors of Latin America self-organize to create open senses of politics and being amidst an increasingly globalizing, interconnected world. As this dissertation shows, these struggles shift over time and place as their constitutive elements find new ways of resisting and creating futures for their communities through unique territorial arrangements. In this way, the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu evidence the interconnectedness of Black

Geographies, territory, and the “progressive” moment in Latin America, demonstrating the ways in which alternatives to prevailing political economic practices are possible. By recognizing that these quilombos do, indeed, offer an alternative to the spatial arrangements enforced by capitalism and state sovereignty, this study locates itself in the geographical literature that insists on the fact that territory is created through the relations entailed in populations’ engagements with itself, outside actors, and the physical world (Raffestin 2012; Murphy 2012; Delaney 2005; Reyes and Kaufman 2011). These relations signify power relations and social meaning that are specific to the given territory. In this way, different territorialities—or subjects’ relations to their territories—serve as examples of alternative ways of existing in the world. Through the always-shifting relations the quilombos create, they continually seek to express their being amidst a world predicated on their assumed inhumanity and destruction.

For over two hundred years, these communities have sought to live their collective lives without falling under the control of state sovereignty or relying on capitalist modes of production and accumulation to sustain themselves. This tradition continues to inform their current political manifestations, as they refuse to allow outside actors to dictate their way of life. Not content to simply receive the legal title of “quilombo,” these communities push forward in their attempts to protect the lives of their people. As I show, the quilombolas are not satisfied with trading their fertile fields for land entitlement. They are not placated by the promise of food aid when their fruit trees remain inaccessible. State acknowledgement of quilombo territory is pointless to the quilombolas if it means giving up access to important fishing, religious, and cultural sites. In sum, they are totally against exchanging their definition of quilombismo for that of the state. The Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu, through their lived politics and territoriality, prove that the “rational” practices of the modern subject are but one way of living in the world. They

uncover the lie that is the assumption of a singular form of being. Moreover, these quilombos have rejected the modern “truth” that Black life is mere biological automation; that there exists no true Black humanity, and hence that there can be no political subjectivity for Black populations that is not essentially an aping of “rational” existence.

The quilombos not only insist on the viability of their own, individual politics, but also recognize and acknowledge each other’s political nature, as well as the politics of other quilombos in Bahia and around the country. Their recognition of each other as political actors shows the open nature of their existence—given the distinct political practices of each community—demonstrating the concrete actualization of the radical imagination. This recognition does not pertain solely to discursive acknowledgements of their respective political competence, however. Fundamentally attached to this mutual recognition is the collective commitment these communities show for protecting one another and defending each other’s territorial integrity. The quilombola struggle is one, even though the concrete quilombola existence is plural. Uniting these communities is the understanding of the inherently anti-Black nature of Brazil as expressed in Bahia, and the collective resolve to preserve those collective subjectivities that do not base themselves on the destruction of Black life. The political and territorial openness practiced in the quilombos, their commitment to a way of life not defined by anti-Black violence, their refusal to reify dominant ideas of race and gender, and the fact that they struggle to create an existence autonomous to the inimical effects of prevailing social, political, and economic norms evidences the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu as modern day maroon communities. The particular case I present in this dissertation is especially relevant for understanding how Black Geographies are created amidst the inimical effects of present-day global capital. As is demonstrated in the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu, there do exist

alternatives to the extractivist agenda of “progressive” Latin American governments. This shows the ways in which Black Geographies continue to emerge in our current moment. It is from the quilombos’ struggles and their collective ability to critique, and offer alternatives to, present-day forms of domination that we can begin to see glimmers of hope for new ways of existing in the world. In this way, marronage, as a Radical Black Geography, remains a viable politico-spatial alternative in the present moment.

Chapter Breakdown

Chapter 1 of the dissertation gives the background of the region of Aratu in Bahia and the history of the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu. I discuss the rise of the Bay of Aratu as a site of state and national development, focusing particular attention on Luiz Viana Filho—the governor of Bahia during Brazil’s military dictatorship—and his role in constructing the Aratu Industrial Center and the Port of Aratu, both of which came to have a tremendous influence on the quilombos. I draw on the communities’ oral histories, as well as their present conditions, to discuss the ways in which the quilombos have historically struggled against prevailing political and economic formations in the Bay of Aratu, starting from the days of slavery through the present.

Chapter 2 contextualizes the case of the Bay of Aratu by situating it as part of a much larger Black struggle in Brazil. To show the national conditions under which the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu struggle, I touch on various aspects of Brazilian anti-Blackness, from slavery to abolition to the post-abolition codification of the Brazilian racial democracy—a fundamentally anti-Black discourse. In addition to this, I explore the various ways in which Black Brazilians have fought against these iterations of racist and gendered violence. Among the various forms of resistance I mention, I give particular attention to marronage; or, as it is

described in Brazil, the establishment of quilombo communities. I follow this tradition of quilombismo (the Brazilian articulation of marronage) through the late 20th century, to show the ways in which Brazil's Black Movement drew on quilombismo to demand Black inclusion in the 1988 Brazilian constitution. As I demonstrate, the quilombo, as a spatial figure, came to be included in the constitution, thanks to the efforts of the Black Movement and the persistence of Black Brazilian struggle.

Chapter 3 focuses on the present-day forms of anti-Black violence as they manifest themselves in Brazil and Bahia, more specifically. I illustrate these realities in two ways. First, I situate the Bay of Aratu in the extractivist moment in Brazil, showing the ways in which Brazil fits into the prevailing global economy and what this has meant regarding the political economic climate in the country. While the Brazilian government is understood by some to be “progressive,” the consequences of the social programs, redistribution of wealth, and racially and ethnically “inclusive” legislature that gives the state this nomenclature means a reliance on the increased extraction of natural resources and erosion of grassroots politics. What becomes evident is that the Bay of Aratu—through the Aratu Industrial Center and Port of Aratu—remains a strategic site of national “development” through its role in the fabrication, refinement, and shipping of commodities—commodities whose extraction and production adversely affect the environment. The effects of the importance of these two establishments has led to the devastation of many aspects of quilombola life. From the entrenchment of the Brazilian navy as a protector of these industries, to the environmental degradation wrought by shipping and industry, to the series of land grabs that have taken place in the Bay, to the attempts at coopting quilombola politics, the region's role in the global economy has meant an all-out assault on the quilombos' ways of life.

The second aspect of anti-Blackness I talk about in the chapter has to do with the various ways in which the population of Salvador is subjected to violent treatment. I base this section on firsthand accounts of living in a favela in Salvador, as well as my general experiences moving about the city. I draw on these experiences to show how labor practices, expressions of sovereignty, and gender relations in Salvador lead to anti-Black violence—realities that the quilombos seek to protect against.

The fourth and final chapter takes the current case of the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu and argues that these communities, through numerous forms of resistance and creativity, act as present-day maroons and therefore represent alternatives to prevailing political and economic practices in Brazil. While not an exhaustive rendering of the ways in which the communities practice quilombismo today, the chapter touches on the quilombos' engagements with the Brazilian state, their interactions with ultra-state actors, their employment of protest and civil disobedience, and certain aspects of their internal organization and inter-quilombo solidarity. While their practice of quilombismo has myriad, far reaching effects, I focus specifically on how quilombola gender relations, subsistence practices, understandings of nature, and commitment to mutual political recognition evidence their uniqueness in “progressive” Brazil. That is to say, the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu, in their very being, show the ways in which there do exist alternative ways of understanding and existing in the world. Given the violence that typifies urban life in Salvador and the destructive effects of the progressive government's extractive measures, Chapter 4 argues that the quilombos demonstrate the ways in which a different way of life is not only possible, but present today.

On not essentializing quilombismo

While I focus on quilombo struggles and their efforts to protect their way of life, it is unsatisfactory for me to pretend to understand the life-world of these quilombo communities. Quilombo life carries its own intricacies, metaphysics, and ethics, of which I caught but a fleeting glimpse during my time there. As such, I must state that the aspects of quilombo life which I analyze in this study pertain mainly to what was explained to me and what I perceived regarding methods of production within the communities, gender relations, personal-environmental interactions, and the understandings of the history and perseverance of Black struggle in the region of Aratu and in Brazil more widely. What I present here, while essentially coming directly from the pronouncements and actions of the quilombo communities, nonetheless is mediated through my own understanding, interpretation, and choice of placement in this text. With this in mind, I must add that I do not claim to “understand,” “know,” or in any way fully grasp what it means to be quilombola. While I personally greatly admire and support quilombola communities and their struggles, what proceeds in my arguments is not commensurate to quilombola life. I do not pretend to know *what* their alternative way of life is—I simply recognize that it is present and alive and that they struggle daily to protect and preserve it.

Chapter 1

*“Era muito bom. Muito bom, esse aqui. Muita alegria. Muita alegria para a gente. A gente catava café, a gente plantava roça. A gente vivia da plantação da roça da gente, e a criação; criava porco, criava muita galinha...”*¹ The words of Quilombo Rio dos Macacos’ eldest resident reflect the history of her community’s struggle to construct a world in which inhabitants could provide for themselves and live on their own terms. While the case of Rio dos Macacos is unique in its own way, I argue that the goal of establishing an existence based on self-subsistence and governance is precisely the goal of all of the Quilombos in the Bay of Aratu. Rio dos Macacos, Tororó, and Ilha de Maré all have a legacy of crop cultivation, fishing, foraging, and collective governance that demonstrate their willingness and ability to create communities autonomous from the violence that typifies the surrounding area. In this chapter, I describe the recent history of the Bay of Aratu, the history of the quilombos, and the forms of oppression the communities currently face.

The area of Aratu, located in the municipality of Simões Filho, in the Salvador metropolitan area, is home to a number of “traditional” communities, including the quilombos Rio dos Macacos, Tororó, and Ilha de Maré. Ilha de Maré is comprised of a number of different settlements named Santana, Bananeiras, Nevis, Botelho, Maracanã, Itamoabo, Porto de Cavalo, and Praia Grande.

¹ It was very good. Very good, this here. Lots of happiness. Lots of happiness for us. We collected coffee, we planted the fields. We lived from planting our fields, and from raising animals; we raised pigs, we raised lots of chickens... (This quote is taken from a YouTube video about Rio dos Macacos, which can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ssiBUXa1AdY>).

Each community (Rio dos Macacos, Tororó, and Ilha de Maré) has unique situations with which they are dealing. What is important about this region, however, is that within a small geographical area there exists three quilombo communities that are struggling (and have historically struggled) against the effects of “modernization” in its prevailing iterations. Specifically, the aspects of modernity I discuss are the exploitation and domination of “nature” and the natural environment; the centralization of sovereign power—in this situation particularly in the name of the state; and the subordination of Black populations with the intention of maintaining them in the position of *les damnés*. I look specifically at how these qualities of the modern epoch play out in the present moment in Brazil, as the country is dominated by extractivist practices and defined by an often-times obscured anti-Black agenda. These different articulations of modernity certainly overlap with each other, and while the situations of the different communities are unique in and of themselves, the communities articulate their struggle in terms of solidarity with one another. If one thing is clear from the cases of the quilombos of Aratu, it is that the communities recognize their interconnectedness and their own position as part of Black struggle.

What this chapter ultimately demonstrates is that the Brazilian nation-state and various corporations have enacted an agenda of genocide against the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu, as the communities seek an autonomous existence. The importance of shipping, industry, and militarization, while vital for Brazilian notions of “development,” adversely affect the quilombos. The actions taken by the state and the various industries in the Bay of Aratu promise nothing less than the erasure of these communities’ way of life as they know it. Relatedly, the quilombo communities I describe continue to push against modern truths regarding notions of

development and rational participation in the state as they have for centuries. Struggling against this reality has meant that the quilombos in question articulate their struggle on several fronts.

Confronting the government face-to-face in public meetings, interrupting the banality of everyday life in both the public and private sphere of society, and reproducing and innovating localized practices within and between the quilombos all make up the agenda of struggle among these groups. In addition to this, the quilombos are able to protect against various iterations of violence mundane to the city of Salvador. Specifically, gendered oppression, labor exploitation, and sovereign violence are rejected in the quilombos in favor of unique quilombola relations that define the communities. While I describe these actions in some detail in Chapter 4, the centrality of these struggles to the perseverance of the quilombola way of life cannot be overstated, as Brazilian society continues to seek the destruction of these autonomous ways of life. These localized methods of struggle are vital despite the fact that public policy and whole organs of government have been created and put into place under the auspices of recognizing and aiding quilombo communities across the country. Despite the open pronouncements of support for “traditional” communities across Brazil (including Indigenous and quilombola populations), the fundamental commitments of the state apparatus—the centralization of sovereign power, domination of nature with the goal of rational production and consumption methods, and the erasure of alternative nodes of power—cannot allow for these quilombo groups to persist on their own terms. Instead, the language of the Brazilian state, which preaches inclusion, obscures their true goals, which is to destroy quilombola life as quilombolas presently understand it. Contrary to the hypocrisy of the Brazilian state and its masked genocidal agenda, the quilombo communities discussed in this dissertation maintain the analytical approach fundamental to all

radical Black struggle and, both internally as well as collaboratively, adjust their public and private actions and pronouncements with the goal of protecting and perpetrating their way of life.

Before exploring the particular situations of the communities in question, I describe the region of Aratu and what it has historically meant to the state of Bahia and the issue of development and Progress.

The State of Bahia, Region of Aratu, and its role in Order and Progress

Salvador da Bahia was the original capital of colonial Brazil and the state of Bahia was an important center of trade, production, and commerce in the Portuguese colony's early days. Salvador was a large port, receiving slaves from Africa and goods from Europe, while the Recôncavo region—located across All Saints' Bay from Salvador—remained one of the world's largest sugar producers through the 19th century (Schwartz 1986, 22; 423).

After the economic and political rise of the southern region of Brazil (with coffee in São Paulo and Rio as well as the industrialization of the region) and the flood of European immigrants to the area, Bahia and the northeast in general became less of a national focus politically and economically. During the First Republic (1889-1930), national economic and political power shifted from the sugar, tobacco, and cotton growing regions of the Northeast to the industrial and coffee growing South and Southeast (Butler 1998, 25). Ultimately, Bahia came to be seen as a decadent area rooted in an archaic past, which had a (Black) population deemed backwards and not amenable to the increasingly mechanized (and thus modernized) work regimen that the nation was at that point undertaking (Martins 2012; Barreiro 2003, 39). This stigma continues to follow the northeast region as well as its inhabitants through the present day. However, during the military dictatorship which lasted from 1964 until the mid-late 1980s,

Bahian politicians sought to make Bahia a central focus of the national government by proposing several projects which would bring the state up to speed with the rest of the country.

Specifically, this was realized through projects like those that took place in Aratu, where the Port of Aratu and the Aratu Industrial Center (CIA) were built. In addition to this, the Naval Base of Aratu was strengthened through the construction of the Naval Dam of Aratu as well as the Naval Villa. In addition to strengthening the Brazilian Navy through these constructions, the fortification of the military presence there meant added protection for the newly arrived commercial establishments represented in the CIA and Port. The history of development projects proceeded from the aspirations of the government during the reign of the military dictatorship in Brazil. Politicians viewed petrochemicals, in particular, as an important industry that could increase the strategic economic importance of Bahia.

Luiz Viana Filho, the thirty-sixth governor of Bahia, helped orchestrate, and later wrote about, the arrival of the petrochemical industry in Bahia. His book *Petroquímica e Industrialização da Bahia (1967 – 1971)* documents the efforts made to bring industry into the Bay of Aratu and the significance of those actions, from Filho's point of view. The arrival of the petrochemical industry, explains Filho, “Mudou-lhe a fisionomia econômica, criando esperança de prosperidade e, portanto, de vida melhor”¹ (Viana Filho 1984, 7). This apparent improvement in life was necessary, according to Filho, because of the waning importance of the Brazilian Northeast—“Dia a dia maior distância nos separava do Sul, especialmente de São Paulo e do Rio de Janeiro”² (Viana Filho 1984, 7). As a result, it was necessary “assegurar aos baianos uma

¹ Changed the economic physiognomy, creating hope of prosperity and, therefore, of a better life.

² Day by day a greater distance separates us from the South, especially São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

perspectiva de desenvolvimento”³ (Viana Filho 1984, 7). The decadence of society in Bahia became the focal point of those seeking to make the state economically relevant again. The discovery of petroleum in the state in 1938 presented a potential for future development projects. While the utilization of this all-important natural resource was initially slow-going, the rise of the Military Dictatorship led to increased government intervention in the economy and gave industry incentive to begin working in the region. Petroleum would eventually take off in the region, however, industry and shipping were the initial capital-enticing factors in the area.

After creating the Superintendency for the Development of the Northeast (SUDENE) the federal government created a system of fiscal and financial incentives for industries to locate themselves in the northeast region. Everything from a complete tax exemption to extending benefits for the importation and purchase of equipment was offered to industries willing to locate themselves in the area. These incentives achieved several objectives, such as the capitalization of businesses in the northeast, which facilitated the unification of various businesses for development. It also meant the transfer of resources from more prosperous regions and from the public sector to the private sector for investment in industry. Filho is clear that all of the above was made possible through infrastructure needed to assist business settlement in the area. It was the Industrial Center of Aratu that provided this smooth transition for the recently-arrived industries (Viana Filho 1984, 27-28).

The construction of the CIA was a long-term project, beginning construction in 1967 and continuing through the 1970s. Filho is clear that “Nada, no entanto, influiu mais para atrair projetos do que o próprio CIA com o que representou de suporte para as indústrias em

³ Assure for Baianos a perspective of development.

implantação. Aliás, desde o início do Governo foi a consolidação do CIA objetivo permanente”⁴ (Viana Filho 1984, 28). Of all the projects constructed with regards to the CIA, “nenhuma, isoladamente, teve a importância e o custo do Porto de Aratu. Era, porém, realização fundamental, pois dela dependia o escoamento, de granéis sólidos e líquidos, da produção de Aratu, e, mais tarde, também de Camaçari, sem os graves inconvenientes de atravessar Salvador para alcançar seu porto”⁵ (Viana Filho 1984, 28). This sentiment was echoed by Dr. Rivaldo Guimarães—the superintendent of the CIA—who, in 1970, stated that the Port of Aratu would contribute “para o desenvolvimento econômico de uma grande sub-região, constituída principalmente pelo Estado da Bahia”⁶ and that this arrangement would be “um projeto de integração econômica regional, de excepcional importância para o conjunto dos interesses de desenvolvimento econômico do Estado”⁷ (de Cássia Santana de Carvalho Rosado 2000, 81).

The first stage of construction of the Port of Aratu began in 1971, with the building of a floating dock, dike, and bridge made for moving solid cargo; a platform for the movement of liquid cargo; loading and unloading equipment; buoys and tugs; and a paved area for mineral storage. Next, a road was built between the Port of Aratu and the CIA, followed by energy lines being constructed throughout the Port along with a transformer station (Viana Filho 1984, 29). The growth that this promoted in the CIA was notable. Between 1967 and 1970, investment in

⁴ Nothing, however, influenced more to attract projects than the CIA which represented support for the industries in implantation. In fact, since the beginning of the Government the consolidation of the CIA was a permanent objective.

⁵ None, in isolation, had the importance and cost of the Port of Aratu. It was, nevertheless, a fundamental realization, because it determined the flow of solid and liquid cargoes, of the production of Aratu, and, later, also from Camaçari, without the serious inconveniences of crossing Salvador to reach its port

⁶ To the economic development of a large sub-region, constituted principally by the State of Bahia.

⁷ A project of regional economic integration, of exceptional importance for the bringing together of the interests of economic development of the State.

the CIA grew tenfold. In 1967, there were thirty-nine official industries present in the CIA, whereas in 1970 there were 125 anticipated industries, assuring around 126,000 jobs (Viana Filho 1984, 30). Luiz Viana Filho saw the creation of the CIA, along with the Port of Aratu, growing side by side with the petrochemical industry, as a “complete success” for the state of Bahia. The 1960s and 1970s, following the installation of the military government in Brazil, saw a tremendous rise in the investment in industry in Bahia. The establishment of the Bay of Aratu as this strategic location of development required a great amount of financial investment and political attention at multiple levels of government. This moment was seen by both state and federal politicians as a step in the right direction for the northeast region.

In May of 1970, Emílio Médici, then president of Brazil, visited the state of Bahia and was welcomed by Luiz Viana Filho, who was governor of Bahia at the time. Lauding Médici for his previous support for the petrochemical industry in Bahia, Filho proclaimed, “Com a petroquímica Vossa Excelência proclamou que a Bahia continuará a se desenvolver para tornar o Brasil mais rico, mais homogêneo, mais unido”⁸ (Viana Filho 1984, 61). Assuring Filho and those in attendance of his continuing support of the petrochemical industry and overall industrialization of Bahia, Médici, responded, “Sinto a presença e o reencontro da Bahia nos momentos econômicos deste País: no pau-brasil, no açúcar, na pecuária, na mineração, no cacao e, agora, na industrialização e na petroquímica. A História mede a força do Brasil nos braços todos da Bahia: no índio, no negro, na lenha, na cachoeira, no petróleo”⁹ (Viana Filho 1984, 62). Médici went further in this speech, claiming, “Sinto, por inteiro, nesta hora nova da Bahia, a

⁸ With petrochemicals Your Excellency proclaimed that Bahia will continue to develop to make Brazil richer, more homogeneous, more united

⁹ I feel the presence and reencounter of Bahia in our country's economic moments: in Brazil wood, in sugar, in livestock, in mining, in cocoa, and now, in industrialization and petrochemicals. History measures Brazil's force in all of the arms of Bahia: in the Indian, the Black, the wood, the waterfall, the oil

participação do povo na nova dimensão do progresso, que governantes, como Luiz Viana Filho e Antônio Carlos Magalhães, souberam entender sabendo seguir seu povo”¹⁰ (Viana Filho, *PIB*, 118).

The statements put forward by Filho and Médici demonstrate a clear commitment to the shifting discourses and goal of Order and Progress. Filho sees federal support of the petrochemical industry in Bahia as allowing the state to become part of Brazil’s drive for wealth, homogeneity, and unity. Médici agrees with this sentiment, claiming that Brazil’s historical development—its commitment and ability to demonstrate progress toward a rational existence—is measured by what takes place in Bahia. To make Brazil a truly modern, homogeneous place, *all* of the nation must be developed—including the northeast, a traditionally backwards region. To evidence these claims, Médici draws on Bahia’s historical role in the national economy, signaling that the state has traditionally acted as an indicator of prevailing economic practices, and, as such, an indicator of national progress. Brazil wood, sugar, cattle, mining, and cocoa are all named as national economic steps that were also evinced in Bahia. What Médici did not acknowledge in his speech was the violence inherent in all of those economic transitions. The enslavement and extermination of indigenous groups resultant from the extraction of Brazil wood, the destruction wrought by the chattel slavery used for sugar and mining, and the violence used to consolidate the cocoa industry are not mentioned in his speech, nor is the impending violence that would come as a result of the industrialization of the Bay of Aratu. The human costs of economic modernization in Brazil, then and now, remain unacknowledged, or, at best, written off as the cost of doing business.

¹⁰ I feel, overall, in this new time in Bahia, the people’s participation in the new dimension of progress such that rulers, like Luiz Viana Filho and Antônio Carlos Magalhães, were able to understand to follow their people.

The approach taken by Filho and Médici speaks to the idea of the *meio técnico-científico* described by Brazilian geographer Milton Santos in *A urbanização brasileira* (1993). The *meio técnico-científico* is marked by the presence of science and technique in the process of remodeling territory. Part of this reality is the integration of previously separated territories. In this case, the Port of Aratu linked Bahia not only to the rest of Brazilian industry, but to foreign capital, as well. Santos describes the result of this approach as the “*tecnoesfera*” (technosphere), which is accompanied by the “*psicoesfera*” (psycho-sphere). The *psicoesfera* is dominated by the discourse of objects, the relations that move those objects, and the motivations that preside over them (Santos 1993, 46). The *psicoesfera* undergirds the objectives of the rationality and imaginary of the *tecnoesfera* and helps to propagate the *tecnoesfera* (Santos 1993, 46-47). Industrialization and transportation as central to the Bay of Aratu present a case of the increasing importance of science and technology in Bahia. The discourse of progress, the economy, and the practices and objects that define that economic development are evidenced in the speeches of Filho and Médici. As shown in subsequent sections, the chaos that accompanies the implementation of the *meio técnico-científico* is certainly evident in the case of the Bay of Aratu.

As territory is defined by the social relations and power arrangements found therein (Delaney 2005), then the Bay of Aratu came to have a strategic importance for the perpetuation of sovereign territory in the mid-20th century. The CIA, Port of Aratu, and the Brazilian naval base were, and are, part of an attempt to solidify certain aspects of state sovereignty—specifically military power and the facilitation of capital circulation—as well as ultra-state sovereignty. Through the creation of the CIA and the Port of Aratu, certain powerful political actors within wider Brazil and Bahia selected the Bay of Aratu as the location from which

participation in the centralized and unitary regulation of the world market and global power relations could take place. As I show below, the Bay of Aratu has become an important location within both national and global capitalist assemblages. Serving as a location from which public and private actors defend and propagate capitalist accumulation while dominating nature and erasing the subjectivities that contend with such practices, the Bay of Aratu has become a focal point for purveyors of sovereign territory. Despite the entrenchment of sovereign power in this area, the quilombo communities in the Bay of Aratu continue their centuries' long struggle against the shifting articulations of sovereignty, constantly finding ways to address the prevailing forms of modern, sovereign power.

History of the Quilombos' Struggles

The introduction of the CIA and the Port of Aratu in the Bay of Aratu meant nothing less than a complete assault on the lives of the quilombos residing there. As I show in this section, the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu have consistently struggled against the various shifts in the economy that former president Médici so proudly named in his speech on economic development in Bahia. Whereas the communities were originally formed to protect against the oppression of slave society, they continue to fight against the imposition of marginalizing factors present in the industrialization of Bahia.

The exact date of the origins of the Quilombos of Aratu is all but impossible to pinpoint. For one, most of the people that are identified as original members of the community have died. Secondly, the communities as they exist today mostly have their origins in communities of slaves that were brought to work on plantations in the areas and runaway slaves that were already in those locations, meaning that there is no singular founding member or moment. Rather than rely on a set date of origin, the quilombos explain their communities' history through comparisons of

past and present lifestyles. The following section describes a brief history of the quilombos and references the troubles they have faced in the last few decades as the Bay of Aratu became a strategic area for both military fortification and development projects. While some archival research was done to clarify and contextualize some claims made by members of the quilombos, what I present here is my rendering of what was told to me directly from the quilombolas I talked to during my time in Bahia.

I first discuss Quilombo Rio dos Macacos, the over 200 year old community in conflict with the Brazilian Navy. I then explore the situation of the quilombolas from Ilha de Maré as they struggle to cope with the effects of a disastrous chemical and oil spill from a Singaporean vessel in the Bay of Aratu. Finally, I turn to Quilombo Tororó, which is fighting against the negative effects brought on their community by both the Brazilian Navy and the private industries present in the Bay of Aratu. Again, while these cases may seem unique to each other, they are all the result of specific aspects of the unfolding of the modern technologies constitutive of the *meio técnico-científico* as it materializes in the Bay of Aratu. These examples also evidence the persistence of the anti-Black violence perpetrated by Brazilian society. Ultimately, what is at stake in this case are the effects of violence resultant from the assumed a-political, a-spatial nature of these quilombos and their resolve to defend their territory and subjectivity, as these phenomena have played out spatially and temporally. Furthermore, despite whatever differences each group may have, they understand themselves as part of the same struggle. Quilombismo, as an ethic and practice that creates life free from racial forms of domination (Nascimento 1980), underpins the activities of these communities' everyday life.

Rio dos Macacos

The origins of Quilombo Rio dos Macacos stretch back to pre-abolition days, when there existed Fazenda Macaco, Fazenda Mereles, Fazenda Carne Verde, and Fazenda Martins on the land where the quilombo currently resides.¹¹ On Fazenda Macaco the slaves cultivated coffee, corn, cloves, beans, and had dairy cattle. Fazenda Mereles and Carne Verde both cultivated sugarcane and raised cattle as well. Fazenda Martins was owned by brothers Fernando, Edgar, and João Martins and also raised cattle. Much of the quilombo's early history is recounted by its oldest member, who is now 96 years old. Her parents, Maria Camila Batista de Souza and João Segundo de Souza, were brought as young adults to work as slaves on Fazenda Macaco for the millionaire landowner Coriolan do Bahia in the late 19th century. Her father had been in charge of packing mules and working on the farm, while her mother took care of all the domestic necessities for Coriolan—cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, etc. Her parents had 18 children, of which she was the youngest and is now the only surviving member of her immediate family.

In addition to working for Coriolan do Bahia, the slaves also planted their own crops and raised animals for subsistence. Corn, squashes, beans, and manioc were all mentioned, as was fishing, and the raising of pigs, chickens, and ducks. Coriolan do Bahia moved to Paripe—a nearby urban neighborhood—when his wife took ill in order to be closer to medical care, and ultimately moved to Praia Grande after his wife died—leaving his land and the slaves on it. Upon leaving Fazenda Macaco, Coriolan do Bahia did not free his slaves or legally will his land to them. This reality is critiqued somewhat bitterly by the younger generations of the quilombo. One of the eldest member's daughters labeled Coriolan do Bahia a “filho de puta,”¹² saying that

¹¹ “Fazenda” is the Portuguese word for farm or plantation.

¹² Son of a bitch

it was not unusual for slave owners to free their slaves or leave them land. Instead, she insisted, he had used up her grandmother and her family and left them nothing. After his death in the 1940s, Coriolan's land remained legally unclaimed, as he had no legitimate heirs. Due to Coriolan's negligence in granting his former slaves land titles, a series of land grabs took place throughout the mid-20th century.

Land Grabs

The United States Military came to the Bay of Aratu in the 1940s to build an air base during World War II.¹³ The quilombo's oldest member has vivid memories of the Americans' time in the area. As a young girl, she worked as a cook and server for the American military men that were in the area. A number of other young women worked for the Americans at this time, as well. One story that the oldest member frequently told was about a friend of hers that got pregnant by an American officer. "Ele gostou de uma amiga minha e ela se engravidou"¹⁴ she said, noting that the officer eventually left both the mother and child in Bahia. It was shortly after the Americans built the base that they left the area and the Brazilian Navy took it over.¹⁵

The oldest resident explained to me "pra mim foi ontêm que eles [da marinha] chegaram".¹⁶ She explained how after taking over the base from the Americans, they began construction of the dam which was to serve as the power source for the base. This moment was

¹³ According to the Brazilian Navy's records, the land purchased for the aerial base was taken from Fazenda Ponto da Areia and Fazenda Pombau, which is where Quilombo Tororó currently is. The landowner for this area was the Portuguese-born businessman Antônio Torres (<http://www.mar.mil.br/bna/historico.html>).

¹⁴ He liked my friend and she got pregnant

¹⁵ The Navy's records state that it was decided in 1949 that the aerial base would be transitioned to a naval base for the Brazilian military, that in 1959 the project was approved by the Navy, and that the project was not actually finished until 1969 and began operating in 1970.

¹⁶ For me, it was yesterday that they [from the navy] arrived.

the first time she was forced to move from her house. She said a Brazilian naval officer came to her and told her they needed the land on which she lived in order to build the dam. This was for the good of the area, he claimed, as it would provide energy for both the Navy and the surrounding locales. According to various members of the quilombo, construction on the dam began in 1954 and was completed in 1964. Many of the men currently living in Rio dos Macacos describe having worked on the construction of the dam as boys and young men—essentially aiding in the construction of an entity that would later brutally oppress and marginalize them. The naval villa, built with the ends of housing naval soldiers and their families, was built between the years 1964 and 1976. The construction of the villa also displaced numerous families. In addition to these removals, the villa was built *around* the populations that were not expelled, essentially forcing them into constant interaction with the Navy.

Despite this imposition by the navy, the community continued to live a semi-autonomous lifestyle. While many of them did indeed work for the Navy—a reality that is discussed in more detail below—much of what is described by the quilombolas focuses on the agricultural, productive, and cultural practices of the community in the mid to late 20th century. Fishing, for example, was an important practice for the community. One member recounted how her mother would make fishing nets out of used cloth bags, take two nets, and leave to fish in the evening, coming back in the morning. She would come back with huge quantities of fish and shrimp from the Bay or the river, go to the terreiro, lay out palm leaves on the ground, and set the catch on them.¹⁷ Members from all over the community would come and fill up buckets full of the catch, communally sharing their bounty. Their land was planted with a variety of crops—corn, beans, passion fruit, African palm, manioc, and tomatoes were some of the crops mentioned to me.

¹⁷ A terreiro is a temple of the Candomblé religion. Candomblé is based on the Yoruba religion of West Africa as well as Catholicism and is an important Afro-Brazilian practice.

Crop cultivation was clearly a central practice in the community, as the quilombo's oldest member smiled as she told me, "Tudo eu sei plantar".¹⁸ One quilombola told me that her father had such excellent eyesight that if he caught sight of a bee he could follow it to its hive, after which he would sedate the bees and bring honey back to the family. Several casas de farinha—where manioc was processed into the farinha that accompanies meals in Bahia—also existed in the community.¹⁹ The distribution of farinha was treated like that of the seafood—people from all over the community would come with a variety of receptacles to take whatever amount of farinha they needed. In addition to chickens, ducks, and pigs, some members of the community had cattle, as well.

Conditions were such that very little food had to be bought by those living in the community—they cultivated and raised almost everything they needed to eat. While they were able to provide for themselves, they were also able to raise enough crops to sell for profit, as well. Several quilombolas mentioned to me how they used to rent out stands in the neighboring cities to sell their produce. Potatoes, tomatoes, and cassava were the different crops which were mentioned as being sold in neighboring locales. At least three terreiros were present in the community, as well. The Pais and Mãe de Santo for the terreiros were named Jaime, Paizinho, and Dona Calú. As stated above, the terreiros comprised not only important religious and cultural spaces, but also spaces for the distribution of foodstuffs.

The Violence of the Navy

¹⁸ I know how to plant everything

¹⁹ The Portuguese word "farinha" translates to "flour" in English. Farinha made from manioc is a coarse kind of flour that is poured over rice and beans as part of the diet of the Northeast.

While the community maintained a level of autonomy and a set of productive and cultural practices unique unto themselves, their forced interaction with the Brazilian Navy never stopped being a source of abuse and marginalization for the people living there. Initial oppression came in the form of the land grabs which displaced some and forced others to relocate their homes, as mentioned above. In addition to these displacements, the construction of the naval villa physically split the community in half, creating a south end and a north end, which essentially borders the dam. What is more, the Navy essentially continued the slave condition forced upon the populations present there—extending the tradition started by Coriolan do Bahia and the other slave owners in the area.

The quilombo's oldest resident remembers delivering the first child born to a naval officer in the area. Over time she would come to attend to and deliver children for a number of the naval officers' wives. Much in the same way that her parents were exploited for the benefit of Coriolan do Bahia, she, her husband, her children, and the other members of the community were exploited for the growth of the Navy. Her children and husband both worked on the construction of the naval base while she spent much of her adult life employed in the houses of naval officers. This was hardly waged employment, however. In addition to her midwifery, she washed and ironed clothes for the naval soldiers, for which she was paid so little that I once heard her exclaim the navy treated her as a slave, forcing her to work for free. In addition to scant pay, her carteira was never signed.²⁰ This further extends the hyper-exploitation present in such work, as it leaves no official record of employment and therefore does not lend itself to either retirement or a pension. "Eles não têm coração"²¹ she explained to me, noting how hard

²⁰ A carteira is a worker's document that registers a person's employment with the Brazilian Ministry of Work and Employment.

²¹ They have no heart

this kind of work is on one's body. She noted that while she had worked for the Americans for six years, she had worked for the Brazilian Navy her whole life. This she described as “tempo perdido”.²²

The Navy continued the hyper-exploitation of the Black populations present in the area, extending a condition inaugurated in chattel slavery. The slave condition that the navy attempted—and continues to attempt—to force on the quilombolas extends beyond mere labor practices. The gratuitous violence to which Black populations are exposed in modernity is very much present in Rio dos Macacos. The navy practiced—and continues to practice—brutal, direct violence on the community. This has taken several forms historically and presently. A fact that the quilombolas of Rio dos Macacos always touch on is the number of expulsions that the navy induced in their community. While it was estimated that there had been over seventy families present in the community prior to the expulsions, today there remain just over twenty households. I was told that these expulsions took place through the 1980s, shortly after the dam and villa were built, and have continued on and off through the present day. The actions taken to push the quilombolas to leave the community are numerous. One quilombola described to me the way in which the navy burned their fields of crops, thereby trying to prevent them from providing for themselves. In addition to arson, the quilombolas tell stories of the navy dropping plant-killing agents from helicopters onto their fruit trees, attempting to destroy the quilombo's ability to sustain themselves. While the community is resolved to replant their land, the navy has habitually returned to rip up the fields and destroy their crops when they do so. Also, while a number of animals were raised for food production in the past by the community, the navy no longer allows the quilombolas to raise large animals, like cattle and pigs. They prohibit this,

²² Lost time

despite the fact that the naval officers themselves raise animals like horses and cattle within the confines of the villa, including on quilombola land. Fishing, which had always provided a source of sustenance for the community, has similarly been curtailed by the navy. I was told that when the quilombolas attempt to fish in the naval dam, the navy will arrest or beat them. The violence practiced by the navy goes beyond destroying practices of production, however.

Attempts on the lives of quilombolas, as well as sexual violence have also typified the navy's endeavors to remove Rio dos Macacos from their traditional territory. A quilombola related a story of one of her brothers being shot by a soldier while in the quilombo, while another was assaulted and beaten by numerous soldiers before being taken to the naval jail, after which he was only released at the behest of his mother—a community elder. In all of these cases, the police refused to open an investigation or look into the situation in any way. I was also told about an instance in which naval soldiers forced a quilombola man to sit on an ant mound, allowing the large, red ants within to crawl all over his body and bite him.²³ Quilombola women have also been raped by naval soldiers. Given the sensitivity of this subject, I did not push further to get details of the cases—which were multiple. However, these cases were discussed among the quilombolas from time to time and even brought up at public audiences with government officials.

These violent attacks on the quilombolas continue into the present day. Shortly before I arrived in Bahia in January, 2014, two members of Rio dos Macacos were beaten by naval soldiers as they were exiting the gate which grants access to the naval villa. This event and the images of the beaten and bruised quilombolas led to increased public scrutiny regarding the

²³ This harkens back to scenes from slavery days, when slave masters and overseers devised brutally inventive ways to torture their slaves. This particular case reads as if it came from C.L.R. James' (1963) description of slavery in Haiti

treatment of the quilombolas by the navy, and continued to be referenced throughout the judicial processes through which the quilombo went throughout 2014. In August, 2015, a quilombola youth was assaulted by a number of naval soldiers, who beat him with pieces of wood and called the military police to arrest him. The soldiers claimed that he had harassed one of their daughters, although this claim was later dismissed. Attacking the lived spaces of the quilombo has also been a common tactic of the navy.

Arson and the destruction of quilombo houses is another tactic the navy has employed to try and force the community from the land. What is more, the navy prohibited—and continues to prohibit—the quilombolas from bringing in the cement, sand, and bricks they need to build permanent, stable establishments in the community. On January 30, 2014, a quilombola family's house was sacked and torn down by a group of soldiers, who had apparently acted under the orders of a superior officer. This was an attempt on the part of the navy to prevent the return of the family, which had moved out of the quilombo for a time, but had decided to come back. I was present in the quilombo the day this attack took place. At the time the house was torn down, I was visiting a nearby quilombola family and upon hearing what was going on, I accompanied several other people to the site. Relatives of the family were distraught and several feared the navy had arrived to murder the father of the family in question, as he had been assaulted by naval soldiers in the past. Luckily, no physical harm had been done to any member of the family. However, the psychological damage was evident. The family's mother was in tears, while the father fought back tears as he explained to the naval officers that had arrived that nobody had the right to attack his house in such a way. When their attempts at forcing the quilombolas from the land did not work, the navy resolved to make life miserable for those that managed to stay.



Figure 1.1 The quilombola house the Brazilian navy destroyed in January, 2014. Photo by Adam Bledsoe

Intimidation tactics and psychological warfare are rife in Rio dos Macacos. Quilombolas report naval soldiers frequently walking through their community and taking pictures of quilombo houses or being found spying on houses from a distance. Many quilombolas report being held up at, and not allowed to enter, the gate entrance to the villa, which is the only way to officially enter the villa and therefore the quilombo (as the villa surrounds the community). I have heard stories of community members returning from work or school and being made to wait hours at the gate before they were finally allowed to enter. Other quilombolas were not even allowed to go to school. Several of the adult quilombolas today are illiterate, due to the fact that they were never allowed to study as children. This enforced lack of study prevented quilombo members from knowing about and being able to access juridical tools that could help ameliorate their oppressed situation. The ill will of the navy is further evident in the everyday remarks officers and soldiers make to the quilombolas. One member mentioned to me that it is common

for the soldiers and officers to inquire about her mother (the quilombo's oldest resident) by asking, "hasn't your mother died yet?" She conjectured that the navy believes that once her mother dies, it will be easier to uproot the community.

As a result of these flagrant abuses, much of what Rio dos Macacos treasured about their community is now gone. The casas de farinha, the terreiros, the extensive crop cultivation, some of the animal husbandry, and the fishing of the local rivers are essentially things of the past. After exploiting the labor and cooperative spirit of the quilombolas, the navy has endeavored to erase the community from their traditional land, continuing the centuries old Western practice of treating Blacks as property, demonstrating no regard for the quilombolas as active political subjects. In this way, the navy continues to treat the quilombolas as slaves, through practices that attempt to preserve the slave ontology that views Black bodies as accumulated and fungible, without any human or political value (Wilderson 2010). Rio dos Macacos faces an antagonist rooted in the sovereign practices of the Brazilian nation-state, one that is resolved to centralize its power at the cost of destroying a group that has practiced a unique spatial existence for over two hundred years and in the process established its own territoriality. The case of Ilha de Maré exemplifies a different iteration of the genocide central to modernity. Instead of confronting the enforcers of modern sovereignty, Ilha de Maré finds itself faced with the effects of "Progress" and the perpetuation of the modern ethic of dominating nature and submitting it to the benefit of (Hu)Man.

Ilha de Maré

Ilha de Maré is a quilombo and fishing colony located on an island in All Saints' Bay. The fishing community is comprised of a number of different smaller communities—Santana, Bananeiras, Nevis, Botelho, Maracanã, Itamoabo, Porto de Cavalo, and Praia Grande, which,

collectively, are home to between 10,000-12,000 inhabitants. Like the other traditional communities in the area, Ilha de Maré has a long tradition of self-subsistence. Fishing is obviously a significant community practice, as the quilombolas fish both to sell in external markets as well as for internal consumption. Planting crops is also something that is practiced by the community. The community's influence in the greater Salvador metropolitan is well-known, as it is said that most of the fish consumed in Salvador and the surrounding area comes from the fisherpeople of this particular island. In the past three years, however, the community's way of life has been greatly jeopardized.

On December 17, 2013, the Singaporean vessel Golden Miller, which was transporting a shipment of chemicals, had its cargo catch fire. With the chemicals already burning on board, the ship's crew feared that the vessel's fuel might also ignite and therefore jettisoned the petroleum into the Bay of Aratu. Community members of Ilha de Maré say that they heard and felt the initial explosion of the chemicals on the ship. In the subsequent days and weeks they reported a noxious odor in the Bay, which led to headaches and sicknesses among the population there. While the explosion happened in mid-December of 2013, it was not until February of 2014 that the government formally addressed the situation. The initial effects of the explosion, however, pale in comparison to the devastation that the oil dumping has wrought on the fisherpeople. Many community members have fallen ill as a result of the fuel that was dumped into the Bay. Within a year of the spill, a 13 year old girl died of cancer; eight tumors in her body. Other, older quilombolas describe pain setting into their joints. Mundane activities like walking up the stairs are now becoming onerous. These realities led a quilombola man to state at a public audience with local politicians that people used to live to be 100 years old in the community—now people were dying before the age of 25. While sicknesses continue to develop

among community members, their way of life is all but disappearing due to the toxicity of the oil dumped into the Bay. Fisherpeople report fish disappearing altogether, while the other marine life they depended on (shrimp, oysters, mussels, etc.) are becoming fewer and fewer.

The mangroves in the Bay of Aratu remain an important topographic feature for the community of Ilha de Maré. Recently, however, it has been reported that the people are becoming allergic to the mangrove mud—a previous source of health and bounty for the community. Individuals report rashes among those that come in contact with the mud—possibly a further effect of the oil dumping. This reality is an imminent threat to the “other world” that the community insists it lives in. At a June, 2015 public audience attended by city councilmen and a number of university and professional scientists, it was revealed by these same scientists that the people of Ilha de Maré are being exposed to high levels of heavy metals. All of the children tested by the scientists presenting at this meeting were found to have abnormally high levels of mercury in their blood, while 90% of the children tested had high levels of lead in their blood, as well. In addition to this, the communities of Botelho and Santana both had high levels of cadmium among their population.

Lest one think this particular case an anomaly, the people of Ilha de Maré have struggled against the effects of shipping in the Port of Aratu for generations. In addition to the shipping brought by the Port of Aratu, there is also an oil refinery as well as a thermoelectric plant sited near the Bay. As a result of these factors, pollution has been a recurring problem for the community. The air, dust, and water of the island has been systematically poisoned, leading to the dying of fruit trees and other important crops that the community had previously cultivated. As such, the oil spill in the Bay is simply the most recent and perhaps most extreme iteration of a process that has been taking place since the Port, refinery, and plant were placed in the Bay.

“Developing” Bahia generally, and the Bay of Aratu specifically has led to the placement of industries which signal nothing less than the erasure of the quilombola fisherpeople of Ilha de Maré. In this way, Ilha de Maré demonstrates another side of the project of modernity and modernization. While Rio dos Macacos suffers from the sovereign arm of the state, Ilha de Maré feels the effects of a different iteration of “Progress,” in the form of the *meio técnico-científico*, which privileges a reliance on science and technology as well as the material and discursive accoutrement that accompanies this approach. Their way of life remains under attack because, despite the long history of self-subsistence and quilombo autonomy, the corporations located in the Bay of Aratu recognize no political subjectivity present in the community and thus treat the space as if it were empty. The case of Tororó demonstrates an example of a community that is struggling against both of these aspects of modernity.

Tororó

In the area near the land that Tororó now occupies, there existed five fazendas from which the community’s current inhabitants trace their origins. The fazendas that were in the area were called Pombau, Bela Vista, Muribêca, Gameleira, Ponto de Areia, and Sapoca. One of the landowners that possessed land and slaves that today form the antecedents of the quilombo of Tororó was named Benjamin de Souza and he bought part of the Fazenda Bela Vista in the late 19th century, bringing his slaves with him. Local knowledge has it that when Souza arrived in the area there were already runaway slaves that were living there who had escaped bondage to form their own communities. This suggests that Tororó has its origins in pre-abolition quilombolas.

After slavery was abolished and the community took form as a free one, it continued fishing, farming, and extractivist practices to sustain itself. Like Ilha de Maré, mangroves are a

lynchpin of life in Tororó. The centrality of fishing is evidenced in the stories told regarding the history of Tororó. Past elders of the community such as Zeloba, Tomé, Pé do Serria, and Netinho were so knowledgeable about the Bay and its treasures that community members describe how they could look out into the water from a high vantage point and know exactly which schools of fish were arriving in the Bay. Canoes would leave and come back full of fish, such that even after community members had all filled their buckets, there would be fish left over. In addition to fishing from canoes, people fished from the shore with enormous nets—nets of such a size that it took twenty men securing each side to haul them in. Shrimping trips would yield anywhere between ten to fifteen kilograms of shrimp. These fruits of the sea formed some of the community's most important goods. In being able to sustain themselves from their local environment, the quilombo eschewed reliance on outside materials. The commodities available to the community at that time were limited compared to the present day. For instance, foods that today are staples—such as carne sertão—were essentially unavailable to community in the past.²⁴ Basic, available foodstuffs included water, farinha, salt, and eggs. In addition to this, money and currency circulation was very limited in the area. Instead of buying commodities with money, people would trade—fish might be traded for salt, for example. To prepare for the winter time, when fishing was slower and therefore not as productive, people would dry their catch in order to have it available on a long-term basis. Houses were all auto-constructed and built from completely local materials. These were casas de barro with palm leaves used for the roof and white sand from the beaches was used to cover the floors.²⁵ Not having access to

²⁴ Carne sertão is a dried, salted, fatty cut of beef that is eaten as a part of several meals in Bahia.

²⁵ Casas de barro are houses made of a wooden frame and filled in with dried mud siding—much like adobe houses.

electricity, candles were used to light the houses—electricity did not arrive to the community until about thirty years ago according to community members.

The arrival of the navy in the area is noted as the moment when things began to drastically change for the community. While it is said that relations between the navy and the community were initially relatively peaceful, the treatment the community received from the navy increasingly worsened over time. Like the case of Rio dos Macacos, the introduction of the navy meant expulsions of families that had previously lived in Tororó, as well as the destruction of landscapes—built and natural—that had been central to the community's reproduction. For instance, while historically the quilombo had three water sources from which they drew only one is still in use by the community, because the Navy filled in the other wells in the 1990s. In addition to this, the navy built a wall around areas from which the community had traditionally extracted fruits and vegetables. If this was not damaging enough to the community, the navy took measures like cutting down their lime trees, stealing fish, nets, and fishing supplies from the fisherpeople. There is even an account of soldiers assaulting a fisherman on the beach and leaving him there naked. Conditions were such that beginning in the 1970s, and occurring through the 1980s, about ten different families left the community.

In addition to the presence of the navy and the problems that this created, the construction of the Port of Aratu and the effects this has wrought have also weighed heavily on the conditions in Quilombo Tororó. Several companies operate in the Bay of Aratu and have drastically changed the lived environment of the people. At no point, I am told, were the community members of Tororó consulted about the arrival of these companies, nor was their opinion on the companies' presence asked. Among the companies that operate on the quilombo's traditional fishing grounds are MFX, which works with Petrobras and manufactures steel cables; Dow

Chemicals; Ford automobiles, whose plant is actually in Camaçari, but who ships their cars to and from the Port of Aratu; and M. Dias Branco, which is a Brazilian food manufacturer. As one of Tororó's leaders explained to me in a conversation, "Eles [as companhias] escolheram seu lugar para despejar desgraça".²⁶ The effects these companies have had on the livelihood of the quilombo have been devastating. It was explained to me that the areas occupied by these companies historically served as key fishing areas for the community. Aside from occupying key locations, parts of the Bay were dried up and destroyed altogether to make room for the Port and its bridge. To accompany the large freighters that bring in Ford automobiles, the sea floor of the Bay was dredged, permanently altering the habitat of the sea life living there. If the complete occupation and destruction of important fishing locations were not enough, the invading companies have caused significant damage to the sea life that remains in this particular part of the Bay.

The mangroves have been poisoned by the industrial waste expelled by these companies such that much of the mangroves have died and the animals living in the mangroves have seriously deteriorated. Sururú (mussels) are a central part of the Bahian diet, and a key food and income source for Tororó. However, given the pollution present in the Bay, the sururú have declined in quality. I was told that they now come out of the mangrove mud dead and soft—unfit for consumption. Shrimping has also taken a major hit since the arrival of the Port and its accompanying industries. Whereas previously people would return from shrimping with 10-15 kilograms of shrimp, today it is common to come back with only 1 kilogram or 80 grams of shrimp. Even to those unfamiliar with the history of the quilombo and the displacement brought on by the presence of these businesses, the effects of industry in the area are evident. On my

²⁶ They [the companies] chose their place to dump damnation

first trip to Tororó I was convinced that there must be some kind of livestock farm nearby the quilombo, given the malodorous nature of the surrounding area. Upon inquiring, I was informed that the smell was actually the result of the soy products that M. Dias Branco worked with—the same byproducts that pollute the marine life in the Bay.

Tororó is perhaps the quilombo in Aratu that most clearly evidences the deleterious effects of both public and private intervention in the lives of the quilombos in the area. Struggling against the maneuvers of the Brazilian Navy to consolidate their power and influence in the area, as well as the Port of Aratu and the businesses it hosts, Tororó is essentially fighting a battle on multiple fronts. The assumed a-political nature of the quilombolas of Tororó is made evident in the fact that the state never consulted them when offering incentives to the companies that arrived in the area. The state clearly did not see any political figure with whom they had to negotiate on this topic. Moreover, the community's assumed a-spatiality is evidenced through the systematic and apparently necessary demise of their lived environment. Both of these factors show that the quilombo's existence is not recognized by private and public actors. By “recognized” I mean that the quilombo's way of life is clearly not deemed a truly political one by the Brazilian state or by private industries. It is not recognized as deserving protection or of having a coherent body politic with whom to negotiate issues that affect the community's population. Instead, the space inhabited by Tororó is treated as empty. Truly, all of the quilombos in the Bay of Aratu are treated as empty spaces by the state and private industry. This reality harkens back to European colonial practices, which were typified by treating indigenous and Black populations as if they were not politically or spatially present on the land.

Currently, all of the quilombos find themselves in a precarious situation. While I go into the specifics of each quilombos' situation in Chapters 4, for the sake of contextualizing my

arguments in Chapter 3 on the conditions of non-being faced by the quilombos, I must briefly describe the status of the communities' current struggles. Rio dos Macacos continues to wait for a resolution to their territorial titling, as they have continually rejected the government's insistence on the legal diminution of their land and implementation of topographical changes and development projects, which they believe will destroy their collective ability to provide for themselves. Because Rio dos Macacos is intent on establishing the conditions for the future growth of their community, the quilombolas continue to insist that their territory not lack the resources necessary for their tradition self-subsistence practices, such as cultivable land and water sources. Ilha de Maré continues to feel the effects of pollution and environmental degradation in their community as a number of illnesses and the disappearance of marine life adversely affect their population. Despite the clear devastation this pollution has wrought in Ilha de Maré, the municipal, state, and federal governments have refused to acknowledge the effects the pollution has had on the community or offer any forms of remediation. The quilombolas of Ilha de Maré remain treated as if they do not exist. Finally, in Tororó, the confluence of environmental degradation from the industries in the Bay and the enclosure practices of the navy persist in their destruction of the quilombo's way of life. Still, Tororó has no set date for when the process of titling their territory with the government will take place.

While the cases presented above are certainly grave and demonstrate nothing short of present-day primitive accumulation and, as such, genocide, the communities of Rio dos Macacos, Ilha de Maré, and Tororó remain resolved to maintain their territorial integrity and preserve their unique way of life. The context in which the quilombos struggle, I argue, is one defined by the continuation of the condition of non-being, inaugurated in the Middle Passage as well as a new forms of the *meio técnico-científico* in the guise of the practice of extractivism and

its attendant technologies. These communities continue to be viewed by the state as empty spaces while their members continue to be treated as if they are non-humans. Still, the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu remain steadfast in their practices of modern-day marronage as they seek to create worlds not defined by anti-Blackness. In this way, the quilombos form part of a much larger Black struggle that has unique characteristics in Brazil.

Chapter 2

To understand the struggle of the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu, it is necessary to give some background to the formation of the Brazilian nation-state and the history of Black struggle there. This brief section describes the legacy of slavery in Brazil, paying close attention to the various ways anti-Blackness was articulated before and after abolition and how the assumption of Black non-being was a central component to the establishment of Brazil. Specifically, the role of the “racial democracy” in shaping narratives of miscegenation and nationhood in Brazil, and the way this discourse has been used to enervate a Black Brazilian identity, are identified in this section. I also touch on the subordination of Black women in Brazil and how this forms a constitutive part of the nation. In addition to exploring early iterations of Brazilian anti-Blackness, this section discusses the ways in which Black Brazilians sought to combat the technologies of oppression they faced, as oppression never occurs without forms of creative resistance. I pay specific attention to the role of maroon communities in Brazil, known as mocambos or quilombos. My focus on maroons is strategic, given that the communities found in the Bay of Aratu draw on the language and legacy of quilombos in their present-day struggles. By contextualizing Brazil in the global landscape of anti-Blackness and Black geographical struggle, this chapter serves to highlight the legacy of anti-Blackness and marronage in Brazil. These phenomena are central to understanding the current manifestations of anti-Black violence the quilombos face and how modern quilombos create their own

territorialities, as I argue that the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu demonstrate present-day forms of marronage amidst a society structured on the assumption of their non-being.

The Black in Brazil

The figure of the Black was a fundamental component in the birth of Brazil—“o ‘ser negro’ foi produzido no campo das idéias a partir das *necessidades políticas*” and “apresenta-se como ontologia de um ser que sempre, sem começo nem fim, foi inferior, foi sombra e negatividade”¹ (Santos 2002, 16-17 emphasis mine). Hence, the Black filled the same role in early Brazil as it did in the emerging modern world. In Brazil, as was the case around the globe, the Black’s non-being established the conditions for the (Hu)Man’s subjectivity, since “Without the Negro, capacity itself is incoherent, uncertain at best” (Wilderson, 2010, 45). The modern Brazilian subject was and is only possible through the maintenance of the a-political figure of the Black non-being. As the most degraded figure in society, the Black acted as the ontological anchor for the political subject. This was made clear in the body and assumed a-spatiality of the Black Slave.

The enslavement of Blacks in Brazil “led inevitably to loss of personhood. The slave became a thing, an object, an item of cargo. He entered a state that nullified not only his possessions but his being” (Mattoso 2002, 87). This existence came into being through the Middle Passage, when Africans went into the cargo hold of the slave ship and came out of the same cargo hold as chattel property (Wilderson 2010, 38). The new role of the slave “would be created by his insertion...into a society shaped by a white model” (Mattoso 2002, 88) which, in addition to attaching the Black body to an assumption of non-being also associated the Black

¹ “the ‘black being’ was produced in the field of ideas for *political necessity*” and “presents itself as ontology of a being that always, without beginning or end, was inferior, was shade and negativity”

with “indeterminate space”, thereby creating an a-spatial figure (Wilderson 2010, 283). In addition to the importance for metaphysical notions of being and space, the Black slave came to have a significant demographic impact on Brazil, as well.

Slavery was a central institution to the foundation of the Brazilian nation. Scholars estimate that Brazil may have received as much as 40% of the Africans brought to the Americas during the trans-Atlantic slave trade and Brazil was the last country to abolish the slave trade in 1888 (Sepúlveda dos Santos 2008, 163). That Brazil received such a high number of slaves and practiced slavery for so long meant the implementation of technologies of domination by the master class. Enacting this domination required very specific social and spatial manipulation by those in power. Brazilian anti-Blackness did not always take the form of spectacular, graphic violence. Oftentimes Blacks, themselves, were encouraged and induced to anti-Black practices.

Brazilian elites fomented major divisions between those of African descent in Brazil. This was done, in part, through rewarding “assimilated” Blacks. “By exhibiting obedience, humility, and loyalty [that the slave] could then win” the master’s favor (Mattoso 2002, 148). These slaves, that were said to be “adjusted” insofar as they internalized the values presented to them by their masters, were differentiated from those thought to be problematic through their ability to master the “accoutrements of whiteness” (Walsh 2016, 4). This led to “Social hierarchies within the ‘subjugated’ [that] were just as keenly felt as hierarchies within the ‘ruling’ class” such that relations amongst slaves or between freedpersons and slaves were often hostile (Mattoso 2002, 107).

For example, slaves born in Brazil were seen as being more assimilated than the African slaves. By playing to “the expectations of white society, the creole separated [himself] from his black African brothers and tried to acquire a white soul” (Mattoso 2002, 200). Another example

of divisions among those of African descent were a result of African “Ethnic and religious hostilities [that] were carefully fostered by slave owners” (Mattoso 2002, 205). Still another example was the social and economic mobility afforded to the mulatto class. Mulattoes were promised advancement in society on the condition that they adhere to a Eurocentric lifestyle and political agenda, so that “The industrious mulatto [could make] himself officially white” (Mattoso 2002, 195). Those who lived in areas with high numbers of Afro-descendant peoples could socially ascend in society as long as they abandoned all practices and relationships that identified them as Black (Mattoso 2002, 198).

If slavery inaugurated the existence of the Black in modernity, then captivity became a defining factor for populations of African descent globally. The violences and truths that accompanied this captive condition existed, and continue to exist, in various permutations among Afro-descendant populations. One of the ways this manifests itself is in regards to gender and the idea of family.

Since “under conditions of captivity, the offspring of the female does not ‘belong’ to the Mother”, in modern figurings of the family, “African peoples in the historic Diaspora had nothing to prove, *if* the point had been that they were not capable of ‘family’ (read ‘civilization’)” (Spillers 1987, 74-75). This is to say that “though the enslaved female reproduced other enslaved persons, we do not read ‘birth’ in this instance as a reproduction of mothering precisely because the female, like the male, has been robbed of the parental right, the parental function” (Spillers 1987, 77-78). Put in even franker terms, the female slave “could not, in fact, claim her child...because ‘motherhood’ is not perceived in the prevailing social climate as a legitimate procedure of cultural inheritance” (Spillers 1987, 80). Black women are denied the potential for motherhood in modernity because, as Hortense Spillers notes, “‘gendering’

takes place within the confines of the domestic”, with the domestic sphere being denied to Blacks, given that the Middle Passage—the inaugural moment of Blackness—was “nowhere at all” (1987, 72). These factors combine to form intersecting modes of oppression, such that Black women in Brazil faced and continue to face unique iterations of racist, gendered oppression which can never be understood as separate from each other (Crenshaw 2012, 1425). The intersectionality of these oppressive factors historically and presently manifest themselves in specific ways in Brazil.

The lack of spatial capacity of the Middle Passage brought about the denial of the domestic sphere, while the spaces of non-being into which Blacks have continually been forced—slave quarters, prisons, the hyperghetto, favelas—have maintained the condition of a-spatiality. A-spatiality, or lacking the potential to make space, also makes impossible the establishment of the domestic sphere and, as such, the establishment of gender. Bodies, not subjectivities, are registered in this case, and “one is neither female, nor male, as both subjects are taken into ‘account’ as *quantities*. The female in ‘Middle Passage,’ as the apparently small physical mass...is...quantifiable by the same rules of accounting as her male counterpart” (Spillers 1987, 72). The degradation of Black female slaves occurred in Brazil just as it did across the rest of the Americas.

Whether it was in the rural sugar, coffee, cotton, and mining sectors, where they were viewed and expected to behave as “good domestic animals” (Brown 2006, 79) or in the urban setting, where supposedly less rigorous domestic work nonetheless killed female slaves through atrocious hygiene, living conditions, and diets and subjected them to disease and high infant mortality (Cowling 2013, 26), slavery entailed the domination and subjugation of Black women. In short, while slavery, in general, meant that “os africanos escravizados não mereciam nenhuma

consideração como seres humanos”² in the minds of the slave-owning class, the marginalizing factors of slave society meant that slave women were “automaticamente impedidas de estabelecer qualquer estável estrutura de família”³ (Nascimento 1978, 61). Instead, widespread sexual exploitation and less than human treatment typified the lives of female slaves in Brazil (ibid). The persistence of anti-Blackness in Brazil continued even after abolition, albeit in new expressions.

Post-Abolition

Unlike Haiti and the United States, where the slaves freed themselves from bondage (James 1963; Du Bois 1998), “abolition in Brazil was a gradual, drawn-out affair” (Skidmore 1999, 70). In addition to abolition materializing slowly, it is evident that the condition of Black non-being inaugurated during the trans-Atlantic slave trade continued in new formations even after slavery was legally ended. Following the 1888 abolition of slavery in Brazil, the recently independent nation-state was faced with a predicament. That Brazil might become a nation dominated by Blacks not only in numbers, but politically as well, remained a reality that the elites were determined to avoid. Blacks represented a “heterogeneous” factor in society, as they were seen as opposed to the labor conditions necessary for a modern nation, making them an “*inimigo domiciliar*”⁴ that was both a stranger to public interests and forever at war with the general population (Azevedo 1987, 41-42). Brazilian elites insisted that Blacks cared little for individual freedom and cast the ex-slaves as naturally lazy and prone to *vagabundagem*,⁵

² The enslaved African did not deserve any consideration as human beings

³ Automatically impeded from establishing any stable family structure

⁴ Home enemy

⁵ Vagabondage

marginality, and retrograde behaviors (Azevedo 1987, 51, 78-80). In reality, these elites were reacting to the ex-slaves' desire to establish their own productive and political practices.

Abolition presented an opportunity for ex-slaves to break their relation of dependence on the former master class. This took the form of Black small-scale production in which former slaves and other marginalized groups created and maintained their own means of subsistence. However, the desire for ex-slaves and the impoverished to work for their own self-subsistence was considered *vadiagem*⁶ among landholders and the propertied (Azevedo 1987, 127-130). As a result, the propertied sectors of Brazilian society worked to prevent land reform during this time (Skidmore 1999, 70). The figure of the Black presented a domestic enemy insofar as it had its own political and economic agenda and desire to create and maintain its own spaces independent of, and indeed inherently contrary to, the national space to which the elites aspired. This was a reality which could not be accepted by the ruling class. To temper this possibility, Brazilian elites worked to redefine Brazil's system of social stratification, such that Black populations would remain as the most marginalized sectors of society (ibid).

Immigration

Brazilian elites found their solution to Black Geographies in European immigration. At stake were issues of economy and culture, as Europeans were accustomed to "modern" labor practices and offered a biological purifying factor in the midst of the Blacks that were seen as degraded by centuries of slavery (Santos, 2002, 84-87).⁷ As a result, European immigration to

⁶ Vagrancy

⁷ The elites' emphasis on establishing a modern nation was part of their feverish drive to realize a society rooted in "Order and Progress." Order and Progress was the mantra adopted by the Brazilian state in its attempt to become a modern nation, and today exists as the slogan emblazoned on the Brazilian flag. "Order," in this case, defines the stability of nature, while "Progress" marks its movement. Progress could be achieved through rational Reason and represented the capacity for people to perfect their knowledge of social life (see Santos, 2002, 39)

Brazil more than quadrupled from 1886 to 1888, with most new arrivals coming from Italy, Portugal, and Spain (Skidmore 1999, 71). Prevailing theories on national development argued that even as freedpersons, Blacks demonstrated an inferiority evidenced by their lack of industry and productive ability as well as their cranial size. Furthermore, many believed that Blacks actually did not know how to be free and were inherently lazy, seeing all forms of work as punishment—and were thus not fit to be free workers in any society (Santos, 2002, 94-95). Until Blacks could be civilized, Brazil needed “massas fortemente organizadas de produtores agrícolas ou industriais que, nos povos civilizados, são a base de toda a riqueza” (Santos 2002, 98).⁸ European immigrants brought with them versatile work skill sets, excelling in a variety of areas, including agriculture, textiles, and metallurgy. This set them apart from Black Brazilians, who elites viewed as physically inferior and incapable of serious work habits (Skidmore 1999, 71; 73). It was this “argumento de inexistência de um povo [que] é fundamental para a concepção...imigrantista”⁹ (Santos, 2002, 98-99). Along with the emphasis on European immigration, the Brazilian nation focused on questions of “purifying” the country through miscegenation in the hopes that eventually Blacks would become extinct (Hordge-Freeman 2015, 11).

Multiracialism¹⁰ and Racial Democracy

⁸ “strongly organized masses of agricultural or industrial producers that, in civilized peoples, are the base of all wealth”

⁹ “argument of inexistence of a people [that] is fundamental for an immigrantist conception”

¹⁰ My introduction to the concept of multiracialism came from an independent study I did with Alvaro Reyes during the spring of 2013.

Despite national attempts to remove the legacy of Blackness from the Brazilian landscape, the preponderance of Afro-descendant peoples in the country necessitated a unique national discourse that operated on two fronts. This discourse rejected the idea of a contemporary, visible Black subjectivity in the country, yet still acknowledged the past figure of the Slave as a constitutive factor of the Brazilian nation. This past figure resides in the tacit acknowledgement of the presence of African descendants in Brazil—a presence which is at once accepted and disavowed through the idea of the Brazilian racial democracy. In order to appreciate the ways in which the notion of racial democracy seeks to erase Blackness, there must be an understanding of the project of multiracialism.

Multiracialism, as a discourse, focuses on “race mixture” in contemporary culture and society. Importantly, this approach reinforces long-standing tenets of anti-Blackness in part by downplaying the lasting effects of slavery and enervating the idea of Blackness as a viable social identity (Sexton, 2008, 1-2). Multiracialism attempts to delegitimize Black identity by arguing that such an identity is not “necessary” and should not comprise a political subjectivity (Sexton, 2008, 6-7). Multiracialism, therefore, works as a discourse to isolate Blacks on social, political, and economic fronts by making the Black identity obsolete.

By tacitly acknowledging the presence and role of Blacks in society, multiracialism serves as a powerful tool to undermine Black consciousness and struggle. The reliance on modernity’s tools is clearly evidenced in the case of Brazil’s “racial democracy.”

Multiracialism has been a component of the Brazilian nation since its inception (Munanga 1999). Because of the high number of Blacks in Brazil, a national identity fundamentally opposed to a Black politics had to be created in order to protect against the possibility of widespread political organizing on the part of the marginalized Afro-descendant

peoples in the country. In addition to cultivating divisions between Blacks, encouraging European immigration, and violently repressing expressions of Black culture and politics, Brazilian elites focused on celebrating and encouraging racial mixture nationwide. Gilberto Freyre would expand on this supposed propensity for racial mixture in his landmark book *Casa Grande e Senzala*, published in English as *The Masters and the Slaves* (1986). In this work, Freyre describes the origins and consequences of the “racial democracy.” Racial democracy is the idea that there exists little to no racial animosity in Brazil and that the Brazilian nation is defined by its inherent racial mixture. The sexual relations between the figure of the White (man) and the Black and Indian (women) meant that “the Portuguese triumphed where other Europeans failed; and the first modern society formed in the tropics with national characteristics and qualities of permanence” (Freyre 1986, 17). As a result of this predilection for racial mixture, the hatreds that typified other slaveholding areas of the Americas, according to Freyre, were absent in Brazil (1986, xii) and every Brazilian, no matter their hue, “carries with him on his soul, when not on the soul and body alike...the shadow, or at least the birthmark, of the aborigine or the Negro” (1986, 278).

Public figures in post-abolition Brazil championed the notion of racial mixture described in the idea of racial democracy by arguing that only through miscegenation could the Black have any value in Brazil. As a nation, “o embranquecimento seria uma solução plausível para negros e brancos, para que os últimos não fossem destruídos pelo enegrecimento e para que os primeiros não sucumbissem à herança nefanda que o destino os reservou: o sangue africano”¹¹ (Santos, 2002, 127). Thanks to the arrival of Europeans in the country, *mestiçagem* could become “o

¹¹ “whitening would be a plausible solution for blacks and whites, so that the latter would not be destroyed by blackening and so that the former would not succumb to the nefarious inheritance that destiny reserved for them: African blood”

ponto de equilíbrio da sociedade brasileira”¹² as argued by Gilberto Freyre (Santos, 2002, 149-151). This blood-mixing would produce “homens fortes, inteligentes e altivos”¹³ (Azevedo, 1987, 75), with “O senhor representando a força, a virilidade, a brancura, a inteligência, o engenho, a crueldade sádica; e o escravo, a doçura, a sensualidade, o negror, a esperteza, a passividade masoquista”¹⁴ (Santos, 2002, 154). These notions lent themselves to the idea of a racial paradise, in which mixture between races occurs naturally and without prejudice, “contribui não só para a invenção de uma nova ‘identidade’ para os negros, brancos, e mestiços, como também para a configuração de toda uma identidade nacional baseada em uma falsa democracia”¹⁵ (Santos, 2002, 160-161). In reality, these aspirations of racial mixture were rooted in ideas of eugenics, cast as a “racial hygiene project” that would eventually remove racial challenges to modernity (Hordge-Freeman 2015, 10).

Despite the apparent celebration of miscegenation, the ideology of racial democracy actually demands that each member of society “obedeça os limites estabelecidos pelo caráter de sua cultura, de sua origem, de sua étnia, de sua cor”¹⁶ (Santos, 2002, 161). Furthermore, this idea of racial democracy privileges the creation of a “modern” subject whose constitution places it in a position to participate in the world as an active subject. This is shown in the quote above that highlights the supposedly positive aspects of both White and Black Brazilians. It was believed that the combination of these two groups would lead to a nation deserved of global

¹² The point of equilibrium for Brazilian society

¹³ “strong, intelligent and haughty men”

¹⁴ “the master representing the force, virility, whiteness, intelligence, ingenuity, the sadistic cruelty; and the slave, the sweetness, sensuality, blackness, cleverness, the masochistic passivity”

¹⁵ “contributes not only to the invention of a new ‘identity’ for blacks, whites, and mestizos, but also for the configuration of a whole national identity based on a false democracy”

¹⁶ “obey the limits established by the character of their culture of origin, of their ethnicity, of their color”

political recognition. This point of view also tacitly demonstrates the persistence of the notion of non-being, as it is against the inhuman Black that this potential Brazilian subject is measured.

Taking into account the history of slavery, immigration, and anti-Blackness in Brazil, it is obvious that racial democracy was “biologically and culturally, politically and economically...set by and on the terms of white European descendants” (Goldberg, 2009, 200). Even though the notion of racial democracy is clearly a tool of anti-Blackness, it serves to prevent discussions around legacies of race and racial violence. Indeed, the idea that racialization in Brazilian society is mild or even non-existence is a lasting hallmark of racial democracy, particularly among middle class Brazilians (Sheriff 2001, 5-6). As a nationalist ideology, racial democracy not only influences the beliefs, actions, and discourses of Brazilians (Sheriff 2001, 7), it also profoundly affects international audiences’ understandings of Brazilian race relations (Hordge-Freeman 2015, 11). While this discourse works to silence discussions on race, the specter of Blackness nonetheless remains salient in society.

The ever-present focus on an identity that both acknowledges and rejects Blackness leads João Costa Vargas to describe the “hyperconsciousness of race” in Brazilian society. This hyperconsciousness “is associated with the effects of the racial democracy ideology” and manifests itself in the outward insistence “that race is neither an analytically and morally valid tool, nor plays a central role in determining Brazilian social relations, hierarchies, and distributions of power and resources” (Vargas 2004, 444). Despite this essential denial of racial awareness, Brazilian society “is in reality deeply immersed in racialized understandings of the social world” to the extent that “race” plays a large role “in determining one’s position in the historical structures of power and resources” (Vargas 2004, 446). Indeed, “Brazilians are acutely

aware of racial differences and utilize those to (often tacitly) justify, think about, and enforce behavior and social inequalities” (Vargas 2004, 446).

In sum, the Brazil of today is built on the attempted removal of any vestiges of Africanity and a radical Black subjectivity. This is a product of Brazilian elites’ attempts to create a “modern” nation that protects against the influence of the Black “non-being.” It is because of this that the Black generally occupies the space of memory in the Brazilian nation. While Blackness’ effects are still evidenced in the country’s phenotype, the persistence of a unique Black subjectivity is not recognized in the Brazilian nation. Still a largely unspoken (but nonetheless present) component of the country’s origin, the Black is not a viable political part of the Brazilian national landscape. The threat to modernity has been banished to the nation’s collective past, present only as a distant memory and rarely spoken about¹⁷. Despite this attempted erasure, Black spaces have a rich and continued history in Brazil.

Pre-Abolition Black Struggle in Brazil

While Black Brazilians historically and presently occupy marginalized social and spatial positions in Brazil, they have nonetheless demonstrated, and continue to demonstrate, the fact that those deemed forgettable and a-spatial are always creating their own spatial formations (McKittrick and Woods 2007, 4). As such, Brazil has a long legacy of Black Geographies, as Black struggles against the various forms of racist violence in Brazil were and are myriad. I define Black Geographies as the geographical expressions of those that recognize the assumed non-being of Afro-descendant populations in society and seek to create the conditions for a

¹⁷ Not *all* vestiges of Blackness and Africanity have been completely erased. Events like Carnaval and musical expressions like *samba*, when portraying a “civilized” and “disciplined” African society are not only accepted but encouraged, as “safe” Blacks are seen as being able to offset the more dangerous elements of society (see Graden, 2006, 205). Still, spaces geared toward a “radical” Black existence remain widely persecuted in Brazil.

world not defined by Black inhumanity. These geographies are plural and occur globally in a variety of expressions. Among the varieties of struggle found across Brazil before abolition were slave revolts, which persisted for centuries in Brazil, leading to the abandoning of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and, possibly, to the ultimate abolition of slavery altogether (Graden 2006, 10, 18-19). Regarding the issue of gender, the record of Brazilian revolts shows women struggling against the intersectional modes of oppression they faced and playing central roles in the planning and execution of the uprisings. Luiza Mahim, for instance, is famous for her role in the Malê Revolt of 1835 in Bahia (Campos 2003, 77).

In addition to these revolts, efforts at building up the Black community were evidenced in the work of practitioners of Candomblé, who collectively put together unique built environments, work techniques, and systems of distribution and consumption (de Mattos 2008). Again, Black women showed their centrality as political actors through their commitment to creating distinctive religious communities. In particular, the case of Rosa Egipcíaca, who was a slave prostitute in Rio de Janeiro and later Minas Gerais, and eventually became a religious leader and writer, founding a convent for prostitutes and women of African descent in Rio de Janeiro, is a prime example of Black women's contribution to wider Black struggle (Krueger 2002, 175-177; Mott 1993). While these measures were undoubtedly transformative for Black Brazilians, perhaps the most radical form of Black struggle in early Brazil were the maroon societies.

Quilombos (also known as mocambos) existed as political and spatial alternatives for the outcasts of Brazilian society. These were communities in which runaway slaves, freedpersons, indigenous groups, and poor whites would gather to escape the oppressive conditions present in dominant society. The quilombo, as a politico-spatial feature “foi, incontestavelmente, a unidade

básica de resistência do escravo”¹⁸ and existed across the entirety of the Brazilian nation-scape since “O quilombo aparecia onde quer que a escravidão surgisse”¹⁹ (Moura 1972, 87).

Mocambos and quilombos, “Unlike individual acts of violence or simple escape...no matter what the ultimate goals or self-perceptions of their inhabitants, were joint acts against the existing social and economic order” (Schwartz, 1970, 333). Moreover, these were spaces of alliances between different oppressed groups in Brazilian society, since “For the runaways and unreduced tribes there was a common ground of opposition to the European-imposed system and slavery which led naturally to cooperation”, despite “Portuguese attempts to turn the Indian into an ally against African resistance” (Schwartz, 1970, 325). In addition to allying with poor Whites and indigenous groups, quilombos offered an important alternative to a society which constantly played Blacks against one another. Rejecting the divisions created between different sectors of the Black population “quase sempre os quilombolas dispunham de aliados quer nas senzalas quer nos centros urbanos”²⁰ (Moura 1972, 111). Quilombos, therefore, worked with and brought together Blacks from all over Brazilian society. The nature of these quilombos was truly a creative one. In this way, the quilombos represented Black Geographies that sought to create wholly new political, territorial, and social relations that departed from modern notions of politics and subjectivity.

Clóvis Moura names seven fundamental types of quilombos: Agricultural; extractivist; mercantile; miners; pastoral; service-oriented; and predatory (1993, 32-33). Regardless of the kind of productive practices employed, “nos quilombos, o tipo de economia comunitária ali

¹⁸ Was, incontestably, the basic unit of resistance of the slave

¹⁹ The quilombo appeared wherever slavery arose

²⁰ The quilombolas almost always had allies whether in the slave quarters or in the urban centers

instalado proporcionava o acesso ao bem-estar de toda a comunidade”²¹ (Moura 1993, 34).

Agriculture was a common characteristic of all quilombos and, unlike plantations, they did not practice monoculture, but instead had a poly-culture that could satisfy their own needs and also lead to trade with outsiders (Moura 1993, 33). Because of the threat these communities posed to the continuation and viability of colonial society, slave owners and political leaders employed various measures with the intent “to destroy them and to kill or reenslave their inhabitants” (Schwartz, 1970, 326). Still, quilombos, by having multiple ways of providing for themselves, were able to survive amidst isolation and wars with slave catchers and colonial militias (Moura 1993, 26).

Quilombos, then, offer a prime example of radical Black Geographies in the sense that they simultaneously refused to succumb to societal assimilation or domination and also existed in a plurality—their existence was a fundamentally open one and not defined by an adherence to modern notions of politics, territory, or being. Moreover, their internal economies and ways of life were all geared toward recognizing, respecting, and protecting the lives of those figures deemed non-beings in colonial society. The need to express one’s humanity was possible in the quilombos of the past precisely through the socio-political arrangements that combated the inherent violence of Brazilian society. Given the plurality of the methods certain sectors of Black Brazil employed to ameliorate their oppressed position in society—assimilation, revolt, reformist organizations—quilombos are unique in their employment of Radical Black consciousness and Geography. Instead of seeking recognition within the modern edifice, as many did in a society structured on anti-Blackness, quilombos offered a truly radical break with modern notions of politics, relying on creating an emergent existence premised on the valuing of

²¹ In the quilombos, the type of communitarian economy installed there provided access to well-being for the whole community.

Black life. Rather than relying on modern forms of politics and territoriality, which are dependent on sovereignty and domination, these communities used unique and creative methods of existing in relation to one another and the physical environment to create their respective territories. The politico-spatial significance of quilombos continued in Brazil even after the immediate post-abolition period.

The anti-Blackness of the Military Dictatorship

As mentioned previously, the creation of the Brazilian nation was and is predicated on the establishment of a multiracial figure that at once tacitly acknowledges and disavows the presence of Afro-descendant populations among its populace. While this manifested itself in unique ways in the different regions, Brazil cast itself both internally and internationally as an anti-racist, unified country where *mestiçagem* was the demographic norm (Bailey 2009). With the coming to power of the military dictatorship in 1964, the silencing of overt race consciousness became even more pronounced. The military coup which brought the dictatorship to power was the result of a conservative pushback against the government of João Goulart, who was proposing measures like land expropriation, the nationalization of oil refineries, and the enfranchisement of illiterate citizens (Alberto, 2011, 248-249). While the military government was initially marginally tolerant of dissenting viewpoints, in 1967, a more hard-line administration took power, expanding state influence, shutting down Congress, censoring the media, and enacting government purges (Alberto, 2011, 249). In 1969, the National Security Council declared that writing or speaking on the issue of racial discrimination was an act of leftist subversion and increasingly circulated pronouncements, publications, and cultural policies that proclaimed racial and cultural *mestiçagem* to be a pillar of national Order (Htun 2004, 65; 89). The dictatorship repressed Black thinkers, organizations, unions, student groups, and leftists

as subversives, while “backed by the threat of military force, the state’s idealization of mestiçagem stifled the claims to racial and cultural difference black thinkers had insisted on in previous decades” (Alberto, 2011, 245).

As part of their championing of racial democracy, the military dictatorship used aspects of Brazil’s African heritage deemed “quaintly folkloric and politically unthreatening” to illustrate the country’s racial harmony (ibid). The dictatorship used the ideology of mestiçagem “to promote a homogenous, organic nation and to blot out claims to black cultural or racial distinctiveness”, arguing that “African cultural traits did not belong exclusively to African-descended Brazilians, but were the shared patrimony of a mestiço nation” (Alberto, 2011, 253-254). In response to this, Black activists and organizations around the country began organizing against the notion of racial democracy that the dictatorship was so keen on emphasizing. Arguing that the claim of racial democracy was actually a purveyor of racism, these Black actors came to frame their struggle in terms of decolonization—“liberation from the political, economic, and ideological domination of an illegitimate white minority” (Alberto, 2011, 246). As is perhaps evident from this language of decolonization, these Brazilian activists drew on the global uprisings that were taking place at that time, including Africa’s decolonizing efforts and the U.S. Civil Rights Movements. In espousing these values of liberation, Brazil’s Black militants rejected the “mixed identity” that the dictatorship insisted defined the country.

The actions taken by Black activists in the wake of the repressions implemented by Brazil’s military dictatorship are termed “*protesto negro*” by Flavia Rios. Rios gives a very specific definition of “*protesto*” here, explaining that “*assume franco objetivo de ser evento público, cuja função é chamar a atenção da sociedade e das autoridades, preferencialmente*

através dos holofotes ou das notícias impressas através das quais ganham mais visibilidade”²² (2012, 42). Specifically, “As manifestações de rua marcaram o retorno da política negra à cena pública brasileira nos anos 1970”²³ (Rios, 2012, 43). This is evidenced in the 1978 protest on the steps of the Municipal Theatre of São Paulo, where the Movimento Unificado Contra a Discriminação Racial took a public space “como palco privilegiado de manifestações”²⁴ (Rios, 2012, 42). This was a seemingly new approach by Black activists as Black organizations previously “por conta da repressão militar, esteve restrita a encontros, reuniões e seminários”²⁵ (Rios, 2012, 48).

Obviously, a key point in the Black protests of the 1970s and later in the 1980s was that of racial discrimination. To combat this reality, the movement “ergue-se a bandeira do igualitarismo, tema que ganhou centralidade no ideário do grupo mobilizado nas últimas décadas do século XX”²⁶ (Rios, 2012, 44). Civil liberties, such as the freedom from police violence, equal access to, and treatment in the workplace, access to education, and political representation were the basis of many of the Black movement’s demands. Racism was thus cast in structural terms, needing concrete solutions, which was cast against the official line of the government at the time, which maintained its insistence on the immanence of racial democracy (Rios, 2012, 49-50; 56). To illuminate the nature of racism and the Black resolve to fight racist national

²² It assumes the frank objective of being a public event, whose function is to call society’s and the authorities’ attention, preferably through spotlights or printed news through which to gain more visibility

²³ The street protests marked the return of black politics to the Brazilian public scene in the 1970s

²⁴ As a privileged stage for protests

²⁵ Because of military repression, were restricted to encounters, meetings and seminars

²⁶ Lifts a banner of egalitarianism, a theme that gained centrality in the ideas of the mobilized group in the last decades of the twentieth century

assemblages, Black Brazilian activists turned to their own “realidade sócio-histórico-cultural”²⁷ (Rios, 2012, 46). The Brazilian Black struggle was exemplified in the case of Zumbi dos Palmares. For Black activists, Zumbi and other historical Black figures like Luiza Mahim and Negro Cosme were the figures that most accurately represented the abolitionist spirit of Brazil.²⁸ Contrary to this national myth, Brazil’s Black movement maintained that abolition had never truly taken place, that it actually persisted into the present day, and thus Zumbi—who had lived and died fighting the proliferation of slavery—was an appropriate symbol of Black resistance (Rio, 2012, 53-54). Drawing on Zumbi meant “a renovação das energias utópicas dos ativistas negros e o fortalecimento de sua identidade coletiva ancorada nas memórias da escravidão”²⁹ and the edification “do guerreiro palmarino como símbolo de resistência política e cultural”³⁰ could be utilized nationally (Rios, 2012, 55).

The organizing efforts of the Black Movement activists came to have concrete effects in the electoral realm of post-dictatorship Brazil. Along with the occupation of public spaces, there came to pass important theoretical pronouncements from the Black Movement. Part of these efforts was the emphasis on the ethic of quilombismo, articulated in the work of Abdias do Nascimento. Nascimento was one of the preeminent figures of the Black Movement during the military dictatorship and the founder of the Black Experimental Theatre (TEN). Exiled for part of the dictatorship’s reign, Nascimento divulged the struggle of Black Brazilians while at the

²⁷ Socio-historico-cultural reality

²⁸ Luiza Mahim was a Muslim slave and mother to Brazilian poet Luiz Gama. She took part in both the Malê Revolt of 1835 in Salvador, Bahia as well as the Sabinada Revolt in Bahia which took place from late 1837 through early 1838. Negro Cosme was a freed slave and quilombola leader in Maranhão during the early and mid 19th century.

²⁹ The renovation of the utopic energies of the black activists and the fortifying of collective identity anchored in the memories of slavery

³⁰ Of the palmarino warrior as a symbol of political and cultural resistance

same time linking their struggle to a broader global Black struggle. The discourse of racial democracy “developed and refined myriad techniques of preventing Black Brazilians from being able to identify and actively assume their ethnic, historical and cultural roots” argued Nascimento, noting that Black Brazilians were not taught to associate with or valorize any aspect of their African heritage (1980, 141-142). Far from only a struggle by those of African descent, Nascimento argues that quilombismo knows its struggle “cannot be separated from the mutual liberation of the indigenous peoples of these lands, who are also victims of the racism and wanton destructiveness introduced and enforced by the European colonists and their heirs” (1980, 148). Thus, like the quilombos founded in the 16th century and after, Nascimento’s articulation of quilombismo is contingent on the participation and defense of other groups that have been subjected to the violences of modernity. In short, it is a challenge to the effects of erasure in the modern epoch. Quilombismo is rooted in the “exigency for enslaved Africans...to recover their liberty and human dignity through escape from captivity, organizing viable free societies in Brazilian territory” as evidenced in the original quilombos, which “rapidly transformed from the improvisation of emergency into the methodical and constant life form of the African masses” (Nascimento, 1980, 151).

Like all radical Black movements, “Quilombismo is in a constant process of revitalization and remodernization, attending to the needs of the various historical times and geographical environments” (Nascimento, 1980, 153). This suggests that, while there are unique aspects to all iterations of quilombismo, common characteristics underpin them all. This common denominator is the “erection of a society founded on justice, equality and respect for all human beings; on freedom; a society whose intrinsic nature makes economic or racial exploitation impossible”—in short, “To assure the fullest human condition of the Afro-Brazilian

masses is the ethical grounding of Quilombismo, and its most basic concept” (Nascimento, 1980, 160; 162). These guiding principles of quilombismo informed the Brazilian Black Movement during and after the Brazilian military dictatorship.

The Brazilian Transition to “Democracy”

1985 marked the first time a civilian president had been elected in Brazil since 1964. A constituent assembly was convened during 1987. There were a number of delegates in the constituent assembly who were activists within the Black movement and who proposed that Black communities that could claim a lineage to quilombos should be granted titles to their land. The language of “remanescente do quilombos,” which connotes a past-tense and derivative form of existence, was the result of concessions that Black activists had to accept. The constituent assembly was unwilling to accept their initial demand that all rural Black communities be given land, and so they jointly settled on the language of quilombos being included in the new constitution (French, 2006, 341; do Rosário Linhares, 2004, 823). The fact that the Black Movement had fewer participants in the constituent assembly than did other marginalized communities may have been one contributing factor to their inability to secure explicit legislation for rural Black communities. Another contributing factor may have been the fact that there were no members of would-be quilombo communities on the constituent assembly (Fiabani, 2005, 360). What is evident, however, is that quilombo legislation was included in the constitution for the simple fact that those comprising the majority of the constituent assembly did not believe that there were many quilombo communities in existence, and that any titling could be handled in a relatively short amount of time (French, 2006, 355). The constituent assembly clearly did not see quilombos as immanent spatial arrangements. In this way, Brazilian society’s power brokers once again evidenced their understanding of Black Brazilians as a-spatial actors.

This legislation was nothing more than a formality for those writing the constitution, as they were unable to see Blacks in Brazil as active territorial subjects. Instead, they chose to frame the law as a nod to a spatial formation that they assumed was extinct, demonstrating the belief that quilombos were strictly things of the past (Arêda-Oshai 2015, 260). The constituent assembly viewed quilombos as erstwhile, vanquished spatial arrangements that had essentially no bearing on present-day Brazil. It was through their inclusion of this supposedly irrelevant spatial figure that quilombos came into the Brazilian constitution of 1988.

Quilombos were recognized as (potentially) legitimate political spaces in Article 68 of the Acts of Transitory Provisions in the Brazilian constitution. The article reads “Aos remanescentes das comunidades dos quilombos que estejam ocupando suas terras é reconhecida a propriedade definitiva, devendo o Estado emitir-lhes os títulos respectivos”³¹ (Brazilian Constitution Art. 68 ADCT). Quilombola legislation has been amended and changed over the years. In 1989 the Palmares Cultural Foundation was consolidated and “implicitly inherited the land issue of quilombo communities as a subject of its administration” (do Rosário Linhares, 2004, 827). The first three cases brought before the Foundation took place in the early 1990s with communities in Maranhão, Pará, and Bahia.³² The Foundation was officially given this authority by Provisional Measure No. 1.911-11 in October of 1999, which placed this titling ability within the Ministry of Culture. In 2001, then president Fernando Henrique Cardoso issued Decree 3.912, which purported to implement Article 68, but in reality made it more difficult for quilombos to become titled as it only recognized land that had been occupied by quilombos prior to abolition. Proving this land tenure required specific historical documents to

³¹ To the remnants of quilombo communities occupying their lands are recognized definitive ownership, the State shall grant them respective titles.

³² The case in Bahia is that of Rio das Rãs, to which I refer below.

which many quilombolas did not have access (Rapoport Delegation, 2008, 22-23). Because of this, from 1999-2003, while the Palmares Cultural Foundation handled the titling of quilombo territories, only fourteen communities were titled, while thirteen of those fourteen were titled between 1999 and 2000.

Quilombola Legislation Today

In 2003, Luis Inácio Lula da Silva of the Brazilian Workers' Party implemented an overhaul of quilombola legislation, creating the Secretaria Especial para Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial (www.SEPPIR.gov.br) which assumed the task of, among other things, creating a new decree on the quilombo titling process (Rapoport Delegation, 2008, 23). The result of SEPPIR's efforts was Decree 4.887, released on November 20, 2003. Among the measures introduced in the Decree was the ruling that quilombo communities would be characterized as such through self-definition; that this self-definition as a quilombo would be registered with the Palmares Cultural Foundation; that the National Institute of Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) would handle the identification, recognition, delimiting, demarcation, and titling of quilombo territories while regularizing such processes; and in the case of quilombo communities occupying the same location as areas of national security, borderlands, and/or indigenous lands, INCRA, the Brazilian Institute for Environment and Renewable Resources (IBAMA), the Executive Office of the National Defense Council, the National Indian Foundation, and the Palmares Cultural Foundation will take appropriate actions to guarantee the sustainability of the communities in question, while conciliating the interests of the State (Silva

et. Al 2003).³³ In addition to these factors, state aid is available to quilombos in the form of food aid and infrastructural assistance for things like sanitation, water, and electricity.

The tangible result of this Decree is a very long process through which quilombo communities must go in order to title their territories. There are seventeen different steps a community must go through, in all, to have its territory titled. These involve self-identification, a formal request by the community to the Regional Superintendent of INCRA to open administrative regularization procedures, the drafting of a technical report by INCRA which uses anthropological and historical data to delimit the community's territory, the potential objection by other actors affected by the titling of the land, and, if necessary, the expulsion of non-quilombo occupants (Rapoport Delegation, 2008, 24-25).³⁴ The legislation makes clear that the state has a central role in defining who becomes an "official" quilombo. As I show in the following section, this ultimately leads to the state attempting to manipulate quilombo territory into propagating capitalistic and sovereign assemblages.

Presently, there are 2,422 quilombo communities culturally recognized in Brazil. Of this total, 238 are territorially titled (www.SEPPIR.gov.br). The titling process implemented through Decree 4.887 has created a situation in which it is not only difficult for quilombos to get their land titled, but can also lead to them losing their traditional territorial practices. As the following section demonstrates, some of the difficulties that come with the territorial titling of quilombos

³³ This final point is particularly important with regard to the case of Rio dos Macacos, which I examine below.

³⁴ The entirety of the seventeen steps are as follows: 1.) Initiating the procedure through a written report 2.) Self-definition of the community 3.) Registration of the self-definition of the community with the Palmares Cultural Foundation 4.) Identification and delimitation of the territory by INCRA 5.) Production of the Relatório Técnico de Identificação e Delimitação (technical report, called the RTID) 6.) Publication of the summary of the RTID 7.) Contestations from outside parties 8.) Consultation with other federal agencies 9.) Judgment of the contestations to the RTID 10.) Publication of the definitive approval of the RTID, as well as of the recognition and declaration of the limits of the quilombo territory 11.) Analysis of the land situation 12.) Expropriation procedure 13.) Resettlement of non-quilombo occupants 14.) Demarcation of the legally constituted association 15.) Concession of the territorial title 16.) Registration of property by INCRA 17.) Registration of title.

are tied to Brazil's role in the global economy. By partaking of the trend of extractivism that currently prevails in Latin America, the Brazilian state continues to seek to dominate both the natural environment as well as those communities that depend on the environment for their survival and, in the process, enact further practices of erasure within Black communities, who remain treated as non-humans.

Chapter 3

The late 20th century saw a plethora of social unrest in Latin America. Protesting the neoliberal turn within many of their governments, the Latin American masses took to the streets and forests to register their discontent with the prevailing political, economic, and social regimes. More than simply critiquing the governments in power, many of these movements actively sought to create the conditions in which they hoped to live. The uprisings took place all over Latin America—creating “open rupture with the prevailing naked logic of neoliberalism” which “forced open a space for counterhegemonic forces and figures within each of these countries to take state power” (Reyes, 2012, 1). Brazil was no different in this regard as, following the fall of the military dictatorship, there occurred a struggle between “a liberal, free market, agro-mineral elite” and “a worker, peasant, rural worker and lower middle class nationalist bloc”, both of whom desired electoral power (Petras 2013). The elites’ victory meant the coming to power of Fernando Henrique Cardoso in the 1990s, which led to deregulation, privatization, and restructuring, and, subsequently, the end of the industrial working class (de Oliveira 2006, 5). On the heels of this neoliberal moment, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva and the Worker’s Party (PT) “came to office with the powerful backing of the trade unions, the MST, public sector unions and popular social movements” (Petras and Veltmeyer 2009, 23).

This new government “reintroduced the state as protagonist capable of intervening in the economic arena and responding to claims made by indigenous and afro-descendant communities for administrative autonomy” (Reyes, 2012, 9). In addition to this new focus on the marginalized sectors of society, this “progressive” government also ushered in a round of

redistribution regarding key sectors of the economy, such as mineral resource extraction.

Whereas past forms of extractivism meant the limited role of the state and a reliance on “the market” to regulate production and distribution, the new forms of extractivism see a much more active state, which seeks to mediate privatization in order to redirect the flow of wealth mentioned above. The state’s new role has meant a renewed focus on the Bay of Aratu as a site of national development, as the Port of Aratu and the Aratu Industrial Center continue to tie the region to the global economy, while the Brazilian navy remains rooted in the area as a protector of both establishments. This commitment to participating in and protecting Brazil’s prevailing relation to global capital has meant both an intensification of already existing forms of marginalization for the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu, as well as new kinds of oppression.

Extractivist Economies and Social Assistance

During Lula’s presidency, a number of social programs were put into place for the poor—a strategy Francisco de Oliveira terms “neo-populist” (2006, 19). In addition to raising the country’s minimum wage, increasing university funding, and pulling more than 20 million people out of poverty (Anderson 2011), projects like the Bolsa Familia were and are vital to the image of the PT and Lula’s legacy in Brazil. Reaching over 11 million families by 2006 and more than 12 million by 2011, the Bolsa Familia is a monthly payment given to poor families that can prove that their children have been going to school and are getting their health checked. This program has helped to paint the picture that “the state cares for the lot of every Brazilian, no matter how wretched or downtrodden, as citizens with social rights” (Anderson 2011). Unsurprisingly, these benefits must be paid for in some way, and Brazil funds their social programs through a dependence on extractivism.

The term “extractivism” comes from the fact that the national economies of Latin America continue a trend toward deindustrialization and a focus on the exportation of primary resources. The emphasis on primary materials means that the exporting “of minerals and petroleum is increasing its pace, and governments insist on framing it as the motor of economic growth” (Gudynas, 2010, 1). What is taking place in Latin America among these leftist governments is, in many ways, a continuation of older practices with a new veneer. While Brazil has the most diversified export structure in South America, with primary commodities accounting for 47-49% of exports (Petras and Veltmeyer 2009, 5), the impact this approach has had on the economy and the general populace is dubious at best. Considering the level of extraction of natural resources, minerals, petroleum-based products, and agro-fuels, Brazil is the biggest “extractivist” on the continent (Gudynas 2013, 2). In particular, iron and soy are central to Brazil’s exportation of primary products (Gudynas 2013, 3; Fearnside 2001). In addition to focusing on primary materials, Brazil has increasingly opened itself to foreign investment (Veltmeyer et al. 2014, 35) which has manifested in the foreign acquisition of “millions of acres of fertile lands, food processing plants, ethanol refineries and storage and shipping facilities” (Petras and Veltmeyer 2009, 23).

In the Bay of Aratu, Brazil’s involvement in the relations described above are evident. The Aratu Industrial Center fabricates commodities from the soy, iron, and petroleum extracted in the country (Secretaria de Desenvolvimento Economico 2016). The Port of Aratu sees the shipping of a number of primary materials and extracted resources, including aluminum, copper, coal, manganese, petroleum, ethanol, and propane (CODEBA 2016a). Moreover, companies from as far away as Norway, Italy, Singapore, the Marshall Islands, and Liberia ship to and from the Port of Aratu, while companies from the United States, like Ford and Dow Chemicals,

remain active in the area (CODEBA 2016b). Hence, we see why Reyes (2012) makes clear that this economic redistribution is not nationalization, as many who comment on the topic maintain, but rather a “renegotiation of the royalties due...from multinational corporations in proportion to the revenues gained through the production and sale of natural resources” (Reyes, 2012, 9).

This relation to globalized capital means that within Latin America there remains “a constant flow of surplus-value from the producers of peripheral products to the producers of core-like products” (Wallerstein 2004, 28). Peripheral products are primary resources, such as the ones Latin American countries have exploited in the extractivist economies mentioned above. Producers of core-like products are generally countries in the global north. In short, this core-periphery relation between Latin America and the global north has meant the continuation of global unequal exchange (Wallerstein, 2004, 28). A continued dependence on this form of production and flow of capital means a continued subordination of Brazil, its populations, and its natural resources, to the global economy—a relation which has essentially been in place since the days of colonization.

The production practices that constitute this extractivism necessitate a specific kind of territorial assemblage. Extractive economies often lead to what Gudynas calls “a process of geographic fragmentation” (2010, 5). This fragmentation is typified by the fact that, while within the zones of extraction “a strong state presence is felt, [the zones] are surrounded by broad ‘deterritorialized’ regions where the state can’t guarantee its presence in an adequate and homogeneous manner. For instance, there are limitations in the protection of the rights of citizens, health services, and the administration of justice” (ibid). Often, extraction takes place in areas where there are previously-existing (indigenous, campesino, quilombo, etc.) territories. This leads to the decreased protection and security of these communities and the increase in

violence perpetrated against the land and the populations living there. This violence takes the form of state actors, like the police or military, coming down on the communities, while it also entails the assault on populations through the destruction of the environment that is so necessary to their being. This is indeed the case in Brazil, where violence against indigenous groups went up 237% in 2012 (Petras 2013). The Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu experience a similar situation, in which sovereign state actors protect the interests of capital, while ignoring and actively oppressing the quilombo communities, whose territories are targeted by land grabs. In their particular case, the Brazilian navy is present in the area to protect the industries and shipping present in the Bay, all the while they terrorize and abuse Rio dos Macacos and Tororó, and offer no form of assistance to Ilha de Maré, despite the crisis occurring there.

Despite the perceived benefits of neo-extractivism, and the apparent benefits it affords Latin America, “this new extractivism maintains a style of development based on the appropriation of Nature” and “still repeats the negative environmental and social impacts of the old extractivism” (Gudynas, 2010, 1). In many ways, the extractivist approach in Brazil is a continuation of a colonial relation, as Black and indigenous groups are marginalized, displaced, and killed for the benefit of global capital, while the natural environment on which they depend is destroyed as part of capital accumulation. Ilha de Maré is routinely poisoned by the presence of shipping in the area, while Tororó and Rio dos Macacos are habitually displaced and abused for the continuation of modern-day primitive accumulation. These situations represent the persistence of a centuries-old practice of domination, inaugurated during the colonial epoch, yet they are justified in new ways in the context of present day Latin America.

If anything is new about the Brazilian and Latin American contexts, it is that marginalized populations seem to be in control, as they are the moral compass of the country, yet

these groups are actually being sacrificed to “unfettered exploitation” (de Oliveira 2006, 22), since global capital continues to dictate the use of natural resources and the displacement of Black, indigenous, and impoverished populations. In short, this is a new iteration of a familiar problem—the domination of the natural world and the continued precarity of those populations that depend on nature as a way of life. It is not sufficient, however, to focus solely on the economic realm regarding the effects of these progressive governments.

The continued domination of nature and the erasure of illegible subjectivities continues into the present in Brazil, as the natural environment is stripped of its resources through extractive industries and those populations deemed “Other” are erased as they try to prevent this devastation. The case of the Bay of Aratu shows how the specifics of such a situation play out. The Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu suffer new forms of anti-Black violence as a result of Brazil’s role in the global economy, as well as because of the continuation of the superfluosness of Black life in Brazil. The quilombos find themselves faced with the sovereign power of the Brazilian state and capital—power that seeks the quilombos’ erasure as part of the apparent necessity for centralizing sovereign influence. These registers of sovereignty manifest themselves in unique ways, yet what remains constant is the treatment of the quilombos as if they are empty spaces in need of the application of the societal norm. In this case, the norm is defined by the reification of state territorial integrity and the propagation of capital.

The Closed Nature of Sovereignty

The struggles and spatial articulations of the quilombos in the Bay of Aratu evidence the reality of multiple territories, territorialities, and unique subjectivities. This is, of course, completely contrary to the assemblages present in sovereign territory, where a central power—that who decides on the exception—precludes the possibility of other ways of understanding and

relating to space. In the case of the Bay of Aratu, the primary sovereign actor is the state, and more specifically the state organs imbued with the power to legally recognize territorial integrity. The state actors that enact the state's sovereign agenda in the Bay of Aratu are the navy and INCRA. Both of these organizations act in such a manner that reifies specific understandings and usages of space. Specifically, the uses are geared toward capitalist accumulation and the fortification of sovereign military presence, as both of these factors work to help solidify Brazil's position in the global economy and preserve of the functions of the meio técnico-científico. In enacting these practices, they preserve the centrality of the Brazilian state as a sovereign actor while propagating the accumulation of land and capital inherent to the productive practices of the private corporations in the Bay.

State Sovereignty

The Brazilian navy qua sovereign continues to pursue an explicit agenda of erasure with regards to Rio dos Macacos and Tororó through their emphasis on eliminating those practices which allow both communities autonomy. This destruction is seemingly necessitated due to the state's creation and expansion of the armed forces—itsself an articulation of sovereignty—and the ways in which this sovereign action collides with a set of alternative territorialities. The crops, rivers, houses, places of worship, and areas of food preparation that comprise Rio dos Macacos and Tororó remain affronts to the Brazilian navy's insistence on controlling the area as these components of the quilombos' territory do not, and never have, required state intervention to benefit the communities. Because both communities continue to defend their way of life and the physical components of their lived spaces, they have come under fire in the most literal sense of the word. In order to preserve and expand Brazil's role in the global political economic moment, the purveyors of Brazilian sovereignty have mobilized the sovereign right to violence with the

intention of removing obstacles to the continuation of capital accumulation in the Bay of Aratu. Those obstacles are the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu and their territorial praxes.

The brutal violence visited upon these communities—especially in the case of Rio dos Macacos—evidences the quilombos’ status as sites of exception that end up experiencing sovereign violence (Agamben 2005, 38-39). In these locations, assassination attempts, arson, and rape can take place with impunity. It occurs precisely for the fact that the Brazilian state neither respects nor recognizes the political and spatial being of the quilombolas. Rather, they treat these quilombo spaces as present-day zones of total war, where legally “empty” space must have sovereign power brought into application in order to enforce the “norm” of perpetuating global capital (Agamben 2005, 24-25). The Brazilian state, by destorying crops, preventing foraging, and essentially declaring war on these communities, has attempted to crush the alternative politics practiced in the quilombos. The state, true to sovereign form, is attempting to destroy alternate centers of power as there can be no challenge to sovereign power in modern spaces (Schmitt 2005, 6-7). This destruction is not a war against a recognized political entity, but rather an occupation of supposedly “empty” space. The state simply cannot allow unique territorial arrangements so close to its own territorial fortifications.¹

At the same time that the navy wages war against an assumed a-spatial, a-political antagonist, other state organs use a different approach to centralize power in the Bay of Aratu. The destruction of crops and the prevention of foraging are coupled with the extending of food aid and promise of development projects—both of which come from the state and make these communities increasingly dependent on the influence of outside actors. By finding ways to

¹This is not to suggest that alternative territories that find themselves at a geographical distance from sovereign fortifications would fare any better. The limitless accumulation of capitalism and its accompanying sovereign assemblages endlessly scour the world for new lands to appropriate.

make itself present within the quilombos, the state, under the auspices of goodwill and assistance, is attempting to reify its sovereignty by curtailing the autonomy of the communities. Along with the full assault against community subsistence, this “government assistance” serves to erode the autonomy of the communities. By making the communities dependent on state aid, the Brazilian government creates the conditions for dictating otherwise independent aspects of the quilombos’ existence.²

The role that INCRA plays in titling quilombo territory is another instance of the role of sovereignty in Brazil and the sovereign’s commitment to perpetuating capital. INCRA’s actions demonstrate the ways in which the Brazilian state only recognizes specific kinds of geographical understanding. By insisting that a state-sponsored team conduct the diagnostic that determines a quilombo’s territorial designation, the Brazilian state demonstrates the modern notion that there are only certain actors that are spatially competent. As such, spatially legitimate actors are needed to quantify and calculate the spaces present in these communities, as the quilombos are regarded as unable to adjudicate this on their own (Schmitt 2003, 132). In this case, the state is assumed to be the entity that not only understands, but also has control over, sovereign space and, thus, territory (Elden 2009, xxx). While it may seem, at first glance, that cultural recognition by the Palmares Foundation and the ultimate territorial recognition of a quilombo shows the state to be somehow cognizant of an alternative geography, what is really taking place is the state coopting the language of radical Blackness (in their use of the term “quilombo”) to manipulate and ultimately mutilate any radical, unique sense of space. As the case of Rio dos

² The Brazilian government has already engaged in this kind of relationship on a national level. Programs like the Bolsa Familia require families to meet government standards regarding the education and health of their children. While the Bolsa Familia has meant improved living conditions for many Brazilians all over the country, the fact that the government is able to dictate the behavior of populations based on distributing or withholding aid is an example of state control of its populace.

Macacos exhibits, territory is only legally recognized by the state insofar as it is state-defined and approved. Should the state's agenda be rejected, as is the case with Rio dos Macacos, a state of exception prevails. What it takes to become state approved involves deferring to state agendas. This would mean nothing short of the destruction of quilombola subjectivity, as state recognition entails the adoption of a legible modern politics, which is fundamentally opposed to valuing and protecting Black life.

State support and recognition of these communities arrives pending quilombo involvement—albeit sometimes indirect—with private capital. Central to the territorial recognition of quilombos is the state's insistence on introducing “development” projects and outside, capitalist influences into quilombos.³ In addition to this, the assistance programs which serve to destroy quilombo autonomy are intimately connected to the Brazilian government's state-backed extractivist role in the global economy. By offering things like food assistance to quilombos, the Brazilian state uses the wealth created through the destruction of the environments that constitute quilombo communities to assuage the effects of the poverty created in quilombos due to that destruction. Through extractive measures and the national redistribution of wealth based on profits from this extraction, the Brazilian government is able to implement programs that force quilombos like Rio dos Macacos to participate in economies that negatively influence their way of life, all the while projecting itself as a benevolent actor.

Sovereignty of Industry

The case of Ilha de Maré evidences the effects of sovereignty in a slightly different manner than does that of Rio dos Macacos. Rio dos Macacos exists as a unique territory that

³See Amorim and Germani (2005) to understand the ways in which the territorial recognition of Quilombo Rio das Rãs meant the implementation of development programs by the Banco do Brasil.

obstructs the expansion of sovereign territory, while also being subjected to social assistance programs that fortify global capital. Ilha de Maré, on the other hand, is shown to be an assumed a-political, a-spatial entity due to its direct contact with sites and relations of global private capital. Furthermore, the effects that global capital has had in Ilha de Maré serve to illuminate the state's complete non-recognition of the quilombo as a political site. Ilha de Maré, as a quilombo, is defined by its assertion that there is no separation between the community and the "natural world"—the environment in which the quilombo resides is one whole; not a separation between human and nature (see Chapter 4). Because this is a central component of the quilombo's politics and because development, progress, and modernization in Bahia and Brazil have meant the manipulation, destruction, and unalterable changes of the community's environment—the "chaos" described in Milton Santos' notion of the *meio técnico-científico* (1993, 16). Thus, the modern politics of the state and private industry have meant a fundamental antagonism with the quilombolas. This antagonism is not registered as a political confrontation in the eyes of the State, however. If it is the sovereign who decides on the exception (Schmitt 2005), then it is within the sovereign state's ability to declare a crisis and acknowledge that the case of Ilha de Maré requires emergency action. It abstains from doing so because such a move would more than likely jeopardize the continuance of capital circulation taking place in the Port of Aratu. This exemplifies the modern sovereign state's role in propagating the prevailing economic order and, ultimately, the state's deference to the dictates of global capital (Hardt and Negri 2000). In this case, the norm is clearly punctuated by the continuation of capital and commodity circulation. Sovereign power, therefore, remains concerned with protecting that circulation in the form of ensuring that the Port of Aratu stays functional.

The assumed a-political nature—and subsequent a-spatiality—of the Black is evidenced in the pronunciations of the members of Ilha de Maré, who constantly articulate the fact that their plight is invisible to the government and the companies responsible for the explosion in the Bay of Aratu. I heard the quilombolas state countless times, “é como a gente não existesse,”⁴ when commenting on the ways they are treated by the government. Through ignoring the ways in which industry has essentially assaulted the being of Ilha de Maré through its destruction of their environment, the government is demonstrating its role in the continuation of treating Black populations as a-spatial and a-political objects. With no meaningful action or statement being made in this situation, both the Federal and State governments comport themselves as if nothing happened—it truly does appear as if Ilha de Maré were inexistent. The community’s reliance on their environment as a purveyor of their way of life is effectively ignored by both industry and the state.

The environmental degradation wrought by the explosion in 2013 and the presence of the petroleum refinery and companies like Ford, M. Dias Branco, and Dow are part of the cost of doing business in the area. It would, seemingly, be impossible for the capitalist growth of these companies to take place without such degradation occurring in unison, as these negative factors have accompanied the presence of industry in the Bay since industrial and shipping interests arrived there. The violation of the environment where these development practices take place has meant, in essence, the violation of the subjectivities of the quilombolas. The fundamental linkages between “necessary” capitalist accumulation and the destruction of the quilombola way of life make evident the ethic of erasure inherent in modernity. Instead of understanding the destruction of a quilombo community as a crisis, state actors facilitate the functions of the Port of

⁴ It’s like we don’t exist

Aratu. Using sovereign power to facilitate the continuation of capital circulation and not invoking the sovereign power of naming a crisis regarding a struggling community are inherently linked. On the one hand, the state's refusal to acknowledge the situation in Ilha de Maré as affecting political subjects, all the while it lends its power to actions which continue to oppress the community, demonstrates the quilombo existing in a zone of non-being vis-à-vis the sovereign state. On the other hand, the prevention of business at the Port of Aratu signals an exception in need of state intervention.

The destruction of Ilha de Maré is not an exception but rather the norm, as the state-backed continuation of shipping in the Bay of Aratu represents the legitimate occupation and use of an otherwise empty space. This example speaks directly to Eduardo Gudynas' (2010) description of the deterritorialization present in the extractivist economies of Latin America. The protection of extractive measures—or in this case in the refining and transportation of those extracted resources—is treated as a more important process than the protection of the communities who suffer from this method of production. It is because of this that the military police were mobilized to try and free the road to the Port of Aratu during the quilombo's February, 2014 protest and blockading of the Port, while the state and federal governments could not be bothered to address the effects the oil spill has had on the community (see Chapter 4). To the state, the blocking of the Port of Aratu was a reason to declare a crisis in need of sovereign intervention; the poisoning of the quilombo's environment, however, is not a crisis.

Tororó, as previously mentioned, essentially finds itself simultaneously facing the registers of oppression experienced in Rio dos Macacos and Ilha de Maré. This quilombo stands in the way of the expansion of the sovereign state's military, while it also exists as an environment in need of appropriation for the continuation of global capitalist accumulation.

Tororó faces the expansionary forces of the Brazilian navy at the same time it experiences the destruction of its environment. These effects lead to the actualization of a variety of forms of death in the quilombos.

Social Death

When the quilombos in the Bay of Aratu describe their communities as dying and claim that the Brazilian state and businesses want them dead, they are speaking of the concept of death in several manners. On the one hand, they are threatened with premature physical death (Gilmore 2002). This comes in a myriad of forms—sicknesses from pollution and environmental poisoning; assassination attempts; and expulsion from their traditional territory, resulting in exposure to the hyper violence of the urban areas of Salvador. However, the premature ending of life is not the only specter of death that haunts the three communities profiled here. The perpetual assault on the quilombos' way of life is another form of death that is forced upon the communities. This perpetual assault is a reality precisely because of the assumption of Black non-being and, hence, the ability to treat the quilombolas as if there is no life to mark in the first place (Wilderson 2010, 38). The devastation that attends this condition extends beyond individual death.

When the quilombolas state that their mangrove is dying; that their natural environment is being poisoned; that the mangrove mud is making them sick; that their traditional fishing grounds are being devastated; that the mussels and oysters have disappeared from their shores, they are acknowledging death in their community. Their existence is fundamentally tied up with their environment. To exist as quilombolas means that the rivers, trees, mangroves, mango trees, and fields of crops constitute a central aspect of their being. This is evidenced, in part, in the Movimento de Pescadores e Pescadoras' battle cry: "No rio, no mar: Pescador na luta! Nos

açudes, nas barragens: Pescando Liberdade! Agronegócios: Resistir! As cercas nas águas: Derrubar!”⁵ These statements demonstrate that the sea, rivers, and water signify freedom for them. Their subjectivity as quilombolas, rooted in an autonomous existence, unique understanding of the world, and constitutive of a territoriality (relation to territory) wholly other to that of the modern praxis espoused by the Brazilian state and private businesses, is under attack—is essentially dying under the assaults they experience daily. When speaking out against these realities, they are calling attention to the assault on the “other world” in which they live. This “other world” is typified by a territoriality—or relation to territory—that entails power relations unique to the modern world. These power relations involve the ascription of specific social meanings and relations to the physical environment and to those that comprise the territoriality in question (Delaney 2005; Raffestin 2012). In particular, the notion of the human and natural environment as a single entity and the refusal to perpetuate relations of non-being define the territoriality of the quilombolas from the Bay of Aratu, as does the commitment to constantly innovating the practices that bring these defining relations into being.

The actions and inactions of the Brazilian state and the private corporations present in the Bay of Aratu have led to a state of chaos for the quilombos residing there. While the quilombolas are very clear in assessing their relation to the environment—stating that their communities and the environment are joined together as a single entity, the modern commitment to dominating nature crashes violently with the quilombos’ traditional way of being in the world. Modernity necessitates the privileging of a specific human relation to space and the perceived natural environment. Space (and, more specifically, land) is to be quantified and calculated

⁵ The MPP is a national coalition of fisherpeople that struggle for the defense and recognition of artisanal fishing communities. The Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu are all active in the organization. Their cry means: “In the river, in the sea: Fisherman in the struggle! In the weirs, in the dams: Fishing freedom! Agribusiness: Resisting! Fences in the waters: Tearing down!”

(Elden 2009, xxvi), while nature is to be understood, dominated, and subordinated to the agenda of the (Hu)Man (Wynter 1976, 81). Today, this relation is typified by territorial integration based on science and technique, which is precisely what the Port of Aratu signifies through its linking industry and transportation to modern territories (Santos 1993). Furthermore, the ends toward which this territorial integration works is the position of an extractivist economy. At the same time that the Port of Aratu signals Brazil's continued commitment to a rational existence through "development" and Bahia's desire to contribute to Brazil's drive for civilization, the genocidal effects of these commitments on the Black populations in Bahia is clear.

The ending of individual lives is unquestionably a part of the violence that modernity and its practitioners understand as central to rational spatial practice. In this case, actively ending lives that adhere to an anti-capitalist, non-sovereign politics has the goal of preserving sovereign power and the unending practice of capitalist accumulation. However, the ending of a collective life, rooted in a connection to, and immersion within, the surrounding world—a connection that signifies nothing less than a holistic, human-environment sense of being—forms a fundamental part of modernity's self-perpetuating agenda, too. What links the need to end these two forms of life—individual and collective—is the assumed non-being and illegibility of these lives. Put another way, neither form of life—whether it be the figure of the individual Black person or the collective Black life of the quilombo—is recognized as a viable way of being in the world, and as such does not elicit acknowledgement from modern actors as being politically or spatially existent. Two factors converge to prevent the quilombolas of Aratu from being seen as beings by the Brazilian state and its capitalist contemporaries: The inheritance of an assumed relation to non-being, which is present among all Afro-descendant populations; and a territorial praxis that runs contrary to modern notions of sovereignty and dominating nature.

The fact that the majority of the quilombos profiled here are of African descent means that they are already viewed as having a close relation to a legacy of assumed non-being, a reality that is further evidenced in the violence experienced by the general populace of Salvador. This is because, globally, Black populations' "physical difference marks them as aberrational, offensive, [and] threatening" and thus leads to the Black as a phobic object (James 1996, 25). Even in Brazil, where the discourse and practice of racial democracy opens up the potential for those of African descent to move closer to political recognition via a commitment to anti-Blackness, the African-descendant populations remain heavily scrutinized and held to strict standards of behavior in order to prove their assumed being (Hordge-Freeman 2015). In addition to this, prevailing modern modes of governance and production refuse to acknowledge the quilombola subjectivity as a legitimate one.

The state's unwillingness to allow Rio dos Macacos and Tororó to continue their traditional ways of life amidst the land controlled by the navy reflects the state acknowledgement that an existence unique to the sovereign state takes place in the quilombos. In addition to this, the quilombos remain openly tied to a socio-spatial practice that is dependent on the environment such that quilombola life and the environment are seen as one in the same. From an abstract perspective this runs contrary to modern notions of being, as the modern human being remains committed to the subordination and domination of nature, with immediate human benefit—in this case understood through continued capital accumulation—as the ultimate ends. From an empirical perspective in Bahia, the quilombolas' way of life runs contrary to modern notions of development in that it is predicated on the preservation and respect of the environment.

This way of life is certainly unlike modern practices of administering the Bay of Aratu, as the presence of the numerous companies in the Bay and the Port of Aratu have meant nothing

short of the complete exploitation and abuse of the environment there. The arrival of the Port and the companies was seen as necessary for the development of the Bay of Aratu and the state of Bahia, in general and continues to be important for Brazil's role as an extractive economy. This necessity has led to the destruction of a way of life, which is fundamentally dependent on the persistence of the natural variety found in the Bay. To put it bluntly, the preservation and propagation of capitalist development in the Bay of Aratu is mutually exclusive to the continuation of the quilombolas' way of life. The state commitment to protecting the Bay of Aratu's current role in capitalist accumulation means that they see the quilombo way of life as in need of erasure. The endless accumulation necessary for the continuation of capitalism means that the quilombos' territorialities—or their physical presence in, and relation to, their territory—must be wiped out.

From a collective standpoint, the practices that define these quilombo territories run contrary to what is deemed as necessary for the propagation of modern governance and capitalist accumulation. The fact that the quilombos seek to remain autonomous, both in their own self-governance, as well as in the realm of production and self-administration, represents a threat to the internal, sovereign coherence of the Brazilian state. In sovereign governance, there is no room for a check to the power of the sovereign. As such, the fact that the quilombos seek to preserve their independence from the influence of the state represents a reality that the modern state cannot allow to be, as this form of politics eschews a singular, sovereign power source. This reality is made clear in the actions of the sovereign actors in the Bay of Aratu and the quilombos' attendant critiques.

Political Legibility and the Persistence of Slave Status

The societal assumption of the non-being of the Black is revealed in the numerous statements made by the quilombolas about their slave status. When the eldest resident of Rio dos Macacos labels her time working for the navy as “tempo perdido,”⁶ she names the a-spatial, a-temporal condition which the purveyors of modern-day slavery try to force on her (Wilderson 2010, 279). Her relation to the navy is one in which the navy does not recognize her time spent laboring for them nor the life that the community has created in quilombola territory. In addition to the elder’s assertion of lost time, the repeated statements by the leaders of Rio dos Macacos and Ilha de Maré that the senzala, tronco, corrente, chicote, and capitão de mato⁷ still exist in Salvador clearly shows how relevant the continuation of slavery in the present is for the quilombos. The violation, murder, and persecution of the Black (individual and collective) body represented in the objects and spaces named above is clearly still at hand in the quilombos’ interactions with the Brazilian state and the various companies present in the Bay of Aratu. Drawing on these very devastating aspects of slave society to define the present leaves no doubt that the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu understand their current existence to be punctuated by the condition of non-being forced on the Black Slave.

Further understanding of the zone of non-being is explained cogently by a young woman who spoke at Rio dos Macacos’ May, 2014 public audience. The tears and cries of the community, she said, did not convince the government. This is the reality of all of the quilombos in the Bay of Aratu, and a hallmark of radical Black geographies, as a whole. The grammars of

⁶ Lost time

⁷ These objects are, respectively, the slave quarters, whipping trunk, chain, whip, and slave catcher. These objects are often used by the quilombos to describe their condition in Bahia.

suffering (Wilderson 2010) present in these instances fall on deaf ears, as the Brazilian state, and the purveyors of “progress” are unable to comprehend the essence of quilombismo. What is being destroyed by the Brazilian navy, the Port of Aratu, the corporations in the Bay of Aratu—in short, by the “rational” actors present in the Bay—is a way of life that receives no recognition from those destructive actors because understanding the suffering caused by that violence is alien to the supposedly “modern” subjects that commit it. The grammar of suffering of the communities in question is underpinned by the assumption that there is no political or spatial capacity present within these populations. The violence present here is not even understood as violence. Rather, it is defended as the nature of human progress. As Sadiya Hartman explains, “Incidental death occurs when life has no normative value, when no humans are involved, when the population is, in effect, seen as already dead” (2007, 31). The storm of Progress in Bahia continues to propel the modern (Hu)Man’s existence into the future, wreaking devastation in the process (Benjamin 1986, 257-258). The Black, the inheritor of a relation of accumulation and fungibility, is always already seen as linked to the a-political and a-spatial and thus experiences this devastation precisely because it is not seen as political life in the first place.

While Brazilianness has allowed the discursive possibility for populations of African descent to shift towards a rational existence, those that eschew the politico-spatial parameters laid out by modernity’s truths remain in the position of *les damnés*. To continue to espouse practices deemed irrational—interacting with the environment in a non-dominating manner; practicing collective governance; privileging anti-capitalist modes of production; and, ultimately, to refuse a politics that preserves the zone of non-being—means to continue to exist in an a-spatial, a-political relation to society. This is the continuation of the idea of “empty space” inaugurated during European colonialism (Galli 2010). In short, Brazilian purveyors of

modernity continue to see this existence as evidence of the presence of the a-spatial, fungible, accumulated Slave. Clearly, these communities know that this assumed a-spatiality is a violation of their viable political and spatial integrity. Their existence is underpinned by an astute geopolitical analysis and clear territorial praxis. However, discursively appealing to the rational logic of the state and private enterprises through the language of quilombismo is akin to articulating a non-language. Simply speaking on this issue—trying to explain the meaning of it—is impossible because there is no analogous experience to which the oppressor can refer. Still, because of the explicit insistence on defending their way of life, the quilombos' antagonists have responded by drawing on the language of quilombismo and recasting it in ways that make Black claims to space legible to modern actors.

Demanding Visibility

Quilombola legislation was put into place as a result of the demands of the Black Movement, who, through civil disobedience and protests, brought the political and territorial demands of Black Brazil to the national stage. Still, this legislation was proof of the structural violence to which Black Brazilians remain subjected. This legislation was included for the simple fact that those drafting the constitution did not believe there to be a significant number of communities that would claim to be related to quilombos. In this way, the legislation and the circumstances surrounding it are further evidence of the assumed a-spatiality of the Black in Brazil. Whereas the historical presence and contemporary existence of indigenous groups is acknowledged in the national discourse,⁸ quilombos seemed a non-existent spatial figure—

⁸ This is at least partially evidenced in the fact that, while quilombo legislation is included as a *transitory* article in the Brazilian constitution (signifying eventual legislative obsolescence), Chapter 8, Article 231 of the 1988 Constitution acknowledges the recognition of indigenous social organizations, customs, languages, creeds, traditions, and land rights (Brazilian Constitution). As a part of the official text, this legislation includes indigenous rights as a lasting component of the 1988 Constitution.

something from the folklore of the past (Farfán-Santos 2015, 112; 117). The communities that eventually came out as quilombos were, for socio-political purposes, invisible and not present. As such, when thousands of communities claimed to be quilombos, the Brazilian state was faced with a situation that seemed impossible: the potential for legally recognized, possibly semi-autonomous Black territories cropping up across the national landscape. This presented a challenge to the necessary land appropriation fundamental to the capitalist mode of production and to the concentration of political power in the state. The Brazilian state had, in a manner of speaking, discursively produced the conditions for a crisis, in that it had acknowledged the possibility of a radical Black geography in the present moment—this despite its assumption that no such spatial reality was still in place. To solve this crisis, the state has resorted to a policy of inaction and, when active, coercion.

It is no mistake that ninety percent of the culturally certified quilombos remain territorially untitled, nor is it a mistake that communities like Rio dos Macacos remain in the precarious position of losing the land necessary for its territorial praxis, should it accept government titling. The state has addressed the quandary introduced by the Black Movement's unexpected influence on the Brazilian constitution by finding ways to make sure that potentially radical territorialities are folded back into the state as legible geographies. These legible geographies are those which contribute to capital accumulation or the reinforcement of sovereign governance. In this way, Brazilian society persists in its efforts to erase those radical becomings that sprout from the crevices of power (McKittrick 2006, 43). Whether it comes in the form of the *capitães de mato* of the colonial era, the espousal of the ideology of racial democracy, the cynical renderings of the 1988 Constitution, or the intimidation and delay tactics of the current government, Brazil remains focused on perpetrating genocidal violence against the potential for

Black radical being. One of the central tactics used for solving the conundrum of the 1988 constitution and the threat of a radical Black Geography is that of coopting and transforming the concept of the quilombo and essentially re-defining what it means to be a quilombola in Brazil.

State Cooptation of “Quilombos”

The Brazilian state unwittingly introduced a fundamental contradiction into its 1988 constitution, by providing for the potential of a multitude of autonomous territories in the country. Because of this, significant measures have been taken to ensure that the territorial titling resultant from Article 68 ADCT *contributes* to the persistence of global capital accumulation and the preservation of certain aspects of state sovereignty, and does not detract from either. The Brazilian state seeks to achieve this through a monopoly on how a quilombo is defined.⁹ By drawing on the language of radical Black struggle, the state appears to be acknowledging the uniqueness of Black Geographies, while at the same time seeking to undermine any potential for autonomous existences.¹⁰ I take the case of Rio dos Macacos to show the ways in which the Brazilian state employs a “neoliberal multiculturalism” to colonize the language of radical Blackness in an attempt to destroy radical Black territorialities. The language of quilombismo and the resurrection of the spatial figure of the quilombo has served to unite thousands of Black Brazilian communities in a common struggle against the various violent expressions of Brazilian society. A central part of this struggle is the claim for territory. As I show in the following chapter on the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu, quilombismo (an

⁹ For a discussion on the ways in which the appropriation of signification reflects the essence of a society, see Gyorgy Markus’ (1993) article “Culturs” in *Dialectical Anthropology* 18. Markus demonstrates the ways in which the word “culture,” while maintaining aspects of its original signification through the years, ultimately takes on entirely new meanings based on the ideas of truth and being present in the societies that adopt the term.

¹⁰ For a discussion on the utilization of a word’s significance for a political ends, see Erich Auerbach’s chapter “Figura” in *Scenes From the Drama of European Literature* (1984).

iteration of marronage) as an ethic recognizes the political viability of myriad territorial expressions. In short, quilombos give rise to an open subjectivity; a subjectivity that accompanies various territorial permutations (Theodoro et al. 2015, 226). The role that sovereignty plays in modern practices of politics and territory, however, dictates that this open subjectivity remain nullified. Modern territory remains understood as bounded, closed, and under the control of a sovereign actor that completely “understands” and dominates the physical environment with which it comes into contact (Elden 2009; Schmitt 2005). It is the subordination of non-sovereign space to sovereign power that the Brazilian state seeks to achieve through its current relation to Brazil’s quilombola movement.

Given the violent history of colonial and state militaries regarding quilombo communities and the reality that attention to those historical facts is nationally prevalent, the state cannot enact present-day quilombo subordination through widescale military campaigns or wars of destruction (although the cases of Rio dos Macacos, Alcântara in Maranhão, and Marambaia in Rio de Janeiro certainly seem to be similar to past practices).¹¹ Similarly, an all out discursive assault on quilombos, given the increasing connectivity among quilombo communities around the country would run the risk of further uniting these populations against the explicit racism of Brazilian society. Instead, the Brazilian state chooses to employ what Stefano Harney and Fred Moten call “governance”, that is, the cultivation of politics that can be turned into labor-power (Harney and Moten 2013, 54).

¹¹ In the late 1980s, Quilombo Alcântara experienced a number of expulsions and threats to their autonomy from the Alcântara Launch Center (CLA), which is part of the Brazilian Aeronautic Command (<http://www.cpisp.org.br/comunidades>). Quilombo Marambaia, located on an island in Rio de Janeiro, found itself in conflict with the Brazilian navy beginning in the 1970s and 1980s. Like Rio dos Macacos, the quilombolas of Marambaia were prevented from accessing public services and blocked from their foraging and subsistence practices (<http://www.cpisp.org.br/comunidades>). The cases of Alcântara and Marambaia are both notorious for the violence that the quilombolas there experienced.

The Brazilian state, through professing to officially recognize and include quilombo communities as part of Brazilian society, “drills” into the political existences of autonomous Black communities as part of its state “responsibility” as a sovereign, territorial actor. The state apparatus nominally seeks to bring order and sense to these quilombo communities through its exclusive ability and right to understand and delimit quilombo territories. Of course, this is not to suggest that it is only the state that stands to benefit from this arrangement. As shown above, the Brazilian state’s connection to national and international capital is a central part of this governance. Nonetheless, it is through state organs that this “drilling” takes place, and it is the “gregariousness” of Brazil’s quilombos that serves as the impetus for such drilling (Harney and Moten 2013, 56). By engaging the state with claims of quilombo status and territorial demands (being “gregarious”), these communities open up the possibility of the state dividing their territory and introducing measures and arrangements that reproduce capitalist relations (“drilling”).

The extent to which the quilombo movement would grip Brazil with its territorial claims was clearly never anticipated by the country’s constituent assembly in the late 1980s. The thousands of (official) territorial claims made by quilombo communities across the country signal the potential for veritable land reform in Brazil, as these autonomous groups attempt to preserve their territoriality by appealing to the quilombo identity. This quilombo identity, however, is understood and reified in different ways by the Brazilian state when compared to the quilombo movement itself. In order to propagate the accumulation of capital and fortify certain aspects of state sovereignty, the Brazilian state has turned to a policy of neoliberal multiculturalism. Neoliberal multiculturalism, according to Charles Hale, “includes the limited recognition of cultural rights, the strengthening of civil society, and endorsement of the principle

of intercultural equality”, such that, when these measures are merged with neoliberal economic policies, they can lead to “a deepened state capacity to shape and neutralize political opposition” (2005, 10). In Brazil, the federal government used quilombos as a means for “greater visibility and political capital” by incorporating and synthesizing “ethnic pluralism” in a way that evidences “a multiethnic country [with] the state as the manager of this diversity” (Leite 2012, 257). By bringing together discourses on ethnic and racial equality with a political economic approach that seeks to make spaces useful for capital accumulation, the Brazilian state employs a neoliberal multicultural approach to the quilombola question in Brazil.

The case of quilombo legislation is interesting in that it was not born of an overt attempt to capture autonomous communities in the folds of neoliberalism or the state—the legislation was implemented as a compromise for the Black Movement and a result of the state’s belief in the non-existence of Black geographies in Brazil. Still, the implementation of the territorial recognition of quilombos has lent itself to several of the factors mentioned above in Hale’s definition. The inclusion of quilombo and indigenous communities in the 1988 constitution continues Brazil’s long history of professed multiracial tolerance. This approach to inclusion is slightly different than the stated nature of racial democracy, which sought to evidence racial harmony through miscegenation. Today, Brazil continues to define itself as an inclusive society by nominally granting groups like quilombolas and indigenous groups cultural and territorial recognition, thereby demonstrating its commitment as a nation to promoting its national differences. Upon closer examination, however, it becomes clear that the Brazilian state is using the language of inclusion and multiculturalism to further an agenda of capital accumulation and circulation at the same time that it enervates quilombo communities’ ability to reproduce their lives as autonomous communities. In reality, then, quilombo legislation continues the practices

of land expropriation and control and the precarious nature of Black Brazilians (Leite 2008, 965). The case of Rio dos Macacos stands out as a prime example of this fact.

The Nature of Quilombismo

The situation in which Rio dos Macacos currently finds itself essentially amounts to INCRA stating that, in order to receive territorial recognition, they accede to the joint exigencies of the Brazilian navy and INCRA, itself, which demand that Rio dos Macacos give up nearly two thirds of its current landholdings and allow the state to implement “development” projects on the land that is left to the community. The quilombolas have been very clear that to go this route would effectively mean the end of their life as a quilombo community. Accepting the government’s reduction of their land would mean an immediate inability to plant crops, no access to water sources, and the unfeasibility of allowing previously expelled quilombolas to return. In other words, crucial factors that make Rio dos Macacos identify as a quilombo would no longer be possible if the community were to accept the standing government land proposal. Despite the fact that INCRA’s current proposal promises the erasure of Rio dos Macacos’ quilombola subjectivity, the legalese of the territorial certification would cite a process in which the Brazilian government is acknowledging the existence of a community that is culturally and spatially unique in the Brazilian landscape. Were the Brazilian government successful in getting Rio dos Macacos to acquiesce to their demands, their effective use of the language and practices of multiculturalism would assist capital accumulation on two fronts.

First, it would strengthen the Brazilian navy’s presence in the area, as the land they would acquire from Rio dos Macacos would be used for the navy’s benefit—either to expand the naval villa, or for the training of naval troops. The navy’s presence in the Bay of Aratu, as stated on their website, is a strategically important one, as it is near an area of “desenvolvimento

industrial”¹² (www.marinha.mil.br/). The various factories, thermoelectric plant, oil refinery, and port located in the Bay could all be considered part of an industrial assemblage, as they all serve different functions for industrial capital. Hence, the expansion of naval power in the area means further protection for these various national and multinational corporations represented in the Bay of Aratu. Secondly, the success of this multicultural legislation for the government would mean the imposition of “development” projects in Rio dos Macacos’ land. While INCRA has not, to my knowledge, stated the nature of these development projects, the implication of discourses of development suggest an attempt at introducing some aspect of capitalist production into the community.¹³

Rio dos Macacos, through its demand that the government recognize its territory, has found itself in a situation in which the government seeks to take advantage of this “gregariousness” by turning quilombola politics into labor power (Harney and Moten 2013, 54). That is, quilombola politics are turned into a process that can be employed to create surplus value. Surplus value can be created either directly through the proposed development projects or indirectly through the strengthening of the Brazilian navy. By placing its actions in the context of multicultural acceptance, the Brazilian state is seeking to further certain aspects of its own sovereign territorial control and promote the accumulation and circulation of capital, at the same time that it completely destroys the ability for Rio dos Macacos to maintain its autonomous existence and lauds itself as a tolerant, progressive entity. The Brazilian state’s ability to capture

¹² Industrial development

¹³ Again, the case of Quilombo Rio das Rãs—also located in Bahia—shows one of the ways in which the “development” of a territorially certified quilombo rarely benefits the quilombo, itself. The cattle forced on Rio das Rãs by the Bank of Brazil required the community to finance its production practices in unprecedented ways.

an otherwise autonomous space and use an aspect of its struggle to further pursue a rational existence is, in part, a result of struggles over signification.

Neoliberal multiculturalism is, obviously, based on the state's ability to engage a conversation about its acceptance of at least some culturally variant sectors of its populace (Hale 2005). In the case of Brazilian quilombos, the state found itself at an impasse, as quilombo settlements were and are, above all, spatial entities. In order to address the situation in a way that would at once acknowledge the spatial aspect of quilombos while also allowing the state to realize its commitment to capital and preserving the necessary aspects of its own sovereignty, the state apparatus had to create spatial arrangements that were amenable to its sovereign obligations. To establish these spatial arrangements, the Brazilian state has asserted itself as the only entity able to name and understand space. "Quilombos," legally, have become the sole purview of the state, such that state organs name quilombos both culturally and territorially. Attempting to hold a monopoly on identifying quilombos has meant that the Brazilian state has tried to effectively redefine the quilombo as a spatial unit, as is evidenced in the case of Rio dos Macacos.

By not recognizing quilombos as spatial actors per quilombo claims and practices, and insisting on having the last word on legal territorial recognition, the state conserves its position as the entity with the power to territorially name and delimit (Delaney 1998, 13). Furthermore, because territorial recognition of quilombos remains based on the translation of quilombo practices into the language of modern, "rational" actors (those anthropologists and technical actors who detail their findings to INCRA), the Brazilian state continues the modern practice of assuming the exclusive possibility of truly understanding the land and its proper usages. By applying this approach to the spatial concept of a quilombo, the Brazilian state is attempting to

re-create the quilombo as a spatial entity that is the sole purview of the state. This signals the state's attempt to create a condition in which Black struggle serves the purpose of consolidating mechanisms of modernity, most obviously including sovereign power, capital accumulation, and subordinating nature for the uses of the (Hu)Man. This approach signals a shift in Brazilian society and governance.

Enforcing a Conservative Black Geography

No longer focused solely on the physical killing of radical Black actors (although this does certainly still occur), the Brazil of today has become part of a regime that seeks to reproduce itself through the capture, appropriation, and subordination of radical elements with the ends of creating an inescapable societal arrangement. Unable to erase radical Black subjectivity through projects like the ideology of racial democracy, the Brazilian champions of modernity have attempted to create a situation in which any articulation of a Black Geography be a conservative Black Geography. In an attempt to forestall this radical Black analysis from becoming radical Black action, the Brazilian state encourages Black Geographies—as geographies that acknowledge the legacy of non-being and seek to remove address the effects of the nonbeing—that reinforce modern notions of sovereignty and progress. By allowing quilombo communities to claim territory and then seeking to manipulate that territory for practices appropriate to sovereign, capitalistic reproduction, the Brazilian state acknowledges Black attempts to ameliorate the violences they continue to face at the same time the state seeks to set the possibilities for the resultant Black territorial expressions. I term this a “conservative” Black Geography because it draws on the Black desire to end the condition of non-being by using the exact same mechanisms—sovereignty and exclusive understandings and demarcations of space and politics—that establish the zone of non-being in the first place. State involvement,

therefore, creates geographies that openly acknowledge the violence Blacks face in society, yet continue to reify political and spatial violence against those same populations.

The state cooptation of the language of Radical Black politics is significant in that it is part of the sovereign attempt to dictate the conditions under which Black populations live. Given the climate of urban life in Salvador, the ceding of control over one's life as a quilombola could have devastating effects, as the expressions of sovereignty outside the quilombos entail distinct, yet equally destructive forms of anti-Black violence.

Anti-Black Violences of Bahia

While the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu face the deleterious effects of Brazil's "progressive" government and its extractivist policies, Salvador, itself, remains a site of gratuitous violence for Afro-descendant peoples. This violence takes form in many ways. Specifically, I discuss the prevailing economic practices mentioned above, in the seemingly arbitrary premature ending of life Black populations experience globally, and through the marginalization of Black women. Blacks in the Salvador metropolitan area continue to face the death-dealing violence that typifies the modern American nation-state (Smith 2015, 384). This "geography of death in Brazil has everything to do with transnational necropolitics" which targets Black bodies as sites of violation and death (Smith 2013, 177). Urban Salvador remains a site where "There is a breakdown between legal, written inclusion and state practice of national inclusion. The evidence for this is the indiscriminate manner by which black people are killed, beaten, tortured, and violated by the state with impunity" (Smith 2015, 385). In Bahia I split my time between the quilombo communities and an urban favela, where I had an apartment. My experiences living in the favela inform this section of the dissertation. As a person of African descent, I often found myself accepted in the quotidian spaces of Salvador. That is to say, I was

not viewed as aberrant or out of place in the city, given my appearance and linguistic abilities. As a result, the quotidian violence of Salvador, as manifested in the actions of police officers and drug dealers were often carried out in front of me, as if I were just another Brazilian that is accustomed to such behavior. It seemed to me that the perpetrators of this violence often did not think twice about my presence, as I do not “stick out” as American. As a result, I was witness to different forms of anti-Black violence in Salvador. In addition to this, the fact that I lived in a favela gave me insight into how impoverished populations live in the city—a fact that informs my understanding of labor exploitation and violence in Salvador. This section demonstrates how anti-Blackness manifests itself in the everyday practices of life in Salvador. It is precisely against these entrenched oppressions that the quilombos struggle.

Sovereign Violence in the City

The common wisdom in Salvador is that one is probably more likely to be killed by a police officer than by a drug trafficker. In many ways, the state-sanctioned military police and the armed portions of trafficking groups are both expressions of sovereignty in Bahia. Both figures operate in a sovereign manner, seeking to control the territories in which they are located and standing outside their respective rules of law to enforce their expected norms (Schmitt 2005). Both purveyors of sovereignty elicit caution among those with whom they come into daily contact. The neighborhood I lived in is home to different drug trafficking factions. While their activity was considerably quieter than that of other neighborhoods around Salvador, the presence of these groups was nonetheless evident. Armed members of these groups were known to occasionally skirmish, fighting over control of the trafficking in the neighborhood. On nights when this occurred, word of mouth alerted many before the gun shots began and people remained indoors until the feuding was over. Occurrences like this were rare, albeit striking.

Much more common in the neighborhood I lived in, and in the city as a whole, was the specter of police violence.

The arrival of the police in any neighborhood is as much a cause for concern as the promise of violence between drug traffickers. This is because the Brazilian police—especially the military police—operate in a manner reminiscent of the colonial epoch, when Black bodies could be tortured and terrorized with impunity (Smith 2013, 191). Word spread quickly whenever the blue and silver SUVs of the military police would swoop into the neighborhood, as police presence carried with it specific causes for concern. One of the first things I learned when I started traveling to Salvador almost ten years ago was that you *never* left the house without some form of personal identification. This rule was explained to me during my first stay in Salvador. At that time I was living in Graça, a well-to-do neighborhood in the inner city of Salvador. A friend of mine from Águas Claras—a favela located in the outskirts of the municipality of Salvador—invited me to his house to meet his family. During my visit to Águas Claras, I noted that his mother asked him if he remembered his “documentação”¹⁴ every time we left the house—even if we were simply going to the store. I did not see why he needed a reminder, given that he constantly had his I.D. with him. When I asked him why they seemed to make such a big deal about carrying identification with them, he explained to me that you were basically as good as dead if the police stopped you and you did not have any I.D. with you. They would assume you were a drug trafficker, he said, and would beat you, throw you in the back of their trucks, and you would never be seen again. He told me in no uncertain terms that I would do well to bring some form of identification with me whenever I went anywhere in Salvador, as I did not “look American.” This was common wisdom to everyone residing in Salvador, as I later

¹⁴ Documentation

found out. Years later, in another favela community in Salvador, a friend of mine was taking me from his house to his parents' house for dinner. As we left, his wife asked him if he had any I.D. with him. He did not, and went into his room to retrieve it, but not before his wife admonished him, shouting “Você está jogando com a vida!”¹⁵ Over the years, subsequent trips to the city made the reality of police violence even more evident to me.

My first personal encounter with police occurred in 2012 while on the highway with a group of friends. After turning the wrong way on a road, we were pulled over and ordered out of the car. In our panic at being stopped late at night by the military police, we were not able to immediately comply with the order to get out of the car. After twice ordering us out of the car, one of the police officers outside began counting, “Um, dois...” Finally, we were able to unlock the doors and get out of the vehicle. It was not until we all had exited the car that it became evident to me the situation we were in. All five police officers on the scene had automatic rifles trained on us. It was clear that had we not made it out of the car when we did, they would have opened fire—hence the countdown that the officer had initiated. One of the officers frisked us while the others stood watch. It was then that I was greeted by what I would later realize was a common (and humiliating) frisking tactic by the police—a quick, sharp smack to the testicles under the auspices of searching for weapons stashed in one's crotch. When a member of our party would not consent to putting his hand on his head in a timely manner, the officer reviewing all of us grabbed him roughly and began hitting him. After checking everyone's I.D., they eventually let us go. When we related the story to other friends after the fact, they all assured us that we were lucky to have escaped that situation with our lives, given the hour that it occurred

¹⁵ You're playing with life!

and our initial tardiness in exiting the car. I have also been witness to people that were not let off so easily.

During my 2014 stay in Salvador, I was returning to my apartment from the Federal University of Bahia, which is located in the neighborhood of Ondina. As the bus I was on rambled down the road mere feet from the coastline, a military police truck pulled us over. These occurrences are known as “blitzes” and are quite common in the city. A police officer climbed onto the bus and ordered all of the males off, demanding we bring our belongings with us. Two officers stood by, automatic rifles at the ready, while a third officer reviewed all of us. First, we were made to hold open any bags, backpacks, etc. that we were carrying while the officer looked through them. Next, we had to stand with our legs spread, arms-length from the bus, with our palms up near the windows on the side of the bus. The reviewing officer frisked all of us, one by one, including the traditional testicle smacking. After being reviewed, we stood on the sidewalk, waiting for the police to finish with their search. When the review was over, the police grabbed two young men, who both looked to be about fifteen or sixteen, and told the rest of us to get back on the bus. As we filed back on the bus, I watched as the police spoke words I could no longer hear to the two young men who were now standing near the back hatch of the police officers’ truck. What infraction, if any, they had committed was anyone’s guess. They did not get back on the bus before we left.



Figure 3.1 “Blitz” carried out by Brazilian military police on a public bus. Photo by Adam Bledsoe

A separate occasion in 2014 gave me insight into the thought process of one particular military police officer in Salvador. While it would not be fair for me to associate his beliefs with

all members of the military police in the city, it was nonetheless a disturbing experience that brought to mind many of the anti-Black tropes that define the Brazilian nation. The situation occurred during a trip I made to the beach. It was early evening and the sun was starting to lower when my friend and I were approached by a man carrying a large Styrofoam cooler. He introduced himself and asked if we wanted to have beers with him. As he handed us each a beer he explained that he had a day off of work and had been at the beach since the morning. It seemed to me that he had probably been drinking that whole time, as he was very clearly intoxicated. When I asked him what job he was getting a day away from, he said he was a police officer. As our conversation continued on, he admitted to my friend and me that his job was frequently a violent one.

“Eu já matei três caras,”¹⁶ he stated frankly, and posed the rhetorical question, “tô errado?”¹⁷ My friend and I uncomfortably did not respond to this question and tried to change the subject, but he continued describing his job and its demands. He was not in the wrong for killing anyone, he stated. “Os vagabundos têm que morrer,”¹⁸ he slurred, looking at us unfocusedly. My friend and I finished our beer, thanked him, and left the beach, as it was now dark.

This police officer’s belief that “vagabundos” had to be eliminated is precisely the sentiment Brazilian elites expressed in their attempt to modernize post-abolition Brazil. While not explicitly a racial term, “vagabundo” nonetheless carries with it a history of anti-Blackness, as it was the good for nothing ex-slave “vagabundos” who threatened the newly forming

¹⁶ I’ve already killed three guys

¹⁷ Am I wrong?

¹⁸ Good-for-nothings (vagabonds) have to die

Brazilian nation with their backwards ways and inability to adapt to rational ways of living in the world. The “vagabundos” that the police officer described above was talking about were never explicitly defined racially or occupationally. Whether the “good for nothings” that he had, in his mind, so rightfully killed were drug traffickers, some criminal element, or simply people he had a problem with was never disclosed to me. Still, the lack of value placed on the life of his victims, the idea that they *needed* to die, presumably for the benefit of society, is exactly the approach Brazil has historically taken towards Afro-descendant peoples. As an enforcer of the sovereign right to decide on the exception, this police officer was able to end the life of those that live in violation of the societal norm. There remains a legacy in Brazil of those in contempt of the norm being Black Brazilians, specifically, as “The black subject in Brazil has been constructed over generations as the internal enemy (captives, terrorists, criminals)” (Smith 2013, 181).

Articulations of the sovereign ability to declare an exception is clearly at play in the actions of the police and drug traffickers described above. Both factions seek to realize territorial sovereignty through the elimination of those factors that threaten their self-preservation as political entities. For drug traffickers, this means eliminating rival traffickers—the collateral damage to those living around them, caused by the attendant violence, is but the cost of preservation. For the police—state actors—the exception is found in the spaces inhabited by the dangerous sectors of society—the “vagabundos.” State violence is a constant reality for the residents of Salvador. The exception is, truly, a permanent condition in Salvador, as the city’s inhabitants seem constantly under threat of assault from the police. Something as mundane as forgetting one’s I.D. can result in death—a death, but not a sacrifice (Agamben

1998)—as the dangerous sectors of society *must* be killed. What is more, the deaths that result from these sovereign decisions are usually suffered by the Black population of Salvador.

The purpose of my anecdotes above is not to provide examples of violence that are contingent on any specific transgressions. I am not trying to itemize the things that can lead to the ending of Black life in Salvador. Rather, I am attempting to demonstrate how the city's Black populations face the specter of life-ending violence on a daily basis due to the societal assumption of Black non-being. Because anti-Blackness and the assumed non-being of Black populations in Bahia are the norm, the social death of these populations looms as a justification for the physical ending of Black life. In short, death is a constant reality for Blacks.

Labor in the City

In Salvador, I stay in a working-class favela neighborhood outside the city-core. Over time, I have become more and more familiar with the conditions under which the people there work. Aside from this neighborhood, I have friends in a number of other parts of the city with whose work life I am also familiar. If I had to use one word to describe the work environment of those I know in Salvador, it would be “strenuous.” Nearly everybody I know works eight to ten hour days, six days a week, with Saturday as a half-day. Despite the frequency of work, it is evident that wages are low.

It was explained to me by various people that the cost of living in Salvador is not high, but that it is hard to make ends meet, given the low wages that workers earn. It is evident to me that measures like the Bolsa Familia certainly help support working families, yet wages alone are often not sufficient to cover family needs. Families frequently must make sacrifices regarding what they spend their hard-earned money on. I have seen children pulled out of the private schools they were attending because their parents could no longer afford the tuition and

additional costs such as books, uniforms, and writing utensils. I have seen families subsist on bread and soup for the final weeks of the month, biding their time until the next paycheck arrived because their salary was not substantial enough to provide them with a full month of the beans and rice they would normally eat. While wages are low, working conditions themselves demand tremendous physical commitments.

In the neighborhood where I lived, the bus stop would be packed from 6:00 AM until around 9 AM with people leaving for work. The highways during this block of time were always, without fail, gridlocked as people from all over the city headed to their respective jobs. Depending on where one works, commutes can take up to two hours during rush hour. The evening rush hour is just as bad, as buses are literally so crammed full of commuters that the doors will not close all the way. Between the hours worked and the hours spent in traffic, families often get little time to spend together. It was not uncommon for me to see situations in which, during the work week, people left for work, came home, ate, went to bed, and started the process all over again without having any personal time to spend with their loved ones. In addition to being extremely time-consuming and low-paying, jobs in Salvador often take heavy tolls on the body.

Manual labor like carpentry, construction, and domestic service often end in serious physical debilitation for laborers. I met people that were forced to retire from their jobs before their fiftieth birthdays because of multiple hernias and work-related injuries suffered while on the job. Baianos are worked until they can literally work no more. This hyper-exploitation and complete disregard for the physical status of workers is reminiscent of the brutal working conditions slaves faced in Brazil. Labor practices are clearly another way in which the assumed slave status of Black Brazilians continues. The violation and breaking down of Black bodies

goes on unchecked; it is the norm in Salvador's labor market. Being witness to this proved to me the ridiculousness of the Brazilian adage that the people of Bahia are lazy and do not like to work. This is, clearly, racially influenced "common sense" which echoes the claims of Brazilian elites who saw the ex-slaves of Brazil as retarding the industrial potential of the country because of their aversion to work. My experiences in Bahia showed me that the people there not only work, they spend the majority of their time at their job or in job-related travel. The marginalizing effects of the labor market have unique effects across gender lines, as well, as the intersecting modes of anti-Black, gendered racism, started during slavery and colonialism, continue into the present moment.

Gendered Marginalization

Traditionally, Black Brazilian women are associated with service sector labor practices. Among other forms of employment, domestic work, tourism, and sex work have been associated with Black women in the popular Brazilian imagination (Perry 2004; Harrington 2015). These forms of labor carry with them social stigma as well as relations of economic dependency. These employment practices mean that Black women must frequently leave their neighborhoods and families to attend to and care for the wealthier (and often whiter) sectors of society in Salvador. During my time in Bahia, I took note of the many forms of employment taken up by Black women. The focus on extractive industries has meant the abandonment of industrial production and, as such, narrows the field of employment opportunities in Brazil (de Oliveira 2006, 15). Because of this, Black Brazilian women remain marginalized through mechanisms of race, gender, and labor.

Jobs like domestic work and childcare, as well as tourism work, like preparing for and working at the World Cup games, were common among many of the women I met. These jobs,

unsurprisingly, meant long hours and extreme physical duress. In addition to this, I came to know many women who were employed in other service-sector jobs, call centers chief among them. Call centers seemed to offer women without a college education the opportunity for steady employment in Salvador. Attending to call lines for companies as diverse as CitiBank, Itaú, and Bank of Brazil, call centers provided a steady, if meager, salary for many women in Bahia. Still, this was far from a perfect arrangement, as these jobs were subject to the whim of supervisors and the market, alike.

Stories of disagreements with bosses and significant layoffs following the 2015 economic crisis in Brazil showed me the ways in which already precarious existences could become all the more problematic. As noted above regarding women's historical roles in struggle, the presence of difficult labor relations do not mean that Black women exist solely as marginalized figures, or that they have no consciousness of the oppressive factors they face. As both Perry (2013) and Harrington (2015) demonstrate, these otherwise oppressive labor arrangements give rise to various forms of political organization and resistance. Still, the situations in which Black women in Bahia often find themselves regarding work are more often than not far from ideal. In addition to the marginalizing effects of labor, Black women in Salvador remain treated as derelict in their relation to their own families. As was the case during slavery, the Black family remains treated as an impossibility, given the lack of value placed on Black life.

The Black Family?

It is not satisfactory to focus solely on the question of labor when it comes to exploring the gendered nature of anti-Blackness in Brazil, and in Salvador, specifically. As the Manifesto da Marcha das Mulheres Negras of 2015 states, “No decurso diário de nossas vidas, a forjada superioridade do componente racial branco, do patriarcado e do sexismo, que fundamenta e

dinamiza um sistema de opressões que impõe, a cada mulher negra, a luta pela própria sobrevivência e de sua comunidade”¹⁹ (2015). The anti-Blackness and imposed oppression Black women face in Brazil continues on similar registers to those started during slavery, suggesting that Black women have, indeed “receberam uma herança cruel”²⁰ from the colonial epoch (Congresso das Mulheres Brasileiras 1975). Part of this inheritance is the attempted systemic prevention of the Black family.

Between 2003 and 2012 the homicides by firearm nearly quadrupled—increasing from 1,241 homicides in 2003 to 4,512 homicides in 2012—among Blacks in Bahia (Waiselfisz 2015, 81). These deaths made up nearly ninety percent of the 5,147 total homicides by firearms in the entire state of Bahia in 2012 (Waiselfisz 2015, 30). Still, none of these statistics name the dead. They cannot explain the grieving of the families of Salvador and Simões Filho who, collectively, lost 1,790 people to death by firearm in 2012 (Waiselfisz 2015, 41, 56), nor can they console the mothers and fathers of the 3,262 young people (ages 15-29) across the entire state of Bahia who were killed in gun violence in 2012 (Waiselfisz 2015, 67). These statistics do not mark a familial loss or a rupture in the everyday life of the people of Bahia. They fail to capture any sense of loss because Black life is still treated as a game of numbers. In the event that any kind of familial relation *is* mentioned regarding Black physical death, it is always in a way that emphasizes the dereliction of Black parenting. Black mothers are often cast in pathological terms, representing threats to the well-being of the entire community (Carby 1992, 741).

Mainstream, day-time television shows like *Na Mira* and *Se Liga Bocão* are examples of this.

¹⁹ In the daily course of our lives, the counterfeit superiority of the white racial component, of patriarchy and sexism, founds and dynamizes a system of oppressions that imposes, on every black woman, the struggle for survival and community

²⁰ Received a cruel inheritance

So, too, are the pronunciations of Bahia's elected officials. In a February 3, 2016 edition of the online periodical Bahia.Ba, Bahia's governor, Rui Costa comments on the fact that, in the first month of 2016, 117 homicides had been committed in the city of Salvador: "Não é pobreza que leva ao crime: A exclusão, a falta de amor e carinho e a falta de esperança é que levam um jovem ao crime"²¹ (<http://bahia.ba/ssa/tratratratratra-dados-confirmam-salvador-como-cidade-violenta/>).

Black life is still tabulated and measured; numerically counted. What is being lost is not a son or a daughter, nor any other familial constituent. Rather, what is being lost is bare life—life which is not killed or sacrificed, but instead simply biologically ended. In this modern understanding of Black non-subjectivity, the lack of a familial structure and the assumed absence of Black political subjectivity mean that the progenitors of those disposed bodies can only weep or mourn over the bodies—they cannot save them, as they have no legitimate claim to their progeny (Hartman 2007, 80). It is this "truth" of modernity, the formula that neither allows Black women to claim or protect those to whom they give life, against which the quilombolas of the Bay of Aratu so ferociously fight.

²¹ It's not poverty that brings crime: Exclusion, lack of love and caring and lack of hope is what brings a young person to crime

Chapter 4

Throughout Brazilian history, the organized struggles of Afro-descendant populations have been vital to resistance against the genocide that typifies the modern epoch. As mentioned above, Brazil's legacy of Black struggle takes many forms and contributes to a variety of Black Geographies. Again, Black Geographies are the geographical expressions put into place by those that recognize the effects of anti-Blackness and seek to create social and spatial relations that are not typified by that violence. In Brazil, marronage, in the form of quilombos, historically presented important forms of Radical Black Geographies—geographies that reject a reliance on modern spatial organizing tools like sovereignty and the maintenance of the idea of non-being. Quilombos were some of the world's earliest forms of Radical Black Geographies as they essentially coincided with the arrival of Africans as slaves in Brazil and entailed social and spatial relations that valued and protected the lives and politics of those deemed “non-beings.” For centuries, quilombos existed as one of the main antagonists to the Brazilian colony and, later, to the nation-state. It was precisely these radical forms of Black consciousness and geographies that the Brazilian national project, rooted in notions of racial mixture and anti-Blackness, sought to expunge.

With anti-Black violence still very much a central component of the Brazilian national landscape, the Black political activists of the 1970s and 1980s sought to reinvigorate the term “quilombo” as a rallying point for Black struggle in the country. Their resurrection of the word “quilombo” attached itself to the continued practice of quilombismo among various Afro-

descendant communities in the country. The present-day quilombo movement is a concatenation of the persistence of the ethic of quilombismo among communities across the entirety of the Brazilian landscape and the strategic use of the term by Black activists of the late 20th century, who sought to name a radical Black praxis. The use of the term “quilombo” at a national level has linked together the struggles of many seemingly disparate communities. By entering into this struggle under the banner of “quilombo,” communities recognize the linkages that they share—that of the preservation and defense of a radical Black life and, I argue, the creation of present-day marronage. As such, the term is once again being used to designate those communities that reject the ethic of erasure inherent to Brazilian society, as they seek to territorially preserve their way of life through unique and always changing praxes, power relations, and understandings of the physical world. The dictates of sovereign governance and global capital, however, demand that the emergence of autonomous communities across the entire nationscape not take place.

The Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu reject the state’s insistence on being the sole identifier of quilombismo. Because they understand that their struggles, as quilombos, entail the protection of their way of life, they refuse to allow the state to define the nature of their territories. In the actions and pronunciations of the quilombolas of Rio dos Macacos, Tororó, and Ilha de Maré, it is evident that they recognize the conservative Black Geographies promoted by the Brazilian state as an affront to their way of life. This mutilated geography acknowledged and encouraged by the state is an example of what Abdias do Nascimento describes as “certain mechanisms the dominant society concedes to [Black Brazilians’] protagonism, intending them as instruments of control” (1980, 154). In this case, these instruments are part of neoliberal multiculturalism and the attempts by the state to nominally acknowledge the quilombos while

simultaneously destroying their territorialities. It is precisely because these quilombos are the creation of attempts to *not* be controlled by dominant society that they recognize the genocidal ends toward which the state works. In addition to recognizing and critiquing these state measures, the quilombos employ unique social practices that continually re-establish their quilombola subjectivity. This section is comprised of statements and actions from the quilombolas that I witnessed and experienced firsthand. All of the descriptions of the quilombolas here are from my personal engagements with them. I discuss practices regarding labor and gender, specifically.

Quilombola Labor and Gender Relations

When I say that the quilombolas of the Bay of Aratu protect themselves against the hyper-exploitation present in the labor practices in Salvador, I do not at all mean to suggest that the quilombolas do not work or do not work hard. To the contrary, from what I witnessed during my time in the quilombos, labor practices were quite rigorous and required a significant time commitment from the community members. Still, several factors make the quilombola's labor and productive practices unique.

For one, they do not answer to a boss who appropriates the surplus value squeezed from their efforts. The quilombolas answer to no authority figure who sets the parameters for their workdays and decides whose efforts are satisfactory. As such, there is no fear of being fired or removed from employment and made to face the possibility of being unable to support oneself. Furthermore, the product of quilombola labor is not the boss's—it is that of the collectivity. Because of this, the quilombolas are not forced to do more work than is required for their own needs. Related to this, the means of production are not divorced from the quilombolas in a way that at once employs them and consumes them (Marx 1981, 424-425). Instead, the means of

production and means of subsistence come from the same sources for the quilombolas. Their dependence on, and for respect for, nature means that the means of production simultaneously provide the communities with a form of subsistence.

While planting fields of manioc, corn, beans, and squashes and hauling nets of fish, digging in the mud to extract crabs, and scouring the mangrove roots for shellfish all certainly entail hard work, none of these actions contribute to the enrichment of an owner of the means of production. Neither the quilombolas, nor some other authority figure “own” the source of the quilombos’ mode of production or subsistence, and, as such, there is not a typical relationship of exploitation present in the quilombos. This is quite contrary to the case of much of the rest of Salvador. Laborers around urban Salvador can be separated from the means of production at the whim of their employers, and thereby lose access to means of subsistence for themselves and their families. They can also be seriously underpaid, such that their long hours yield scant remuneration. The quilombolas in the Bay of Aratu, on the other hand, are able to provide for themselves and subsist from the very environment in which they live. Whereas many of those living in Salvador are forced to labor for the gain of others, often times not even making enough to provide for their basic needs and the needs of their dependents, the members of the quilombos can proudly proclaim, “Ninguém passa fome aqui.”¹

While much of the urban populace of Salvador must sell their labor power in order to purchase amenities like light, water, and gas, the quilombolas can rely on the fruits of their own territory to provide cooking fuel and housing materials; and although many of those living in urban Salvador would certainly perish without access to a wage from which means of

¹ Nobody goes hungry here

subsistence are purchased, the quilombolas assert, “Se não tiver [dinheiro], não morre.”² A fundamental aspect of quilombola life is reliance on their environment to collectively provide for the community. The “environment” in this case is the confluence of all the factors that make up the world the quilombolas live in. The quilombos’ unique conception of the world leads to a unique territoriality which creates new relations to territory and eschews many of the truths and taken for granted aspects of life that define Salvador. The labor practices of quilombola women, specifically, stand out as a unique aspect of the quilombos’ world.

The role that women play in the quilombos is another example of the ways in which quilombola life departs from the societal norms in Salvador. This is an important fact, given the numerous, interlocking ways in which Black women are marginalized in Salvador. Just as in historical Black Brazilian struggles, Black women today—especially in quilombos—are central actors in the struggle against anti-Blackness. My experience with the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu suggests that Keisha-Khan Perry’s assertion that Black women are the “foot soldiers” of Brazil’s Black movement is correct (2013, xv). I would argue further that Black women are simultaneously foot soldiers and leaders of the quilombola struggles in the Bay of Aratu. I am not suggesting that quilombola men are entirely absent from the political struggles of quilombo life. Rather, I am noting the fact that women make up the majority of those that both plan and enact the political expressions in the quilombos. This fact is openly acknowledged by the quilombolas, who begin their meetings by always greeting the women first and taking care to privilege the presence of women in public statements. They do this explicitly because they collectively recognize that women make up the greatest number of those active in their struggles.

² If you don’t have it [money] you won’t die.

Both Keisha-Khan Perry and Kia Caldwell note, respectively, that “the knowledge that black women gain from the built environment and their social conditions informs their creative struggles in building more democratic...landscapes” (Perry 2013, xvii) and “individual [Black] women attempt to reconstruct their subjectivities by contesting dominant aesthetic norms” (Caldwell 2003, 18). These arguments demonstrate how Black women in Brazil draw on oppressive aspects of their lived experiences in attempts to create the conditions for a more just world. The oppressive aspects of life that Black Brazilian women deal with are part of a society in which “Black women are overdetermined as promiscuous, violable, and poor” (Smith 2014, 114) and therefore exist outside “the social contract and, by extension, outside the moral order” (Smith 2014, 107). This marginalized condition leads to Black Brazilian women being socially excluded through assumptions deviance and being perpetually “out of place” and therefore spatially superfluous (Williams 2013, 26). The Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu recognize this register of oppression and therefore articulate their struggles and highlight the values of quilombola life by emphasizing the ways in which the Black population of Salvador is systemically marginalized. As Caldwell (2007) notes, the marginalization faced by Black Brazilians and Black women, specifically, are not necessarily spectacular, uncommon occurrences. Rather, oppressive factors can be of the mundane sort—occurring as “informal and everyday aspects of Brazilian citizenship (Caldwell 2007, 2). Everyday labor practices and economic dependency seem to be one of the main forms of oppression against which quilombola life protects.

Quilombola Women's Labor

Unlike gendered divisions of labor, in which women are frequently forced to take jobs that leave them exposed to a variety of harassments from their employers, the quilombolas of the

Bay of Aratu were very clear that they set the conditions for how and when they worked. The collection of shellfish, for instance, was scheduled around the high and low tides of the sea. When the tide was low, the roots of the mangrove were exposed and thus the clams, oysters, and mussels that formed an invaluable part of the quilombos' diet and income were able to be collected. Fishing days were decided collectively among the communities. Various members would confer within their respective quilombos, or would coordinate with members from neighboring quilombos, to establish a day and time when they would go fishing. Fishing the sea and rivers and collecting shellfish among the mangroves, then, did not require the approval or oversight of some "qualified" supervisor who would ultimately determine the competence of the quilombo fisherwomen. Instead, the quilombola women decided among themselves, and in conjunction with the natural rhythms of the sea and rivers, when and where an appropriate time to work was. This rule applied to the cleaning and preparing of their bounty as well.

At a meeting I attended with the members of Ilha de Maré, Rio dos Macacos, and Tororó, one quilombola woman expressed that, to her, being quilombola meant sitting in front of her house with her daughter, removing the shellfish from their shells. They could do this, she said, while conversing and taking their time—this was a special time for her family. This image stands in stark contrast to the descriptions I heard from women outside the quilombos who work in call centers and doing domestic work, where breaks and conversations were few and far between, and the emotional and physical stress of the jobs could cause any number of personal breakdowns. In addition to this, spaces like the mangroves offered women a unique space in which they could gather amongst themselves.

While fishing practices that required heavy lifting were often undertaken by fishermen, the gathering of shellfish, shrimp, and crabs were often the purview of fisherwomen. This means

that the centrality of fishing to quilombola life, and the communal access to the mangroves, offer unique spaces where women gather willingly in groups to conduct important social reproductive practices. This not only reifies quilombo subsistence and economic efforts, but also works to maintain a social arrangement in which quilombola women create spaces in which they can collectively gather of their own volition. Given the exploitation many women in Salvador face, the importance of this fact cannot be overstated. Another important social relation defended vehemently by quilombola women is their ability to redefine what it means to be a Black mother in Bahia.

Quilombola Motherhood

Among the many aspirations voiced by the quilombola women in the Bay of Aratu, one of the most commonly articulated desires was to maintain a community that was viable for their children and their future progeny. When making these claims, it was not unusual to hear these women juxtapose their desired quilombo life to the problems that Black peoples face in the urban areas of Salvador. Life in the quilombos was preferable to life in the city, according to these women, because of the violence city life brought with it. It is because of this that the women of Ilha de Maré stated “a gente já sabe como é tratado o jovem negro neste estado”,³ at public audiences with city politicians. Contrary to these outside violences, the quilombos protected against the various forms of violence—some of which I mention above. The quilombolas—particularly quilombola women—take it upon themselves to defend their territory and ensure that future quilombola generations inherit a world that is not defined by the brutal anti-Black violence that so many face in Salvador. By taking action to preserve territorial configurations that value

³ We already know how Black youths are treated in this state

and protect Black life—by committing themselves to quilombismo—the women of the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu are recognizing and rejecting one of the fundamental aspects of modernity’s anti-Blackness. The ways that the quilombos as a whole protect against these forms of anti-Blackness materialize in a variety of ways. If territories are imbued with specific power arrangements and social meaning, then quilombo territories are, in part, defined by structures that recognize the agency and power of a collective family committed to protecting those seen as inhuman by the purveyors of modernity. This means that quilombos recognize the role of mothers and fathers in protecting those they bring into the world, a task that entails defending the very territory from which such a subjectivity is born. Because of this, the struggle of the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu preserves the life of its members at the same time that it protects the physical and ethical components of its territory.

Quilombola self-defense

The violence typified by the competing sovereign actors in the city of Salvador is one of the main factors that the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu seek to avoid through their politics. As this chapter demonstrates, the quilombos are very proud of the fact that they have not allowed drug trafficking in their territories. By preventing traffickers from taking root in the community, they avoid some of the problems that are present in the urban areas of Salvador where trafficking is a reality. Additionally, during my time in the quilombos I never once saw the military police present there. I am certain this is not always the case—police have surely been in the communities at some point—but given the amount of time I spent in the communities, I was surprised that I never saw the military police present. This does not signify that there are not other sovereign actors that the quilombos must deal with. Especially in the case of Rio dos Macacos, the presence of the navy means that there are times when specific sovereign actors

present themselves in quilombo territory. Nonetheless, the quilombos remain resolved to not allow these sovereign actors uncontested power to decide on the exception.

The diligence that the members of Rio dos Macacos show in patrolling their communities at night show that they are committed to attempting to prevent the navy from deciding on, and addressing, a state of exception. Through these measures, the quilombos reject sovereign power in their territories. Instead, their territoriality is punctuated by a collective governance of cooperation. No one actor or body of actors stands outside the law to decide on the exception (Agamben 2005; Schmitt 2005). Rather, the quilombos collectively organize and act on decisions and actions within their territory. Furthermore, no sector of quilombo society exists in a permanent state of exception where they can be eliminated as part of a necessity (Agamben 1998). Quilombolas are valued as quilombolas—there are no dangerous, expendable sectors that can be killed without being sacrificed. By remaining committed to protecting their territories and, thus, their way of life, the quilombos offer a form of protection from the violence that pervades much of urban Salvador, where the sovereign right to end life, practiced by the police and drug traffickers goes largely unchecked. In addition to the quilombos placing a value on life that is unique to the hierarchy of humanity present in modern, sovereign territory, the productive practices in the quilombos are also unique to that of the rest of Brazilian society.

The approaches that the quilombos in question take to defend their way of life vary. Above, I describe some of the unique aspects of life in the quilombos, touching specifically on issues of labor and gender in the context of anti-Blackness in Bahia. I now turn to a closer examination of the *ways* that the quilombos enact their distinct territorialities. These concrete articulations of the communities' relations to their territories offer us examples of how the quilombos realize alternative ways of existing. These methods include working with

“sovereign” actors, such as organs of the state and international groups like the United Nations. The other methods of resistance employed by the quilombos include civil disobedience, cooperation between different communities, and strong internal organization. Each community articulates these forms of struggle in unique ways.

As I have gone to lengths to describe radical Black movements, and maroon/quilombo communities in particular, as existing apart from the tradition of sovereignty, it may seem contradictory to see quilombo communities work with sovereign state and ultra-state actors. However, working with sovereign actors is actually a very common characteristic of maroon and quilombo communities. As radical Black movements are premised on their ability to analyze the situations in which they find themselves, it is often the case that, recognizing the power relations present in a situation, these movements find it necessary to negotiate with the sovereign actors against whom they struggle.⁴ In these negotiations, what is taking place is the recognition of the sovereign actor as a figure which wields a certain kind of power in a situation. This in no way suggests that the movement in question sees itself as part of the sovereign apparatus, nor that it wants to become a sovereign actor. Rather, as is evidenced in historical cases, as well as in the cases of the quilombos of Aratu, when radical Black movements engage with sovereign actors, they are essentially seeking to establish a relation in which their way of life can be preserved to the greatest extent possible. Far from seeking to become part of the sovereign state or ultra-state organization, these movements seek to use multiple methods to preserve their ways of life—including institutionalized methods. In so doing, these movements present the possibility of using technologies recognized by the sovereign as a way to exercise non-sovereign power.

⁴ Engaging with colonial and state powers was not unusual for the original maroon societies. The maroons of Jamaica and Suriname battled British and Dutch troops, respectively, for many years before being awarded titles that recognized their communities’ independence.

Again, this evidences a close analysis of the situation with which these movements are presented. The case of Rio dos Macacos demonstrates this fact clearly, as they continue to reject proposals put forward by the Brazilian state that promise to reduce their territory to a level that would prevent their reproduction as a community.

In the following section, I focus much attention on the case of Rio dos Macacos. This is because I met the members of this community before I met the members of Ilha de Maré and Tororó. Hence, I spent more time in Rio dos Macacos and with its members during my fieldwork than I did with those of the other two quilombos. This in no way suggests that the case of Rio dos Macacos is more important than the others—it is simply a symptom of how I spent my time in Bahia. Also, all of my descriptions of public audiences, protests, and meetings in this chapter come from my firsthand accounts of the events in question. What I describe here are events in which I was present and participated. Hence, the explanations of mood, tone, and behavior in this chapter are all as I experienced and understood them, making the descriptions wholly dependent on my own choice of placement and representation in the text.

Rio dos Macacos

The case of Rio dos Macacos clearly demonstrates the fact that spaces of Blackness and Black Geographies remain unrecognized as legitimate political spaces by the practitioners of Western reason. Instead, Black Geographies—particularly Radical Black Geographies—remain in a close relation to spaces of non-being. This manifests itself in the rendering of the spaces as a-political and thus as sites of exception, open to the total war that modernity and its adherents continue to visit against Black bodies. That Quilombo Rio dos Macacos lives the reality of the continuation of this total war within an assumed a-political space is evidenced in several ways. When stopped by the guards at the entrance to the villa and questioned about one's destination, it

is necessary to say “vou para a roça.”⁵ There is no address, nor legal title to which the quilombo has claim. In addition to the lack of a legal registration of housing, none of the quilombolas—with the exception of the oldest members—are recognized as legally residing on the community’s lands. It is because of this that an order of removal was able to be leveled against the quilombo in 2012, as they were described as “invaders.” Many quilombolas lament the fact that they have no legal residence, as they must have their mail sent to their friends and family who live in fixed, recognized addresses. The designation of the community as existing in the “roça” suggests a space devoid of human presence, a place open to the agenda of those able to dominate the (human and natural) wilderness. The roça (or mato) was the supposedly unsettled spaces in which the capitães de mato would search for, capture, and kill quilombolas during the days of slavery.⁶ This a-political space was one in which actions against those seeking and realizing their freedom could be killed and detained with impunity. The force of law could take place in the roça without homicide or sacrifice occurring. Hence, the veracity of the statement made by the quilombola leader during the community’s protest at the villa’s entrance regarding the navy’s view and treatment of the quilombo, “os escravos existem! A senzala, o tronco e a corrente existem no Quilombo Rio dos Macacos pela Marinha de Guerra do Brasil!”⁷ In their attempts to defend their unique territory and protect against the continuation of the assumed condition of non-being, Rio dos Macacos employs a variety of methods.

⁵ I’m going to the roça

⁶ Capitães de mato were essentially bounty hunters and hired guns that were used to track and capture runaway slaves and quilombolas. Their name connotes one who has control or authority over an otherwise uncontrolled, empty space. In addition to this, capitães de mato were traditionally known to be of visible African descent themselves, and are usually described as mixed-race in the literature discussing them.

⁷ Slaves exist! The slave quarters, the trunk, and the chain exist in Quilombo Rio dos Macacos because of the Brazilian Navy!

Rio dos Macacos and the state

The case of Rio dos Macacos did not become national news until relatively recently, despite the fact that their community and struggle has been waged for over two hundred years. The process for cultural and territorial recognition began in the 2000s, thanks in large part to the assistance of one of the community leaders from Tororó. Tororó, suffering from a similar situation to Rio dos Macacos with respect to the navy, and already familiar with the process of applying for cultural and territorial recognition, resolved to help Rio dos Macacos. As a result, Rio dos Macacos received its cultural recognition from the Fundação Cultural Palmares in 2011 and thereafter entered into the process for territorial recognition. With the cultural recognition came food aid, which was necessary in light of the fact that the navy actively sought to destroy their autonomous food production. While this emergency food relief helped to temporarily ameliorate the quilombo's situation, the process of territorial recognition has been a long and protracted one for the community. A resolution has yet to be reached.

Cultural recognition of a quilombo is essentially bestowed based on their self-identification as such, but the territorial recognition of a community is dependent on a report made by the National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA). This report is the product of a team of specialists that analyze and measure the land historically and presently occupied by the quilombo. When this is done, INCRA comes up with a demarcated portion of land which they deem as comprising quilombola territory. In the event of competing interests for the land in question, there is an opportunity for objections and reevaluations of the potential quilombola territory. Because of this, the situation of Rio dos Macacos has essentially arrived at a stalemate. The initial report by INCRA claimed that there were 301 hectares of land to which

the community can lay claim as necessary for their way of life.⁸ Despite this 301 hectares acknowledged by INCRA, the navy has continually protested and obstructed the quilombo's right to the land. As such, the amount of land officially offered to Rio dos Macacos has been significantly less than the originally stated 301 hectares.

The first revised territorial proposal offered to Rio dos Macacos by INCRA was seven and a half hectares of land in an area outside of the traditional territory of the community. Along with this offer came the government's promise to build housing for the quilombolas. The quilombo rejected this proposal. The second government proposal, presented in a public audience in December of 2012, was for twenty-one hectares of land within the community's traditional territory, and would have involved the uprooting and resettlement of almost all of the families in the quilombo. This proposal, too, was rejected by the community. A third territorial proposal made in an October 2013 public audience was for twenty-eight and a half hectares of land, in the form of the first two proposals combined. Unsurprisingly, this, too, was rejected by the community. I was present for the fourth government proposal, made in March of 2014. It should be noted that at this meeting, further demands had been made by the community. Specifically, they were now demanding the construction of their own road which would allow them and their visitors an independent entrance and exit to the community. This was partially the result of the abuses they and their familiars had suffered at the hands of the naval soldiers at the gate entrance to the villa. The assault the soldiers had committed against two quilombolas in 2013 was the final straw which forced the community to make this demand.

⁸ This is despite the fact that the original amount of land historically claimed by the quilombolas was around 900 hectares.

At the March, 2014 public audience, INCRA presented itself as having gone to lengths to do right by Rio dos Macacos. The representative from INCRA began the meeting by discussing how hard they had worked on this proposal and how they had, so regrettably, missed out on Carnaval because they had committed so much time to this new offer to the community. They prefaced the proposal by saying that they greatly respected the history and struggle of Quilombo Rio dos Macacos and that this offer they were making was taking into account both the legacy of the community as well as the respect they needed to give the navy. The issue of the navy was one of national security, they explained, as this was the largest naval base in the country. As such, they had to respect both the villa and the dam, which were already established and represented important interests. They then presented their newest proposal—eighty-six hectares of land. This newest offer very visibly ignored the current living conditions of the quilombo's oldest family, as it necessitated the resettlement of the community's oldest resident and all of her children and grandchildren. Those present from the community immediately began to protest. There was no access to water, they argued. How were they supposed to continue their traditions of fishing, which had already been curtailed thanks to the abuses of the navy? The representatives from INCRA assured the quilombolas that this would not be a problem—they would simply build lakes and river tributaries for the community and stock them with fish. In addition to this, they promised to engage with the community in helping to “develop” the land they would get.⁹

⁹ This is not the only case in which a quilombo has been offered titled land with the promise of assistance in “developing” it. See Amorim and Germani (2005) for a description of Quilombo Rio das Rãs of Bahia, whose territorial titling led to a complete overhaul of community leadership, legal representation, and the implementation of cattle farming by the Bank of Brazil—an agricultural practice with which the community had no previous experience.

INCRA stated that the community would have sixty days to accept this proposal, after which time the titling process would begin. The disappointment among the quilombolas was palpable. The community's lawyer claimed that this timeframe was essentially forcing the quilombo to operate "com uma faca no pescoço".¹⁰ A representative from the Secretary of Policy for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPPIR) made an intervention at the end of the meeting by saying that the approach INCRA was taking, in suggesting that the interests of the state (in the form of the navy) and the people (in the form of Rio dos Macacos) were mutually exclusive, was casting the people as the enemy. She calmly argued that this approach to politics was supposed to have ended when the military dictatorship ended and that there needed to be an accord reached that benefitted both. After this pronouncement, the meeting was adjourned. This proved to be just another round in what was already a long struggle.

The community was dissatisfied with the government's proposal for multiple reasons. First, it proposed to uproot the oldest family in the community. Unable to attend the meeting, the community's eldest member became incensed when she heard that the government proposed to move her and her family. She greeted this news with her oft-repeated phrase, "Só saio daqui morto!"¹¹ Another point of discontent was the fact that there was no water source present in the government's proposal. Community members were adamant that there be water sources present in whatever territory they accepted. In discussing the implications of the latest proposal and what to do about it, the community was assisted by their lawyer and a group of architects that work with traditional communities in Bahia. The decision the community came to evidenced a sharp analysis and commitment to protecting their future.

¹⁰ With a knife [held] to the throat

¹¹ I'll only leave here dead!

The state's tactic of territorial titling appeals to the community to make themselves true, modern political subjects through state recognition, and to remove themselves from the space of exception. This claim is bolstered by the government through its offer to help the community "develop" their territory. Not only will the community then be politically recognized, its space will also be a container for rational economic practices. When government representatives threaten Rio dos Macacos with further stalling of their territorial titling process, what they are really threatening is to preserve the community's relation to the state of non-being. They are threatening to continue to maintain the quilombo in a situation in which modern-day capitães de mato can arrive and visit their various violent articulations upon the quilombolas without fear of reprisal. By offering territorial—and thereby political—titling to the community in exchange for the essential destruction of traditional quilombo life, the Brazilian government appears to be giving the quilombo the option of shifting itself from bare life to political life. The government seeks to capture the quilombo in modernity's notions and forms of governance, essentially inducing them to accept a conservative Black Geography which, while recognizing the present wretched condition in which the quilombolas live, entices them to seek respite in modern notions of being.

The government promises that accepting and abiding by modern notions of territory, such as the reliance on sovereignty (in this case, of the nation-state) and the implementation of rational economic planning (in this case, state-backed capitalism), will result in shifting from a state of non-being to one of political recognition. This is the understanding at root of the realization of a Conservative Black Geography; while recognizing the existence and effects of zones of non-being, this conservative approach seeks a solution through the same ontological mechanisms that created this relation of non-being. However, Rio dos Macacos commitment to

struggle, and their analysis of the situation, has resulted in a stalemate, as the quilombo recognizes the imminent destruction of their territorial practices, and, as such, their community, should they accept the government's terms.

After the March, 2014 meeting, it was resolved that they would reject the offer of eighty-six hectares and work to create a counter-map, in which they would propose their own territorial claim to the government. In the past, the community had simply rejected INCRA's offer and waited for them to return with another one. This time they would create their own map and rationale and present it at the next public audience to the representatives of INCRA and the navy. What proceeded was a series of community meetings with the team of architects and lawyers in which they worked to graphically represent their cartographic knowledge in a way that would be legible to the government. Maps were hand drawn on enormous sheets of white paper by the architects and community members together as members took turns explaining lived spaces, cultural spaces, what fish could be found in which sections of the river, where there had previously existed casas de farinha, terreiros, and the houses of families that had been expelled. The role of the outside actors was crucial. Several quilombolas explained before and after this meeting that they *knew* their territory deeply, they simply did not know how to technically represent it in map form. They therefore welcomed the lawyers and architects, who helped to transfer this intimate quilombola knowledge onto maps that INCRA and the navy could understand.

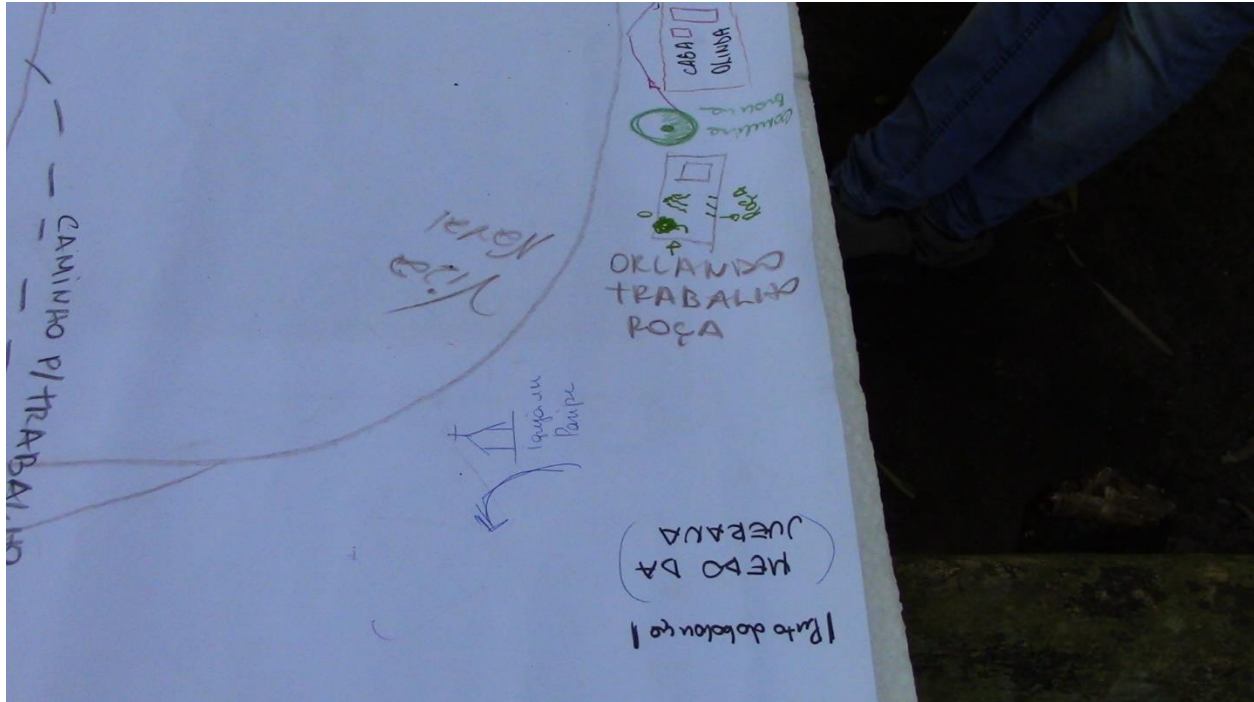


Figure 4.1 Mapping project undertaken in Rio dos Macacos. Photo by Adam Bledsoe

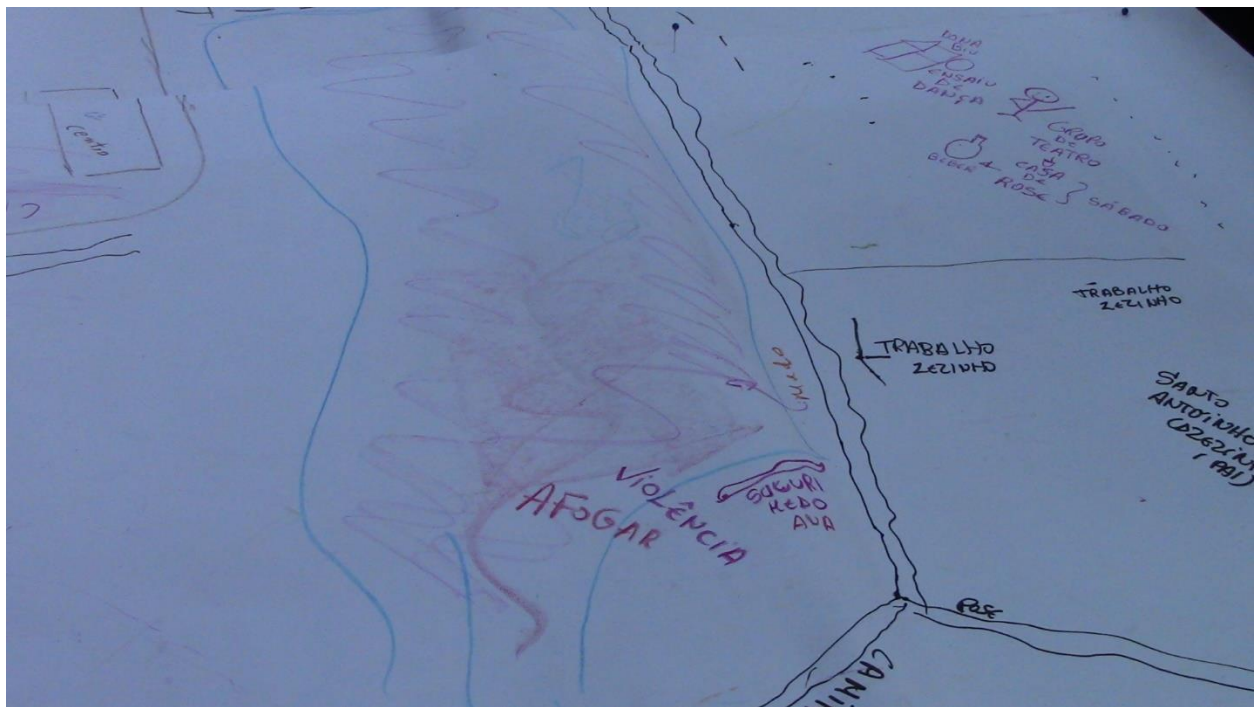


Figure 4.2 Mapping exercise in Rio dos Macacos. Photo by Adam Bledsoe

After digital renderings of these maps were made, community members place colored pins in the areas of the map that represented lived and formerly lived spaces to delineate who

lived there and how their families were comprised. Central to the community's map were the claims that no families would be moved and that they would have already-existing water resources within the territory—they would not wait for water to be built into the quilombo. This first claim was premised on the fact that the community felt as if the navy and government were trying to create divisions within the quilombo by moving certain families and not others. The second claim was rooted in a desire for the community to reclaim resources and subsistence practices that had been lost to them due to the navy's violence. When the final product was complete, the meetings shifted toward strategizing who would present the map to the government and how they would do so. The community's lawyers helped them craft their presentation in a way that couched their struggle in terms that could be understood by the government representatives present there.



Figure 4.3 Rio dos Macacos mapping exercise in preparation for public audience. Photo by Adam Bledsoe

It was not until two months later, in May of 2014, that the community would have the opportunity to present its counterproposal to the government. In that time, there had been a judicial order decreed by a local judge which ordered the evacuation of the quilombolas from the land on which they lived.¹² Nonetheless, the quilombolas remained in their territory and moved forward with their plan to present the counter-proposal to the government. For this meeting, the quilombolas had resolved to do more than simply present their own map to the government. In front of several arms of the government as well as local news sources, the quilombolas made the public audience their own on this day.

The meeting started with a capoeira demonstration by the quilombo's capoeiristas. The capoeiristas are a group comprised of, and led by, the community youth, with participants ranging in age from fourteen to sixteen. They had practiced for months leading up to this public audience in order to perform. "Vamos mostrar a capoeira, a cultura do nosso território e como é importante,"¹³ explained one of the community leaders as the capoeiristas took the floor. As the bass sound of the berimbau, dobrao, and baqueta strummed through the room and the pandeiro kept the rhythm, the capoeiristas comprising the circle clapped their hands in unison while those in the middle performed the athletic cartwheels, high kicks, and timely ducks and dodges that typify capoeira. Initially, only the youth participated, but as the performance continued on, some of the community elders began to take part in the performance as well. Next, a dance troupe from the community presented. Dressed in orange, flower-patterned outfits, this group of young women performed a number of dances in the back of the meeting room. When the performances

¹² This was not the first time this had occurred. The judge in question, Evandro Reimão, had ordered an identical evacuation in 2012, based on the navy's claim that the quilombo had invaded the navy's territory. Both evacuation orders occurred just prior to a territorial proposition from the government.

¹³ We're going to show capoeira, our territory's culture and how it is important

were over, the meeting began with INCRA again putting forward its ornamental acknowledgement of the efforts of Rio dos Macacos and its commitment to finding a solution that would be agreeable to both the community and the navy. The podium was left open for remarks from anybody that wanted to make them. One of the community elders—a man that had married into the quilombo—went up to speak.

He immediately railed against the navy and the crimes they had committed against the community, stating that the navy had done away with almost everything that had previously been there. He stated that he was a proud quilombola, having lived in the community for over thirty years, and that the navy ought to be ashamed for everything they had perpetrated. He shouted that his wife had been raped by naval soldiers, quickly asking pardon from his wife as well as those present for having to mention this fact. “You don’t have to ask pardon!” several quilombolas shouted back to him. He continued on, explaining the history of the community; which fazendas the community had come from, who had owned the fazendas, which water sources they had used, etc. After finishing his intervention, the representatives from INCRA were given the opportunity to speak.

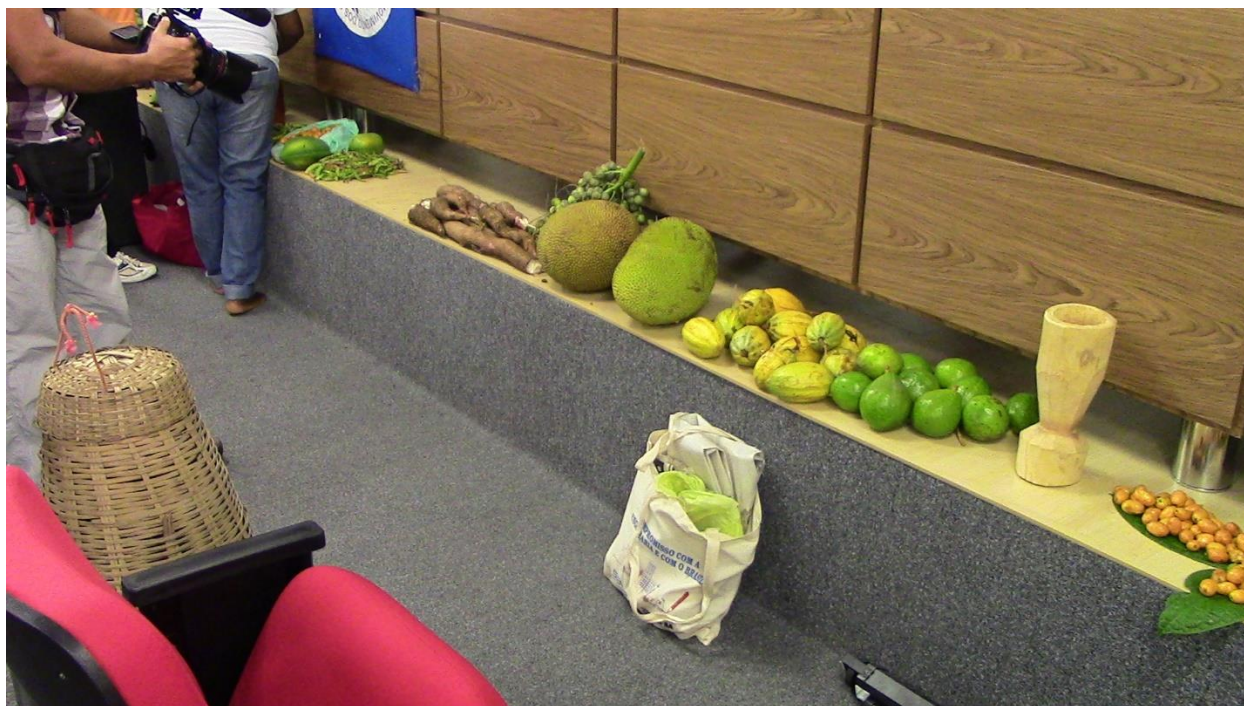


Figure 4.4 Quilombo fruits and community products at Rio dos Macacos public audience. Photo by Adam Bledsoe

INCRA unveiled a new proposal which they seemed to think would surprise the community. This newest proposal, of 104 hectares, did not call for the removal of the quilombo's eldest family. It allowed them to remain on their land and included another small parcel of land that had been left out of the previous proposal. The rest of the land was not open for negotiation due to its proximity to the dam. The importance of state security was again repeated by the government, stating that what the navy had built needed to be protected. In addition to this, the need to reserve land for training space for the soldiers was also brought up. They explained that soldiers currently had to leave the state to conduct their training—reserving this land in question would facilitate training for the soldiers in Bahia. One of the INCRA representatives added a somewhat impatient qualification, as well, stating that the government was essentially reaching its limit with the amount of land it was willing to offer the quilombo. In short, this was the maximum amount of land Rio dos Macacos would get. The community had anticipated this approach by the government. In previous meetings the quilombolas had

discussed the fact that there were notable elisions with regard to the land the government had offered them in its previous proposal of eighty-six hectares. They correctly assumed that the government would try to come back with a new proposal which they would pitch as being far more generous than past offers. Having expected this move by the government representatives, the quilombo moved forward with its own counter-proposal.

Standing before the audience comprised of journalists, local politicians, representatives from the navy, and members of INCRA, the counter-map was projected onto the presentation screen and two women quilombola leaders explained their territorial demands. The quilombo was demanding 280 hectares of land, more than twice what the government was offering and just short of what the original INCRA report had demarcated as quilombola territory. With the land they were making seven demands of the government with regard to their community's situation: Integrity of the quilombola territory; food security and income generation; rights to water security; preservation of natural water sources; shared use of the naval dam; preservation of the community's sacred sites; and the implementing of policies guaranteed to Brazilian citizens.

Regarding the quilombo's territorial integrity, one of the community leaders explained that the quilombo was one territory and could not be divided. This was undoubtedly in response to the navy's attempts to divide the quilombolas both territorially and internally; here the community was rejecting the military's divisive agenda, insisting on the unity of quilombola territorial integrity. The second demand was couched in terms of needing to sustain themselves through access to land for planting and water for fishing. The third demand—for access to water—was couched in similar terms as the second point. Water was needed for fishing, watering animals, and irrigating crops. The fourth point was invoked as a preservation of the traditional practices of the community, as it was explained that the quilombolas had always

preserved and maintained access to the rivers surrounding their community. The second, third, and fourth demands, therefore, focused on the quilombo's legacy of self-subsistence, which is so important to them. Presenting the fifth point, regarding the use of the dam, one of the quilombola leaders explained that the community could not take administrative control of the dam, but, considering their need for water, they wanted to negotiate terms of use of the dam with the navy. On the map they produced, they had strategically left out most of the land surrounding the naval dam, as they recognized the navy's fixation on the dam as a strategic location of national security. Still, they demanded access to part of the land around the dam so that they might fish there as they had done in the past. The sixth point touched on the locations which were central to the community's practice of Candomblé, asserting that these spaces needed to be preserved, as Candomblé and its built environment of the terreiros have been vital cultural, religious, and distribution sites for the community. The seventh and final point put forward by the community demanded that, as a community, the quilombolas be allowed electricity, basic sanitation provisions, access to healthcare, education, and a community center. Their demands for this land were rooted in their desire and expectation to grow as a community, as they hoped to pass their land and customs on to their children and their children's children. This was something they did not see as possible with seriously diminished land. This final demand was very much rooted in the future aspirations of the quilombo, demonstrating that, contrary to popular Brazilian notions of quilombos, modern-day marronage in Brazil is a viable option for the future of Black populations there.

Given that a major part of the quilombo's future was the return of the nearly fifty families that had been expelled during the height of the navy's aggression, it was necessary to maximize the amount of land the quilombo received. How, the quilombolas queried, was a community of

around seventy families going to survive on 104 hectares of land, which amounts to less than two hectares per family? Where would they plant their cassava, their bananas, their cocoa? How would they be able to collect their dendê or squash? Any hope for future generations and a population increase would essentially be impossible. By diminishing the quilombo's land, they explained, the government was essentially saying to the quilombo, "você não pode parir mais."¹⁴ Furthermore, they argued, much of the land left out of the government's proposal were areas vital to the extractive practices of the community. The community's commitment to self-sustenance was dependent on this area, which was completely absent from all of the government's proposals. To further prove the quilombo's history on the land and the losses they had already suffered at the hands of the navy, a second counter-map was presented to the audience. This map showed the land loss that the community had already sustained, representing the entire 900 hectares that had been occupied prior to the navy's incursion and land grab. How could the government ask for more land, given what they had already taken from the community?

INCRA representatives were visibly surprised and frustrated by this move from the quilombolas. One representative exasperatedly hurled a veiled threat at the community, explaining that, given the fact that elections were upcoming, the community needed to seriously consider their best option—if the current presidential administration was ousted, there was no telling how much longer the titling process might take. This comment meant more than simply noting the possibility of a delay in territorial titling. In saying this, the representative was acknowledging the fact that further delay in the titling process meant that the quilombo would remain open to the predations of the navy. This representative was signaling the government's

¹⁴ You can no longer give birth

ability to allow the navy to continue its abuse of the quilombolas; a particularly heavy threat considering the content of the opening statements made by the quilombola elder.

After this initial pronouncement by INCRA, the meeting was again opened up for comment. A man who identified himself as a former professor of political science at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) stood up and vehemently commented on the fact that the approach the government was taking, in protecting military interests over those of the population, was exactly in step with the military dictatorship that had run the country for over twenty years. He went on to argue that by offering a small amount of land to the quilombolas, the government was not dooming them to immediate erasure, but rather to eventual destruction—“Não morre hoje, mas morre amanhã,”¹⁵ he exclaimed. After the ex-professor’s intervention, a member of the architectural team that aided Rio dos Macacos in making their map spoke. She began by saying that, despite the titling process’ reliance on maps, what was being discussed was not hard data, but rather the life of the community in question, emphasizing the humanity of the community as more important than modern, abstract cartographical representations. She further critiqued the cartographic representations of INCRA, stating that the river which was represented as being in the community in the newest government proposal was not, indeed, there. She based this on her own familiarity with the area, as she had surveyed the quilombo territory several times with the quilombolas. Following her was the same community elder that had spoken at the beginning of meeting. He demanded that the abuse of the government stop, eventually breaking down into tears as he shouted what the navy’s presence meant for the community: “É estupro! É tiro! É vergonha!”¹⁶

¹⁵ You don’t die today, but you die tomorrow

¹⁶ It’s rape! It’s shots [bullets]! It’s shame!

The next speaker was a young woman who identified herself saying that while she was not from Rio dos Macacos, her roots were there. She began by addressing the elder whose speech had preceded hers, saying that the tears and cries of the community did not convince the government; that the government used many weapons against the quilombo. These weapons were not reduced solely to arms, rather the community's ignorance also served as a means of oppression for the navy. Why, she asked, did the quilombo have to apologize and ask pardon after being raped, prevented from planting, and treated like animals? Finally, one of the quilombo's lawyers spoke. He started by frankly saying that the quilombo was hesitant to believe anything the navy said or promised, given the lies it had told in the past. He cited the navy's 2012 claim that the community had invaded its territory—a claim used as the impetus to order the quilombolas' expulsion—as an example. He went on to say that it was not clear why the navy was making such a big deal about the threat to “national security” that the quilombo posed vis-à-vis the dam, given that the navy had donated significant amounts of its land in the Bay of Aratu to the company M. Dias Branco. Why was the question of security brought up when it came to Rio dos Macacos, but not when it came to a large corporation? The Chief Minister of the Ministry of Defense, Antônio Lessa, closed the meeting by saying that he was glad the community had offered a counter proposal, although it was much different than what the navy had in mind. This tactic by Rio dos Macacos served to confront the navy in a space defined by state power, yet it also simultaneously drew on the quilombo's unique political and territorial understandings. By presenting cartographical representations based on their own territorial knowledge, showing the state's anti-Black agenda through making demands that run counter to state expectations and yet remain vital to the quilombola subjectivity, and creating spaces for the expression of quilombo cultural practices like capoeira and dance, Rio dos Macacos used a space

of state sovereignty to at once critique state racism, as well as assert the territorial viability of their community.

The quilombo's way of life is very much dependent on their own sense of place and territorial practices amidst a society predicated on their destruction. Still, they choose to confront the state in spaces like the Federal Public Ministry because they recognize that such spaces codify the proceedings that take place therein as legitimate. In the same vein, the quilombo chooses to represent their territory with cartographical renderings and legal speech that state actors understand, in order that these same state actors recognize that there is, indeed, a claim to territory being made. Meeting the state in these ways prevents state actors from ignoring completely the quilombo's territorial claims, forcing them to take note of the community's aspirations. The quilombo understands that their own territory and territoriality is completely illegible to the Brazilian state, as their relation to, and understanding of, their territory exist in concepts wholly other to that of the sovereign state. At the same time, however, they do not let this fact deter them from confronting the state with their territorial agenda.

In recognizing the state's inability to see them as legitimate politico-spatial actors, Rio dos Macacos draws on the assistance of those they know can help them represent their territorial claims in ways that the state would understand. The architects' and lawyers' involvements in the quilombo's struggle served to paint the quilombolas' claims in a way and a language that the state is capable of comprehending, and, as such, forced the state to consider the community's claims. This is a tactic the quilombo has employed since about 2010, when it first brought its case to the federal government. Their struggle, obviously, preceded their entrance into the legal process to have their territory recognized, however, given the kind of violence they found themselves facing in the late 2000s, they felt it necessary to enter into negotiations with the

government, in an attempt to preserve their traditional territory. This timeframe further demonstrates that the territorial struggle of the quilombo cannot be conflated with their interactions with the Brazilian state. The engagement with state technologies of power are but one aspect of the quilombo's much larger struggle, as is further demonstrated later in this chapter.

Over a year later, no action had been taken on the part of the government with regards to responding to the quilombo's counter-proposal, nor in the construction of the community's private road into the quilombo. On the afternoon of July 7, 2015, various representatives from the government, including a woman from the office of the President of the Republic, a technician from INCRA, and a representative from the Secretary for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPROMI) visited the community to update them on the status of the government's role in the territorial titling process. Immediately the quilombolas launched into their critique of the government and its failure to recognize the community's demands.

They argued that the government had never responded or acknowledged the community's counter-claim of 280 hectares. Again they reiterated that 104 hectares was not a sufficient amount for their community to survive into the future. For one, they claimed, much of the 104 hectares being offered by the government was Mata Atlântica, which is land protected under environmental legislation—how could they survive on that? When their kids got married and had kids, where would the families live then? Furthermore, they were frustrated with the fact that they had yet to receive basic services in the community, such as water, electricity, and plumbing—was the government planning on holding these things hostage until they accepted the offer of 104 hectares? They clarified that they were not suggesting the government do everything for the community, rather, they were bringing attention to the fact that the navy was

still not allowing the quilombolas to address their own needs. The quilombolas were still prevented from bringing house-building materials past the guards at the villa's gate. This led to them continuing to live in precarious housing, with all of the problems this brought with it. For instance, one quilombola rhetorically asked, how many snakes do we have to kill in our homes before we're allowed to build decent houses?¹⁷

A community elder came to the front of the room, claiming that the government and navy had no respect for the quilombo. The quilombolas built both the dam and the villa, he emphasized. They had labored as slaves for the navy, and yet they still received no respect. Community members continued on, explaining that they were aggressive with government officials that came to the quilombo because they were tired of broken promises. The issue should have been resolved a long time ago, they argued, but it was still in process because the government continues to do whatever the navy wants. Despite the difficulties, the quilombolas maintained that the struggle was going to continue, as they had a right to their territory.

Continuing on, they registered their lack of faith in other promises the government had made. They had no facts or information with regards to how the government planned to build lakes or river tributaries in their territory. What is more, they argued, it was not necessary to *build* water sources, as the area was one that was rich in bodies of water. They asked why there had been no news on the building of the community's personal road. The government retorted, saying that it was ready to begin construction on the northern end of the community, but that the necessary surveys had not been done on the southern end of the quilombo yet. The families that lived on the north side of the quilombo stated that if there were no southern road, there would be

¹⁷ Snakes and other dangerous animals are common visitors in casas de barro. Stories of community members killing poisonous snakes and toads in their houses are far from unusual.

no northern road either—the quilombo was one single community, and no families would be treated differently. The government used this as an opportunity to threaten the quilombolas, saying that if the community did not want the roads, that was perfectly fine; they did not need to be built. The quilombolas again protested and the government responded by promising that they would both begin construction on the north side of the community and begin the necessary processes to eventually build on the south end.

Throughout the meeting, the government agents never directly responded to the quilombo's critique that they were ignoring the community's counter-proposal of 280 hectares. Instead, the representatives kept saying that the community had every right to demand what they thought was a fair amount—but in the meantime the government was going to proceed as if 104 hectares was the ultimate amount the community would receive. Put another way, the government was going to move forward with the process of titling 104 hectares of quilombo land, with the understanding that, down the road, the community could continue to petition for increases in their territorial claims. Taking this route and assuming everything went to plan, the government representatives promised the community a title to its land by December, 2015. The quilombolas, again, asserted that 104 was not sufficient and again the government officials offered a veiled threat, stating that if this was not satisfactory to the community, they could stop the process altogether and then see how long it would take them to get titled. The meeting closed with the government promising to send a team of technicians from INCRA to measure the 104 hectares the government was willing to cede the quilombo. This would be done the following week in order to quickly establish the physical parameters of the community's territory.

The following week, however, the quilombolas received an unexpected shock when they discovered that INCRA had measured the land *prior* to the scheduled meeting, and in so doing had completely left out a family that was currently settled in the community. This neglected family was distraught, stating that they had been in all of the original territorial measurements that had been made in the community. The land which was being offered in this mapping left absolutely no room for the families that had been displaced from the territory and wished to come back. In addition to these actions, which promised to seriously minimize the families that could live in that section of the quilombo, the land that INCRA included in their map of the southern portion of the quilombo was land that was essentially inhospitable for planting. It was explained to me that the good land was mapped out of the quilombo, which would prevent them from being able to plant for and sustain themselves.

If this were not enough, this poor land was also part of an area that was protected by environmental laws, meaning that if the quilombolas decided to try and plant, they would be legally prohibited from doing so. Some expressed fear that if they accepted this measurement of the government, it would lead to this part of the quilombo being totally isolated, with no way of providing for itself, as the villa remained in place, cutting the quilombo into two parts. Essentially, it would mean the imminent end of this portion of the community. This necessitated a rejection of the measurement by the community and new rounds of community meetings on how to remedy the situation. This problem has yet to be resolved.

Regardless of the government's repeated promises of territorial recognition and the protection it insists this will afford the community, the members of Rio dos Macacos know that they cannot continue their way of life if they lose more than two thirds of their land, particularly when the land that would be left to them is not fit for cultivation. A limited amount of land

would mean a crowding of living spaces as formerly displaced members of the quilombo came back to live. This would also mean putting extreme pressure on the cultivable land that the community would have access to. A crowded living situation would also force the community to “build up,” or engage in a more urbanized form of settlement. “Eles querem que a gente vire favela,”¹⁸ was an expression I heard numerous times from members of the quilombo, describing what the acceptance of the government’s terms would ultimately mean.¹⁹

Aside from signaling the impending destruction of their traditional farming and foraging practices, becoming an urbanized favela brings with it the specter of involvement with the undesirable aspects of urban life in Salvador. These undesirable aspects are usually associated with the violence that comes along with the presence of police, drug use, and drug trafficking. To many quilombolas, allowing the community to become more connected to the surrounding, urbanized community would mean inviting new articulations of anti-Black violence into their lives.

Despite the frustrations they face in doing so, interacting with the government in these capacities was and still is a necessity for the community. In these engagements, the quilombo is not so much demanding inclusion in the state apparatus as it is using a juridical arrangement to both bring attention to the abuses the navy has visited upon it, as well as attempting to protect its own territory, albeit with an imperfect tool. By appealing to the legislation on quilombola rights, Rio dos Macacos is able to bring focus to a situation which had previously been unknown to outside actors. Moreover, by engaging with certain outside actors, like their lawyers and the

¹⁸ They want us to become a favela

¹⁹Here the term “favela” does not mean the formation of unregistered housing, the way it did in the past. Rather, it is the word used to designate the auto-constructed settlements in the generally poorer areas outside of the city center of Salvador. Thus, “favelas,” in this sense of the word, are extremely common housing structures in Salvador and its surrounding metropolitan area.

architectural team, the quilombolas are able to produce cartographical representations that are legible to both their oppressors and the sovereign power of the state. While these maps will never exist as a true representation of the spatial being or understanding as quilombolas, it nonetheless serves as a means of temporarily holding off the navy's aggressions. The quilombo is thereby using representations that are legible to the government in their negotiations. This means representing space in a way that is quantifiable and calculable, despite the fact that the quilombo does not understand its territory in this way. By using the language of the modern subject, Rio dos Macacos acknowledges the power of the sovereign state at the same time that it seeks to live a non-sovereign existence. The quilombo's ability to bring their struggle to the public is not reserved to the realm of government meetings, however. Recognizing the power of ultra-state actors as well as the influence that media outlets can bring to bear on situations also influences quilombola actions.

Rio dos Macacos and ultra-state actors

During my fieldwork, I was witness to Rio dos Macacos engaging with ultra-state actors, while also using certain tools and relations that they felt would bring ultra-state actors into their struggle in a manner beneficial to their struggle. This meant engaging with the United Nations, as well as a number of media sources. In February, 2014, a special commission from the United Nations visited Salvador. This commission was led by Dr. Raquel Rolnik, UN Special Rapporteur on adequate housing. This commission visited several different communities throughout all of Salvador during their brief time in the city. One of these communities was Rio dos Macacos. The UN group arrived in the community early in the morning. Along with Dr. Rolnik came several photographers and video assistants who documented the meeting. Initially, Dr. Rolnik interviewed the community's eldest member, asking her about life before and after

the arrival of the navy. The quilombola elder discussed everything from the community's productive practices to her own personal life as a wife and mother. Dr. Rolnik's line of questioning kept returning to the issue of when life for the community became "bad" due to the navy. This was a topic which she seemed intent on understanding and documenting. When the questions shifted to the future hopes for the community, younger members of the quilombo took over responding.

What the community wanted, they stated, was their territorial title, the 301 hectares they currently had, the right to plant their land, the right to fish the rivers, and the right for the expelled families to return. They did not want to take any of the navy's land, they simply wanted to live on the land they had now without any problems. At this point, several women whose families had been driven out of the quilombo spoke up. One explained that her grandfather had had a *casa de farinha* in the quilombo. She wanted to return to the territory, she said, because her grandfather had had land there and it was thus due to her. Others that had been expelled came forward, discussing how things had been before the navy arrived—how they had produced almost everything they consumed, had had their own houses, *terreiros*, and *casas de farinha* before the navy had destroyed all of it. Another community elder came forward to discuss some of the quilombo's history with the commission. He explained that the community had its roots back in the days when slavery was still practiced. The *fazenda* owner (Coriolan do Bahia) did not mind the fact that his slaves essentially started their own independent community. In this way, the quilombo had been established while the community's antecedents were still nominally enslaved. He claimed that it was after Coriolan do Bahia had died that the land had been sold to the navy. Before leaving, Dr. Rolnik explained that the housing conditions she saw in the quilombo were among the worst she had seen during her time in Salvador and that there was no

excuse for the people having to live in such a situation. After this, her and her group left the quilombo, heading to visit another community in the city.

Later that afternoon, the quilombo traveled to the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) to hear the results of the visits that Dr. Rolnik had made during her time in Salvador. The various communities that she had visited were given time to make a short presentation on their situation.²⁰ Dr. Rolnik finished the meeting with a long-winded speech describing the UN's idea of just living conditions. She acknowledged that while there was no guarantee that anything would come of the report, she was most certainly going to present the UN with everything she had seen and heard while in Salvador. She argued, however, that the most important thing in these situations was that other people hear about what was going on. She concluded her speech by saying that, without engaging with the UN and telling their stories, there was no way that others would ever hear about their situations. While Rio dos Macacos appealed to the United Nations with the understanding that this was one way to bring further scrutiny to their situation and offered some potential for reprieve, the community also reached out to other outside actors.

I spent a significant amount of time filming different things in Quilombo Rio dos Macacos. I was told by the quilombolas that it was important that I share their story wherever I went. When I offered to put the videos on YouTube and translate the images into English and Spanish, they accepted wholeheartedly. I was told that certain activities—such as the counter-mapping project—were not to be shared publicly, due to their strategic importance to the struggle against the navy. However, events like the public audiences, protests, traditional community practices, and quilombola commentary on their situation were all open for

²⁰ The other communities present at this talk were Condomínio da Mangueiras, Moradores do Cassange, Gamboa de Baixo, Nosso Bairro 2 de Julho, Moradores de Preguiça, an association of residents from the Pelourinho, Movimento Sem Teto da Bahia, and Associação de Moradores do Centro Histórico.

divulcation. With their blessing I was able to create a YouTube channel for them and post the videos I recorded of them and the struggles of which they were a part.

My efforts are hardly the only ones that attempt to bring the quilombo's story to a wider audience, however. YouTube contains perhaps tens of videos about Rio dos Macacos' struggle, including everything from personal interviews to footage of the community partaking of its daily practices. Social media outlets like Facebook and Twitter are used by those connected to their struggle to spread breaking news about their case. During my time with the community, I also met several groups that were working on film projects about the community. One group was putting together a special for TeleSur, an alternative news outlet based in Venezuela. I encountered a man from Bahia who had received funding from the state government to carry out a documentary on the quilombo, as well. He was frequently at community meetings and events, recording what they were going through.

Local news sources were also frequently covering quilombo news. News outlets like *A Tarde* made several trips to the quilombo in 2015, with the intention of mounting a story about the history of the community and its current land claims. On July 20, 2015, the *A Tarde* article, authored by Tatiana Mendonça and titled "Terra Partida" (Divided Land), was published. The piece focused on the stark contrast between the lived spaces of the quilombo and the neighboring naval villa, discussing the ongoing relations between Rio dos Macacos and the navy. The article also discussed some of the history of the community, as well as the abuses and aggressions it suffered at the hands of the navy—abuses which, the article states, have gone largely unreported. Overall, Mendonça's piece is a sympathetic one, touching on the inequalities present in the community, when compared with their antagonists. Indeed, media attention to the case of Rio dos Macacos has been fairly constant, as newspapers like *A Tarde* have consistently covered

stories about the quilombo since 2013.²¹ The divulgation of the quilombo's story is an attempt to bring wider attention to the community's struggle. The intent to bring outside actors in to assist is a clear indication that the quilombo knows the state is not the only sovereign actor in the world. Their interaction with the United Nations, for instance, demonstrates Rio dos Macacos' knowledge of the international hierarchy of sovereignty, as they seek to use the UN's authority against the Brazilian state.

The quilombo's appeal to the United Nations demonstrates its awareness of the fact that certain intranational organizations have power and influence over state actors. It was mentioned to me several times by the quilombolas that they hoped that the UN would make some kind of intervention or judgment regarding their situation which would benefit them. Because of this, the quilombo took the time to interact with Dr. Raquel Rolnik and her team when they arrived in Salvador. Such an approach reflects the quilombo's analysis of the current global geopolitical climate. Clearly, the community understands that sovereignty is not solely the purview of state actors. Again, while they do not rely on a sovereign approach to their own internal politics, they do acknowledge the influence that certain sovereign actors do have, and, in some cases, seek to use those actors' faculties for the benefit of the quilombo.

In a similar manner, Rio dos Macacos also seeks to use the international public as a forum for articulating their struggle. Occasionally members of the quilombo described to me how they believed that the more the international community learned about their struggle, they more likely an ultra-state organization like the United Nations would get involved in their struggle for territory. More commonly articulated, however, was the sentiment that the

²¹ Journalistic reports about Rio dos Macacos such as this are not uncommon. Stories about the quilombo appeared in both print and broadcast news sources. Nonetheless, it is not clear to me how these efforts had an effect on public understandings of the community's situation. The people in the neighborhood I lived in, for instance, did not appear to have any knowledge of Rio dos Macacos or the other Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu.

community wanted as many people as possible around the world to know what they were going through. They explained to me that increased visibility meant possible beneficial intervention by influential parties. The translation and spreading of their situation was the only thing they ever asked of me during my time there. Clearly, international attention was something the quilombolas believed was important for their cause. The quilombo, therefore, attempts to leverage one form of sovereignty against another. In addition to appealing to outside actors in a targeted manner, Rio dos Macacos often made their discontent visible to the public eye through their own actions.

Rio dos Macacos and civil disobedience

Following the January, 2014 destruction of a quilombola house in Rio dos Macacos, images of the quilombo's protest reached YouTube and mainstream news sources in Bahia. More important than these media representations, however, was the quilombo's ability to obstruct the navy's everyday activities and bring public attention to their struggle. As soon as the quilombo was alerted to the fact that a house had been destroyed, all members immediately began organizing. Several members took me to the scene of the aggression and told me to begin filming while they explained what happened. "Estamos vivendo um *militarismo*,"²² exclaims a quilombola woman in the YouTube video that captured this day. "[Os fusileiros chegam] para derrubar, acabar com tudo...como é que pode?"²³ she continues, ultimately asserting, "todo mundo tem direito a viver!"²⁴ Another quilombola man berates the naval officers that were

²² We're living a *militarism*

²³ [The soldiers arrive] to tear down, to finish with everything...how can this be?

²⁴ Everyone has a right to live!

summoned to the area in wake of the attack on the house; “Oi, comandante, eu quero, no dia aqui que eles paguem todinho!”²⁵ he shouts as he stomps around the debris of the fallen house. While some members of the quilombo remained near the destroyed house with the now displaced family, other quilombolas moved to protest the action and disrupt the functions of the naval villa itself. At the gate where residents and visitors enter the villa, one quilombola drove his car into the entrance, parking so that nobody could enter or exit. Quickly the community gathered there, demanding that the navy provide the materials necessary to rebuild the house, and that they begin construction on a new entrance which the community would use for access to the quilombo. Until this was done, they explained, they would remain in the entrance, and nobody would come or go.

During this protest, I continued to film, while different community members made statements about the conditions they lived in, and their resolve to combat the violence they faced. “Os escravos existem! A senzala, o tronco e a corrente existem no Quilombo Rio dos Macacos pela Marinha de Guerra do Brasil! A Marinha de Guerra do Brasil trata nossa comunidade como uma verdadeira senzala,”²⁶ one quilombola woman asserted as she looked into the camera. She continued, “Agora mesmo, a gente está aqui e a gente só vai sair daqui quando a casa estiver de pé e quando botarem os tratores na estrada para puder fazer.”²⁷ She went on to state that while the soldiers’ commanding officer said that he had not ordered the destruction of the house, “eles falaram que quem mandou eles vir e derrubar a casa foi o comandante. Se o comandante não

²⁵ Hey, commander, today I want them to pay for it all!

²⁶ Slaves exist! The slave quarters, the trunk and the chain exist in Quilombo Rio dos Macacos because of the Brazilian Navy! The Brazilian Navy treats our community like true slave quarters

²⁷ Right now, we’re here and we’re only going to leave when the house is back up and when they bring tractors to make the [alternate] entrance

tem a capacidade de mandar os homens dele, quem é que mais vai mandar?”²⁸ She summarized the community’s feelings on their situation by stating, “A gente não quer nenhuma militar da Marinha lá dentro do nosso território.”²⁹

Another quilombola spoke over the phone, registering her feelings on the navy’s actions and the quilombo’s position; “a marinha não é dono do mundo,”³⁰ she asserted forcefully. “A gente está aqui tentando resolver problema e eles vêm para fazer uma merda,”³¹ she continued, “eles estão dando uma retaliação...para meter medo.”³² This, however, would not deter the quilombo, she vowed. “A gente não tem medo de morrer, não! Quem está aqui tem cento e oitenta, duzentos anos na terra. São terroristas mesma! A marinha do Brasil é terrorista—pode jogar para todos os jornais! É terrorista a marinha do Brasil; principalmente a marinha de Aratu! A marinha da Bahia é terrorista com quilombola! Pode falar para o mundo inteiro! A marinha de Aratu é a vergonha da marinha brasileira. É uma desgraça! Só pensa em bater em mulher, só pensa em bater em pobre e lascar quilombola.”³³

After hours of protesting in the hot summer sun, a naval truck arrived loaded with bags of cement to help rebuild the house that had been torn down. With the arrival of the truck, the community desisted in their occupation of the gate entrance, and allowed the comings and goings

²⁸ They said that who had ordered them to come and tear down the house was the commander. If the commander doesn’t have the capacity to order his men, who else is going to order them?

²⁹ We don’t want any military [person] from the Navy inside of our territory

³⁰ The Navy isn’t ruler of the world

³¹ We’re here trying to resolve problems and they come to do shit

³² They retaliating...to scare [the quilombo]

³³ We’re not scared to die! Those here have 180, 200 years on the earth. They’re terrorists, all right! The Brazilian Navy is a terrorist—you can put that all over the news! The Brazilian Navy is a terrorist; principally the Navy in Aratu! The Navy in Bahia is a terrorist with quilombolas! You can tell the whole world! The Navy of Aratu is the shame of the Brazilian Navy. It’s damnation! It only thinks about hitting women, it only thinks about beating poor people and screwing over quilombolas.

of those in the villa. It is important to recognize that this protest was more than simply a publicity stunt, aimed at getting the public's attention. While several journalists did arrive to cover the event, even more important was the quilombo's resolve to hold the navy accountable for their actions. This is evidenced in numerous pronouncements by the quilombolas, who vowed not to leave until the house was rebuilt and asserted that everyone has a right to live. By occupying the entrance to the naval villa, the quilombolas were interrupting the quotidian engagements of their oppressor, in much the same way that the navy continually obstructed the quilombo's attempts at living their own way of life. In so doing, the quilombolas were forcing the navy to recognize the oppressive nature of their actions, and, contrary to the navy's wishes, obligating them to address their aggression against the community. An action which would have otherwise gone unnoticed or un-addressed by the navy became an action which resulted in the obstruction of the navy's mundane existence. This realization was not lost on those that live in the villa.

After the protest was over and we headed back to the quilombo, I found myself in an argument with a resident of the villa and one of the quilombolas. The villa resident registered her anger with the fact that the community would obstruct the gate in such a way, stating that those living in the villa had done nothing to the quilombolas. She went on to angrily state that the land had never belonged to the quilombo in the first place and that they had no right to prevent people from getting to their homes. Through these statements she showed the navy's and general public's inability to recognize the quilombo as a legitimate lived space. While there were people residing on the land, she clearly did not see them as worthy of recognition as political subjects. To her, the presence of the quilombos was obviously subordinate to those she deemed truly political subjects—the people living in the villa. She rejected the notion that

quilombola life was equal in value to the life of those living in the villa, evidencing the societal assumption that Black life has no politico-spatial value.



Figure 4.5 Rio dos Macacos' blockade of the naval villa in Janaury, 2014. Photo by Adam Bledsoe

Like the social movements of Latin America (Zibechi 2012; Reyes 2012), Rio dos Macacos forces their oppressors to acknowledge their existence and spatial presence through protesting. While public attention was garnered with this tactic, Rio dos Macacos also demonstrated their ability to organize and realize a collective action against the navy. Such a maneuver demonstrates the power that the quilombo as a collective organization has. This collective approach is also present in the community's internal organization.

Rio dos Macacos internal organization

While the modes of struggle noted above entail the quilombo interacting with outside actors, one of the means of struggle which remains central to their continuation as a community is found in their own internal activities. These are the aspects of quilombo life which often

remain unseen to the public, but which are invaluable for the social reproduction of Rio dos Macacos. While the actions geared toward reaching outside actors rely on the influence which these actors have vis-à-vis the Brazilian government and navy, the internal activities practiced by the quilombo focus on self-reproduction and analysis, as well as self-sustenance. These internal actions involve a myriad of practices, from food production, to self-defense, to community meetings. While they vary in nature, they all nonetheless take place at the grassroots level between those that comprise the quilombo. These are the practices that comprise the unique power relations and social arrangements that establish the quilombo's unique territory.

Productive Practices

As is evident in the community's history, the ability for the quilombolas to produce what they consume and to have control over their own means of production is vital to their identity as a quilombo. It is precisely this aspect of quilombo life that the navy has continually targeted through their destruction of crops, poisoning of fruit trees, and prevention of quilombola fishing. It would be inaccurate to say that these measures by the navy have not had devastating effects on the community. Whereas before the community had its own crops and foodstuffs, today the quilombolas are forced to receive government food aid to fill in much of what they consume. Before, the quilombolas had their own casas de farinha; today, they receive portions of already-made farinha from the government—farinha which I am told is of a lesser quality than what they used to make. In the past, the quilombo cultivated its own beans—a staple for all meals in Bahia; today, their beans come as part of the cesta básica.³⁴ While they used to communally distribute fish among community members after long days and nights on the rivers and shores

³⁴A cesta básica is government food aid that is offered to traditional communities that have achieved cultural recognition as such.

near their community, today they are often forced to go to the super market and buy the frozen fish sold there. Despite these setbacks in their ability to produce for themselves, however, the quilombolas have remained intransigent in their willingness and ability to continue to self-sustain.

Regardless of the fact that the navy remains insistent on destroying their crops, the quilombolas today continue to clear and plant their land. Community members work side by side with hoes, shovels, and machetes to clear underbrush, cut down bamboo trees, and remove weeds from their land. Manioc, mangoes, jackfruit, guava, African palm, cocoa, cajá (hog plum), avocados, and jenipapo are all still cultivated on quilombola land. From these are made an assortment of juices, foods, and dendê—all products which are consumed within the community. Some quilombolas even make their own licor from cajá and jenipapo which they then sell to people outside the community.³⁵ The quilombo's ability to maintain these agricultural practices is truly incredible when one considers that, in addition to the navy's aggressions, there occurred in 2015 a series of torrential rains, which destroyed much of the quilombo's crop. One quilombola, who had spent most of 2014 clearing her land in order to plant, assured me that, regardless of the destruction the rains had wrought, she would clear her land and plant it again. These productive practices are whole-community endeavors, as well. Community members work together to help clear, plant, and harvest the land on which they work. One quilombola whose husband had recently died, was aided by several other members in the clearing and planting of her land. Another quilombola family was aided by the community in their harvest of their cajá, which was then distributed among community members in order to

³⁵Licor is an alcoholic drink that is typical in the Northeast of Brazil. It is made with cachaça (sugarcane liquor) and any variety of fruit juices. Selling this drink can be especially lucrative during regional festivals like São João.

make juice and licor. Still others help with the collection of dendê and its transformation into azeite. This same refusal to succumb to the difficulties thrust upon them is demonstrated in the quilombo's ability to shelter themselves.

In addition to destroying the houses which already existed in the community, the navy has gone to lengths to ensure that no more quilombo houses would be built. Preventing the entrance of construction materials, as well as tearing down whatever is in the process of being built are both methods the navy has used and continues to use to try and force the quilombolas off of their traditional land. The quilombolas have responded to constructing houses which do not require great amounts of time to build. This ensures that the navy will have less time to interrupt the building process. This is done through the erection of casas de massapê, also known as casas de barro. These houses are akin to adobe. First, the house's wooden frame is constructed with bamboo and other tree branches, nails, and connecting ties, creating a lattice pattern. Next, water is poured onto clay-like earth and stomped until a kind of mud forms. This clay material is applied to the frame of the house, filling in the cross-sections of the branches, and essentially creating an enclosed establishment which then dries, creating a hard, brick-like substance. Roofs are often made of materials purchased outside of the quilombo, although, in the event that these materials are confiscated or held up by the navy's checkpoint, quilombolas also use palm leaves. Once the house structure is complete, the inside of the house is built. Walls are finished with "reboque" which is a combination of water and cement that is applied and smoothed over, to minimize the amount of dust to which the inhabitants are exposed from the dried clay mixture. The floor is also put in place, made from a cement mixture which is allowed to dry.

Any quilombola will say that these houses are far from ideal. These constructions are, above all, unstable, in that they do not rest on solid foundation and are not made of extremely durable material. Furthermore, houses not finished with reboque on the inside are often host to undesirable animals, including snakes, toads, and a variety of insects. Still, the ability and willingness to create and reside within these dwellings is a testament to the quilombolas' resolve to remain in their own territory. These houses show both a resourcefulness and a commitment to struggle. In constructing these houses, the quilombolas have been able to stave off the navy's agenda of displacement; an agenda rooted in the navy's attempts to exercise sovereign power and establish a "norm" in the assumed empty space of the quilombo. It is important to note here that these houses are not simply individual efforts on the part of the family or individual that resides there. Instead, all members of the community partake of the building and maintenance of these establishments.

After the January, 2014 destruction of the quilombola's house, the entire community mobilized to help in the house's reconstruction. Members whose families had been expelled years previous showed up to help apply the reboque on the inside of the house and to place the roofing tiles. Another instance saw nearly the entire community assist in the building of the house of a quilombola who was returning to the territory years after her family had been expelled. On the day when community members finished the cement floor for her house, she turned to me as I helped her place the furniture on the new floor and profoundly explained, "Assim é a luta da gente."³⁶

Continuing and propagating quilombola territory is, therefore, not a singular, individualist effort. Rather, the quilombo, as a collective, demonstrates the understanding that

³⁶ Thus is our struggle

creating and maintaining a community requires the involvement and participation of every quilombola. Moreover, these collective efforts are realized as daily praxis. Continuing the quilombola way of life means more than simply fantastical, attention-grabbing events. The life of the community is preserved through everyday activities. Here it is important to note that, per the example of those quilombolas that live outside the quilombo territory but are still involved, a quilombola ethic and territorial commitment can be, and is, practiced even by those that reside outside the actual physical confines of the community. The ethic of quilombismo is a communal one that premises itself on the respect for and propagation of Black life. The territoriality of the quilombo subjectivity involves a commitment to the quilombo territory regardless of where one resides on a day-to-day basis, meaning that one can have a commitment and relation to quilombo territory without living there everyday. This is clear from the way in which families expelled from the quilombo return to assist in things like repairing and constructing houses. Quilombismo, therefore, signifies a territorial commitment which transcends lived space. While creation and propagation are very clearly central to the quilombola ethic, so, too, is the defense of quilombo territory.

Defense Practices

One of the first things that I heard from the members of Rio dos Macacos when I met them was, “A gente não dorme aqui.”³⁷ Because of their concern for what the navy might do should they go to sleep and not maintain vigilance, the quilombolas take turns sleeping in the community. Those that are not sleeping patrol the community, machetes in hand. They informed me that, should they let their guard down, they would leave themselves open to the

³⁷ We do not sleep here

predations of the navy, which has already shown itself to be capable and willing to perform the most dastardly of actions. This form of armed resistance demonstrates the continuation of the quilombola ethic, five hundred years old, of recognizing the uniqueness of their own territorial practices and the commitment to defending that uniqueness, even if it means putting oneself in harm's way.

The community understands the violence that modern society practices upon Black bodies and that relinquishing their autonomous existence would mean finding themselves in new zones of non-being in Salvador's urban milieu. As such, Rio dos Macacos demonstrates an approach of radical Black consciousness through its recognition and rejection of the violence which typifies Western society. On the one hand, they reject this violence through their varied organizing efforts against the Brazilian navy and its agenda of intimidation and violence. On the other hand, they reject the violence which would come of the government's diminution of their land. Struggling on both of these fronts demonstrates the keen analysis that is central to radical Black struggle, as well as the presence of a radical Black consciousness. Here, the radical Black consciousness is made obvious in the quilombo's refusal to seek recognition through the reliance on modernity's tools of governance as put forward by INCRA and the Brazilian government. Instead of seeking being through taking on a praxis legible to the government, the community continues to practice their own set of political, economic, cultural, and social practices, through which they know and identify themselves. They push forward in their resolve to exist on their own terms despite the combination of threats and promises from the navy and Brazilian government. By remaining committed to defining themselves as a community and reproducing themselves as such, Rio dos Macacos shows themselves capable of analyzing the iterations of modernity with which they find themselves faced and willing to struggle for their traditional way

of life. The quilombo preserves the ethic of quilombismo as their politics focuses on the self-directed governance of their community and rejects inclusion in the modern political apparatus due to its erasure of autonomous Black being.

The Contested Politics of Rio dos Macacos

The Brazilian navy, through its treatment of Quilombo Rio dos Macacos, continues to reaffirm the assumed existence of spaces without a politics; spaces where rights are non-existence and humans do not live. This is the a-political space of exception where assassination attempts, dwelling destruction, beatings, arson, unremunerated labor, and rape take place without any legal acknowledgement that anything of the sort ever happened. In these spaces, the violence that takes place remains at once seemingly invisible and also acceptable, as there is no political subject against which that violence is being perpetrated. Therefore it is no surprise that there remains no prosecution for those responsible for the uncountable aggressions against Rio dos Macacos. The quilombola space of Rio dos Macacos remains a criminalized space today—a space where no law exists to be observed by state actors. Using the quilombo's understanding of this a-political reality as a tool, the Brazilian government and navy hold out the possibility of establishing the community as a *political* space in return for deference to the state's geopolitical agenda.

Despite the government's interchanging promises and threats, Rio dos Macacos remains resolved to defend its territory and traditional cultural, political, and economic practices. This has meant rejecting both the navy's incursions on their territory as well as remaining steadfast in their rejection of the diminution of their territory by INCRA. Like the quilombos of old, Rio dos Macacos must find ways to defend itself from the forces that seek to destroy its alternative set of political and productive practices. The presence of an autonomous community within the

crevices of power of the Brazilian navy has led to numerous attempts at the community's destruction. However, Rio dos Macacos has established a set of practices in defense of their way of life which has become central to their identity as a quilombo community. Community self-defense patrols, planting practices, auto-construction of houses, civil disobedience, and engagement with government representatives all serve to protect and reclaim the quilombo's practices of self-sustenance while also fending off outside aggressions. The defense of these traditions is important because, as the community understands their situation, the navy's continued assaults on their community and the acceptance of the government's terms both signal the imminent destruction of the quilombo's existence. It is obvious that the navy wants nothing less than the total removal of the quilombo from the area. This is evident in the grotesque abuses it has committed against the quilombolas. This is perhaps the most visible, easily-understood articulation of genocidal violence against the community. In addition to this, however, the quilombo understands that accepting the government's minimization of their territory also means the end of their traditional way of life. While Rio dos Macacos organizes against the sovereignty of the state, Ilha de Maré employs their own set of tactics to defend against other forms of modern violence.

Ilha de Maré, sovereign actors, and civil disobedience

Struggling against a slightly different iteration of modernity's rationalized violence than that of Rio dos Macacos, Ilha de Maré has brought attention to, and fought against, the effects of commodity circulation in the Bay of Aratu. Like Rio dos Macacos, Ilha de Maré has shown itself to be a sharp analyzer of specific practices central to modernity. While not in conflict with the navy to the same extent as Rio dos Macacos, Ilha de Maré currently finds its own way of life under attack from the effects of the shipping industry in the Bay. Shipping has had long term

effects in the area, but has manifested itself most perniciously in the past two years, with the fallout from the ship explosion and fuel leak that occurred in December, 2013. Through their recognition of the nature of the shipping industry in Aratu, the quilombolas of Ilha de Maré have coordinated a series of actions which target the industry, obstructing “business as usual” in order to gain attention from those responsible for the threat to their way of life.

Despite the fact that the explosion of the Singaporean *Golden Miller* occurred in December of 2013, the state government of Bahia refused to dialogue with the communities that comprise Ilha de Maré immediately following the accident. While the ship that leaked the petroleum was a private Singaporean vessel, the Docks Company of the State of Bahia (CODEBA) remains in charge of the businesses that frequent the Port of Aratu. As such, it remains the responsibility of CODEBA to respond to situations in which claims and complaints are made against the businesses present there. Having received no recognition of their plight, on February 2, 2014, the quilombolas of Ilha de Maré staged a protest and blockade of the road leading to the Port of Aratu, effectively blocking trucks from dropping off and picking up the ships’ cargoes. The quilombolas’ demands were simple; schedule a meeting with the president of CODEBA, or the road remains closed.

The action started around 5 AM, with the quilombolas collectively occupying the road, carrying banners and signs that registered their complaints with the government and the Port of Aratu, as well as their demands for improving their situation. In addition to blocking the road with their own bodies, a number of quilombolas had brought and parked their cars to obstruct the passage of other vehicles. Around noon, a large tree branch was placed crossways in the road and lit on fire, further obstructing the route to the Port. The trucks headed to the Port of Aratu were backed up for what seemed like miles, their drivers reclining beneath them to escape the

roasting Bahian sun. The community's banners not only drew attention to the December 17th explosion, but also to a number of other issues which the community was facing from private industries. For example, I was informed that there is a thermoelectric plant being built in the region, despite the fact that there is a law stating that no thermoelectric plants could be built within twelve kilometers of a community. The plant is less than three kilometers from the communities of Ilha de Maré and where they fish. The community is concerned with the waste from the plant and the noise from the motors, as it detrimentally affects the sea life on which they depend. The plant's other effects include acid rain, which threatens the health of the people living in the area, as well as the health of the surrounding environment, such as the mangroves and vegetation on which the community depends. The community has been protesting the plans for and construction of this thermoelectric plant since 2010, when the Superintendent for Industrial and Commercial Development (SUDIC) began construction on it. It was explained to me that actions aimed at targeting these issues were necessary because, without staging such protests, businesses and the government would implement all kinds of measures which would have no benefit to the communities in the area.



Figure 4.6 Ilha de Maré protest and blockade of the Port of Aratu. Photo by Adam Bledsoe



Figure 4.7 Debris used to further blockade the Port of Aratu. Photo by Adam Bledsoe

Around noon, a squadron of military police arrived at the protest and implored the quilombo leaders to disperse. An officer argued that they had been in the road since the early morning and that while they had the right to protest, it was time to let people go about their

business. The quilombo leaders stated that they would not be going anywhere until their demands were met. When a car from CODEBA arrived, they said, they might consider lifting the blockade. The policeman, assault rifle slung over his shoulder, continued to insist that the protest end, to which the quilombolas replied that there was nothing left to discuss, and calmly walked away, effectively ending the parlay. As the day wore on, the quilombolas showed themselves prepared to push on with the action. Around 1:00 PM, giant pots of beans, rice, pork, and beef were brought via car to the middle of the road. Plates, bowls, and silverware were distributed among those present, with some people needing to share their platters and utensils. Two lines were then formed and food was distributed to all of those supporting the protest. Sharing the meal in the midst of the protest showed the quilombolas commitment to remaining in the road until their demands were met, as they were able to then carry one with their action.

Shortly after this, word came that CODEBA would be sending a car to bring the quilombo leaders to talk with the president of CODEBA. One of the leaders quipped that what the government was really interested in was freeing the road for the businesses in the Port—not in freeing the people that were protesting. Shortly after 2:00 PM a car from CODEBA arrived to bring the leaders to meet with the company's president. Before getting in the car, Ilha de Maré's leaders spoke into a microphone that was connected to a set of speakers in a car. They stated that the protest could not have been successful without the participation of everyone present—everyone was important to the struggle. With the departure of the quilombo's leaders, the protest dissipated.³⁸

³⁸This, however, was not the only time that the quilombolas strategically blocked the functions of the Port of Aratu. In June, 2014, community members of Ilha de Maré again blockaded the Port, this time with their fishing boats. They collectively swarmed the Port, blocking in the giant freighters that sought to exit the docks with their cargo. This protest, while effective, lasted a much shorter amount of time than did the protest in February of 2014.

In addition to protesting and obstructing the daily business of the Port of Aratu, on June 6, 2014, Ilha de Maré brought their struggle to the city center of Salvador, where they not only made their struggle evident to the general public, but also met with city government officials to register their disgust regarding the way the community was being treated regarding the oil spill. Starting in the Pelourinho, the quilombolas marched to the City Council's Chamber near the historic city center.³⁹ En route to their destination, the quilombolas obstructed traffic by walking through the streets. With them they carried banners that read, "Pescadores e Quilombolas: nossa luta é por terra e água!"; "Contra o Extermínio da Juventude Negra"; "Explosão de Navio: Poluição Confirmada!"; "Território Pesqueiro **LIVRE**"; and "**Basta** de Crimes Ambientais **SEM PUNIÇÃO**".⁴⁰

After arriving at the City Council's Chambers, it was announced that only a certain number of people would be allowed in to the building to witness the meeting between the community and the city council. Initially, I was not allowed into the meeting, as there were many people present. However, eventually a member of a Dutch film team that was working on a special program about Ilha de Maré came to me and told me he could get me into the meeting if I wanted. He went to the policeman guarding the door to the building and told him that I was part of his film team and I went in with him. The meeting was taking place on the second floor of the building. Because I arrived late, I did not get to hear the introductions, nor the planned

³⁹The Pelourinho is the main attraction in the historic center section of the city of Salvador. The name, in Portuguese, means "the whipping post" and was the site of punishments for the slaves during colonial times. Due to agendas of urban renewal and forced expulsions, it has since shifted from being a site of low income housing and prostitution to a center for tourism and various other service industries. Nonetheless, it remains a site frequented by both Brazilians and foreigners alike and is a well-known location for anyone even remotely familiar with Salvador.

⁴⁰ In the same order as the statements written above: "Fisherpeople and Quilombolas: our struggle is for land and water!"; "Against the extermination of Black Youth"; "Ship Explosion: Pollution Confirmed!"; "**FREE** Fishing Territory"; "**Enough** of environmental crimes **WITHOUT PUNISHMENT**"

agenda for the meeting. What I walked into, however, was a scathing indictment of various levels of government in Bahia and beyond, as well as insight into the conditions in which the quilombolas of Ilha de Maré were forced to live.

The points of discussion for Ilha de Maré that I heard touched on access to healthcare, a high school for the community, basic sanitation, basic infrastructure, and recompense for the chemical spill in the Bay of Aratu. The lack of infrastructure, one of the leaders stated, microphone in hand, was a complete scandal. The community had never had the right to a plaza in which their children could play. It was embarrassing, she said, knowing that so many of the youth of their community want to leave the island to move to Salvador, “porque a gente já sabe como é tratado o jovem negro neste estado”.⁴¹ Part of the reason that the youth want to move to Salvador, she said, was because the young people of the island believed Ilha de Maré lacked opportunities, given what they were shown in the media regarding Salvador. She posed the question to the audience, “tem alguma política, um incentivo para os jovens de Ilha de Maré?”⁴² The audience responded with a resounding “Não!”⁴³ She listed a number of the things that the community did not have for their youth: athletic courts; plazas; soccer fields; in short, they did not have very basic things. They were not asking for an enormous structure like Arena Fonte Nova, she stated—they wanted simple things.⁴⁴ Another demand made by the community at this meeting was a road which would link the different parts of the community. Without this basic

⁴¹ Because we know how the Black youth is treated in this state

⁴² Is there some politics, an incentive for the youth of Ilha de Maré?

⁴³ No!

⁴⁴ Arena Fonte Nova is where the soccer club Bahia plays, and was renovated for the 2014 World Cup, which was held in Brazil. As a result of the rapidity with which Fonte Nova was built, it has become a physical testament to many social movements of the import that politicians give projects which benefit businesses, and the neglect with which they treat these movements and their communities.

necessity, it was argued, it did not make any sense to have any other amenities on the island, as the lack of a road meant exposure to hazardous conditions, including muddy, unfinished thoroughfares and dangerous animals. The fact that they lacked these things, she argued, demonstrated that the public powers had denied them to their community. Even the attempts that the state government had made to ameliorate certain problems in the community were having negative effects in the quilombo.

The Secretary of Infrastructure had been put in charge of addressing issues of erosion in the community and had sought to solve this problem by creating anti-erosion barriers with stones. The problem with this, however, was that the stones they were using were coming directly from the mangroves from which the community received much needed sea life. These were the same rocks that crabs and mussels lived in, and which the quilombolas depended on for their livelihood. Thus, it was not satisfactory that the stones used for this project be the same ones on which the community so depended. She also made plain the fact that there was no sanitation on the island—all sewage drained out into the sea. Even the schools, which were run by the city, had their sewage drain out into the Bay—“Imagine o absurdo que é isso!”⁴⁵ she exclaimed. This lack of sanitation was having effects that would be carried on for generations. Children, for instance, were being born with vision problems. She used the example of her own nephew, stating, “ele nasceu e com seis meses a médica disse que ele vai ter que usar óculos”.⁴⁶ She went on that there is a family living in Maracanã in Ilha de Maré that has five children and “o pai está desesperado porque o médico diz que não entende porque essas crianças vão ficar

⁴⁵ Imagine this absurdity!

⁴⁶ He was born and at six months the doctor said that he is going to have to use glasses.

cegas. A mais velha, com oito ou nove anos, já está cega”.⁴⁷ This was devastating to the children’s father, because “o médico mesmo está dizendo que não tem explicação”.⁴⁸

This leader went further, saying that it was telling that the actual state officials were not present at the meeting. She said that every time they went to a meeting, the only people present there were those that had no power to make actual decisions. State officials were never present at the meetings, she continued, which demonstrated a lack of responsibility and a lack of respect for the community. Toward the end of the meeting, one of the leaders, speaking from the front of the room, spoke through her tears, stating, “Eu nunca senti o peso do racismo tão forte, igual ao tratamento que deu com essa explosão que aconteceu do navio. A marinha ajudando assassinar a gente. Os órgãos ambientais ajudando assassinar a gente.”⁴⁹ She went on, “A gente tem certeza que as políticas públicas não são garantidas para a gente...porque não é do interés [do governo].”⁵⁰ She explained that when they discussed their plight with representatives from the Institute for the Environment and Hydric Resources (INEMA), they were told that the decision regarding what would be done would be made by President Dilma for the people that voted for her and that they would simply have to live with the consequences of that decision. She described these representatives as “desgraçado” and “nojento”⁵¹ and closed her intervention by stating that this was only the first step in their struggle to be respected. “A gente não está

⁴⁷ The father is in despair because the doctors says he doesn’t understand why these children are going to be blind. The oldest, at eight or nine years old, is already blind.

⁴⁸ The doctor himself says that there is no explanation.

⁴⁹ I never felt the weight of racism as strongly as the treatment after the explosion that happened with the ship. The navy helping to kill us. The environmental organs helping to kill us.

⁵⁰ We’re sure that public policy is not guaranteed for us...because it’s not in the interest [of the government]

⁵¹ Wretched and disgusting

aqui para pedir favor a ninguém,”⁵² she said, her voice hardening at the close of her intervention; “a gente está decidida passar por cima de quem for para garantir nossos direitos,”⁵³ and with this she dropped the microphone and stepped off stage. From the crowd came the cheer, “No rio, no mar: Pescador na luta! Nos açudes, nas barragens: Pescando Liberdade! Agronegócios: Resistir! As cercas nas águas: Derrubar!”⁵⁴

In addition to demonstrating its understanding of the sovereign state’s role in defending and perpetrating capitalism, the quilombolas show their recognition of the persistence of the slave ontology that Brazilian society attempts to force upon them. This is evidenced through the acknowledgement that public policy is not guaranteed the community, as the quilombolas explained that they knew their well-being was not in the interest of the government. Even more explicit language was used, however, by the quilombolas that accused the representatives of the mayor’s office at a public audience, claiming, “este capitão de mato aí que está chicoteando ao nosso povo...a escravidão ainda não terminou!”⁵⁶ She continued on, “E o Estado e a prefeitura é o chicote, é o capitão do mato, todo dia chicoteando e assessinando nosso povo!”⁵⁷ These

⁵² We’re not here to ask a favor of anyone

⁵³ We are intent on going over whoever to guarantee our rights

⁵⁴ In the river, in the sea: Fisherman in the struggle! In the weirs, in the dams: Fishing freedom! Agribusiness: Resisting! Fences in the waters: Tearing down!

⁵⁵ This call and response is something like a battle cry for the Movimento de Pescadores e Pescadoras. Its statements speak to the foundations of quilombola territoriality. What would be seen as natural, exploitable environmental sites—the ocean, rivers, dams, etc.—are here the root of struggle and freedom. It is through their own environment and their dependence on acts like fishing that they express their freedom. Furthermore, the call and response highlights the quilombola ethic of resisting the enclosure practices typical of capitalist primitive accumulation. In advocating the tearing down of aquatic fences, the quilombolas show themselves to be present-day Levelers and Diggers—fundamentally opposed in their being to the privatization and enclosing of commons.

⁵⁶ This capitão de mato that is whipping our people...slavery still hasn’t ended!

⁵⁷ And the state and the mayor’s office is the whip, is the capitão de mato, everyday whipping and killing our people!

statements are laden with imagery of slavery and the tools which led to the destruction and mutilation of slave bodies and communities. Clearly, the quilombolas of Ilha de Maré see the persistence of slave ontology in the present. Furthermore, the leader's assertion that the weight of racism has demonstrated itself in the treatment of the community as spatially and politically non-existent shows how the assumed non-being of Black Brazilians, and the quilombo communities in particular, is understood in Ilha de Maré. The quilombolas, through these claims, made clear how the Brazilian state and industries view and treat Black communities as a-political and a-spatial. The quilombo's condemnation of this anti-Black violence reach beyond formal settings, however.

The quilombo's indictment of the city government did not stop at this public audience. When the meeting was over, the protest continued through the streets of the city center of Salvador until it came to the mayor's office. There, flanked by a banner reading "Território Pesqueiro **LIVRE JÁ**"⁵⁸ one of the quilombo's leaders came to the front of the crowd and openly denounced the treatment the community habitually received from the city, state, and federal governments. The support from President Dilma and Bahia's Governor (Rui Costa) for the Port of Aratu, she explained, meant the extermination of the people of Ilha de Maré. "O que está sendo negociado é a vida de uma população de um povo preto que vive em Ilha de Maré....Nossos governantes já têm uma decisão política que o povo preto e pobre deste Brasil é para ser exterminado."⁵⁹ Shifting from commentary on the overarching genocide present in Brazil to the specific case of Ilha de Maré, she went on, "As várias comunidades de Ilha de

⁵⁸ Fishing territory **FREE ALREADY**

⁵⁹ What is being negotiated is the life of a population of a Black people that lives in Ilha de Maré...Our governors already made the political decision that Black and poor people in this Brazil are to be exterminated

Maré...estão sendo ameaçadas em nome de desenvolvimento que não é para nós. Quem faz o desenvolvimento, quem traz o desenvolvimento somos nós. Somos nós que alimentamos, que fazemos parte desse povo que está aqui...Infelizmente, tem uma decisão política de que tem que exterminar o nosso povo, a nossa cultura, e o nosso modo de vida. Nós estamos aqui reivindicando direitos humanos. Nós queremos viver em nossa comunidade e o poder público, infelizmente, nos trata como invisível. Nós somos pretos e parece que somos invisíveis.”⁶⁰



Figure 4.8 Street protest by Ilha de Maré. Photo by Adam Bledsoe

⁶⁰ The various communities of Ilha de Maré...are being threatened in the name of development that is not for us. Who makes development, who brings development is us. We are the ones that nourish, that make up part of this people that are here...Unfortunately, a political decision was made that our people, our culture, and our mode of life has to be exterminated. We're here claiming human rights. We want to live in our community and the public power, unfortunately, treats us as invisible. We're Black and it seems that we're invisible.



Figure 4.9 Street occupation by Ilha de Maré. Photo by Adam Bledsoe

All the while the leader spoke out, a wall of military police officers stood on the steps of the building's steps, watching the proceedings. Unsurprisingly, neither Antônio Carlos Magalhães, who was the Mayor at the time, nor anyone else from the Mayor's office came out to meet the group of protesting quilombolas. When it became evident that their statements would not elicit a response from anybody in the Mayor's office, the protesters unfurled an enormous canvas banner which read "EM DEFESA DOS TERRITÓRIOS PESQUEIROS"⁶¹ in giant red block letters. After stretching the banner out in the plaza so that anyone in the Prefeitura could see it, they collectively hung the banner over the plaza's wall, thereby exposing the banner to the entire lower city.⁶² Despite the state's insistence on protecting the industry and shipping in the

⁶¹ IN DEFENSE OF FISHING TERRITORIES

⁶²The Upper City (Cidade Alta) and Lower City (Cidade Baixa) are two well-known areas of the city center of Salvador. They are linked by the Elevador Lacerda and a winding road called A Montanha (The Mountain). Hanging the flag over the wall of the Upper City served to further divulge the community's message to the city of Salvador.

Bay and thereby preserving modern notions of environmental domination and exploitation, the quilombolas occupied public space to assert the existence and viability of their own territoriality⁶³. Here the quilombo notes that the manifestation of the meio técnico-científico, in the form of the development projects in the Bay of Aratu, works to destroy the community and in the process completely obscures the needs of the quilombolas. To reject this treatment and literally, physically bring to light the reality of Black Geographies, Ilha de Maré takes public space, obstructing the daily functions of the mayor's office and demonstrating to the public that they not only have a different territoriality, but are committed to defending it.

⁶³ While Ilha de Maré has received some media coverage (Silva 2014), public attention to their case is not nearly as comprehensive as that of Rio dos Macacos, for instance. There are relatively few articles in circulation regarding the situation in Ilha de Maré when one considers the devastation they continue to face.



Figure 4.10 Unfurling of a banner during Ilha de Maré's occupation of the mayor's plaza. Photo by Adam Bledsoe

Over a year later, little had changed for Ilha de Maré. The community had not been remunerated for the devastation they experienced due to the explosion and chemical leak in the Bay, and the health effects were increasingly worse among the quilombolas. Cancers, rashes, debilitating pain, and the disappearance of their livelihood as fisherpeople were among the

claims that community made to the city council members present at a June, 2015 public audience. Many of these city council members present had been in attendance at the public audience in the city center the year before. The quilombolas unanimously voiced that they were tired of having so many public audiences in which nothing got solved. This was “conversa pura”⁶⁴ they claimed, and nothing was going to get done if conversation was the only thing happening. What was occurring in their community was ethnic genocide and environmental racism, said one fisherman; it was like they are not even people, exclaimed a fisherwoman. Still, the resolve on the part of the quilombolas was as strong as ever. “Se somos guerreiro, temos que ser mais ainda,”⁶⁵ one quilombola stated firmly at the meeting. What was certainly evident from these series of meetings was that there was no immediate help coming from the government.

At the June, 2014 meeting, the woman representing the Mayor’s office at the public audience explained that the difficulty in moving forward with relief measures for Ilha de Maré was found in the fact that it was not clear who was responsible for the problems in the Bay. There are differences in state and municipal responsibilities, she explained, and certain things had to be handled by certain actors. Furthermore, she said, with elections slotted for later that year, it was inevitable that all of the gains and progress made regarding Ilha de Maré’s situation would be undone if a new set of politicians were elected to office—“A democracia é assim,”⁶⁶ she stated. She implored the community to be patient; things had to be negotiated—they could not all be done at once. A year later, the city council members were preaching the same thing in the community center in Botelho in Ilha de Maré. As there were new city council members—per

⁶⁴ Pure conversation

⁶⁵ If we’re warriors, we need to be even more so

⁶⁶ Democracy is like this

the 2014 elections—they had to be given time to be able to bring their grievances to those in higher positions of power. When radical actions were called for by the quilombolas—such as occupying the Mayor’s office until some meaningful pronouncement was made on his part—the politicians present urged the quilombolas to calm down. Such actions would end with people in jail, they assured the meeting. The only piece of advice and words of consolation that came from the politicians at the meetings for which I was present was for the communities to wait. Based on the advice of the Mayor’s office and city council members, one would think that simply waiting could cleanse the Bay of Aratu of all its problems.

The meetings with the city council and state government representatives, much like Rio dos Macacos’ meetings described above, were not aimed at having the government solve the community’s problems. Ilha de Maré, through its various meetings with different government representatives, appealed to actors which they recognized as being invested with certain kinds of power, in order that they might protect important aspects of their community’s traditional practices. While emphasizing the rights that they knew were due them as nominal Brazilian citizens, they demonstrated their understanding of the persistence of the enforced non-being of certain segments of Brazilian society, which is evidenced in a societal lack of respect and recognition of quilombo communities. For Ilha de Maré, the public audiences functioned as forums in which the quilombolas demanded that the government recognize the harm they had caused the community and subsequently address those negative effects. As one of the quilombo leaders stated at the June, 2014 audience at the city council, “Eu não 191usto de estar aqui neste ambiente, que é para mim, um ambiente no sentido de assassinar a vida do nosso povo.”⁶⁷ For

⁶⁷ I don’t like to be here in this environment that is, for me, an environment in the sense of killing the life of our people.

the quilombolas of Ilha de Maré, petitioning the government meant acknowledging the devastation that was being wrought in their community.

In their public audiences, they frequently used the word “denunciar” to describe the actions they were taking in the meetings. This suggests that one of the intended goals of the meetings was the shedding of light on the destructive actions (and lack of actions) of the government. In so doing, they sought to confront the government directly, holding them accountable for the environmental devastation that was destroying their way of life. In these public audiences, the quilombo seeks to dictate the terms on which they engage with the Brazilian state, in its various iterations. Recognizing that state presence (in the form of the Port of Aratu), deleterious development projects, and misguided attempts at improving life in the quilombos serve to destroy the community’s way of life, Ilha de Maré comes to the public audiences to demand that the nature of state intervention change altogether. The quilombolas thus demand that the state use its resources not for the fortification of private capital, but rather for the aid of the community’s way of life. The presence of Ilha de Maré in spaces like public audiences, and their actions therein, should not be seen as a reliance on state power. Rather, it should be seen both as a critique and an expression of quilombola agency, as their leaders stated in no uncertain terms that they would do whatever was necessary to protect their way of living.

Like Rio dos Macacos, Ilha de Maré recognizes the fact that their own territoriality is illegible to the Brazilian state. Receiving attention from the state would require meeting state actors in areas deemed legitimate by the purveyors of modern sovereignty. As such, denouncing the state in spaces like public audiences meant demonstrating the hypocrisy inherent in the project of the Brazilian nation-state, which, despite its professed commitment to universal inclusion, continues to perpetrate the genocidal destruction of subjectivities it deems illegible.

By engaging the state in spaces that codify state power and relying on the language of quilombismo to demonstrate the structural racism and violence of the Brazilian government, the quilombolas force state actors to face the effects of anti-Black violence. Certainly, the essence of quilombola life cannot be captured in statements made to government officials, as the state is incapable of understanding the essence of quilombismo, yet the quilombolas nonetheless took the opportunity to register their disgust with the state's role in this genocide. Along with this attempt at explanation, the quilombo committed itself to obstructing those functions which define modern capital and Brazil's role as an extractive economy, and which the state seems so keen on defending. This commitment is demonstrated in the various protests and blockades that quilombo enacted. By not allowing the reproduction of the functions so vital to the continuation of capitalism in Bahia and Brazil's position in the global economy, Ilha de Maré effectively showed—albeit very briefly—state officials and private actors what it meant to have one's way of life besieged. To ensure that their own way of life continues, Ilha de Maré focuses on internal politics.

Ilha de Maré, internal organization, and quilombola solidarity

The level of internal organization demonstrated by the quilombolas of Ilha de Maré is truly impressive. Ilha de Maré is a relatively large community—there are between 11,000 to 12,000 inhabitants on the island. Despite its size and the community's poor infrastructure, which prevents quick and easy access to the different parts of the island, the quilombolas are always in touch with one another and involved in the community's goings on. Never once was an Ilha de Maré-led meeting, protest, or public audience poorly attended during my time in Bahia. Instead, the quilombolas from Ilha de Maré constantly presented themselves as a totally united front. At every meeting I attended, members from each of the different areas of the island were allowed to

speak and help plan the agenda for the gathering. Their commitment to the quilombola struggle was not focused solely on their own community, however. The public actions and strategy meetings for the quilombos of Aratu are attended by members of all the different communities, and Ilha de Maré often takes the lead on planning and peopling these different events. It was very evident to me early on in my time among these communities that Ilha de Maré had many connections, not just in the Bay of Aratu and the surrounding Salvador metropolitan area, but also in other parts of Bahia—especially in the Recôncavo. Through these meetings, the different communities were able to remain united, as the encounters served to update the various quilombos on recent developments, reflect on what each group needed, and plan a various number of actions. In short, the focus Ilha de Maré demonstrated regarding both its own internal cohesion, as well as its commitment to the other communities comprising the quilombola struggle, established a strong foundation for the continuation of the ethic of quilombismo in Bahia.

Community meetings at Ilha de Maré were sometimes used as venues to discuss the nature of what the quilombo was facing, and to reaffirm the community's collective understanding and approach to their struggle. In June of 2014, a community reunion was held in the community center in Botelho. The injustices of the quilombo's treatment by the state was a major topic of conversation during this encounter. Invoking the state government's preposterous slogan, which stated that Bahia was "A Terra de Todos Nós,"⁶⁸ one of the community's leaders posed the fundamental question, "Quem somos nós?"⁶⁹ She went on to argue that it did not seem that land in Bahia was for communities like theirs at all, demonstrating, again, the ways in which

⁶⁸ The land of all of us

⁶⁹ Who is us?

quilombo communities remain viewed and treated as non-beings through the ignoring of their communal needs. The quilombos are not seen as party of the collective “we” of wider Bahia, as their radical Blackness sets them outside the possibility of achieving inclusion as part of the Brazilian nation. Another quilombola spoke up, explaining why it was that Ilha de Maré seemed to be absent from the state’s understood notion of spatial occupation. The quilombo, she explained, did not have a relationship of dominance or accumulation with the environment. Instead, they practiced a relationship of dependence and respect. As such, she said, they described their environment as “ambiente,” and not “meio ambiente.” The distinction she draws here is one that speaks to the unique relation the quilombolas of Ilha de Maré have to the world they live in. By explaining the difference between seeing the environment as “ambiente,” as opposed to “meio ambiente,” this quilombola was evidencing the fact that her community did not see themselves as separate from the “natural world.” Rather, the world in which they found themselves was comprised of both the “human” and the “natural”—they were a collective whole.⁷⁰

Meetings like this were important points of encounter for the community to ruminate on their community as a collective and vocalize their understandings of self. These meetings set the groundwork for the collective gatherings that Ilha de Maré helped to coordinate with other quilombo communities from the Bay of Aratu, Salvador, and the Recôncavo. During my time in Bahia, I was able to partake of a number of assemblies attended by Ilha de Maré and a variety of other social movements. Such meetings were attended by groups like Rio dos Macacos, the Movimento Sem Teto da Bahia, Tororó, the quilombolas of Acupe (in the Recôncavo), and a

⁷⁰This distinction is not necessarily self-evident, as the English translation for both “ambiente” and “meio ambiente” is the word “environment.” However, “meio ambiente” connotes a natural environment that is unique to, or separate from humans, whereas “ambiente” connotes a whole, or rather, everything present taken as one.

number of other quilombola fishing communities from the Recôncavo. At these encounters it was always emphasized that the connections between the various communities present needed to remain intact, as these quilombos and social movements saw their oppression and struggles as linked to each other. This was especially underscored regarding the Recôncavo communities, which are geographically farther apart from the Bay of Aratu than Salvador is. The constituents of these reunions highlighted the similarities of their respective situations, ultimately concluding that they were all treated as if they did not exist. As a collective remedy to a collective problem, these meetings usually involved plans for staging actions, of which all those present planned to partake. The blockade of the road leading to the Port of Aratu and the obstruction of the shipping routes with the fishing canoes were both products of meetings like those described above. Through internal organization and the maintenance of a collective notion of struggle, both solidified through organized encounters, Ilha de Maré is able to stage effective actions as part of their struggle. Through this close attention to self-organization, the quilombolas are able to pursue their own sense of justice, as institutional means of redress—like working with government officials—has proved far less than unsatisfactory.

By committing to a collective notion and praxis of struggle, Ilha de Maré ensures that they and their fellow quilombolas, alongside whom they struggle, remain cognizant of the ways in which they are oppressed and active in their willingness and ability to combat this marginalization and create new futures for themselves. While the actions that come from this organization lead to moments in which the plight and territorialities of the quilombolas are made temporarily visible to their oppressors, the more important issue is that the quilombo commitment to autonomous politics reproduces the quilombo subjectivity, in all of its variety. The meetings organized by Ilha de Maré—whether comprised solely of those from the island, or

by members of various other communities—reinforce what it means to be quilombola by offering a space where threats to the reproduction of the quilombo are discussed and agendas for the continuance of community life are planned. Tororó, also, is an important practitioner of quilombola solidarity.

Tororó and internal organization

Quilombo Tororó, too, has found itself threatened by events taking place in the Bay of Aratu. Tororó, however, finds itself in the unhappily unique position of being beset upon by both the Brazilian navy and the private industries arriving in the area. In many ways, they find themselves fighting on two separate fronts to preserve their way of life, which, like that of Rio dos Macacos and Ilha de Maré is one intimately linked to the natural environment around them. The navy has essentially enclosed the community, building a wall around the quilombo's living spaces and effectively barring the quilombolas from being able to forage, plant their fields, or build their houses "outward." This has resulted in a great decline in the self-sustaining practices which previously typified the community and has also necessitated that the quilombolas "cresce para cima."⁷¹ The result of this last point is that Tororó resembles a typical urban favela community in its appearance—little green space, multi-story apartment buildings, and paved roads are found throughout the community. The presence and expansion of private industries in the Bay of Aratu has also worked to erode Tororó's traditional fishing practices. While they have (as yet) still not felt the effects of the explosion and chemical spill that is devastating Ilha de Maré, the environmental degradation and topographical changes that have marked the presence of private interests in the area have wreaked havoc in their own right. The quilombolas

⁷¹ Growing upwards

explained to me that the pollution from the soy by-products of M. Dias Branco have led to a marked decrease in the presence of mussels and shrimp in the mangroves, while the sea floor was irreversibly changed to accommodate the large freighters used by Ford to ship their cars, which are produced in Camaçari. The destruction of the sea floor, I am told, has meant a decrease in fishing yields, as the fish habitats have changed drastically. The quilombolas still fish and collect mussels, shrimp, and crabs in the mangrove, as these practices remain central to their way of life, but the yields from such activities are much less than what they used to be. Given the two-pronged assault on their way of life, Tororó has had to find different ways of fighting to preserve their traditional practices.

In 2014, a number of women from Tororó began renting out a small kitchen in the community, naming it “Tempero do Quilombo.” They have turned the kitchen into a restaurant from which they serve food to community members and anyone else in the area that wants a meal. About forty-five women are associated with the restaurant which is run as a cooperative. As it was explained to me by one of the women involved in the restaurant, “não tem dono—o dono é o grupo.”⁷² The quilombolas involved in the restaurant have had classes on making a variety of confections, as well as salty snacks, which can be made at home or in the restaurant and sold within the community as well as outside it. Ultimately, the cooperative hopes to be able to purchase their own kitchen from which they would work, instead of renting the space. In addition to the restaurant, the quilombolas have begun to generate income in other ways, as is necessary to compensate for the loss of much of the natural habitat surrounding their community.

The quilombo currently engages in what could be called a kind of tourism. Several community leaders work together to coordinate visits with outside groups that come to see the

⁷² There is no owner—the owner is the group

quilombo and learn about the community's history. The quilombolas offer "classes" on a number of activities that are part of their history and culture. Capoeira classes, boat tours of the Bay of Aratu, visits to the mangrove, acarajé classes, and workshops on making small crafts are all offered to visiting groups by a number of members from the quilombo. Along with the classes come brief history lessons, which explain the significance of the different activities. For example, the history of capoeira comprises a part of the capoeira lesson. How African slaves developed the martial art as a form of self-defense, which eventually became a kind of art, only to be reconverted into a form of self-defense by the famous Mestre Bimba—a native to Salvador—is explained prior to the class beginning. The trip to the mangrove involves passing some of the wells the community formerly used, which have since been filled in or polluted so that drinking from the wells is no longer possible. This ignominious history continues to be explained upon reaching the mangrove, as the quilombolas describe how the sea and sea life *used* to be in the area. Still, while the trip guides acknowledge that their ability to reap the sea's harvest has been diminished, they do not hesitate to demonstrate their continuing commitment to fishing.

Walking about the mangrove, the quilombolas demonstrate to the visitors where and how to find the mussels that are so central to their way of life. It is truly impressive to see the facility with which these quilombolas move about the mangrove, spotting mussels that are invisible to the untrained eye, and prying them from the mangrove roots before placing them in the large buckets they carry. Once on the mangrove, visitors are offered canoe rides in the Bay to view the businesses which have been such a detriment to the community. Viewing M. Dias Branco from the canoes, for example, the boat guides explain what the pollution has done to the area, as

well as the ways in which the company's security team tries to prevent local fisherpeople from fishing in the area surrounding the factory.

In addition to the various activities offered by Tororó, the quilombolas insist on visitors hearing the history of their community; a lesson which has two parts to it. First, one of the community elders speaks to visiting groups about the quilombo's founders—runaway and freed slaves—and the foundations of the community, which are rooted in a close relationship to the Bay and the hills surrounding the quilombo. The present-day struggles of the community are also discussed, describing the role that the navy has played in the enclosures surrounding the quilombo, as well as the quilombolas' attempts to continue their way of life despite the effects of the environmental degradation brought by the businesses in the Bay. Secondly, a DVD and booklet packet is offered to visitors, which further describes the history of Tororó. This is a production that was funded by the Steve Biko Institute and released in 2015 and is now used by the community as a way to further divulge the story of their struggle. This nascent tourist industry in the quilombo is an important source of income for the inhabitants, as their traditional means of making money—fishing—has been greatly threatened by the recent developments in the Bay. Just like the restaurant, tourism is treated in a communal way, and the proceeds from the different classes are divided among those that partake of the events. This is not to suggest, however, that Tororó has abandoned its traditional way of life—nothing could be farther from the truth.

Like ninety percent of Brazilian quilombos, Tororó is culturally certified but is still awaiting INCRA to conduct the diagnostic which will determine how much territory they are granted by the government. As of July, 2015, six years after receiving cultural certification, the quilombolas of Tororó do not know when INCRA will arrive to make the territorial study. Thus,

Tororó finds itself in a similar position to many other quilombos in Brazil—culturally recognized, but denied territorial acknowledgement. Because of this, the community is officially prohibited from conducting the foraging that is so central to their self-sustenance. The quilombo relies on collecting jackfruit, mangoes, African palm, cajá, and cashew fruit. The ability to continue their foraging practices and to plant their fields are the two most salient reasons Tororó wants its territory titled. It is clear in its claims, however, that it does not necessarily want back *all* of the land that was once used by the community. Some quilombo leaders believe that while they previously planted and foraged all of the land that the navy now occupies, they no longer have enough people to tend to such a large area. They only want enough land to be able to practice their traditional methods of planting and gathering necessary foodstuffs. While they wait for INCRA to conduct their territorial diagnostic, however, the quilombolas continue to preserve what traditional practices they can, in order to defend their way of life. Among these, as I mention above, are fishing and gathering mussels, crabs, and shrimp. The preservation of traditional religious and cultural practices also persist in Tororó. There are two terreiros in the community, as well as a capoeira school, where a community member acts as the mestre. Tororó also continues unique holiday celebrations. In January, the community celebrates Dia dos Reis with a samba de roda⁷³ and march led by a model cow that the children of the community construct.

Another important community practice is the prevention of drug trafficking in the quilombo. The suburban region of the Salvador metropolitan area is notorious for the amount of drug trafficking present there. The neighborhoods close to the quilombos in the Bay of Aratu are frequently mentioned in the media and among locals as areas that have high levels of crime. As

⁷³ Samba de roda is a traditional dance in Brazil

such, protecting their communities against these forms of violence is a major goal of all of the quilombos profiled here. The leaders of Tororó were very proud in informing me that they had not allowed drug trafficking as a practice to take hold in their community. They admitted that some members did use drugs, but that none had begun to sell them. Keeping the distribution and sale of drugs away from the quilombo's territory is clearly seen as part of preserving the internal integrity of the community. Like the other quilombos discussed here, however, inter-quilombo solidarity is also central to Tororó.

Tororó and quilombola solidarity

In the same way that Ilha de Maré uses its territory as a location for strategic planning and reflection on quilombismo, so, too, does Tororó. In May of 2014 I was able to attend a class led by an attorney who worked closely with traditional communities in Bahia, held in Tororó. Present at this meeting were members of Tororó, Rio dos Macacos, and Ilha de Maré. The class was part of a series of meetings which sought to bring different quilombos together in order to strengthen their leadership base. The meetings were each facilitated by different individuals, all of whom set a unique agenda for each encounter. The five classes which were planned for 2014 focused on society, race, gender, power, and territory. During the day in question, the focus was on "society," and the guiding question for the class was "por que existem ricos e pobres?"⁷⁴ Those present were grouped in twos and everyone discussed the day's overarching question.

I was paired with a quilombola woman who explicated inequality in Brazil as rooted in a tradition of domination. In a profoundly clear, cogent manner, she discussed the extermination of the indigenous groups of Brazil as well as the enslavement of Africans, noting that these

⁷⁴ Why do rich and poor exist?

continue to be practiced today. She also mentioned the role that an organization like the Catholic Church has in perpetuating inequality, stating that churches explain world phenomena as being inevitable due to “God’s plan.” She continued on that the poor in Brazil were taught to accept and expect their poverty and that laws geared toward things like agrarian reform really had the effect of further entrenching inequality. Her explanations of these phenomena struck at once as both extremely well thought out and convincing. These were topics that she had clearly reflected on individually and collectively with others.

After these small group conversations, we came back to the larger group and discussed what we had talked about. Other people discussed wealth distribution, noting that the wealthy never redistributed what they had; that poverty was an age-old question, as evidenced in slavery, de-valued labor, and forced employment both globally and in Brazil; that legacies of poverty are difficult to overcome, as rich people are generally born rich and poor are born poor. Still another woman opined that it was always made to seem that the *patrão* had worked hard, but that you had not—and that society was always explained in a way that made governing and running businesses seem as if they were too complicated for regular people.⁷⁵ In this sense, she explained, poverty is a political decision.

Discussing the quilombos’ relation to poverty, the class facilitator explained that he saw the quilombos of Aratu as existing semi-independently of the capitalist system. He posed a question to the group: How did they see themselves in relation to money? Nearly everyone in

⁷⁵“Patrão” is the Portuguese word for patron. The history of patronage in Brazil is an important one, as it harkens back to slavery and partially explains attitudes taken by poor citizens and wealthy employers and politicians toward one another. Employers are usually seen as a kind of father figure—a benevolent actor whose patronage makes their workers beholden to them. In this formulation, workers are supposed to be thankful and deferent to their patron. This relationship is evidenced in the statements by the quilombola mentioned above, who argues that the *patrão* is always cast as a hard worker who takes care of the difficult tasks which apparently prove unwieldy to the poor worker.

the room began describing the difference between the quilombos' relation to money and the favelas' relation to money. In the favelas, they said, one would die without money, but in traditional communities it was a different story. One quilombola woman, for instance, explained that she could go about fifteen days without using or needing money, and she would do just fine. As one of the quilombolas succinctly explained, "Se não tiver, não morre."⁷⁶ Another quilombola clarified that it was not possible to live *indefinitely* without money, just that they were not as dependent on it as were people that lived in favelas. She went on, however, that their communities were becoming increasingly dependent on money for things that they did not need to purchase in the past. Items like fish and natural gas still did not need to be purchased, because these communities fished and could use firewood in place of gas. However, the quilombos needed to increasingly purchase other foodstuffs and drinking water—a symptom of the combination of enclosures and environmental degradation—as well as medicine, clothes, transportation, and leisure activities. The reliance on purchased goods was eroding certain aspects of their traditional way of life, they said.

For instance, whereas these communities were formerly self-sufficient regarding food, they now relied on the purchase of food like bread. They noted that the introduction of these kinds of processed foods were leading to their communities becoming obese and sick. Another factor contributing to the increasing role of money in the quilombos' life is consumerism, propagated by media images among the community youth. Like the meetings and protests coordinated by Ilha de Maré, the course that Tororó hosted in their community offered an important space for the quilombolas of Aratu to meet and discuss the causes and meanings of their struggle. This meeting, and the subsequent classes attended by the community, give the

⁷⁶ If you don't have it, you won't die

quilombos the opportunity to further analyze their collective situation and reflect on what is important for them moving forward. These meetings are but one example of Tororó committing its time and energy to helping the cause of other quilombos.

The leaders of Tororó played a significant role in bringing attention and assistance to Rio dos Macacos in the late 2000s. Some of those familiar with the situation claim that, had it not been for the role Tororó played in helping Rio dos Macacos bring its case to the public's attention, Rio dos Macacos might not exist today. Tororó helped Rio dos Macacos start the process of officially becoming a quilombo, and petitioned for the food aid which is temporarily necessary for Rio dos Macacos, given the destruction of their crops. Rio dos Macacos needed this help, I was told, because they were largely ignorant of their constitutional rights as a quilombo community⁷⁷. Tororó clearly remains committed to the causes of their fellow quilombolas, putting their time and energy into protecting the territorial integrity of other communities. This takes different forms, including hosting meetings where quilombos, as a collective, can discuss and analyze their situation, as well as working to bring the struggles of other quilombos to the attention of the public institutions that can aid their cause. The quilombos of Aratu, while unique in their own ways, all demonstrate similarities in the oppression they face as well as in their methods of struggle. Furthermore, the quilombos articulate their struggles as part of the same cause.

When discussing the various articulations of the quilombola struggle in Bahia, it was commonplace to hear members of one community reference other quilombos as their own. For

⁷⁷ Interestingly, while Tororó helped Rio dos Macacos garner the national attention that has made it so newsworthy to the public of Bahia and Brazil, I have found almost no journalistic accounts of the case of Tororó and what they are going through as a community.

example, quilombolas from Ilha de Maré would use the term “a gente”⁷⁸ when describing the predicament and actions taking place in Rio dos Macacos. Quilombolas from the Recôncavo were mainstays at the public audiences for Rio dos Macacos and Ilha de Maré, where they championed the causes of their brethren from the Bay of Aratu and discursively linked the situations of the quilombos of Aratu with those of their own region. Actions were always planned among quilombo communities—no quilombo ever scheduled or enacted a protest, public audience, or strategy meeting without the presence of quilombolas from other communities. Even in the case of Rio dos Macacos’ impromptu protest outside the gate of the naval villa, members from Tororó and Ilha de Maré presented themselves as soon as they were notified. The approach taken by the quilombos of Aratu clearly evidences a common struggle among the communities. This struggle is not bound by geographical proximity, as the quilombos in question also maintain a close relationship to the communities in the Recôncavo, some hours away. What remains central to the quilombos in the Bay of Aratu is the recognition of the reality of the zone of non-being and the never-ending commitment to acknowledging and defending Black humanity. Quilombismo continues to inform the lived politics of the quilombos in the Bay of Aratu, despite the persistence of global anti-Black violence and its variants found in Bahia and Brazil, more generally.

When the quilombolas of Ilha de Maré remain steadfast in their endeavors to protect the mangrove from further pollution, they are both defending the environment from which they have come as well as struggling to maintain the conditions in which their children can continue their quilombola lifestyle. When members of Rio dos Macacos refuse to accept government land proposals that confiscate the majority of their territory, they are not only attempting to conserve

⁷⁸ Literally “the people.” This is colloquially used to mean “us.”

the territorial expanse of their community, but seeking to ensure that the future generations will have sufficient space in which to territorially reproduce themselves. Tororó continues to practice their fishing and foraging despite the negative effects of the navy's enclosures and environmental degradation.

In this struggle, the actions of the quilombos are the most active and conspicuous elements of the drive to preserve the territorial conditions of Radical Black Geographies and present-day marronage. This is significant for the fact that these communities, largely led by women, are actively staking a claim to the right and duty to protect their children and their children's future, and, as such, claiming a position of radical motherhood.

What makes this subjectivity unique is that, in addition to demanding the ability to protect the Black lives that they brought into the world, these subjectivities are not based on the normative notions of family, domesticity, labor, or rational existence that underpin the Western and notion of politics and being. Instead, the role of the quilombos is to protect the open possibilities that emerge from the persistence of quilombismo, a commitment that has persisted for centuries. The ethic of quilombismo continues to privilege Black life amidst a society structured on the necessity of Black social and physical death and has done so since the communities' inception centuries ago. In the Bay of Aratu, quilombismo is propagated by those who reject the condition of non-being forced onto Afro-descendant populations, and who seek to protect their loved ones by taking up the responsibility of defending their territory. This struggle involves the defense of physical space, the reproduction of socio-spatial relations, and the securing of the lives of their children. That is, continuing the ethic of quilombismo involves taking hold of all that is denied the Black in the modern epoch. By assuming the ability to create territories that are, at their core, alternatives to the anti-Blackness of modernity, the Quilombos

from the Bay of Aratu present a case of modern-day marronage and, as such, an alternative to the extractivist, anti-Black sovereign approach of present-day Brazil. By engaging with these communities' territorialities and methods of struggle, one can see the viability of existences that both value Black life and create the conditions for a politics not dependent on non-being and its attendant violence.

Quilombola obstruction of the oppressive elements of society takes multiple forms. Using the space and time of public audiences to demonstrate the quilombo's capoeira and dance traditions, for instance, offers an opportunity to assert the importance of the community's culture and history amidst a setting aimed at eliminating those same phenomena. Blocking the Port of Aratu and the naval villa are moments in which the spatial capability of these supposed non-beings are briefly acknowledged by their oppressors. The quilombolas fleetingly stop being a-spatial precisely because they temporarily hinder some of the actions which bring modern subjects into being—namely sovereign legal procedures, the perpetuation of capitalist accumulation and the reification of the modern family. In this way, these quilombos engage in tactics similar to those of contemporary Latin American social movements—occupying public space to register their discontent and assert their political and territorial claims (Reyes 2012; Zibechi 2012). This, however, is not sufficient to preserve the unique quilombola existence, nor is it capable of breaking the relations of modern governance or capitalist production. As the case of the Black Movement and its subsequent influences show, visibility alone leads to cooptation. It is because of that realization that the relations internal to the quilombos, which manifest themselves through, among other things, unique labor and gender practices, are so important to the continuation of quilombismo.

Conclusion

The Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu demonstrate the ways in which modern political economic formations continue the violence of the Middle Passage and colonialism in the present day and the manners in which Black actors continue to create alternatives to that violence. As occurred during European colonization, those of African and indigenous descent in Brazil continue to be understood and treated as inhuman and unevolved “Others,” while their spatial expressions remain viewed as indicative of “empty” space. These populations and their geographies are therefore subjected to a variety of practices of erasure by the Brazilian state and those private corporations that continue the accumulation of land and capital that is necessary for the perseverance of capitalism and sovereignty. These take form in specific practices. The community of Rio dos Macacos has been habitually displaced by the Brazilian navy for the past five decades. While the navy’s original presence in the area predates the arrival of industry and shipping in the area, the naval base, dam, and villa are all cast as being part of a security apparatus necessary for the protection of the Aratu Industrial Center and the Port of Aratu, both late 20th century products of Brazil’s attempt at “modernizing” their economy. The Brazilian navy’s insistence that they not only remain, but expand, in the area is a clear example of the Brazilian state’s commitment to protecting and propagating the presence of capital in the Bay of Aratu, despite its effects on the communities living in the area. This commitment is part of a larger national involvement in specific political economic practices.

Both the Industrial Center and the Port remain important aspects of Brazil’s larger role in the global economy, as both serve as spaces of fabrication and circulation of commodities that

make up a part of Brazil's commitment to extractive practices. By manufacturing and serving as a point of distribution of materials such as biofuels, petroleum products, metals, and natural gas, both the CIA and Port of Aratu help to entrench Brazil in its commitment to the extraction of natural resources as its primary means of income. Partaking of such practices reveals present-day iterations of the *meio técnico-científico* described by Milton Santos, which relies on science and technique to remodel and integrate territory, as is clearly being done in the practices of manufacturing and shipping (Santos 1993, 35-36). While Rio dos Macacos has felt the effects of the state's desire to protect these extractive industries and spread the *meio técnico-científico*, Ilha de Maré suffers the consequences of the pollution that accompanies a reliance on such practices, while Tororó remains oppressed on both registers.

The Port of Aratu is a site of shipping that connects Brazil, and Bahia more specifically, to the global economy. Companies from all over the world ship through the Port of Aratu, loading and unloading a variety of manufactured products, metals, chemicals, and fuels, linking Brazil's national resources and territory to a number of locations both within and outside of Latin America (CODEBA 2016). The pollution and environmental degradation that the shipping and manufacturing has brought to the region is unquestionable. While the oil spill of 2013 remains the most stark example of the negative effects of shipping for Ilha de Maré, the presence of shipping and industry in the area has been detrimental to the quilombo's way of life for decades, as it has adversely affected not only the marine life in the area, but the ability of the quilombolas to farm and forage, as well. In Tororó, community members have been repeatedly displaced to make room for the Brazilian navy, just as they have in Rio dos Macacos. They have also felt the negative effects of shipping and industry, seeing their mangroves and shellfish disappear, and having the sea floor near their community dredged for the benefit of the Port of Aratu. Despite

the devastation these factors have brought to the three quilombo communities, the Brazilian state continues to engage in behaviors that adversely effect the quilombolas; treating the communities as if they were empty spaces.

While the state has outright ignored the plight of Ilha de Maré and Tororó regarding the effects of pollution and environmental degradation in the Bay of Aratu, state organs like INCRA—that ultimately have the power to observe and delimit quilombo territory—have sought to destroy the politics of Rio dos Macacos through nominal territorial recognition. Instead of respecting Rio dos Macacos’ historical presence on the land and the community’s clear commitment to realizing a unique territoriality, INCRA has insisted on setting its own definition of quilombo territory. This is not aberrant behavior on the part of INCRA—indeed, Brazilian legislation dictates that the state must have the ultimate say in defining the parameters of a quilombo community—yet it nonetheless shows the national subordination of a quilombola subjectivity to “rational” modern actors. While the Brazilian state portrays itself as “respecting” quilombo communities, it maintains that Rio dos Macacos should not and need not have access to traditional fishing and farming sites; it refuses to acknowledge that Ilha de Maré is facing any adverse conditions, much less a catastrophic assault on its very existence; it holds Tororó in limbo by promoting shipping and military expansion in the region and not moving to title the community’s land.

By preventing Rio dos Macacos from having access to fishing sources and land amenable to farming, Brazilian state entities ensure that the quilombo will remain dependent on things like state food aid or be forced to partake of capitalist modes of production to secure their means of subsistence. Furthermore, the insistence on having Rio dos Macacos accept state involvement through the guise of development projects pending territorial recognition, signals the state’s

intent to “modernize” the quilombo, through direct state involvement. In addition to this, the quilombos’ endeavor to prevent the domination of nature and spread of the meio técnico-científico also marks their spatial capacity as null. The case of Ilha de Maré shows how the decision to remain independent of the meio técnico-científico also casts one as a non-being. By protesting this capitalist mode of production, Ilha de Maré is forced to work to prevent the ever-accumulating capitalist machine while receiving essentially no legal recognition of their struggle. Still, these communities remain steadfast in their commitment to protecting their autonomy and articulating current forms of marronage qua quilombismo.

By identifying as quilombos and committing themselves not only to each other, but to the wider struggle of quilombo communities, the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu draw on the histories, and continue the legacies of, maroon settlements in Brazil and more widely. Contrary to the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, which emerged under the assumption that quilombos were inexistent things of the past, the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu show that “the term quilombo itself does not refer only to historical facts and past events; each day it acquires new meanings” (Leite 2012, 250-251). At the core of these quilombos’ struggles is the desire to create a world not based on a social and political order of domination (Theodoro et al. 2015, 219) but rather on relations of cooperation, justice, equality, and respect (Nascimento 1980, 160). In their everyday practices, the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu reject the forms of anti-Blackness that materialize in present-day Brazil. The anti-Black violence of Bahia manifests itself in myriad ways. In this dissertation I have focused on the ways that the quilombolas have sought to create territories independent of sovereign violence, gendered marginalization, the hyper exploitation of labor, participation in the global capitalist economy, and a reliance on the state to ultimately define their territory. The quilombolas’ territorialities are more than simple rejections of

prevailing social, economic, and political norms. Far from negative forms of freedom—or freedom *from* something—these communities evidence a commitment to building and creating the world in which they want to live.

The quilombos wage their struggles in a variety of locations and through a variety of activities. In state and federal public audiences they reject state insistence on defining their territory and denounce the genocidal behavior of state actors; in the streets of Salvador they obstruct the mundane activities of urban life to draw attention to their situations; in the spaces of the quilombos they continue to plant and cultivate the land, despite state destruction of their crops; in the spaces of capital circulation they prevent the the continuation of commodity exchange; in their community centers they painstakingly analyze their conditions of oppression and reflect on the possibilities of how to achieve a future for their people. In short, in their struggle for the continuation of their expressions of quilombismo, the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu create tools, theories, and new realities on an everyday basis (Theodoro et al. 2015, 218-219). Quilombo praxis, then, demonstrates the emergence of a recomposition of humanity (Miranda et al. 2015, 31) as well as a focus on avoiding the fixed, determinate endings on which modernity depends (Roberts 2015, 174). Quilombismo, as an iteration of present-day marronage, and evidenced in the actions and reflections of the Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu, focuses not on realizing a static “end goal” or condition, but rather “an approach to and vision of politics that puts the accent on the process, rather than on the end result” (Vargas 2008, 142). The quilombos are quilombos precisely because they remain committed to constantly analyzing the effects of global anti-Blackness and creating ways of life that recognize and respect the lives of those deemed non-beings. In the specific case presented above, the quilombos wage their struggles against prevailing modes of global capital, which presently manifest in various forms

of extractive practices. The Quilombos from the Bay of Aratu demonstrate a present-day form of quilombismo by not only critiquing, but refusing the modes of accumulation and displacement that accompany these extractive industries. This mode of existence refuses to seek being through engagement with the state or partaking of “rational” modes of production (Leite 2008, 973; 975-976). Present-day quilombismo continues the struggle started centuries ago by the original maroons, establishing viable ways of life through a commitment to constantly asserting the dignity and humanity of *everyone*. This modern-day marronage therefore presents us with an alternative to the reliance on the domination of the natural world, capitulation to globalized capital, and subjugation of global populations deemed “Other.” An open approach such as this is vital to creating possibilities not dependent on domination and gratuitous violence. Indeed, as part of the wider approach of Black Geographies, quilombismo and marronage truly suggest that “Black geographies will play a central role in the reconstruction of the global community” (McKittrick and Woods 2007, 6).

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