Afro-Brazilian women YouTubers' Black Feminism in Digital Social Justice Activism

O ativismo digital da Justiça Social das Mulheres Afro-Brasileiras youtubers

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Abstract: This article examines how Afro-Brazilian women YouTubers employ the strategy of challenging racism, sexism and colorism through their own articulations of Black Brazilian feminism. They are not a part of feminist organizations but are a new form of activists as they are digital social activists. Their strategies are educating their audiences and challenging their audiences to change the way they think about and treat Black women so that viewers do not produce racism and sexism while empowering Afro-Brazilian women and girls. I argue these YouTubers are engaged in black feminist digital activism. These women draw on media from Brazil and the USA thus engaging how oppression works in both countries with a focus on Brazil. YouTube is another platform that scholars should consider when thinking about digital activism.

Keywords: YouTube. Black Brazilian Feminism. Digital Activism. Social justice. Brazil.

Resumo: Este artigo examina como as mulheres afro-brasileiras youtubers empregam a estratégia de desafiar o racismo, o sexismo e o colorismo através de suas próprias articulações do feminismo negro-brasileiro. Elas não fazem parte de organizações feministas, mas são uma nova forma de ativistas, pois são ativistas sociais digitais. Suas estratégias são educar o público e desafiar o público a mudar a forma como pensam e tratam as mulheres negras, de modo que o público não produza racismo e sexismo, enquanto fortalecem as mulheres e meninas afro-brasileiras. Eu argumento que essas youtubers estão engajadas no ativismo digital negro-feminista. Essas mulheres utilizam os meios de comunicação do Brasil e dos EUA, portanto, estão engajadas em como a opressão funciona nos dois países, com foco no Brasil. O YouTube é outra plataforma que os estudiosos devem considerar quando pensam em ativismo digital.

Palavras Chaves: Youtubers. Feminismo Brasileiro Negro, Ativismo digital. Justiça social. Brasil.

> *I can smile speaking about racism, about how people die in Brazil, about how black women are objectified [and] devalued. I can speak smiling. I can speak playfully. I can talk about unicorns and flowers and about death and about how black people die all the time. Even then, I am going to be understood as crazy. I am going to be seen as aggressive,*

> *regardless of how I use my voice, no matter how pink my lipstick is, no matter how bright my smile and my eyes are. I will always be [seen as] aggressive. I will always be [called] crazy because these are the stereotypes of me [as a black woman] every time I try to talk about my pain. - Nataly Neri, Afros e Afins (Por que Você é Tão Agressiva, Nátaly? Video)*

This article examines how Afro-Brazilian women youtubers employ the strategy of challenging racism, sexism and colorism through their own articulations of Black Brazilian feminism.[2] They are not a part of feminist organizations but are a new form of activist -- digital social activists. Their strategies are educating and challenging their audiences to change the way they think about and treat Black women so that viewers do not produce racism and sexism while empowering Afro-Brazilian women and girls. I argue these youtubers are engaged in black feminist digital activism. These women draw on media from Brazil and the USA thus engaging how oppression works in both countries with a focus on Brazil. YouTube is another platform that scholars should consider when thinking about digital activism. This is an exploratory project as there are many forms of social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Periscope that people use to spread consciousness and awareness. Hashtag activism relying on twitter is an important platform to respond to events immediately. While YouTube can also provide a a source to respond to events immediately, it also serves as a site where people can look at past videos and "binge watch" shows they enjoy. Like twitter and Facebook, YouTube allows people to engage as they can post comments. This article is limited to two YouTube channels that allow Afro-Brazilian women an alternative source of information to mainstream media.

I focus on two YouTube channels, *Papo de Preta* (which translates as Black Woman's Chat) and *Afros e Afins*, but there are a number of channels that discuss issues of race, gender, class, and sexuality. Some Brazilian YouTubers who take an intersectional approach are: Gabi Oliveira of Gabi de Preta, Xan Ravelli of Soul Vaidosa, Marco Antonio Fera of *Pretinho mais que Basico, Muro Pequeno*, and Lorena of *Negatta*. I refer to Kimberlé Crenshaw's (1991) notion of intersectionality in which women of color, in particular Black women's positions in society and the ways in which policies

shape their lives occur in an intersectional manner where their race, class, and gender have an impact on how structures affect their lives. Although Crenshaw is often credited with creating the term intersectionality, as Ange-Marie Hancock (2016) notes, women throughout the world have been using intersectional-like thinking before it was named. As Cláudia Pons Cardoso (2016) claims, Afro-Brazilian women have been articulating intersectionality since the 1970s. Additionally past scholars such as Lélia Gonzales discussed Afro-Brazilian women's marginalized position in Brazilian society. This article focuses on contemporary Afro-Brazilian women who also discuss Afro-Brazilian women's marginalization via a digital platform.

Although there are significant differences in the number of subscribers, I choose to focus on *Papo de Preta* and *Afros e Afins* because these channels are run by black women, because of the high volume of videos they produce, their topics, and variance in location of the YouTube hosts. The hosts of *Papo de Preta*, Natalia Romualdo and Maristela Rosa are located in Juiz de Fora in Minas Gerais. The city of Juiz da Fora has a population of nearly 490,000. On the other hand, Nataly Neri of *Afros e Afins* is located in São Paulo, the largest city in Brazil, with a population of more than 12,000,000. Neri has over 429,910 subscribers while Romualdo and Rosa have 47,319 subscribers. Romualdo and Rosa have limited options of where they can record their shows as they are not located in a large city. Most often they record outside Romualdo's parents' home. However, they have traveled to YouTube events in larger cities. São Paulo has a YouTube space that Neri can access, although she often records in her apartment.

Differences in the quality of videos, access to recording equipment, and space may account for variance in subscriber base. Of course, Brazil's pigmentocracy of valuing light skin over dark skin may also be one reason Neri is more appealing to subscribers. Neri is light skinned while Romualdo and Rosa are dark skinned. The channels are different in that Neri discusses social and political issues as well as thrift store shopping, veganism, and hair and make-up. Romualdo and Rosa focus on social and political issues as well but also discuss movies and television shows. They mention hair but do not provide makeup and hair tutorials. All three of these YouTubers are in their 20s which allows me to examine issues young Afro-Brazilian women find relevant. They are all

highly educated and graduated from public universities. In Brazil, public universities are extremely competitive and are of higher quality than private universities.

This manuscript is organized in the following way: I first discuss racism and inequality in Brazil. I also discuss black activism. This follows with a brief overview of literature on the role of social media and activism. I then follow with my methodology and analysis.

Racism and inequality in Brazilian society

Brazil is a highly unequal society. Robin Sherriff's (2001) and Donna Goldstein's (1999) research projects reveal racial prejudice in the private sphere and negative views of blackness, even among Afro-Brazilians. Men view Afro-Brazilian women with African features and/or dark skin as less suitable marriage partners (GOLDSTEIN, 1999; CALDWELL, 2007). Chinyere Osuji (2013) finds that, despite Brazil's reputation as a racial paradise with many interracial couples, it was challenging to find interracial couples in her research in Rio de Janeiro. Furthermore, when she did study these couples, many of them revealed that their families hold prejudice against their Afro-Brazilian partners. Both Marcos Rangel (2015) and Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman (2015) find that within families, children are treated differently according to their skin color. Rangel finds that parents invest more in lighter-skinned children than their darker-skinned siblings. Hordge-Freeman finds that parents praise lighter-skinned children's physical features, and some show less affection to their darker-skinned children. Yet she did find evidence of resistance where parents embraced blackness. Even in the private sphere, racial prejudice has a negative impact on Afro-Brazilians.

There is a gap in income between Afro-Brazilians and non-Afro-Brazilians and between men and women. In 2014, while there was a decrease in the wage gap, negra women still earned 40 percent less than white men (*Mulher Negra* 2016). Although average salaries of Afro-Brazilians rose 51.4 percent between 2003 and 2013 compared to 27.8 percent for whites, Afro-Brazilians' incomes still amount to only 57.4 percent of whites' incomes (LISBOA, 2014). In addition, as Campante, Crespo, and Leite (2004), Figureido (2010), Silva and Reis (2011), Bailey et al. (2013), and Silva and Paixão (2014) have found, blacks

and browns with higher socioeconomic status face more wage discrimination than those of lower socioeconomic status. As wages increase, the difference in wage earnings between whites and Afro-Brazilians increases (TELLES and LIM 1998; ARIAS et al. 2004; BAILEY et al. 2013). Campante et al. (2004) first studied this "elite profile of discrimination" against Afro-Brazilians and Silva and Reis (2011) find it continues. Those with higher incomes and more prestigious jobs face barriers despite having equivalent or superior credentials to their non-Afro-Brazilian peers. Bailey et al.'s (2013) work confirms that there is a penalty for blackness, so those with darker skin are paid less than those with lighter skin.

In addition, there are discrepancies in educational outcomes. The number of whites attending university was over four times the number of blacks and browns attending university in 2006 (PAIXÃO and CARVANO, 2008: 81). Paixão and Carvano (2008) show that *pretos* and *pardos* who have finished college are 1.2 times more likely to be unemployed compared to whites with the same schooling. Monk finds that skin color is a better predictor of educational outcomes and income differences. Monk finds that as skin color gets darker, a one unit increase in skin tone darkness leads to "26 percent lower odds of having more education compared to others" (MONK, 2016: 422). Monk finds that after controlling for educational attainment, skin color is a predictor of occupational status so that those with dark skin are more likely to hold less prestigious positions. Black movement activists challenge discrimination by advocating for policies to address these inequalities and by embracing blackness and African features.

Black activism

Black activists have played a critical role in changing racial discourse and challenging negative stereotypes of blacks. Today black activism includes formal non-governmental and non-profit organizations where the focus is on Afro-Brazilians. Hip-hop music and the organizations of some of these artists also provide forums of black activism: artists provide workshops where issues of racial discrimination are addressed (PARDUE, 2004).   Some Afro-Brazilian politicians discuss racism and racial issues while campaigning and the use of political campaigns provide a means of racial mobilization and teaching racial consciousness (MITCHELL, 2009).

More importantly, grassroots organizing are sites where black women organize, asserting their racial and gender identities (CALDWELL, 2007; PERRY, 2013). Christen Smith (2016) shows the importance of artistic groups and grassroots groups, such as "Reaja ou Será Morto!" (React or Be Killed!), from Salvador, in the fight against racism and police brutality. Lastly, I argue that social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter provide mediums of spreading black and gender consciousness.

Black movement activists seek to raise racial consciousness. Most Afro-Brazilians do not think they face racism because they understand racism to be explicit (LAMONT et. Al. 2016). However, they are aware of racial stigmatization. Perceptions of discrimination differ according to the intersection of race, class, and gender. Layton and Smith (2017) find that considering all Brazilians, those with darker skin tones are more likely to perceive class, gender, and race discrimination. When considering racial discrimination, age is negatively associated with perceived discrimination and education is positively associated with perceiving discrimination. Lower levels of income are positively associated with perceived class discrimination. For women, those with darker skin tones are more likely to report gender discrimination. These women also face race discrimination. Variance in discrimination may be the result of exposure to black movement activists discourse. Younger people and people with more education are more perceptive of racial discrimination.

Furthermore, black movement activism that involves multiple issues and views women's rights, LGBTQ rights, and Afro-Brazilian rights through an intersectional lens allows people to see how various oppressions are linked. Afro-Brazilian women YouTube channels such as *Papo de Preta* and *Afros e Afins* provide instrumental tools of educating Afro-Brazilians about various discriminations in society. I now turn to a brief review of the literature on social media and activism.

Blacks and digital activism

Most of the literature on digital activism and blacks focus on the use of Twitter to organize African Americans and other groups to make people aware of social justice issues such as police brutality. Literature on social media overwhelmingly focuses on

Twitter (BROCK 2012; FLORINI 2014). Scholars have noted the role that Twitter plays on social activism (JACKSON and WELLES 2016; WILLIAMS 2015; BONILLA and ROSA 2015). Scholars such as Bonilla and Rosa (2015) and Cox (2017) admit that while there are limitations to social media, we should consider social media as a site for research studies. In the United States Twitter served as one of the first social media sites where people learned about Michael Brown's death in Ferguson, Missouri. Brown was killed by police and his body was left in the street which plainly displayed how police officers viewed black life and death as worthless. People who posted live tweets about what was going on aided in information sharing before major news networks discussed the horrific incident. Consequently, there were protest against the unjust killing of Brown. "BlackTwitter" has played a role in influencing corporate media to run stories they would otherwise not run (NEAL 2014). There were over one million tweets about Ferguson before CNN began covering the event (NEAL 2014). Neal notes that despite African Americans being only 13 percent of the US population, blacks are 27% of Twitter users. Brown's death was not the first use of social media. In fact, many scholars mark Trayvon Martin's death as the beginning of the Black Lives Matter movement, which heavily relies on social media platforms. Twitter Hashtag activism has also played a role in spreading campaigns about specific issues to bring awareness to the killing of black women and girls. Crenshaw led the hashtag "#Sayhername" to bring awareness to numerous black women killed by police officers but whose stories do not gain as much media attention as black boys and black men.

Methodology

In this project I rely on content analysis by using the qualitative software program Nvivo to examine how often topics are covered. This means that videos were transcribed and were analyzed in Nvivo, which can provide a word count of specific words and can report words most frequently used. I selected 50 videos from both channels as videos I would watch which is a total of 100 videos. I watched all videos but only 33 of Neri's videos were transcribed due to a lack of funding compared to 50 of Papo de Preta videos. The content analysis relying on Nvivo is limited to the 83 videos transcribed. However,

further explanation of themes from videos are mentioned based on my watching all 100 videos. YouTubers Natalia Romualdo and Maristela Rosa transcribed their videos while Andreza Conceição and Thânisia Cruz transcribed videos from *Afros e Afins.* The time period for videos covered on Papo de Preta is September 29, 2015 through April 26, 2017. The time period for videos covered on *Afros e Afins* is July 28, 2015 through May 28, 2017. The author can provide a list of these videos.

Papo De Preta

In this section I focus on the channel *Papo de Preta* (see Image I). Rosa and Romualdo say that the purpose of the channel is to "talk about black women's issues and to speak with a vision of the black woman about diverse social issues, including popular culture. What we see on the internet [and] what we watch on television [are] through black women's eyes." I analyze how Rosa and Romualdo articulate black feminism and how they empower Afro-Brazilian women. I developed a word cloud in Nvivo which shows popularly used words. The larger the word in the word cloud, the more often it was discussed. As can be seen in the word cloud, popular topics include blacks (*negro*), hair (*cabelo*), women (*mulher*), whites (*brancos*), racism (*racismo*) (Figure II). Table I shows the number of topics referenced in their videos.

Image I - Papo de Preta

Figure I - Word Cloud of most frequently cited words in select YouTube vídeos of Papo de Preta

Table I Topics and number of references in 50 Select YouTube
videos of *Papo de Preta*

Topic	# of References	% Coverage
Black woman	1238	1.92
Black feminism	913	1.36
Negra	881	1.28
Women	357	.64
Hair	339	.55
Racism	158	.30
Right	69	.13
Viola Davis	23	.03
Blackface	23	.06
Malcolm X	15	.01
Stereotypes	11	.03
Colorism	23	.05
Machismo	6	.01
Police	2	.01

BLACK FEMINISM AS ARTICULATED BY PAPO DE PRETA

In this manuscript, I do not make the claim that these YouTubers belong to formal black feminist organizations in Brazil or are linked to international black feminist organizations. Nor do I make the claim they are engaged with most black feminists in Brazil or throughout the African Diaspora. They are not. This chapter focuses on how they understand black feminism and how they use black Brazilian feminism to challenge discrimination. Black feminism is mentioned 913 times. In the Brazilian context, black feminism considers the role race, class, aesthetics, and gender play in society and how Afro-Brazilian women are particularly marginalized due to racism, classism, and sexism (GONZALEZ, 1988; NASCIMENTO, 2009; BAIRROS, 1991; CARNEIRO, 2003). Sueli Carneiro challenges feminism that ignores the experiences of black women. She believes that feminism should fight against both racial and gender domination. She proposes a number of initiatives black women should promote, including recognizing that poverty has a racial dimension and that race should be included in analyses of the

feminization of poverty. She also advocates for a recognition of the "symbolic violence and oppression that whiteness as the hegemonic and privileged aesthetic standard has over non-white women" (CARNEIRO, 2003). I point out the aesthetic dimension because one's appearance is particularly valued in Latin America and especially Brazil.

Some of the elements of black feminism *Papo de Preta* articulates are empowerment, embracing a black beauty aesthetic, taking an intersectional approach to analyzing issues, and resistance. Another important aspect of black feminism is Patricia Hill Collins and Beverly Guy Sheftall's (1995) notion that intellectuals are not only highly trained academics but also include activists, community leaders, and everyday women. I argue that through their channel, they raise racial and gender consciousness and act as intellectuals by teaching their audience about issues they may not have thought about previously.

Black Brazilian feminists empower black women to embrace their identities despite marginalization. *Papo de Preta* articulates the experiences of black women as well as practical ways to combat stigmatization. Hair is a physical marker that can lead to stigmatization in Brazilian society. In Brazil one's appearance is extremely important and, like in many countries, beauty is Eurocentric. Even within Afro-Brazilian households, the standard of beauty is Eurocentric (CALDWELL, 2007; HORDGE-FREEMAN, 2015). These beauty standards are not limited to Brazil. In fact, Cheryl Thompson (2009) finds that black and mixed-race women in Canada disengage in changing their natural hair to fit a Eurocentric beauty aesthetic. Women are also socialized to straighten or relax their hair. With the growth of the natural hair movement, more Afro-Brazilian women are accepting their natural hair and wearing it natural. In the Nvivo analysis, hair is mentioned 339 times, making it the fifth most cited word. They discuss prejudice against people with naturally curly hair, personal hair experiences, and how to embrace one's natural hair. Rosa and Romualdo do not simply view transitioning to one's natural hair as a hair style or fashion. They believe it is a political act.

In the video "10 things that irritate almost all black women" Romualdo tells a story about going into a store to buy a hair product and the sales attendant assumes she wants a product on sale. In this incident, the sales attendant makes the racist and classist

assumption that she cannot afford a more expensive product. In Brazil, if one wears their hair natural, many people believe believe it is a marker of low class status such that the individual cannot afford to go to a hair dresser to get their hair relaxed. Romualdo recounts a story where a woman in the neighborhood insists she will pay to have her hair relaxed for her graduation dance. She recounts the following:

> My father was so excited telling God and the world. Everyone in the street knew 'Natália will graduate', [the day] is arriving. And on a nice day, this neighbor of mine, arrived and called me in my house. I was in my house, very quiet. And there she arrives, called me and said 'So Natália, You always have been a very ambitious girl and now you have achieved a very good thing in your life that will end with your university degree and so my husband and I would like to give you a gift because you deserve it!' Wow, what generosity, right? And so she said this 'Natália I was speaking with him and we came to the conclusion that we will pay for you a makeup artist and a hair dresser. Because the hair dresser will fix your hair, and straighten it. This hairdresser will talk about this with you but if you straighten it I think it will be very nice!' …I turned to her and told her "I cannot accept this proposal Mrs. First because I do not want to straighten my hair and there is a misunderstanding because it seems that you are associating my crespo hair with a lack of money and my hair is *crespo* because I want my hair to be *crespo*. It is not because I do not have money to take care of my hair. It is my choice; it is my choice!'

Rosa chimes in and says "If you see a pretty black woman in the street with *crespo* hair, it is her hair! It is not bad, not badly treated; not badly cared for. It is not because she does not have money. It is her hair!" They challenge the idea that natural hair is a marker of low class status. Despite the negative stereotypes associated with natural hair Rosa and Romualdo both embrace their natural hair, and let their viewers know that *crespo* hair is just as beautiful as other hair types. By promoting the idea that naturally curly hair is beautiful, they empower black women through self-acceptance.

In another video entitled "Phrases every *Crespa* has Already Heard (or will hear)" they discuss racist and insensitive comments people say about natural hair. A common question is "Can I touch your hair?" This question exoticizes black women and animalizes them as if they are accessible to touch in the same way one might pet an animal.   Another question and statement Roumaldo have heard is "Are you going to a job interview with

your hair like that? You will not get hired." Rosa responds "The problem is with the employer. It is not your problem. This is what we have to immediately realize. We do not have anything wrong with our hair or our aesthetic. The error is [people who are] racist and those who are prejudiced."

This follows with another conversation about what people say regarding hair and the difficulty of attracting a boyfriend:

> Romualdo: With this ugly hair you will never get a boyfriend. I have already heard this a lot in my life…. Men do not like women with messy hair on their head. Men like women with straight hair.
>
> Rosa advises: This is the type of man you do not want. If he is with you because of your hair what is he? A hairdresser? Give him a lace wig for a present. He can date the lace wig.

They use humor to advise viewers how to respond to these statements. Romualdo and Rosa also discuss racist jokes people make, such as 'one of the advantages of your hair is that you can hide things in it.' Rosa says she heard this a lot as a child. Jokes play a critical role in Brazilian social relations as they are meant to make social relations smoother. Sheriff refers to jokes people make in Brazil while Sue discusses racist jokes made in Mexico. Hordge-Freeman (2015) also finds that in Salvador, Bahia jokes play a role in everyday social interactions. Those who make racist jokes believe these jokes are in fun and that people should not be offended by them. When people take offense they are viewed as insensitive. Humor is meant to silence people. Silencing people does not allow them to resist the white supremacist viewpoint that African features are inferior to European features. However, Rosa and Romualdo use humor to fight common hateful and racist remarks against natural hair.

Challenging stereotypes of black women

Black Brazilian women feminists challenge stereotypes of black women. Patricia Hill Collins (1990) defines these stereotypes as controlling images which are meant to dominate black women. Collins discusses stereotypes such as the mammy, who cares more for other families than her own and the jezebel, who is always sexually available.

Similar stereotypes of black women exist in Brazil. They dedicate an entire episode to stereotypes about black women. They discuss the stereotype that black women are hot in bed. The dialogue is below.

> Romualdo: The second [stereotype] is [that] all black women are fiery and hot in bed.
>
> Rosa: This phrase is more disturbing than people realize because the idea of black women being fiery and hot in bed comes from the fact that the slaves were raped and could not speak at all. The white woman was the little *sinhazinha* and could say she had a headache. Although her husband did not always respect her, she was white like him and could complain. The black woman could not. She was not seen as a person so he could do whatever he wanted, when he wanted, whenever he wanted. So that's where this idea that black women are fiery and hot comes from.
>
> Romualdo: Stop it. If any of you still say this, please stop.

They connect this stereotype to slavery to inform their viewers where it originated. This stereotype dates to slavery where black women were viewed as promiscuous so when white masters raped black women, the act was not considered rape as they were viewed as readily accessible since they were considered property. It is also important to note that the word *sinhazinha* points to the fact that black women are not treated in the same way as white women and as explained by Black activist Dalila Negreiros, is also employed to explain how white women treat black women.

Another stereotype they address is what is called "The strong black woman" in the United States. They identify this stereotype in the Brazilian context:

> Romualdo: Black women are strong; resilient. They are good for hard work ...
>
> Rosa: Domestic service.
>
> Romualdo: That's it. The black woman is so strong that she can bear any pain that you want to inflict and she can even go through labor without anesthesia.
>
> Rosa: This is the stereotype of the strong, resilient black woman, who bears everything despite difficulties. You know the thing about the fragile sex? It's for white women. We discuss this more in the Black Feminism video. All these stereotypes are a way to dehumanize us and put us all in one category. There are black

women who are stronger, livelier, more extroverted, or more sensitive. We are not one thing.

The "strong black woman" trope exists in both Brazil and the United States. This stereotype is extremely detrimental as researchers have found that medical doctors believe black women have a higher pain threshold so are not given pain medicine at the same rate as white women (WEISSE, et al. 2001). Donovan and West (2014) find that African American women who believe in the strong black woman stereotype are more likely to have anxiety and symptoms of depression than those who do not believe in this stereotype (DONOVAN and WEST, 2014). Romualdo and Rosa articulate how black and white women are viewed differently in society and how the stereotype that black women can endure pain and bear any difficulty in life because they are strong and resilient, dehumanizes these women. They articulate black Brazilian feminism by identifying that the stereotype that black women are strong is detrimental and that black women are just as human as white women.

In summary, the channel *Papo de Preta* articulates how Eurocentric standards marginalize black women especially those that do not uphold a European aesthetic. Rather than allowing jokes about black women's hair to silence them, they use humor to challenge these stereotypes. They also teach Afro-Brazilian women about the origin of harmful stereotypes and empower them by challenging these stereotypes as they embrace their blackness, gender, and natural hair.

Afros e Afins

On her channel, *Afros e Afins*. Nataly Neri discusses topics that are also covered on *Papo de Preta* (see Image 2). Neri states that the main purpose of her channel is "to speak about us, black women, about our lives, about our spaces, about how we deal with our reality and how knowledge can change the things around us." Neri also discusses topics such as her relationship with her white transgender boyfriend, sexuality, veganism, and thrift shopping. I focus on the themes of black feminism and black women's empowerment. She is not shy about addressing topics such as racism and sexism and has also been very transparent about her experiences growing up as a lighter skinned and thin negra woman

in Brazil which positions her differently than darker-skinned Afro-Brazilian women. The Nvivo analysis reveal that some of the most popular topics were black women and hair. She mentions black women 621 times and hair 97 times.
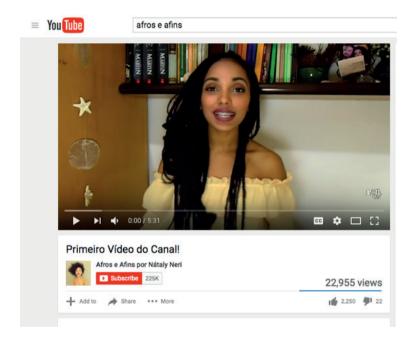
Image II Afros e Afins

Figure II Word Cloud of most frequent words in select
YouTube videos of Afros e Afins

Table II Topics and number of references in 33 Select YouTube videos of Afros e Afins

Topic	# of References	% Coverage
Black woman	621	1.64
Women	329	.97
Black feminism	319	.77
Negra	292	.66
Hair	97	.25
Racism	79	.23
Stereotypes	51	.25
Thrift [shopping] (brecho)	44	.11
White women	35	.09
Consciousness	32	.15
Right	15	.05
Colorism	13	.05
Trans	11	.02
Machismo	1	.01

Black feminism as articulated by Afros e Afins

Neri admits she learned about feminism at the university in her second year in college. Black feminism is how she gained more self-esteem. She makes a distinction between black feminists and white radical feminists and believes this difference is related to black women's intersectional marginalization. Neri responds to white radical feminists who critique her for wearing makeup. They claim she is playing into gender stereotypes. Identifying herself as an intersectional feminist she states:

> When I speak of feminists, I am referring to radical white feminists. I am an intersectional feminist. I do not hate radical [feminists]. I am not like that. But there are theoretical divergences. Here comes a woman telling me, I wear a lot of makeup. The white woman has been telling me that I use a lot of makeup, and that I am collaborating with the gender stereotype. I am. I am collaborating. I am collaborating. It's okay to question, the act of gender… the performance of gender within the society. When a white woman, a white feminist, wants to impose this on a black woman, she is quite problematic. …We can discuss this. So I Nataly, will only begin to deny this gender stereotype, the day that the [make-up] industry produces the same amount of [make-up] base's for black women that they produce for their white skin. When they are as careful with black women as they are with your skin; by researching your [skin] tone by making a huge range of shades for you. And when the cosmetic industry is so careful to make a shampoo healthy to take care of your hair, to leave it oily [or] less oily… But this is only an idea for curly hair, for curly hair, for afro hair. When you have a variety of products for afro hair, then yes I will. While it does not happen, it's part of my struggle, it's part of my empowerment. I position myself and say to the cosmetic industries, that yes, Black women exist, black women consume. We want things for our hair, we want things for our skin…

Neri's argument that black women taking care of their hair and wearing make-up is a form of militancy is in line with Johnson's (2017) argument that YouTube Hair tutorials for African American women that teach them how to take care of their hair allows them to embrace their hair which is a form of resistance to stereotypes of black women. Similarly, Neri believes resistance occurs in caring for one's appearance despite that hair and make-up products for Afro-Brazilian women are not in the same abundance as they are for white women. Embracing "black" beauty through hair and make-up allows Afro-Brazilian women to gain self-esteem and to challenge the stereotype that there is no

make-up in the capitalist market for black women as consumers. Neri, is very conscious about the ill effects of capitalism as she promotes thrift shopping rather than consumerism through buying new clothes. She is also conscious of workers who are exploited to produce cheaply made clothes. However, in her critique to white radical feminists she does not critique capitalism but seeks empowerment for black women through participation in the beauty industry so that they can also be viewed as equal players in this market.

HAIR AND BLACK WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

As in *Papo de Preta's* discussion of black feminism, Neri also discusses hair. In Neri's video entitled, "Self-esteem, Identity, and Black Feminism" she discusses the experiences she had as a young girl and believes that many Afro-Brazilian girls have low self-esteem because of a Eurocentric idea of beauty. She says that when she was nine years old she began to have her hair relaxed and that her hair broke off easily because it is thin. She even says that now when she passes a hair salon and smells formaldehyde, a chemical used in relaxer's, she likes the smell because it reminds her of a happy time. When her hair was straight she thought she was beautiful. She states the following:

> When I was nine years old, I do not remember for sure, I started to get my first relaxers. My hair was greatly damaged by these chemicals. And I loved it. And it is very funny because even today when I step in front of a salon and smell formaldehyde I very much like the smell of formaldehyde, although it is very strong, because when I was a child I always associated the smell of formaldehyde with happy things. For me, every time I relaxed my hair I was happy. I felt beautiful. Look how deep that is. The smell of something so destructive brought me good memories, but I started relaxing my hair very early. And my hair was never curly hair that seemed straight. My hair never looked pretty straightened. My hair is extremely thin. So this process always damaged my hair a lot. My hair never grew past here... And it was really very ugly….It was really badly damaged hair; I did not look good. I never passed as white even though my skin was lighter and my hair straightened. People always knew I was black…

She later wore faux locs and this was during the time she embraced blackness. Neri went through a process of embracing her blackness and this embrace allowed her to "become *negra*," which is what Kia Caldwell (2007) finds in her study where Afro-

Brazilian women became *negra* through a process of consciousness. Neri encourages Afro-Brazilian women and girls to embrace their natural hair and she believes by doing so they are engaging in activism.

Discussing hair and giving practical advice about hairstyles is not simply an aesthetic endeavor. Neri says she is involved in *aesthetic militancy*. She believes that when black women embrace naturally curly hair they are empowering themselves and are challenging the white aesthetic that Brazilian upholds. In her video "Self-esteem Identity, and Black Feminism", she states:

> It is not easy, while we are fighting here, society is struggling against us. Racism is trying to destroy people. So I am talking about this right now because when we talk about hair, when we talk about braids, what does it mean to talk about those braids? It means to say that it is part of my identity as a black woman, that this is part of a historical and social construction of black culture, and that from the moment that we can understand what it means, and it is of use for our self-esteem, you are a militant, you are doing something. You are denying society. From the moment in which you [as a] woman, even if you do not agree with feminism or do not agree with social movements, you can have that right, but from the moment you [as a] black woman, put the pick, on top [of your hair] you are denying society. You are involved in activism. You are building your identity and that of other women, because you are…. showing other women that it is very cool to be who you are. I love being black, and black women love being black.

This passage illustrates Neri's belief that black women embracing a black woman aesthetic is a form of activism. It is a personal sense of activism because it allows individuals to change the way they think about themselves. It also allows black women to see beauty in other black women.

Fighting black women stereotypes

Neri discusses three stereotypes of black women. She admits she learned about these stereotypes when she took a course taught by Djamila Ribeiro at her university. The three stereotypes she mentions are the strong black woman, *mãe preta*, and the *mulata* export. I focus on two of the stereotypes Neri addresses. Neri says the *mãe preta* stereotype is an older woman who is subservient, cooks, always keeps her head down, cares for the

house, is a wet nurse and is often portrayed as dark skinned. She maps this stereotype onto her discussion of colorism. This stereotype is most similar to the stereotype of the mammy in the United States. In the United States context, the mammy is viewed as subservient and one who is willing to care more for white children than her own. The mulata export is viewed as a sexual object meant to draw foreign men. The *mulata* export is a symbol of a sensual and hot woman. This stereotype is most similar to the stereotype of the hot momma or jezebel (Collins 1990). As Neri notes, these stereotypes are meant to socially control women. Discussing the role of color in these stereotypes is insightful as it allows the viewer to realize that negra women are racialized and sexualized despite differences in skin tones. Although the two stereotypes are different and associated with different skin tones they are both harmful to *negra* women. By making viewers aware of the history of these stereotypes and how to identify them, she gives them knowledge to question everyday stereotypes that are harmful to black women. She also frees black women from these stereotypes as she fights against them by advocating for people to let go of them.

    In another video, "Why Are You so Aggressive?" she critiques the angry black woman trope. Neri says some viewers comment that she is always angry and should smile more. She asks, why should she look happy discussing topics such as racism and sexism? She references Porsha Olayiwola, an American African-descendant gay woman poet who has a poem about this stereotype. Neri states the following:

> I do not know if you all, people who are non-black [viewers], people who accuse me of being aggressive, who accuse other black women of being too aggressive, of being too intense, of being too incisive know [black women]. I do not know if you all know when you all do this [make this accusation] you have an understanding of what we are talking about. I do not know if you have an understanding of the pains, memories, experiences that we have to gather to speak out about all this.

    Neri's response is important as she addresses the expectations of viewers, particularly non-black viewers. Presumably non-blacks do not have such painful experiences and furthermore, they stereotype her as the angry black woman because she does not make them feel comfortable when she discusses uncomfortable topics such as

racism. Rather, than make a video where she tries to accommodate white fragility Neri confronts them and lets non-black viewers know these topics are burdensome and are meant to challenge commonly held ideas of black women.

In summary, Neri engages in aesthetic militancy which is key to Brazilian black feminism as it embraces Afro-Brazilian women's natural hair rather than a Eurocentric aesthetic. In her videos she empowers black women by providing practical hairstyles black women can wear and she also addresses white feminists who she believes do not acknowledge the varied experiences black women have. Neri has been recognized as a leading social justice YouTuber as she was invited to the 2016 YouTube Summit for Social Change in London. Her social activism is evident through the practical ways in which she seeks to empower black women.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the YouTube channels *Papo de Preta* and *Afros e Afins* articulate aspects of Brazilian black feminism such as critiquing Eurocentric beauty standards, empowering black women to wear their hair natural, and critiquing racism, sexism, and colorism in Brazilian society. They are committed to challenging racism, sexism and colorism. They are not a part of feminist organizations but are a new form of activists as they are digital social activists. Their strategies are educating their audiences and challenging their audiences to change the way they think about and treat Black women so that viewers do not produce racism and sexism while empowering. There are other forms of digital activism such as the Manifesto Crespo (Kinky Hair Manifesto) in São Paulo, an online platform ran by Afro-Brazilian women such as Denna Souza and Jully Gabriel and others to promote discussions of a Black Brazilian woman aesthetic and to create exchange between African and African Diasporic women. While there are a number of digital platforms this research contributes to scholarship on feminism by focusing on contemporary Black feminism in Brazil as articulated by digital activists. These YouTube shows clearly center on black women, an often ignored group. Romualdo, Rosa, and Neri are black feminist intellectuals, teachers, and activists in the fight for black empowerment and more specifically black women's empowerment. While older forms of activism

through legislation, protests, and formal organizations continue to play a significant role in change, digital activism that articulates Brazilian black feminism has the potential to change commonly held stereotypes. These young black women feminists play a role in new ways of transforming Brazilian society.

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