‘Christ the Redeemer Turns His Back on Us:’ Urban Black Struggle in Rio’s Baixada Fluminense
by
Stephanie Reist
Department of Romance Studies
Duke University

Date:_______________________
Approved:

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Walter Migolo, Supervisor

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Esther Gabara

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Gustavo Furtado

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John French

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Catherine Walsh

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Amanda Flaim

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Romance Studies in the Graduate School of Duke University

2018
ABSTRACT

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Abstract

“Even Christ the Redeemer has turned his back to us” a young, Black female resident of the Baixada Fluminense told me. The 13 municipalities that make up this suburban periphery of Rio de Janeiro have suffered for decades from spectacular stigmatizing media narratives that cast the region as pathologically violent and culturally devoid due to its Blacker, poorer inhabitants. This has helped perpetuate government neglect, exacerbated by Rio’s hosting of the 2016 Olympic Games, through clientelist politics that thrive off the lack of jobs and basic public services in the region. My dissertation is an auto-ethnographic analysis that draws from three years of participatory action research with Black and brown youth in Rio de Janeiro’s stigmatized Baixada Fluminense. I argue that the music, films, social media driven journalism, and scholarly production of these youth contest the ways in which race, class, and place of origin often overlap through segregationist practices and media narratives that attempt to maintain racial, socio-geographic hierarchies by relegating Black, brown, and poor bodies to the social and geographic periphery of a country that once proclaimed itself a “racial democracy.” Through transnational dialogues, these
youth movements employ diasporic cultural forms and digital media to re-
configure the Baixada and its 13 municipalities as a “Black place” that is
inherently intersectional in its claims to collective access to urban and social
mobility within this urban periphery.
Dedication

To Bernice and Ulrich Reist, my parents, for raising me in a home full of books, music, and foreign currency.

And to Anne Marie Reist and Edna Jones, my grandmothers, who passed before I finished college and graduate school, respectively. Milu, as we called Grandma Anne Marie, taught me to love traveling alone, learning languages, and eating chocolate bonbons like potato chips. Grandma Edna taught me to love puzzles, fried chicken, and my own grace and power as a Black woman.
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Philip, has been my biggest fan throughout my life, and I am overwhelmed with gratitude for him and Carolyn Stinites for bringing my cherished niece, Iree Carol May, into this world.
1. Introduction

Young, poor, and negro from the periphery. This is how many activists throughout Metropolitan Rio de Janeiro identify themselves at debates, political manifestation, and through their journalism, art, and music. Some may swap periphery for “favela” or for the name of a specific favela or neighborhood within Rio. When women speak, they will say that they are a “mulher negra” — a black woman. And when LGBTQ activists speak, they will often identify their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Many also say that they are the children or grandchildren of nordestinos, migrants from Brazil’s impoverished and stigmatized Northeastern region. What they all have in common is their youth, their poverty, and an assumed political identification as a Black person living in one of Rio’s numerous urban peripheries — be they the favelas that tower over wealthy neighborhoods in hillsides throughout the city, thus putting Rio’s endemic inequality on full display, or they the subúrbios, the distant suburban neighborhoods and municipalities where that inequality is no less stark, but far less visible.

What does it mean to assume an identity that has been rendered invisible? What opportunities do the poor, Black youth from the periphery dream of by assuming that identity? How do youth come to known themselves and demand that they be known from a place that others would like to forget and ignore? These are the central question
of this autoethnographic dissertation. It is the result of three years of collaborative research between 2014 and 2017 in the Baixada Fluminense, Rio’s vast suburban periphery of 13 municipalities. Though largely rendered invisible through stigmatizing media narratives and public policy neglect, I contend that the knowledge and cultural product of these youth is a pursuit of collective self knowlegde and territorial identity from and for the Baixada.

To answer these questions, and in following in the example of these youth activists, this dissertation is auto-ethnographic. That is to say, I situate myself within the text as a mixed-raced Black, middle class, college educated woman from the US and continually reflect on what that positionality means in terms of the research I conducted and the act of writing itself (McClaurin 2001). In doing so, I situate this dissertation within a Black feminist ethnographic tradition in which “[s]elf and subjectivity are never secondary but are instricately woven into the direction, content, analysis, praxis, and materiality of our scholarship” (McClaurin 2001, 51). As McClaurin notes and the example of these youths’ self-identifications demonstrate, such an analytical positioning is inherently political. Just as I attempt to articulate the power relationships between Rio and the Baixada Fluminense and between white hegemonic disourse and Black bodies in Brazil, I also strive to evaluate the power relationships between me and my ethnographic “objects of study,” including myself. Though my research methodology attempted to avoid the
objectification of the people I write about, primarily through collaborative engagements with actvisits such as writing for the blog *RioOnWatch* and co-directing a film, I use the process of writing to continually reflect on my own biases and emotional responses to events in order to analyze my own process of knowing. Thus, while I examine the ways in which this youth comes to know themselves and make themselves known, I ask how my own subjective and emotionally invested knowledge creation, both in the form of this dissertation and in my writing and filmmaking while in the field, observes, analyzes, collaborates with, contributes to, or even potentially co-opts these projects.
2. The Baixada Starts at Central do Brasil

“Are you sure you don’t want to take the bus to Central do Brasil, it isn’t the safest walk.” “Be careful at Central do Brasil. I once saw a news report where they snatched the necklace off a woman being interviewed.” “The trains can be dangerous. A lot of people get robbed on the train.” “You work in Caxias, aren’t you scared?” “I’ve heard Mangueirinha is where all the drug traffickers from Rio have started operating again.” “Coming back, you don’t want to arrive at Central too late, there are many bandidos who hang out there.”

Every part of my near daily journey was supposedly marked with the threat of violence. I would leave by foot from the tree lined residential hamlet of Bairro de Fatima—a one block long residential neighborhood at the foot of Santa Teresa where bohemian Lapa fades into working class Centro. I would first cross Praça Cruz Vermelha, where many homeless people that I had been cautioned against gathered to chat and play cards, before I joined the march of commuters heading to or from Central do Brazil outside the gates of the Campo Santana park, another place where I was to “stay alert” (fica atenta) lest I be robbed. The reputation of violence only increased as I reached Central do Brasil—Rio’s and formerly Brazil’s—central train and metro-region bus station. And, according to the friends and colleagues who warned me about my journey, even after I had been taking it for months, the dangers would further escalate as I took the train from Central do Brazil to the center of Duque de Caxias, a municipality on the
outskirts of Rio in a region of 13 total municipalities known as the Baixada Fluminense. The threat of violence would reach its metaphoric if not geographic peak as I descended from a bus at the base of Morro do Sapo (Frog Hill) in the complex of favelas called Mangueirinha (Little Mango Tree).

Figure 1: View from Morro do Sapo in Mangueirinha.

This was my near daily commute for 10 months from October 2014 through July 2015 as part of the Felsman Fellowship in Children in Adversity of Duke’s Sanford School of Public Policy. The fellowship partnered me and another Duke graduate student from the Center for Documentary Studies, Sarah, with Programa Raízes Locais (PRL-Local Roots Program), a community based
project in Mangueirinha sponsored by Rio-based NGO *Terra dos Homens*—an independent Brazilian affiliate of the Lucerne, Switzerland based international children’s advocacy NGO *Terra des Hommes*. The first time I went to Mangueirinha was with PRL coordinator and dear friend Luciano. We met in Cinelandia Square in downtown Rio. At first Luciano was unable to spot me reading on the steps of the belle époque Municipal Theater as he had been expecting someone a bit more *gringa*. While he and I had only communicated through email, he had skyped with Sarah. Her fair skin and strawberry blond hair seemed to match many Brazilians’ expectation of what an American looks like, though they belied her radical politics and quest for intersectional solidarity through filmmaking. I simply assumed Luciano would spot me after having seen a passport photo or some other document that the Felsman team had sent to him. The irony is that I, a brown skinned, mixed raced Black America with natural hair,¹ was able to arrive in Brazil 5 months before Sarah because I have a Swiss passport, which do not require visas to enter Brazil unlike US passports. I have

¹ Black American women use the term “natural” to describe hair that has not be texturized—either straightened or made to have perfect ringlet curls—by any chemical treatments. Fros, braids, locs, curls, and twists are all considered natural styles. There is a growing natural hair movement in Brazil.
no doubt that my Afro-descendant, Brazilian appearance often helped me blend into public spaces, especially on solitary commutes to Caxias.

After exchanging a few emails, I eventually made my way to the nearby _Terra dos Homens_ headquarters in Centro to meet Luciano and other members of the team. He and I then took the metro to Central do Brasil before getting a bus—rather than a train given that there was less traffic in the middle of the day—to Caxias. Luciano, who was born and lives in Caxias, explained in a mixture of Spanish and Portuguese, for my benefit, the best routes to take depending on the time of day, especially since I would be traveling _contra-fluxo_, or against traffic, as most residents of the Baixada and North Zone commute to the center and South Zone to study or work. Upon arriving in the bustling center of Caxias at the Praça do Pacificador, which features a museum and theater designed by famed Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, Luciano made sure to point out the number 20 bus that would leave me practically at the front door of the converted residential home that PRL operates out of. It was a straight forward enough

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2 Rio is divided into four socio-geographic zones: Zona Norte, Centro, Zona Sula, Zona Oeste; seven administrative subprefectures: Zona Oeste, Zona Sul, Ilha do Governador, Grande Tijuca, Zona Norte, Centro e Centro Histórico, Barra e Jacarepaguá; which are in turn divided into 34 districts encompassing all 160 formally recognized _bairros_ in the city. Some favelas, like Rocinha and Vidigal, have been recognized as _bairros_ though the vast majority have not.
commute, and though trains would be delayed and the number 19 bus would pass three times before a number 20 finally arrived, there was nothing about it that inherently made me fearful of any of the places that I would come to almost feel indifferent toward out of the familiarity and routine that only one’s daily commute engenders.

It would be naïve, however, to say that at no point in my journey did I not feel nervous or even afraid, especially in the first weeks. I was in two new cities, both Rio and Caxias, my Portuguese was Portuñol at best, and the sheer quantity of people who commute through Central—estimated at 600 thousand a day—meant that anything, from being pickpocketed to verbally sexually harassed, was possible. But I was also keenly aware that passing through Central do Brasil was a daily reality for people throughout Rio’s metropolitan region, especially those in the Baixada Fluminense who often commute upwards of 2 hour on 2-3 forms of public transportation one way before reaching their place of work or study (Casa Fluminense 2015). I was in Rio to use my experience at PRL to conduct independent research and mass transportation not only became a focal point for my own understanding of Rio as a city and metropolitan capital, but trains and buses served as places where I could engage in various research
methodologies—improving my Portuguese during the 3 hours a day I spent on the train or bus by reading and analyzing both academic and news articles, and participant observation—or sometimes just non-academic people watching—of the passengers and vendors on the train. And in all earnestness, if I were to embrace this opportunity, I had no other affordable, concrete options to get where I needed to be, lest I live in Caxias, which was even more unheard of according to my interlocutors.

Why was everyone so fearful of these places? Even before I left for Rio in October 2014, my friends and family in the US seemed simultaneously thrilled and terrified that I would be spending the next few months in the Marvelous City. “You’ve seen City of God, right? Is it going to be like that?” they asked, even knowing I had traveled alone to conduct research in places similarly stigmatized by violence, like Cali, Colombia. Though think back now, I suppose there is no film about Cali that quite colored their perceptions like City of God did for Rio. Rio itself was not necessarily a no-go for them, having known people who were traveling there during that time for the World Cup, but they insisted that I stay in the right parts of town. People who did not know Rio knew that there were places to be fearful of, as is the case with any major city. Being from the Chicago
suburbs I have often been asked, by Americans and Brazilians alike, about the endemic violence there of the last few years and how it affects my daily life. However, since Oak Park, like many US suburbs and unlike their Global South peripheral counterparts, like he municipalities of the Baixada, is the right part of town, violence largely had not impacted my daily life in the ways that I was warned it might during my time in Rio and Caxias. Through films like *City of God* and the *Elite Squad* franchise as well as the heightened media coverage during the World Cup and ahead of the 2016 Olympics, Rio had gained a certain notoriety as hip and gritty, as perennially and precariously up-and-coming. However, my commutes also revealed that it was a metropolitan center unable and largely unwilling to reckon with the systemic issues that produce the violent realities that many people live in. Rather, that violent reality had even become a point of attraction to those marketing authentic or even “chic” favela tours (Cummings 2015; Williams 2008; Freire-Medeiros 2007, 2011). Perhaps it goes without saying, but none of my friends and family said anything about me spending a significant amount of time in the Baixada since it was entirely unknown to them.
Those “right parts of town” became more specific once I arrived in Rio. I, like many gringos before me, opted to live temporarily in the hill top bohemian neighborhood of Santa Teresa. Until I took the trip to Caxias and Mangueirinha with Luciano, I did not really have a grasp of the complex magnitude of the city and its suburbs so I opted for a neighborhood recommended by a trusted friend. But once I realized the neighborhood was only a fifteen-minute walk to Central, I found a more permanent room in the nearby residential street of Bairro de Fátima. I considered living in Caxias, but I wanted to secure something quickly and had already become familiar enough with the area and honestly did not know where to look beyond Airbnb, which did not include many listings in the Baixada. And of course, I wanted to be in the right part of town.

As quoted above, my Brazilian friends and colleagues had more specific misgivings about why I should not go to precisely the places I needed to: Central, Caxias, Mangueirinha, and the Baixada in general. One friend had cited a news report in which even the cameras could not stop a thief from snatching a necklace off a woman being interviewed by a journalist from Rio-based media giant O Globo (O Globo 2014), a clear sign of rampant lawlessness at Central, the very topic of the interview. Others recounted their own experiences of being
pickpocketed or robbed near Central or on buses and trains on their way to the Baixada. But many of these people lived or worked relatively near Central or in the Baixada, clearly meaning that these places were not completely off limits, but were so for a foreigner who should not have to experience first-hand these more unsavory sides of Rio. These Brazilian friends and colleagues had plenty to say about the Baixada, very little of it was positive; the general advice seemed to be ‘stick to the beaches and Lapa and, if need be, the pacified and gentrified favelas.’

I must admit that even I was reluctant to research and write about these places. Though I did write about PRL and Mangueirinha for the Felsman blog, I primarily participated in the Felsman Fellowship during a leave of absence from my PhD program with the intention of using my experience in Rio—not the Baixada at this point—to connect it with previous research that I had conducted in Cali on displaced Afro-descendant communities from Colombia’s Pacific region. I was fascinated by how the discourses of both favelados in Rio and displaced Afro-Colombian communities in Cali used the history and image of the run-away slave (cimarrón in Spanish and quilombola in Portuguese) and their fugitive communities (palenques in Spanish and quilombos in Portuguese) to make
claims to territorial rights in both places. My work with PRL was in the Baixada, in Caxias, in Mangueirinha, but my intellectual and social life was very much Rio-centered. Even my friends from PRL usually invited me to events in Rio proper, though I prided myself for preferring Centro and the Port Zone over Copacabana and Ipanema.

The centrality of Rio in my life was heightened when I joined the Rio-based NGO Catalytic Communities (CatComm) to write for their English and Portuguese language blog RioOnWatch in May of 2015, only a few months before I would return to Duke to defend my dissertation proposal. I had pitched myself to CatComm director Theresa Williamson as able to cover the Baixada for the blog since I was there nearly every day of the week. While I did produce a well-received piece on the Baixada ("Rio the Reluctant Metropolis: An Introduction to the Baixada Fluminense"), I used the experience with RioOnWatch above all as a means to get to know as much as I could about what was happening in Rio proper and its favelas as urban quilombos. That was where the supposed action was—resistance to forced removals for Olympics legacy projects, racist police brutality despite the supposed community policing approach of the Pacifying Police Units, community leaders with innovative sustainability projects. Of
course, all of these things were also happening in Caxias and other municipalities throughout the Baixada Fluminense, but I too was blinded by the pull of Rio and perhaps my own voyeurism, even if that interest sought to build solidarity with those in the supposedly less marvelous favelas, that is, the wrong parts of town—or the right ones if you are an emerging academic from the Global North looking to make a name for yourself studying urban social dynamics in the Global South (Roy 2011).

When I returned to Duke with the conviction to research and write about the “modern maroons” of Rio’s favelas and Colombia’s displaced Afro-descendant communities in Cali, I thought it would be a good idea to take my first course dedicated entirely to Brazil: a graduate course on Afro-Brazilian colonial history taught by historian John French. I had no idea that that the course would lead me back to the Baixada, this time more deliberately, though still in the beginning with Rio on my mind. After learning that I had spent a significant amount of time in Duque de Caxias, John graciously asked me to join an ambitious, collaborative research project between Duke University’s Bass Connections and Global Brazil Lab and the Multidisciplinary Institutes (Instituto Multidisciplinar-IM) of the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro.
(Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro-UFFRJ) located in Nova Iguaçu—another municipality in the Baixada Fluminense. IM, a satellite campus of UFFRJ, had been established 10 years earlier with the expansion of Brazil’s federal university system under Workers’ Party President Lula da Silva. John had conceived of the idea for the project, dubbed “The Cost of Opportunity” with his long term academic collaborator Alexandre Fortes, a Brazilian labor historian who was a founding faculty member of the new satellite campus and was the dean of IM at the time of the project. The ongoing, multi-year project, whose first field phase took place over three weeks in June 2016 at the Multidisciplinary Institute, aims to measure and understand the socio-economic impact of having a free, public, high quality federal university in a region that exemplifies Brazil’s racial and socioeconomic inequality. Since I was to return to Rio in January 2016 to conduct research for my Public Policy Masters project on land titling in favelas and dissertation research on favelas as “urban quilombos,” John asked me to work as the on-site coordinator for the project, working closely with faculty and students at IM to plan the June field visit. Those students and professors, many of whom were researching the Baixada Fluminense for their own undergraduate
and graduate projects, even helped me workshop a conference paper I had written about the modern maroons of Rio’s favelas.

![Figure 2 UFRRJ-IM/ Duke research team.](image)

In fact, it would not be until the final week of the Duke-IM field research trip in late June 2016 that I would come to realize that my own experience and narrative of Rio was inconceivable without the Baixada Fluminense. I confessed to John my desire to change my dissertation topic and he seemed almost relieved, as if he knew that I had been ignoring not only my own knowledge of the region, but also the intellectual and political potential of a region that had
been largely ignored by the academy within Brazil and abroad. We both felt that a dissertation building off the collaborative work of the IM/Duke team, could help give voice to the emerging cultural, knowledge, and political production of the students, scholars, and activists at UFRRJ-IM and in the region. On the team’s last day in Rio, John helped me brainstorm some of the initial ideas for an interdisciplinary cultural studies and public policy dissertation on the Baixada Fluminense.

Filled with excitement, a few days later I was heading to meet a friend at Quinta da Boa Vista Park in Rio’s North Zone neighborhood of São Cristovão and I declared to the military police officer moonlighting as an Uber driver to support his daughter at Harvard that I was living in Rio to research the relationship between Rio and the Baixada Fluminense. “You only go to dangerous places, don’t you,” he quipped.

Once again violence was the prevailing perception of the Baixada Fluminense. I was to research not just the wrong part of town, but the stigmatized periphery beyond the city’s limits. Granted, even the most well trained, well intentioned military police officer would undoubtedly generalize entire neighborhoods and regions out of concern for someone’s public safety,
especially if that someone is a foreigner. Statistics showed that in 2015 despite having a population of only 4 million people, the Baixada experienced twice as many homicides per 100 thousand inhabitants as Rio did with its population of 6 million (Fórum Grita Baixada 2016). However, implicit in the officer’s misgivings and my friends’ warnings about me researching the Baixada was an underlying “why.” Why go through Central do Brasil? Why work in Caxias? Why Mangueirinha and not a safer, pacified, favela in Rio? Why study the Baixada? What could these places possibly have to offer for a foreigner, for those in Rio and outside of it, for knowledge?

This disparaging sentiment seemed to extend to Rio’s most iconic monument. “Even Christ the Redeemer has forgotten about this place,” one self-identifying black female student from Nova Iguaçu told me after lunch at the IM dining hall, “and even he has turned his back to us.” With construction beginning in 1922, Rio’s 125 foot-tall Christ the Redeemer Statue’s, one of the seven modern wonders of the world, opened his arms in 1931 to embrace the South Zone Rio that the urban elite chose to invest in at the turn of the century—turning his back to the increased urbanization happening in the city’s North and West Zones and on its outskirts in the Baixada Fluminense (L. H. P. da Silva...
More recently, the iconic statue was central to international TV coverage of the 2016 Olympics as aerial panoramas captured the city’s beachside marvelousness, overshadowing the economic and political crises that led to the President Rousseff’s impeachment. Rio’s mountainside informal favelas also drew ubiquitous coverage as exotic and out of place in this “picture postcard” view of the city. Not surprisingly, the Olympic coverage ignored the poorer and even blacker population of four million who lived on periphery of that favela periphery in the Baixada Fluminense. Seventy percent of African descent and largely children of migrants from the poor and stigmatized Northeast, those who live in its 13 densely populated municipalities face catastrophic conditions: poisoning from the petrochemical industry that enriches the state, poor public services, and high rates of victimization by crime. An extreme example of this turning away by the media was the abysmal coverage of the assassinations of 13 political candidates in municipalities throughout the region between throughout 2016 despite the presence of tens of thousands of journalists during the Olympics and Paralympics ahead of the October 2016 municipal elections (Kiernan and Parkin 2016; País 2016; Martín 2016b). Everyone it seems—the media, the
government, and even the symbol of Rio—has turned away from the Baixada Fluminense.

Everyone, that is, but groups of young students and activists who recognized the cultural, historical, economic, and political potential of the Baixada. Due to the intense three weeks of collaboration at the Multidisciplinary Institute, I established deeper working relationships with a number of organizations, including IM itself, in the Baixada. I was aware of many of these organization heard of while working with Programa Raízes Locais in Mangueirinha and writing for RioOnWatch, but had not conceived of them as a loose network seeking to establish an intersectional territorial identity from and for the Baixada. I discovered that Douglas Almeida, a former IM student, also worked as the spokesperson for an organization that I had covered for RioOnWatch: Foróm Grita Baixada (Cry Out Baixada Forum) a movement connected to the Catholic Diocese of Nova Iguaçu that is fights for the human rights of residents of the Baixada Fluminense, especially in relation to the endemic violence of the region. My understanding of that loose network expanded even further, when Alexandre invited videographer, rapper and director of the Nova Iguaçu-based, cultural NGO Instituto Enraizados, Dudu de
Morro Agudo, to film interviews with IM students and their parents and create a
documentary with me as his co-director. I witnessed young people involved in
all of these organizations—the Instituto Multidisciplinar, Instituto Enraizados,
and Fórum Grita Baixada—and others using their cultural and knowledge
production to combat the stigma long associated with the Baixada and call for a
territorial identity that took pride in the region.

In part my interest in the Baixada also stems from my own personal life,
having grown up in the upper middle-class Chicago suburb of Oak Park.
Through both my lived experience and intellectual engagement with the
experiences of the Black diaspora in the Americas, I am aware of the uniqueness
of US suburban expansion—and the corollary ongoing segregation of our public
schools—as an investment in the maintenance of white economic, political, and
cultural supremacy (K. T. Jackson 1985; Massey and Denton 1993). Suburbs, or
peripheries as they are generally conceptualized in the Global South, also serve
to maintain a differently articulated, though no less insidious, White,
Eurocentric, economic, political, and cultural hegemony (Gonzalez and
Hasenbalg 1982; Da Silva 2001; J. A. Alves 2014). In a sense, I was drawn to the
question of why the Black parts of town are always the “wrong parts of town”—
be they inner cities or peripheries. Yet after spending upwards of the year working and researching the in Baixada, I witnessed and was drawn to how those peripheries are theorized as incubators of “insurgent citizenship” and, central to this dissertation, how residents of the Baixada, were generating alternative possibilities and embodied practices of territorial belonging for and from the poor, Black youth of the periphery (Holston 2008).

2.1 Autoethnography for an Interdisciplinary Misfit: Reflecting on Methods from the Periphery

As may be assumed from these first few pages, this dissertation attempts to answer the underlying question of my many concerned interlocuters, “why study the Baixada Fluminense,” through auto-ethnography. This may seem unorthodox given that my disciplinary training has not be in anthropology. Much of my graduate experience was marked by methodological anxieties due to both the freedom afforded in an enthusiastically self-proclaimed interdisciplinary field and the ever-lurking discussion of the “crisis in the humanities.” Having majored in comparative literature, I anticipated my graduate work to be textual analysis, or doing close reading, within a certain
theoretical framework—say post-colonial theory—to answer questions about the relevance—aesthetically, politically, historically or some combination of the above—of a given author/artist/genre/movement. The graduate student page for the Romance Studies departmental site currently states that the field offers “a broad methodological formation in literary and cultural analysis, critical theory, visual studies, and history.”

Indeed, many of the courses I took throughout my graduate career engaged with questions of what we do in cultural studies, or as…cultural studiers (unlike historians, who do history, our discipline lacks a clear title, and I’m too self-aware to refer to myself as a cultural critic). A course on doing research as an artist taught by Visual Studies and Romance Studies professor Esther Gabara has greatly informed this dissertation as I reflection on my own archival, collaborative, and artistic practices. Both Walter Mignolo and Catherine Walsh’s courses on decoloniality have brought questions of “from where” and “with whom” we as scholars create knowledge to the fore of this dissertation, inviting me to “delink” from the universalizing discourses of Western knowledge and my own presumed floating intellectual objectivity and “walk with” my research collaborators rather than subjects. Later, John French helped
me conceive of the dialogic relationship between myself and the people I
interviewed in terms of oral history.

Yet, I often felt that these theoretical and methodological debates, while
necessary, were unmoored from the urgent violent realities of marginalized
people. This desire for a civically engaged research praxis led me to combine my
PhD with a master’s in public police. However, because I had this critical and
decolonial training—since, hopefully, we can be (un)trained and (un)train
ourselves to think in certain ways—when I enrolled in my public policy master’s,
I also felt dissatisfied by the methods we were taught to employ to make policy
proposals. “I’ve done a cost benefit analysis of ABC to determine if Black
Americans should get paid reparations, see recommendations XYZ.” Though this
was not a question actually presented, I often felt that complex social issues were
reduced to a quantitative analysis, as if numbers were the only form of rigorous
analysis within public policy. And I was not alone: the lack of critical race and
feminist theory within the curriculum—especially given the school’s name sake,
civil rights leader, former Governor of North Carolina and former President of
Duke University, Terry Sanford, and the #Blacklivesmatter and Moral Monday
movements of the time—became a point of contention between the students and
faculty at Sanford. Thankfully development sociologist Amanda Flaim’s course on qualitative and mix-methods became a critical respite from memos and regression analyses.

Why, then, auto-ethnography? In the black feminist anthropological tradition of auto-ethnography, I found both a theoretical framework and methodological praxis that allows for the type of interdisciplinary questioning and civically engaged doing in which to situate my work, scholarly and otherwise. As McClaurin (2001) puts forth, in black feminist anthropology the “idea of situatedness is one that resonates heavily” and informs “a collective belief in the materiality of racism and patriarchy, notwithstanding the constructed nature of race, that impinges on the lives of Black women globally in constraining and oppressive ways, and must be critiqued, described, and ultimately ameliorated” (57). While participant observation is the primary “tool” of Black feminist anthropologists, they are “faced with the task of fashioning a research paradigm that decolonizes and transforms—in other words, that seeks to alleviate conditions of oppression through scholarship and activism rather than support them” (McClaurin 2001, 57). Hartsock (1990), whom McClaurin cites frequently in her call to “theoriz[e] a Black feminist self in anthropology,”
envisions collective ontological and epistemological theories that question “universalist claims” for women from the margins:

Our non being was the condition of being of the One, the center, the taken-for-granted ability of one small segment of the population to speak for all; our various efforts to constitute ourselves as subjects (through struggles for colonial independence, racial and sexual liberation struggles, and so on) were fundamental to creating the preconditions for the current questioning of universalist claims. But, I believe, we need to sort out who we really are. Put differently, we need to dissolve the false "we" I have been using into its real multiplicity and variety and out of this concrete multiplicity build an account of the world as seen from the margins, an account which can expose the falseness of the view from the top and can transform the margins as well as the center. The point is to develop an account of the world which treats our perspectives not as subjugated or disruptive knowledges, but as primary and constitutive of a different world. (171)

The situatedness of this “we” recognizes and reflects upon the intersectionality and difference of race, class, gender, sexuality, and geographic location, and it is from these differences that transformative knowledges emerge. Thus, Harstock, McClaurin and others call not only a “shifting of the geopolitics of critical knowledge” from the center to the margins and back (C. Walsh 2007b), but also a shifting in what knowledge can do to foster liberation from and for the margins.

Although the research that has culminated in this dissertation started from many different questions—a comparison of Black territoriality in Colombia
and Brazil, the policy possibilities of collective land titles for favela residents, youth cultural and knowledge creation in the Baixada—the overarching methodology, or rather, what I have done in the field from October 2014 to September 2017, has been participatory action research informed by a commitment to “building an account of the world as seen from the margins” (Hartsock 1990, 171). In the case of this dissertation, I analyze and “build an account” of the multiple margins experienced by poor, Black and brown youth from Rio’s Baixada Fluminense periphery. Through an engagement with the work of Brazilian Black feminist intellectuals Lêlia Gonzalez and Beatriz Nascimento, this auto-ethnography argues that these youth seek to “recuperate” the “lost image,” as Nascimento states (Gerber and Nascimento 1989), of pride and possibility in the Baixada Fluminense by combatting dominate, stigmatizing media narratives through their own cultural, political, and knowledge creation.

Though I hope to have answered the question of why I have chosen ethnography as my tool of analysis, I have yet to fully address the question why turn to my own auto-ethnographic self. The easy answer to why ethnography would be that due to the collaborative nature of my research method, I must chronicle the ways I was there working with poor, Black and brown youth in the
Baixada. However, these first few pages contend with another critical aspect of auto-ethnography: my own biases. I had initially blinded myself to the research that I had already conducted in the Baixada after the 10-month Felsman fellowship in Mangueirinha and only came to the project upon reflecting on the research that I conducted with the UFRRJ-IM/Duke team in Nova Iguaçu. I wanted to be in Rio. I was attracted to its charm and, perhaps especially the image, both academic and marketed, of favelas. I wanted to create, to thrust upon, a collaborative relationship with favela activists, while ignoring the relationships that I had already begun building with people and organizations in the Baixada Fluminense. Thus, I turned to autoethnography to examine my own biases and positionality as a Black, mixed-raced, middle class woman from an affluent Chicago suburb conducting research in the Baixada and Metropolitan Rio. Though my appearance affords me a certain anonymity in public space, my Black ancestry does not “presuppose solidarity” with the communities with whom I presume myself to be collaborating (Gillam 2016, 103). Auto-ethnography thus serves as a process, to borrow from Hartsock, of sorting out who I really am and the we that I assume to be a part of. Did I conduct an ethnography if I never lived in the Baixada? Did the nature of my collaborations
change when they became more directly related to my dissertation?

Autoethnography, then, also serves as a tool to examine collaboration and research: its power dynamics and its directionality (who does this collaboration benefit and to what end), but also its intimacy, its everyday moments of laughter and disagreement.

Because autoethnography is a writing form that calls for reflexivity on the writing process itself, throughout this dissertation, I attempt to interrogate my own writing through a knowledge of what Deck (1990) calls “the double consciousness of what took place” (247). That is, not only does autoethnography ask that I reflect on both my experience of myself and of the communities I engage with in the field and their experience of me and themselves, but autoethnographic writing itself invites me to think of the act of writing as another site of reflection that interrogates “myself in the past compared to myself at the present moment of narration” (Deck 1990, 248). This temporal double consciousness of what took place was underscored to me by the process of making “The Cost of Opportunity” documentary with Dudu, as the medium of film forced us to reckon with editorial decisions, and the process of writing forced me to reflect on those decisions then and now. Thus, the process of
writing this chapter in some ways mirrors the production of the film itself, in that neither was conceived of systematically until the time of its production was already underway.

Autoethnography also helps fill in some of the methodological gaps of a research project that I came to after already having spent a significant amount of time in the field, albeit involved in other at times tangential projects. As I outlined earlier in this chapter, I understood the IM/Duke project and my own dissertation as two separate projects at the time, not the intertwined, lived experience in the Baixada that had marked much of my time in Brazil. This chapter, like the film and this dissertation as a whole, thus relies on me “sorting and handling” “older scribblings and writings, whether lodged in journals, letters, e-mails, blogs, finished pieces, drafts of grant proposals, or formal field notes” in order to “reconnect…with them afresh” in light of a new research project that in some ways I had already been embarking on but had yet to envision at moments that would later prove critical to understanding both the narrative territorial production of youth in the Baixada and my own role as observer, chronicler, researcher, and now filmmaker (Narayan 2012, 4).
I have primarily engaged in participatory action, or activism in McClaurin’s formulation, through my writing for RioOnWatch and leadership role in the collaborative “Cost of Opportunity” research project between the Multidisciplinary Institute of Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro in Nova Iguaçu, including the process of making the film of the same name with local hip-hop artists and director of the NGO Instituto Enraizados, Dudu de Morro Agudo. I have conducted over 50 informal interviews and participated in a number of cultural and political atos, or acts, with a primary engagement with three youth networks based in Nova Iguaçu, the historic heart of the Baixada: 1) students recently admitted, many through socioeconomic and/or racial quotas, to the Multidisciplinary Institutes 2) young participants in Instituto Enraizados, who learn audiovisual and communications skills through the language of hip-hop, and; 3) human rights umbrella organization Fórum Grita Baixada. To compliment my analysis of these emerging narratives of territorial belonging by poor, mostly Black and brown youth, I also rely on a variety of cultural products, many produced by these same youth, including film, music, and community journalism. I ask how these youth combat the image of violence and backwardness long associated with the Baixada Fluminense and how that
stigmatization relies on constructions of poverty and Blackness within the Brazilian social imaginary (Goffman 1963). I am particularly concerned with how principally Black and brown youth from the Baixada experience Rio’s (sub)urban geography and redefine notions of access to leisure, culture, education, and urban and social mobility from the periphery.

2.2 Theorizing Peripheries Racially and Spatially

With the margins on mind, I situate this dissertation broadly within scholarship on Brazilian urban peripheries. Holston’s (2008) concept of “insurgent citizenship” permeates much of this text, given that he locates this insurgent citizenship within Brazil’s urban peripheries where “autoconstruction turned the peripheries into a space of alternative futures, produced in the experiences of becoming propertied, organizing social movements, participating in consumer markets, and making aesthetic judgments about house transformations” (8).

Through my research with the students of UFRRJ-IM, I add to this list of experiences that of attending a free, federal, public university that positions itself as being of and for the periphery. Federal universities, which were not established until the 20th century, have long been associated with Brazil’s
“differentiated” or “inclusively inegalitarian national membership” in so far as access to universities has never been legally restricted based on race or socioeconomic status (Holston 2008, 64). However, until recent policy changes implemented by the successive progressive governments of Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff, universities have been predominately white elite spaces given Brazil’s lack of quality public elementary and high school education for the poor Black, brown and blackened masses (Ribeiro 1978; Da Silva 2001). However, in this age of the corporate university (Readings 1996; Aronowitz 2000; W. Mignolo 2003), of certain disciplines “getting you a job,” and of what Rolnik (2016) calls the “colonization of land and housing in the era of finance,” I am also mindful of the ways in which the university and peripheries themselves are not necessarily utopian places. As Simone (2010) asserts, the “anticipatory urban politics” of the periphery “is not just a form of resistance or simply a politics from below” given that “these very anticipations can also be used by more powerful actors and forces” (99, quoted in Roy 2011). A public university in the Baixada Fluminense, for example, responds to the aspiration of social mobility and local knowledge and cultural production. However, it also meets the demand for more qualified high school teachers, as many majors include the equivalent of a
teaching certificate, while public high schools themselves remain precariously underfunded and teachers remain underpaid and undervalued. Thus, the social mobility they promise is itself tenuous.

Along with Holston, Caldeira has been a leading voice in conceptualizing citizenship in the periphery, particularly through the lens of criminality and criminalization of certain bodies through the surveillance and privatization of urban space. Much of her work examines how the disposability of criminal life, often with the support of the working class who are disproportionately the victims of police violence, underscores how democratization in Brazil has been “an uneven process” “despite elections being “free and fair” because “institutions of order...have been systematically incapable of guaranteeing the public security, justice, and respect for civil rights even at the minimal levels” (T. P. Caldeira 2006, 103).

In her analysis of young, poor, mostly Black people from São Paulo’s peripheries frequenting high end malls in the city’s whiter, more affluent center—a practice known as rolezinhos, or little strolls—Caldeira underscores the coloniality of who has access to urban space: “Since the time of Baudelaire, wondering through the city was always more [acceptable] for some—men, the
wealthy, dandies—than for others—women, the poor, Black people, youth” (T. P. do R. Caldeira 2014, 13). The *flaneur* embodies Modernity through his occupation without preoccupations of public space, and his ability to do so as a subject is maintained by the denial of access to objectified, colonized others to do the same. Much like the early police forces of industrial cities dedicated themselves to maintaining order by upholding vagrancy laws, Caldeira tells us, the rolezinhos of this youth from the periphery “has generated much anxiety and repression in São Paulo and throughout Brazil,” (T. P. do R. Caldeira 2014, 13).

However, Caldeira finds in cultural manifestations like the rolezinhos and, especially, hip-hop music, from the periphery “aggressiveness and a clear class and race antagonism” (T. P. do R. Caldeira 2014, 15). In an earlier, 2006 article, she had further elaborated this idea of “class and race antagonism” through an analysis of the lyrics of Racionais MC. As Caldeira maintains, because the hip hop group “position[s] themselves in the periphery, identify themselves as poor and black” their lyrics create “a nonbridgeable and nonnegotiable distance between rich and poor, white and black, center and periphery” (T. P. Caldeira 2006, 117). Rather than locate the “race and class antagonism” in rap lyrics, I locate them in the structural systems of segregation
that created these differences and distances in the first place. Caldeira’s body of work recognizes these structural systems, to an extent, citing the “cruel” separation of classes in buildings through “social” and “services elevators” (T. P. do R. Caldeira 2014, 18) and her analysis of the “fortified enclave” as an “emblematic form” that “reproduce[s] inequality both as value and as social fact” (T. Caldeira 2008). However, French (2013) notes that race is rarely a “social fact” in Caldeira’s work:

Caldeira’s pioneering research tends not to foreground the racialization of the Brazilian class structure, and thus pays little or no attention to the entrenchment of racism as a potential causal factor. Emphasizing class and socioeconomic status” (167).

Despite positing race and class antagonism as the central theme of her analysis of Racionais MC’s lyrics, Caldeira, as French underscores, contends in a footnote that “[she] cannot discuss here the complex Brazilian system of race relations. One of its marks is a flexible system of racial classifications that allows people to shift positions depending on circumstances. Under this system, the question of who is black is always open-ended” (Caldeira 2006, 142, n. 25).

Where Caldeira sees a “a nonbridgeable and nonnegotiable distance” in the lyrics of Racionais MCs, I see in the youth networks of the Baixada, a
territorial bridge connecting the peripheries of class, race, and gender. A common phrase used by many activists throughout Metropolitan Rio to identify themselves to discuss injustices like the lack of access to quality education or the disproportionate toll of police violence is “joven, pobre, negro/a, de periferia”—young, poor, Black (person) from the periphery. Though favelado/a and da favela are also used by favela activists to underscore the specific relationship between Rio and its internal, informal, favela peripheries, many, even those from favelas, opt to use “da perifera” to signal solidarity across experiences of geographic marginality within and without Rio. Women will also include “mulher” and members of the LGBTQ community will include their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in their declarations of their multiple forms of “situatedness” (McClaurin 2001).

In her analysis of the “socio-logos of justice,” that is the territorial boundaries of supposed Liberal universal notions of legality and justice, da Silva refers to favelas as “that strange place where (blacks and mestiços and blackened whites) the poor –the Enlightened would wonder—feel fit to live,” (Da Silva 2001, 441). Following the formulation of this youth, I contend that, race, class, gender, and place of origin overlap through segregationist public policies that seek to
maintain racial and socioeconomic hierarchies by relegating poor, Black, brown and blackened bodies to “the strange places” of Metropolitan Rio’s social and geographic peripheries. That is, within the context of Rio and its suburbs, particularly the Baixada Fluminense, the social pyramid manifests itself geographically. Whites are blackened, that is, negated their humanity and thus their rights via their proximity to social and geographic blackness (J. A. Alves 2014), such as white, female domestic workers. However, the order is important in the phrase “young, poor, Black person from the periphery” because though “poor” calls for a shared class identification, Blackness already assumes both poverty and being from the periphery, particularly for the elite. A white domestic worker would only be “blackened” through her non-corporal cues—a uniform or clothing, riding a bus headed toward the “wrong part of town.” Moreover, that young Black Brazilians are disproportionately the victims of all forms of violence, including police violence, speaks to the limits of such blackening (Cerqueira et al. 2017). As Caldeira asserts without discussing, “the question of who is black is always open-ended,” but not who is white.

For this very reason, activists and youth tend to use the word negro rather than the more common word for “black”—for both people and objects—preto.
Negro includes both pretos and pardos (mixed-race or brown skinned people).

While many civil society organization have adopted the category in their statistical analyses, especially of indices of violence, when used by activists, negro/a is highly political and indicates that the speaker has “assumed their blackness” rather than attempting to claim a whitened, mixed ancestry through words like pardo or moreno (S. A. dos Santos 2006).

By not discussing race relations, Caldeira re-inscribes the long dismissed (Mitchell and Reiter 2010), though not dismantled, myth of racial democracy and racial conviviality that has been underpinned by an elite discourse of racial mixing—principally among the poor—with the goal of an increasingly whitened population (Da Silva 1998; S. A. dos Santos 2006; Gonzalez 1988; Ratts and Nascimento 2007). As dos Santos affirms in his analysis of the debate surrounding racial quotas in federal, public universities—a topic that will be discussed in later chapters— “the most perverse aspects of racism in Brazil” result in “the perpetual quest of the victim of racial discrimination to achieve an unattainable equality of the races through racist means” (S. A. dos Santos 2006). Because colorism and what Hordge-Freeman calls Brazil’s “traitocracy” do impact people’s material access to resources and to affective worth, even within
one’s own family as she documents in her research, I choose to use Black and brown to describe the racial composition of the Baixada and the youth I have interacted and collaborated with to acknowledge that not all pretos or pardos have assumed their negritude (Hordge-Freeman 2015), though the police and the elite may have.

Although her research is more concerned with legal claims to land, my research and work with youth in the Baixada constructing a territorial identity is theoretically informed by Keisha Khan-Perry’s work, and her assertion that: “Claiming the right to urban land [or belonging in the case of the stigmatized youth of the Baixada] means challenging gendered, racial, and class dominance rooted in colonialism and the legacy of the unequal distribution of material resources” (Perry 2016, 104). The precarity of urban mobility and the ubiquity of state sanctioned violence, both of which I analyze throughout the dissertation, function to maintain the popular saying, attributed to humorist Millôr Fernandes, that “Brazil has no race problems, because Black people know their place” (Gonzalez 1988). This place is known by Black and Blackened bodies through the lack of basic public services and the ever-present threat of violent death that characterizes the Baixada, but also through the simultaneous and
spectacular commercialization and criminalization of the culture produced in the periphery. This youth physically and epistemically occupy places that have historically not been theirs such as public universities. And similarly occupy places that have in the contemporary moment, due to mega-events and the increased privatization of the city (Rolnik 2016), become increasingly restricted, like beaches. Through this physical and epistemic occupation, they question their place within the social geography of Rio. Above all, their cultural and knowledge creation makes their alternative places of knowledge and being known within the very Baixada. These youths do not simply demand a “right to the city” and more access to the center, but rather seek to reconstruct dignified lives from and for the strange, Black place of the periphery, where possibilities abound to “transform the margins as well as the center” (Hartsock 1990, 171).

2.3 Christ Turns His Back on Us: The Fragmented Territoriality of Stigma

To speak from the margins, from the Baixada Fluminense, I must first define it. However, the inability to define exactly what is the Baixada Fluminense reinforces the territorial distinction between the region and the municipality of
Rio. While the borders of Rio proper have been well defined since the 17th century, the fluvial lowlands between the Serra do Mar mountain range and the once colonial, imperial, and republican capital, have been much less so even into the 21st Century. I have heard and seen the Baixada described in English as a county. But a county is a political unit; the Baixada is a nebulous discursive one. Thus, scholars have attempted to delineate the Baixada Fluminense along geographic, historic, and sociological lines. Geographer Manoel Ricardo Simões puts this effort simply: “There is no general consensus on what is the Baixada Fluminense, what its borders are and what municipalities comprise it” (Simões 2011, 15). How do hegemonic narratives of violence and stigma exist about a place that does not clearly exist in space? From where, then, do these counter narratives emerge, if both the physical space of the Baixada and the cultural place of the Baixada remain indefinite?
Borders simultaneously define and elude this “periphery of the periphery,” as residents often described the Baixada. The Baixada is a periphery; thus, the clear defining characteristic of the Baixada that it is outside the city limits of Rio de Janeiro: But center-periphery dynamics already exist between Rio and its internal, informal favela communities, embodied in the phrase “o morro e o asfalto,” the hill and the asphalt, a clear evocation of the geographical boundaries that have defined public investment in Rio proper over the course of the last century. The hilltop favelas throughout much of Rio’s Center and South
zones are a reminder that the perceived pathologies of the Baixada Fluminense—chaotic urbanization; high crime rates; lack of public investment in basic health, education, and sanitation, political clientelism—spill over into Rio itself. The perceived pathologies of these peripheries emerges from the stigmatization of the sectors of Brazilian society who live in them—poor Black and blackened people, especially those who arrived from Brazil’s similarly stigmatized, and demographically much Blacker, Northeast—who have been deemed unworthy of a dignified life through the privision of basic services (R. S. Gonçalves 2013; Fischer 2008).

Though her foundational text on Chicana queer feminism is situated in Aztlán, the historic expanse of the Aztec Empire that occupies territories on both sides of the present-day border between the US and Mexico, Gloria Anzaldúa’s analysis of the work that borders attempt to do, and the stigmatized space that emerges in the borderlands speaks to the denigration of the Baixada Fluminense:

Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los atavesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulato, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the “normal. (Anzaldúa 1987, 3)
This “constant state of transition” exemplifies the Baixada at both the local and national level. During the three-week collaborative research project between Duke University and the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro’s Multidisciplinary Institute (UFRRJ-IM), a phrase that Professor Lucia da Silva said during a presentation became a bit of a running joke: “Guapimirim se acha parte da Baixada. Mas não é.” “Guapimirim thinks it’s part of the Baixada, but it isn’t.” “Mas não é” the students would muse, stressing the high-pitched inflection on the “é” that characterized da Silva’s memorable voice. The city in question—Guapimirim, Seropédica, Paracambi—would change, but the sentiment was the same: these places, though now a de facto part of the region, did not culturally or historically belong to the suburban place bordering Rio de Janeiro known as the Baixada Fluminense, at least not in da Silva’s academic opinion.

Historians and residents agree that Nova Iguaçu is the historic core of the Baixada (L. H. P. da Silva 2013; J. C. S. Alves 2003). In an editorial commemorating the city’s 183rd anniversary, the local tabloid O Jornal de Hoje referred to Nova Iguaçu as the “município mãe da Baixada,” the “mother city” of
the region (Journal de Hoje 2016). The Baixada has become more and more fragmented since Grande Iguassu, colonial administrative predecessor of Nova Iguaçu and the Baixada’s progenitor, became an official municipality in 1833. However, municipalities like Duque de Caxias and Belford Roxo emancipated themselves from Nova Iguaçu throughout the 20th century. Since 1999, when Mesquita separated from Nova Iguaçu, the Baixada has been comprised of 13 municipalities on the northwestern outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, though 8 are considered the “nucleus of the Baixada”—the 20th century offspring of 19th century Nova Iguaçu (Simões 2011, 26).3 Municipalities like Seropédica and Guapimirim were never part of Grande Iguassu, making their historical connection to the Baixada limited. Yet, as the area around Rio has become increasingly urbanized, the conception of the Baixada has also grown. Urbanization, particularly an auto-constructed urbanization perceived to be accompanied by violence and backwardness, seems to be the essential criteria for status as part of the Baixada. Seropédica—the seat of the main campus of the

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3 According to Simões and others, the 8 municipalities of the “Baixada núcleo” are Nova Iguaçu, Japeri, Queimados, Belford Roxo, Mesquita, Nilópolis, São João de Meriti, and Duque de Caxias while the “Baixada ampliada” includes Magé, Guapimirim, Paracambi, Seropédica, and Itaguaí (Simões 2011). Magé is contested as parts of its territory that border present day Duque de Caxias were part of Grande Iguassu.
Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro—was not, historically speaking, part of the Baixada, as da Silva tried to make clear in her presentation to our group. How could the IM-Duke project investigate the impact of the expansion of a federal university into the Baixada if one were already there? Rather, it seems, that the Baixada had expanded into where once sat a decidedly rural university—akin the state land grant universities in the US.

At the national level, the “emotional residue of an unnatural boundary,” was heighten by the confluence of Brazilian regionalism. Given it’s real and perceived Northeastern-ness, the Baixada’s relationship to Rio serves as a too-close-for-comfort borderland between the industrial, modern, and intentionally more European—through public policies that favored Italian, Portuguese, and even Swiss immigration to Brazil—Southeast and the agricultural, stagnant, and tinged by Afro-Brazilian and indigenousness Northeast. According to Durval Muniz de Albuquerque Jr. (2014), the idea of the Northeast, in contrast to the Southeast and especially São Paulo and to a lesser extent Rio de Janeiro, emerged in the early 20th in part due to its own intellectual and political self-differentiation as a folkloric image of Brazil’s past. The migration of people from Brazil’s Northeastern states like Bahia, Pernambuco, Alagoas, Sergipe and Ceará
that propelled the Baixada’s rapid urbanization occurred precisely at the same moment when *regionalismo* re-emerged within Brazilian intellectual discourse. These Brazilian citizens that arrived in the Baixada and Rio’s North and West Zone neighborhoods and favelas became *nordestinos*, a racially, historically, and culturally distinct people. Even when white, upon arriving in Rio and São Paulo, southeastern elite perceived the *nordestinos* as racially distinct, somewhat blacker and more indigenous, due to and/or resulting in the region’s socioeconomic stagnation (Albuquerque Jr. 2014; Blake 2011). These *nordestinos* are Anzaldúa’s “mongrels” and “half-breeds” who occupy the borderlands of the Baixada and the favelas. For Rio’s elite, they brought within them the “prohibited and forbidden” elements that would thwart Rio’s ambitions to be a modern, i.e. European, city as embodied by French urbanist Alfred Agache’s master plan for the city of Rio under the administration of Prefect Antônio Prado Jr. in the 1920s. Central to Agache’s plan was a clear delineation of different socioeconomic groups such that, as Fischer notes, “each group carried on its own social
economic life in distinct, hierarchically delineated regions of the city” (Fischer 2008, 40).4

The attempts to “hierarchically delineate” the Baixada from Rio proper manifest itself in the very naming of the region. Though under the field of influence of Rio throughout its perceived and real existence, the Baixada and other freguesias-turned-municipalities that surround the Guanabara Bay have had an uneven relationship with the Marvelous City well before the emergence of the first favela, Providência, in 1897. In her article “De Recôncavo Guanabara à Baixada Fluminense: Leitura de um Território pela História,” the same Lucia da Silva who spork to our team affirms that how one seeks to describe the Baixada reveals how one conceives of its territoriality vis-a-vis Rio de Janeiro:

Baixada Fluminense, periphery, metropolitan region, Great Iguassu, or the Guanabara Reconcavo are terms used to refer to a piece of earth and the choice of one of these concepts implicates an affiliation with an amalgam of references and feelings that have transmuted over time.5

These attempts to name a geographical space reflect different meanings of place, that is, the socio-cultural meaning giving to specific spaces (Agnew 2011; Harvey

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4 For a historical account of Agache’s plan, its partial implementation, and elite views of Rio’s early 20th century urbanism, see Fischer, 2008.
5 All translations are my own unless otherwise stated.
Territoriality is the means through which humans give meaning to specific spaces in order to create distinguishable places (cities, nation-states, etc.). Territoriality, according to geographer Roberts Sacks, refers to “a spatial strategy to affect, influence, or control resources and people...by controlling area...and is intimately related to how people use the land, how they organize themselves in space, and how they give meaning to place” (Sack 1986, 1, 2). By referring to the Baixada Fluminense as the Recôncavo de Guanabara one alludes to the centrality of the Bay and the river systems of the Baixada which enabled timber, sugar cane, coffee and other goods to reach the ports in Rio. Da Silva prefers the term as it “seeks to maintain a unity, without hierarchy, between the city and its surrounds” (L. H. P. da Silva 2013, 52), encompassing the lands and the human uses and social organizations therein that encircle the bay from Rio to Niterói. The Recôncavo de Guanabara emerges as a simultaneously rural and urban place due to the interconnected spatial organization of its many parts. However, terms like Great Iguassu, though similarly geographical in scope given that “iguassu” is a Tupi-Guarani term for river that highlights the many that crisscross the region in their descent from the Serra do Mar to the Guanabara
Bay, also invoke the historical centrality of Nova Iguaçu as the first municipality in the region before the many municipal emancipations of the 20th century.

Baixada Fluminense is the most widely used contemporary name for the region, though it only gained force in the second half of the 20th century. At first glance, the name represents the geographical characteristics of the region. “Fluminense” is derived from both the fluvial geography surrounding the bay and the Portuguese-given misnomer for the city: Rio de Janeiro (river of January). It refers to the entire region that surrounds the Guanabara Bay; and since the 1975 merger of the State of Rio de Janeiro with the State of Guanabara, which included only the municipality of Rio following the transfer of the republican capital to Brasilia in 1960, it has referred to the entire State and its inhabitants. “Baixada” describes the ecological alluvial lowlands of the region. Baixada Fluminense, the river lowlands. However, Baixada, often used without “Fluminense,” has become a signifier for the “lowliness” of the region, especially thanks to media depictions of the region as it experienced rapid urbanization.
beginning in the 1930s with the arrival of nordestinos who bought homes on loteamentos, or lots, of dubious legal status.6

“Housing, health, education, artistic expression, legal projects, educational campaigns and events are themes rarely featured in news reports, while violence is highlighted,” laments a recent Fórum Grita Baixada report (Fórum Grita Baixada 2016). Though the report acknowledges that the height of media stigmatization of the Baixada Fluminense occurred during the 1960s through 1980s, the real and perceived violence of the Baixada still dominates headlines, without newspapers presenting the numerous causes and consequences of that violence. If elites in Rio seek to evoke the city’s grandeur through its beaches and dramatic mountainous skyline, to imbue the center as a place of modernity and luxury, the Baixada remains the lowland plains. The Baixada is undefined but

6 Loteamentos or subdivisions are a form of land tenure throughout Brazil that characterizes much of the Baixada Fluminense. With increased urbanization in Brazil’s urban peripheries in the 20th century, larger estates were parceled out to working class families in search of affordable land. Though federal laws attempt to standardize the dimensions of the lots and the procedures for their sale, possession often takes four forms according to Holston (Holston 1993): legal, where the lot corresponds to all bureaucratic and physical specifications; irregular, where the lot may violate some physical specification but is legally register; clandestine, where the lot has not been registered but still may be legal possessed by the owner; and grilado, where the lot is sold by someone, grileiro, who falsifies their title to the land in order to sell it. Holston (Holston 2009), distinguishes these loteamentos from favelas: “the majority of “slum dwellers” in most Brazilian cities, of those who live in the poor peripheries, are good-faith purchasers of house lots in subdivisions (loteamentos) who have been defrauded in one form or another. They are not squatters and do not live in favelas. A favela is a land seizure without any payment and is only one of several types of illegal land occupation in Brazil’s urban landscape. Thus, favela residents have no claims to land ownership, although they own their houses—an ownership that the state generally recognizes in various ways” (265).
always hinterland, associated with violence, disorder, landfills, petro-chemical pollution, and cultural backwardness.

2.4 The Invisibility of the Baixada in Internationally Acclaimed Film

“The Baixada starts at Central do Brasil,” Prof. Lucia Silva had said in her presentation to the IM-Duke research group in July of 2016. Though she had said this nearly a full year after I had stopped working in Mangueirinha, it struck me on both a personal and intellectual level. I started my commute to the Baixada at Central, and as I watched the urban landscape from the train window, it was never obvious where Rio’s North Zone ended and where Duque de Caxias began. This was precisely what da Silva was highlighting to our group. The train lines departing from the central station facilitated urbanization within the Baixada from the 1930s onward, and they linked the shared socio-economic conditions between Rio’s North and West Zones with the Baixada Fluminense. As of this writing, there is no map of metropolitan Rio in Central do Brasil. A small placard shows the five commuter train lines that leave from the station, seemingly all in the same direction. There are no borders demarcating when one
leaves Rio and enters the Baixada, its municipality names are given equal weight as the neighborhoods of the North and West Zones.

Metrô Rio, which is under the jurisdiction of the State of Rio, however, does end at the border between Pavuna, the last North Zone neighborhood, and São João de Meriti, the most densely populated municipality not only in the Baixada, but also Latin America, leading to its nickname as “the anthill of the Americas” (Prefeitura Municipal da São João de Meriti n.d.). Similarly, while intra-municipal buses, which all have a standard fare of $3.60 reais (approximately $1.20 at the time of writing), mostly depart from the front of Central on the busy Avenida Presidente Vargas, inter-municipal buses, whose prices can vary widely depending on the quality of the bus, the speed of its route, whether the bus has air conditioning, and what the private company wishes to charge, depart from the hectic, poorly patrolled bus terminal behind the train station. Essentially anywhere that you can get to on the commuter trains from Central do Brazil are Othered from South Zone Rio, but even then, the metro and bus lines are a reminder of the limits of the city and the unevenness of the interdependence between the Baixada and Rio proper.
Central do Brasil is perhaps best known both inside and outside of Brazil due to the award-winning 1998 film of the same name directed by Walter Salles Jr. My colleague, Luciano, was the first to insist that I watch the film once I recounted to him how much I enjoyed passing through the station, perhaps stopping for some pão de queijo (cheese bread) and a caldo de cana (sugarcane juice) for breakfast, before boarding the trains full of vendors selling everything from chocolate to vegetable peelers. I had told him how much I liked the space,
how it harkened to a former grandeur evident in many of the world’s turn of the century train stations. It also helped that the trains were my one air-conditioned respite during the scorching summer months, something that I came to learn was a hard-fought battle as many buses, and a few of the older trains, still lack AC throughout much of Rio and the Baixada.

It took me months to watch Central do Brasil following Luciano’s suggestion. I watched it on my laptop, a version I found on YouTube without subtitles. The first shots, though filmed some fifteen years before I ever step foot in the station, were immediately recognizable: the art deco clocks on both ends of the hall, the stands selling snacks, and the chaotic movement of hundreds of people entering and leaving the station. The letter writers like the film’s protagonist, Dora (played by Fernanda Montenegro) were no longer there, as Brazil has made great strides in combatting illiteracy, having been replaced by young salespeople compelling you to switch to Tim or Claro for your cellular service.

The relay of costumers soliciting letters from Dora, many of whom presumably came from Brazil’s Northeast given their accents and the destination of their letters, gave you the feeling that you were somewhere between Lapa and
Recife—the center of Brazil, somehow detached from Rio itself. This is reinforced by the lack of images of iconic Rio throughout the film—no beaches, no Christ the Redeemer, no Sugar Loaf mountain. The train station and the railway lines and a few interiors of apartments, primarily in Rio’s North Zone, offer the only glimpses of the city before Dora begins her reluctant journey to reunite the nine-year-old Josué Fontenele de Paiva (played by Vinícius de Oliveira) with his father in Bom Jesus do Norte, in the state of Ceará in the sertão (outback) of the Northeast. Both Dora, with her light brown hair, and Josué, dark haired and olive skinned, are visibly white, while the majority of the passengers exiting the trains and requesting letters from Dora are shades of Black and brown, their northeastern accents punctuating their Otherness.

Though Dora does not live in the Baixada—she asks a cab driver to take her to a North Zone neighborhood before detouring to the interstate bus station to begin her journey with Josué—the liminal space of Central do Brasil and the railways that connect it to the greater metropolitan region speak to the periphery. In many senses, the border between these peripheries is often arbitrary: neighborhoods throughout the North Zone are similarly referred to, often with a disparaging tone, as “subúrbios”—in the geographical sense rather than the
“white picket fence” sense of the U.S.—and “*periferias.*” The lack of basic public service and the dependency on mass transportation mark these *periferias,* especially when compared to the center and South Zone.7 Many of the same drug trafficking factions and even militias operate across the borders between the Baixada and the North and West Zone (Martín 2016b, 2016a). However, because of the perception of the Baixada as particularly lawless—a now defunct check point operated in the 1950s between Duque de Caxias and the bordering North Zone suburb of Vigário Geral (Ralston 2013)—police have even identified crimes in North Zone suburbs as having occurred in the Baixada (J. C. S. Alves 2003).

This connection between Central and the *subúrbio,* be it the North or West Zones or the more distant periphery of the Baixada, is evident throughout the film. In one of its most striking scenes, a young black man steals a radio from one of the vendor stands. Two security guards chase him through train cars until overtaking him on the train tracks that lead through the North Zone to the Baixada. Though he pleads for his life, the two lighter skinned security guards

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7 Mass transportation is run by municipal and state government subsidized transportation consortiums. There are several individual bus companies, *Supervia* is responsible for trains and ferries, and *MetroRio* operates the metro trains as well as buses, all located in Rio’s South Zone, called “metro on the surface.” Though subsidized, they are not public and integration between systems is inadequate and expensive. For an in depth account of Rio’s urban segregation through an analysis of the bus system, see (Caiafa 2002).
exchange a knowing look before summarily killing him in front of on lookers.

Dora, in the middle of writing a letter for a client, raises her head at the gun shot, before the lead security guard returns the radio to the vendor while wiping the sweat from his brow. The camera shifts to the station’s looming clock, a mere minute before 6 o’clock pm, marking the end of a typical day, as Dora packs up her materials.

Though vigilante and paramilitary culture has characterized Rio and much of Brazil, particularly the Northeast (T. P. R. Caldeira and Holston 1999a; Scheper-Hughes 2006), esquadrões de morte, or death squads, and extrajudicial killings dominated much of the Baixada and the perception of it as a lawless “Wild West” (J. C. S. Alves 2003; Enne 2004). As Alves documents in his essential work, Dos Barões ao Exterminio: Uma história da violência na Baixada Violência, state sanctioned violence by private actors dictated the local politics of the region, emerging first and foremost from attempts by local land owners to thwart and capture runaway slaves (J. C. S. Alves 2003, 40). These hired guns, execution squads, vigilantes, and policemen who killed with impunity became symbols of the region, with 1940s populist politician Tenório Calvalcanti being the most (in)famous manifestation of this state sanctioned violence (Ralston 2013).
Execution squads were so prevalent in the region and reporting on them made for such great newspaper sales that many Rio and Niterói-based\(^8\) newspapers, especially Última Hora, reported on the figure of “Mão Branca” (white hand), a notorious assassin in the region. The newspapers, however, had largely invented the figure whose popularity even lead to Gerson King Combo soul song called “Melô de Mão Branca” (“Justiceiros’ de Ontem e de Hoje - Revista de História” n.d.; Enne 2004). The lyrics of the 1979 song speak to the popularity of the fictitious, solitary assassin:

Esses bandidos soltos, cruéis e vagabundos que andam perturbando por aí.
Daqui pra frente é bão tomar muito cuidado,
que agora o Mão Branca está aqui.
Eles se escondem e pensam, que estão muito seguros,
mas sou o dono da situação.
Estou lá em cima, lá em baixo, na frente,
atrás do muro,
sozinho valho mais que um esquadrão!

These bandits on the loose, cruel good-for nothings disturbing the peace
From here on out it’s good to take heed,
Because now Mão Branca is here.
They hide and think that they are safe and sound
But I own the situation.
I’m there above, there below, in front
Behind the wall,
Alone I’m worth more than a (death) squad!

The “bandidos” cannot hide from the ever present Mão Branca, a white

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\(^8\) Niterói served as the capital of the State of Rio de Janeiro until 1975 while Rio was the federal capital and then its own city-state; thus Niterói was the administrative though not culture and economic center of the Baixada.
hand that disposes of the dark, Black and blackened sinister elements hiding in plain sight throughout the Baixada. The song ends with a nod to the ever-present nature of violence in the region, often in the form of disappeared corpses: “Quero avisar que na Baixada estão esperando pelo Senhor, dois presuntinhos desovados... À moda da casa!” (I want to let it be know that in the Baixada there are waiting, two strung up little hams... in the style of the house!). In the voice of the infamous, mythological media creation, Gerson King Combo alters that there are two hidden bodies awaiting their maker in the Baixada, in “the fashion of home,” as such occurrences are common place throughout the region that, as da Silva proclaimed, “starts at Central do Brasil.” Figures, imagined like Mão Branca and real like the Calvancanti, created the image of the Baixada as one of the most dangerous places in the world. And Central do Brasil, as liminal place between modern Rio and backward suburbs, marks the border between due process and summary executions, between Black and white space in Metropolitan Rio (J. A. Alves and Costa Vargas 2017; Porto-Gonçalves and da Silva 2011; D. F. da Silva 2009)

Even the hope of democratization did little for the sanctity of life in the region. A 1987 report from the Christian Science Monitor attested to the return of police affiliated death squads throughout the Baixada at the end of the military dictatorship when they were allowed to act with near impunity (Langfur 1987). Many of the people I interviewed informally during feijoadas or other forms of participant observation, especially those in their 30s and 40s in Nova Iguaçu and Caxias, detailed how they would gather as children to go see a dead body in their neighborhood following such a killing. “Even a bricklayer would kill
someone for smoking pot to maintain order,” one informant told me when reflecting on the pervasiveness of vigilante justice.

Vigilante violence also serves to link the urban chaos and amorality depicted in Central do Brazil and strongly associated with the Baixada Fluminense to another region plagued by these social ills, the sertão (J. C. S. Alves 2003; Scheper-Hughes 2006). For viewers of the film in Greater Rio, the numerous customers from Brazil’s Northeast seeking letters and the centrality of the sertão in the third act of the film serve as a not-so-subtle illusion to the numerous migrants from the region who came to populate Rio’s favelas, subúrbios and the Baixada Fluminense between the 1930s and ‘60s. Elites in the city of Rio used this influx of poorer, often Blacker nordestinos to the Baixada Fluminense to reinforce the contrast between the civilized center and the barbaric hinterland at its border.

The Niterói based newspaper, Última Hora, ran an eighteen part series in August and September of 1962 entitled “Baixada: Nordeste sem seca,” “Baixada: Northeast without Drought,” with each part highlighting the projected pathologies of the region—prostitution (even of children), lack of public services, rampant clientelism, illicit gambling, and arms sells. However, as Ralston reminds us in his doctoral dissertation, the timing of the series ultimately aimed
to combat the appeal of Duque de Caxias based populist candidate Tenório Calvalcanti, himself from the Northeastern state of Alagoas, in the race for governor against incumbent Badger da Silveira (Ralston 2013, 93). Though these problems were undoubtedly also present within Rio’s city limits, the racially, geographically, and socio-economically charged stigmatization of the Baixada through the media coupled the region with the backward image of the Northeast.

However, the sertão depicted in the film, as Bentes points out, departs from the violent, poverty stricken region that came to typify Cinema Novo, and rather serves as a ‘romanticized’ contrast to the ills of urban living: “the *sertão* emerges as [...] a kind of ‘return’ for the failed and deserted who did not manage to survive in the big cities” (Bentes 2007, 246). In Salles’s film, the cities of the southeast and especially Rio represent the lawless lands where a woman can make a living never actually sending the letters that her illiterate customers pay for, where a mother can be run over by a bus and no authorities step in to take care of a now orphaned child, where summary execution reigns, and where children can even be sold. The sertão, in contrast, is a place of deep spirituality and familiar love, with Josué being accepted by his brothers even though they have just met. It is the city, with its sprawl, inequality, and unbound
communities, that is the center of a cruel, modern Brazil, whereas the true central heart of the Brazilian family and national identity lies in the sertão (Blake 2011).

While *Central do Brasil* presents the sertão and the city as extremes, *Waste land*, the award winning 2010 documentary by director Lucy Walker, shows Rio at its dialectical limit: the Jardim Gramacho Landfill in Duque de Caxias. I emphasize Rio here because little mention is made of Duque de Caxias or the Baixada in the film. The waste land of the film only exists as a not so far off place where anything from Rio that is disposable, including and especially people, has been cast aside. The film follows world renowned New York-based, Brazilian artist Vik Muniz as he invites *catadores*, people who sort recyclable material from garbage, from Gramacho to pose for portrait recreations of famous artworks that are then refashioned using the same recyclable material from which they make their living. The film opens with Muniz giving an interview on the popular late-night talk show *Programa do Jô*. Just as the host, Jô Soarez, asks Muniz how he began his work with discarded materials, the film cuts to Muniz at the sambódromo as he takes in the opulent sights and sounds of the *Carnaval* parade. However, as the music fades, the camera lingers on the discarded costumes that line the streets following the performance: From a year’s worth of planned
decadence to trash in a matter of hours. As Muniz discusses his artistic trajectory
and his work with material ranging from sugar to AstroTurf, he expresses his
disillusion with the world of fine art and his desire to give back: “What I really
want to be able to do is changes the lives of a group of people with the same
material that they deal with every day. And not just any material, the idea for my
next project is to work with garbage” (Walker et al. 2011). From the beginning,
Muniz introduces himself as a recycler of other people’s lives, he will not only
refurbish garbage but those who work with it. He and his art will be the
salvation of the salvagers.

Muniz and the viewer are first introduced virtually to Jardim Gramacho,
at the time the largest landfill in Latin America by volume of trash collected.
While seated a computer scrolling through Google Maps and images, Muniz and
the director of his studio in Rio, Fabio, discuss that perils of working in
Gramacho given that many people who work there have been so excluded from
society that they end up living at the landfill. Muniz is apprehensive about his
own project’s ability to change people in such a dire situation. Fabio, however,
believes the real difficulty would be to not believe in their own artistic powers of
transformation: “No, because I think it would be much hard to think the we are
not able to change the lives of these people.” Muniz sees the junction between art and social projects as a way of taking people out of their place, “even if it’s a place from which they can look at where they are at.” This even though he has yet to actually go to the very place, Jardim Gramacho, from which he hopes to remove and transform others.

His then wife, Janaína, they divorced shortly after the film, has many more misgivings about the repercussions of Muniz’s project as they explore Jardim Gramacho through Google Earth: “Do you think people are open to work like this?” Janaína is not only concerned about the safety of her husband, but also the limits of Muniz’s work to truly transform the lives of what Muniz calls “some of the roughest people you can think of” (Walker et al. 2011). He cautions his wife about making assumptions about the hazards of Jardim Gramacho while looking at Google Earth, but is quick to make assumptions about the people whose very lives he is determined to change. As an artist who specializes in found objects, the potential “drug addicts” that he is about to meet are rendered just another material to be transformed. Director Walker reinforces this sentiment when discussing the film:
For me this film, as with all of my work, is about getting to know people who you do not normally meet in your life. And, if I’m doing my job, I aim to create an opportunity for the audience to feel they are getting under the skin, to emotionally connect with the people on the screen. But you need people you can care about. (Walker 2015)

As Muniz sets out to meet “these people you can care about,” Walker incorporates the iconic images of Rio—the beaches, Crist the redeemer—to situate Jardim Gramacho within Rio, but not necessarily the Baixada. Many aerial shots are also taken of the dump itself to give a perspective of how truly massive Jardim Gramacho is.

Within all this refuse, Muniz is tasked with finding people the audience will care about. Certain people immediately catch his attention: Valter, the blackened white, eccentric, wise picker who reminds everyone that “99 is not 100” in order to instill a sense of the importance of their work recycling what other deem as trash; Isis, a vivacious parda woman who has worked in Gramacho for five years; and Tião, the Black book loving leader of the recycling collective whose political activism to improve the plight of his fellows catadores through a library and others means is evident before Muniz’s salvific arrival. One wonders if Muniz and Walker ambitious art project could have made audiences “emotionally connect” with more troubled figures, like the prophetic Estamira
who struggles with mental and physical health issues and years of abuse led to her working in Jardim Gramacho as depicted in Marcos Prado’s 2006 film that bears her name. Muniz also seeks an “emotional connection” with those who will eventually buy the portraits, through their obvious references to Western figures, both real and fictional, like Atlas and Marat, when one of the catadores is named Zumbi, the real though legendary leader of Brazil’s most successful maroon community.

As the film progresses, the people ‘collected’ by Muniz to be featured in the portraits do express a sense of change. Some speak of not wanting to work in Jardim Gramacho anymore, some of simply taking more pride in the work, knowing that they are an essential component of environmental protection. Muniz’s wife fears that the changes might be too extreme, and warns him about taking them to the auction of the portraits in London, that it might be too much of a transformation. In the end, Tião is the only catador who makes his way to London with Muniz, perhaps because he is the leader of the Jardim Gramacho collective (ACAMJG Associação dos Catadores do Aterro Metropolitano de Jardim Gramacho). Throughout the film, Muniz’s interactions with the catadores seem genuine. He laughs with them as they crack jokes, he hugs them, and urges them
not to cry as he hands them the small prints of their portraits. He recognizes that he is the one who has truly changed.

Early in the film, when looking at Google Earth with his wife, Muniz points out that the geography of Jardim Gramacho is “the end of the line. Where everything that is not good goes. Including people” (Walker et al. 2011). By not contextualizing Jardim Gramacho, the struggle of the catadores within Caxias and Brazil, or the obvious racial composition of those who live and work at “the end of the line,” Walker and Muniz never reckon with the political dimensions of Jardim Gramacho—the general neglect of the Baixada that has made it the dumping grounds for Rio’s waste and the petrochemical industry that pollutes the bay. Even when Walker shows the catadores protesting in front of City Hall in Duque de Caxias, the legend on screen simply says local city hall, giving little actual geographic weight to the struggle of the catadores. Nor does the film contextualize catador mobilization and the political achievements of many unions throughout Brazil given their close working relationship with and recognition from President Lula da Silva throughout his administration (Fortes and French 2012). The money generated from the auction of the paintings and the subsequent popularity of the film as a piece of advocacy are the only avenues
for change within the imaginary of *Waste Land* propagated by Muniz and Walker.

Yet, for Tião, the narrative of Jardim Gramacho does not end at the “end of the world” nor with his attending an Oscar party. Before Muniz even arrived, Tião led the drive to organize the catadores collective and he and his partner, Zumbi, took it upon themselves to salvage books in the hopes of building a community library for the neighboring favela of Jardim Gramacho that many catadores call home. Though the film does show their protest in Duque de Caxias, the narrative arch of the film, of salvation for the salvagers outside of the landfill, ignores the real political goals of Tião and AMAMJG: to use their knowledge to transform the site into a world-class recycling facility. The importance of Jardim Gramacho, as a place where people who, in Muniz’s original view have been discarded, making their own collective meaning of place and belonging, is underscored by Irmã: “You know how I became famous all over the world? There inside the garbage. I started there 28, almost 30 years ago. I like it there. My life began there, thank God. I’m only famous worldwide because of that place. Everything started there for me.”
In classic sentimental documentary style, the final scenes of the film juxtapose the portraits of the protagonists with short “where-are-they-nows.” We learn that Muniz earned over $250,000 from sales of the portraits, which went to AMAMJG for a learning center and equipment and that though she briefly left, Irmã returned to the place where “everything started” for her. The film is bookended by Tião, rather than Muniz, appearing on the talk show Programa do Jô. Tião, in his charismatic pedagogical style, corrects Jô when he calls catadores “garbage collectors:” “we are not garbage collectors, we are collectors of recyclable material. Garbage cannot be re-used (não tem aproveitamento), recyclable material can.” Though this is obviously a result of editing, the interview did chronologically take place after the film’s release, and suggests Tião’s ongoing dedication to claiming a narrative for people from one of the Baixada’s most neglected communities. In a subsequent interview with O Povo Jornal de Hoje, Tião recognizes the ways in which race and class overlap, a theme largely ignored in the film, recounting to the interviewer how he was accused of not being a catador when he visited a private university in Rio’s South Zone because he wore designer clothing. He told the young lady that he had “forgotten [his] bottle of cachaça, [his] big beard, [his] costume at home” (Firmo
2015). Tião had always “imagined [himself] on every airplane that flew over” Gramacho, determined to know and occupy the spaces from which he was excluded. As he tells the interviewer, the first thing he did as a teenage was to take a bus to the beach: “You see people giving you a sideways glance. Then you also do a robbery, to revolt. You’re saying: this is also my space. The beach is not theirs. You could own the building, but the beach, no.” He knows where he is from, and the extreme measures that people take, including theft, upon arriving in places like the beach where others are suspicious and resentful of your very presence. Though he has left Jardim Gramacho, Tião recounts how he cried when returning to his home in the favela with a reporter who consoled him by assuring him that that life in the garbage was behind him. Tião rebukes the reporter, affirming that he is crying out of saudades, longing, for his home, for his friends when they would “gather money together” and enjoy “sun, churrasco [BBQ], funk [music], and billiards” (Firmo 2015). Much like Tião, the narratives of youth from the Baixada that I analyze refuse to be defined by stigma, by the turning away, and rather configure the Baixada, even those places at “the end of the line,” as central to their identity and claims to a territoriality of the periphery.
2.5 Re-imag(in)ing the Baixada Fluminense as a Black Place

The Olympics in many ways served as a present-day manifestation of decades of media and policymakers “turning their back on” the Baixada, or “collecting” it when it was politically or cinematographically convenient. The ‘state of calamity’ that acting Governor of Rio de Janeiro State Francisco Dornelles declared just weeks before the 2016 Olympics was not actively linked by local or international media to the Baixada, where over 100 oil refineries brought tax revenue to the state. Similarly, the international media focused on the plight of Olympic sailors who would have to deal with pollution in the Guanabara Bay, yet little coverage talked about how this pollution is a metropolitan issue, out of the hands of just the mayor’s office of Rio and directly tied to the petro-chemical industries that dominate the Baixada’s economy (Biller and Smith 2016). Moreover, due to its marshy plains and informal urbanization sanitation has been a perennial problem in the Baixada with much of the region’s untreated waste entering directly into rivers that feed into the bay. Three of the region’s most populous municipalities—Duque de Caxias, Nova Iguaçu, and São João de Meriti—are among the bottom ten of 100 major Brazilian cities when it comes to basic sanitation (Instituto Trata Brasil 2016). Coupled with poor garbage collection and
overfilled hospitals, the pollution makes for a staggering public health crisis that recently elected officials only fear will get worse given the financial ruin of not only the state but the municipalities themselves. The bay’s pollution, which was not resolved ahead of the Olympics despite investment from the International Development Bank needs to be confronted by all of the Recôncovo de Guanabara. However, mega-events like the Olympics and the World Cup concentrated investment, media attention, and tourism in Rio, highlighting the city rather than its place in an urban, suburban, and metropolitan geography. Like the opening Carnival scene of *Waste Land*, spectacle has often been the principle means of linking the Baixada and Rio, and the Rio 2016 Olympic Games were no exception—however now residents of the Baixada sought to use this media attention to their own advantage.
I took the familiar train to Caxias to watch the Olympic Torch pass through the city two days before the opening ceremony in Maracanã stadium. I was covering the event for RioOnWatch with an eye toward local perspectives of the event. In several other cities throughout Brazil, while the torch was also welcomed with much fanfare, protestors had attempted to extinguish the flame.
Only a few days prior, in Angra dos Reis, a municipality in southwest Rio de Janeiro state bordering São Paulo, police used rubber bullets to disperse a group of teachers protesting their months-delayed salaries. While some attempted to blame the violence that ensued on the teachers’ union, they dismissed the claims, remaining steadfast in their commitment to non-violent collective action by issuing a *repúdio*, repudiation, of not only the violence of the relay but also the violent negligence of the state: “Are the Torch passing and the image of the city in the media more important than the lives that are lost or neglected everyday by the lack of hospitals, of quality education, and social services that are essential to our population?” (Sepe Núcleo Angra Dos Reis 2016). State employees had gone largely unpaid for months and in June Interim Governor Francisco Dornelles finally declared a state of financial calamity as falling oil prices had led to decreased tax revenue (M. Kennedy 2016). Many unions and social movements, however, viewed the top-down spending on the games, and the corruption scandal that had ensnared members of nearly all political parties at every level of government as evidence of endemic misplaced priorities that sought to enrich political elites and their business allies at the expense—quite literally in the case of state employees—of basic services like education, health care, and public
security (Sepe Núcleo Angra Dos Reis 2016; Comite Popular da Copa e Olimpíadas do Rio de Janeiro 2015; Kuzma 2015). Somewhat ironically, Rio de Janeiro city police and firefighters conducted their own protest in Galeão international airport the day after the violence in Angra, greeting tourists with signs in English that read, “Welcome to Hell: Police and firefighters don’t get paid, whoever comes to Rio de Janeiro will be unsafe;” ignoring the sense of insecurity already felt by residents, often at the hands of police not just during protests, but also due to the increased militarized ‘security’ presence ahead of the games (Zirin 2016).

I would only find out later that day via a 12-minute live stream on Facebook from community news outlet O Caxiense that while I was awaiting the torch’s arrival in downtown Caxias police had once again shot rubber bullets and flash bombs into a crowd of onlookers, including small children, after protestors allegedly threw rocks at the torch procession in the Vila São Luiz neighborhood.

When I arrived in Caxias, the performances by local artists and cultural groups taking place on the Teatro Rual Cortez main stage in the central Praça do Pacificador belied the state violence in the name of the Olympic Torch occurring only a few kilometers away. Capoeira groups and families with children holding
Coca-Cola polar bear fans awaited with joy for the torch to arrive. Before I began to cover the event, I wanted to double check that my camera and recorder were working so I decided to get a coffee at The Duke of Caxias café that had always piqued my interest for obvious school pride reasons. One middle aged *parda* woman took my order while chatting with another woman who clearly was a friend rather than a customer. I had resolved to myself that I would ask these two women their opinions of the torch passing through Caxias, but at that moment I began to feel terribly nervous and self-conscious. While my writing for *RioOnWatch* had led me to cover several events, I had mostly done semi-structured interviews with civil society and community leaders who were already inclined to speak to media. These types of interviews aligned much more readily with my academic training in qualitative methods. Here, in the Duke of Caxias, I was an academic posing as a journalist covering a story, and I had not really been trained in “what’s the buzz on the street” methods. Thankfully, the women started talking to me about the news on the television screen. Pre-Olympic celebrations were in full swing, and they expressed their exasperation at the sporting event that had yet to start. They also expressed their delight at having a gringa journalist there though I insisted that I was more of a *blogueira*. 
They knew quite a few foreigners due to a neighboring language school, and before I could ask if I could quote them, they were introducing me to the English owner. Though I never actually interviewed them, I left the café caffeinated and confident, if not in my own journalistic skills then at least in my belief that many Brazilians were quite open—and sometimes when I was on the train listening to music on my headphones entirely too eager—to speak with someone who expressed a genuine interest in them and their lives.

I continued to Praça Roberto Silveira, near the Museum of Life and Science and Caxias’s city hall, and approached a woman holding a small girl’s hand. I introduced myself, the blog RioOnWatch, and explained why I was there and Andrea responded almost without me asking much:

I was complaining about the torch last week but I decided to come to see it for my niece. The situation here has everyone thinking it’s absurd to have the torch, but I think it’s important for Alice here to do patriotic things. This is a forgotten city and seeing the torch is validating; it’s cool.

This contrast between the simultaneous pride and sense of being forgotten that Andrea and other spectators expressed ultimately served to foreground the piece I wrote for the event, though another, unofficial torch relay a few days earlier,
further highlighted the rubber bullet laden police repression of the state going on during our interview.

On Saturday July 30, four days before the official Torch passed through Caxias and slightly less than a week before the opening ceremony, members of Fórum Grita Baixada, the human rights organization based in Nova Iguaçu, along with other civil society organizations held an alternative relay throughout 9 cities in the Baixada Fluminense, passing along what they dubbed the “Torch of Shame” (tocha de vergonha). I attended one of the planning events as well as a meeting with local press, both held at the Center for the Formation of Leaders, housed in the Diocese of Nova Iguaçu. It also serves as Fórum Grita Baixada’s main headquarters. My principle contact was Douglas, a 25-years old, light skinned, resident of São João de Meriti who had finished both his undergraduate degree in Economics and Masters in Public Policy and Territorial Development at UFRRJ-IM after writing his master’s thesis on university expansion in the Baixada. He had participated in many of the Duke-IM research events in late June, and he knew about my writing for RioOnWatch, so we had gotten to know each other’s work and sought avenues for mutual collaboration and support,
especially when it came to giving more visibility to the Baixada given the
number of journalists in Rio to cover the Olympic games.

Douglas had invited me to the events to help gain some international
coverage of their alternative relay, which members of Fórum Grita Baixada
insisted was not an anti-Olympic demonstration, but rather an opportunity to
draw attention to the historic neglect faced by residents of the Baixada
Fluminense. As Douglas underscored in a later interview: “We organized a
protest that at no point was against the Olympic Games but so that we could
utilize the space of the Olympics, the pre-Olympics, to show the historic
disregard (descaso) faced by the Baixada Fluminense. The passage of the torch
was something, if not the only thing, that connected the games to the Baixada.”
That the purely symbolic act of the torch passing through the Baixada was the
only direct legacy that residents could point to, as expressed by both Douglas
and Andrea ahead of the official event, speaks to the overwhelming sense of pain
they felt as they watched billions being spent on future white elephants when
their pasts and presents remained so forgotten and neglected. Flameless, black
and dripping with blood-red paint, the torch of shame served as a call to local
politicians that residents were no longer willing to internalize their marginality.
The torch places the blame squarely on those who should be held accountable, who should feel *vergonha*, for the depraved state of rights that residents face, while elevating the Baixada to a place worthy of care, and for that matter, love:

We, residents of the Baixada Fluminense, receive the Olympics with a mixture of happiness and a lot of pain (*dor*). Happiness because we greet the Olympic spirit of promoting peace, friendship, and goodwill among peoples. Pain because a state of exception to rights (*estado de exceção de direitos*) presides over our beloved (*amada*) Baixada.
These opening words appeared on the pamphlets distributed to onlookers during the July 30th torch of shame relay. The pamphlets went on to list a few of the almost innumerable ways in which the Baixada has long existed in a “state of exception to rights,” ranging from delayed pay to police massacres. Yet the relay itself, which began in the far-out municipality of Paracambi and covered some 80 kilometers through 9 municipalities in the Baixada before ending in Duque de Caxias, in many ways represented an act of love “in spite of” these sources of pain.

Figure 6: “Torch of Shame” in downtown Nova Iguaçu
Though the relay traveled by caravan, I only attended the part of the procession that went through Nova Iguaçu with another blogger for *RioOnWatch* due to the logistical difficulties of traversing the Baixada by bus—many routes head toward Rio, and those that do go between municipalities make many stops in residential neighborhoods along the way. However, members of Fórum Grita Baixada assured me that they were going to make a video of the procession available on YouTube, from which I have gleaned the following observations about the torch in other municipalities in addition to remarks from interviews and local and international media that covered the event.

The procession in Paracambi featured a small group of activists welcoming onlookers with a popular Catholic song with clear Afro-Brazilian rhythmic and harmonic elements: “Welcome, Olêlê/ Welcome Olala/ Peace and wellness for you/ who came to participate” (Seja bem vindo Olêlê/ Seja bem vindo Olala/ Paz e bem pra você/ Que veio participar). Congregations of several churches of different denominations in the region lent their support to the procession, as did the Bishop of Nova Iguaçu, Dom Luciano Bergamin. Evoking the Fórum’s name, banners signaled to onlookers that this was a “cry for peace and life” (grito pela paz e pela vida) throughout the entire region of the Baixada,
underscoring that though scant public services and bloodshed had all too often served as the commonalities binding the region together, a collective mobilization that envisioned an entire Baixada of “peace and life” was emerging. One of the torch bearers, an elderly white woman, wore a simple white t-shirt with a red glitter heart as she led the procession before handing the torch to a cherubic though resolute adolescent boy.

Figure 7: Woman passing torch at Fórum Grita Baixada “March of Shame.” Photo courtesy of Fórum Grita Baixada
Another young woman carrying one of the banners wore a simple “Eu ❤ Paracambi” shirt. When reviewing photographs published on Fórum Gita Baixada’s Facebook page, I thought immediately about my many interlocuters who had disparaged the Baixada. Such a t-shirt would be laughable to them. No one would ever think to love this no-man’s land, but this march was clearly for those who ❤ their *amada* Baixada. But for that love to flourish and to not be tinged with the mark of stigma, the torch relay needed to underscore, to denounce, to cry out (gritar) against the pain that decades of negligence, violence, and clientelism had wrought within the region.
This process of transferring this internalized marginalization to those responsible for the oppression faced by residents of the Baixada is a hard-fought battle for the Fórum Grita Baixada, as is converting those feelings of shame into one of pride and love, as Douglas expressed to me:

I believe that recently within the population a vision of being from the Baixada Fluminense is emerging. But it still varies. There are people who are ashamed to say that they live in São João de Meriti or the Baixada Fluminense when they leave. Obviously, there are instances where a person is going to ask “where are you from” and to make things easier you’ll say you’re from Rio in general because people won’t know other
places. But in Rio and Brazil themselves a person could
demarcate, but people prefer not to define where they live
because of the prejudice and stigma that the Baixada already has.

The Baixada is at once a poorly defined though socially recognized Other,
functioning as a liminal “no-man’s land” between the quaint colonial mountain
cities of Petropolis and Teresópolis and the Marvelous and modern parts of Rio
de Janeiro. Rio’s neighborhoods on the border may experience a Baixadafication
due to high levels of violence or stigmatization (J. C. S. Alves 2003). And
municipalities that do not fit into the “serra” or the “carioca” identity but also
were not part of the historic core of the Baixada, like Itaguaí and Seropédica, may
be incorporated into the region due their increased urbanization and economic
ties to Rio proper. This was especially underscored to me during an August 2017
visit to the Serópedica campus of UFRRJ, where students from Rio’s West Zone
recounted how they had been warned against studying in the Baixada—though
we ourselves had been treating the Nova Iguaçu Campus as the true “Baixada
campus.” Border residents at times are often the most vocal opponents to such a
“shameful” identification, as one researcher notes in a quote from a city official
from Itaguaí: “We have nothing to do with the Baixada” (Nós não temos nada a
ver com a Baixada) (A. S. Rocha 2013). Residents of the Baixada have internalized the stigma associated with the region as public policy neglect and media representations seek to render nearly impossible identification with the region. Though the Baixada is often referred to collectively, the collective Othering and marginalization of the region by those in Rio proper has instilled in residents a sense of shame, fragmenting attempts at a socio-territorial identity.

This shame is akin to what Stuart Hall identifies as the “traumatic character of ‘the colonial experience’” by which “dominant regimes of representation” sought to not only “position and subject” “black people, black experiences” to inferiority but also “make us see and experience ourselves as ‘Other’” (Hall 1989, 71). Hall goes on to decry the ways through which this ‘Other-ness’ becomes internalized:

Every regime of representation is a regime of power formed, as Foucault reminds us, by the fatal couplet, ‘power/knowledge.’ But this kind of knowledge is internal, not external. It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that ‘knowledge,’ not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, by the power of inner compulsion and subjective con-formation to the norm. That is the lesson—the sombre majesty—of Fanon’s insight into the colonised experience in Black Skin, White Masks. (Hall 1989, 71)
In the shadow of the Marvelous City, of the South Zone beaches, of Christ the Redeemer, and, at the time of the torch relay, tremendous media attention concentrated around the #CidadeOlimpica, residents of the Baixada have had little recourse to control how they are represented locally and internationally, leading many to the “inner compulsion” to distance themselves from identifying with their municipalities and the Baixada as a whole. Despite some evidence that the violent image of the Baixada that dominated media coverage of the region began to subside in the 90s and early 2000s as politicians recognized it as a new frontier of voters (Enne 2004, 2013; Fórum Grita Baixada 2016), interviews and participant observations attest to how residents of the Baixada have internalized this knowledge of “Otherness,” of being forgotten and forgettable, as Andrea expressed. Practical survival also dictates this distancing, as many interviewees told me that residents of the Baixada would lie about their addresses on job applications knowing that potential employer may discriminate against them either due to the stigma of the region or because they did not want to have to pay the higher transportation costs.

This sense of shame is, as in Hall’s formulation, intricately linked to the territoriality of race relations in Rio de Janeiro and Brazil more generally. I
emphasize the territoriality aspect of this claim due to the ways in which racialization in Brazil both geographically and socially rest on the premise of the famous phrase: “Brazil has no race problems because the blacks know their place” (Gonzalez 1988) This idea of “place” underpins my conceptualization of the Baixada as a “Black place” following activist Joel Rufino dos Santos (1999). I understand the Baixada as a “Black Place” not only through the ways that both Blackness and the Baixada are stigmatized and ‘shamed’ and the ways its more or less white residents are blackened by living in this “strange place” of the poor (Da Silva 2001), but also through the ways that the Baixada exemplifies one particular “Black place” of potential and possibility from which to construct an emancipatory urban, territorial project that challenges dominant narratives of racial, class, gender subordination and Otherness.

In her reading of Du Bois, Harris-Perry, identifies shame as the affective basis of his famous question, “how does it feel to be a problem?”, and highlights shame as “a defining element of African American life,” (Harris-Perry 2011, 109). While Alves defines the Baixada as a place of violence, where local elites dominate through the violation of “any and all...human rights” (J. C. S. Alves 2003), following Harris-Perry, I understand shame as both the subjective and
collective response among residents of the Baixada to decades of such violations.

Neguinho de Beija Flor (Problema Social 1991), the dark skinned, samba composer and singer and official interpreter for the Beija Flor samba school in the Baixada municipality of Nilópolis, has a formulation of shame, of being a problem, that mirrors that of Du Bois in the song “Problema Social”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portuguese</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>É ruim acordar de madrugada</td>
<td>It’s awful waking up at dawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pra vender bala no trem</td>
<td>to sale candy on the train</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Se eu pudesse tocar em meu destino,</td>
<td>If I could change my destiny,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hoje eu seria alguém</td>
<td>I would be somebody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seria eu, um intelectual</td>
<td>I’d be an intellectual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mas como não tive chance</td>
<td>But since I wasn’t lucky enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de ter estudado em colégio</td>
<td>to get a good education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muitos me chamam pivete,</td>
<td>Many call me an urchin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mas poucos me deram apoio moral</td>
<td>but few gave me moral support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Se eu pudesse</td>
<td>If I could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eu não seria um problema social</td>
<td>I wouldn’t be a social problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Se eu pudesse</td>
<td>If I could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eu não seria um problema social</td>
<td>I wouldn’t be a social problem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Neguinho de Beija Flor’s song touches on many of the aspects that contribute to the sense of shame, to the sense of being a social problem, that affect residents of the Baixada Fluminense: informal work, poor education, lost childhoods, the dependency on poor urban mobility, and the stigma that accompanies all of the above (Goffman 1963). The young protagonist of the song does all that he can to improve his lot in life, selling candy on the train to “kill his hunger” rather than
“hurt someone else,” even distancing himself from the even more stigmatize lot of orphan and ward of the state at FUNABEM. While the idea of people-as-social problem within the US context almost always carries anti-Black under and overtones—from the explicit “negro cocaine ‘fiends’” to only slightly subtler welfare queens, super predators, and thugs9—the plight of Neguinho da Beija Flor’s pivete, though undoubtedly also a racialized “more or less black” subject (Da Silva 1998), does not within the Brazilian context stem from his Blackness per se, as it is never named, but rather from his poor, peripheral upbringing during which “few gave [him] moral support.”

Denise Ferreira da Silva rightly reminds us that racism and racial subjectivity (the term she prefers to the frequently used ‘racial consciousness’ in the social sciences and humanities) in Brazil is not like the US, nor the English speaking Caribbean from where Hall hails (Da Silva 1998). Da Silva problematizes the premise of comparative works (of which this work is admittedly among given my own positionality) on race in the US and in Brazil, particularly as embodied by the question posed by Michael Hanchard: “Why has

there been no social movement generated by Afro-Brazilians in the post-World War II period that corresponds to social movements in the United States, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Caribbean?” (Hanchard 1994, 6). I often heard a similar, more contemporary sentiment expressed by fellow Americans living in Rio, both Black and white, especially given the centrality of the Black Lives Matter movement in our collective, progressive consciousness. Why was there no national, politicized Brazilian #BlackLivesMatter we and numerous international media outlets pondered (Brunhuber 2016; Freelon 2016; Carless 2015)?

Though the myth of Brazil’ racial democracy, in contrast to the United States’ “racial dictatorship” (Da Silva 1998, 212), has long been debunked by both Brazilian and foreign scholars and Brazil’s Black activists, the lack of politicized Blackness remains a constant question among, if not scholarly circles, at least those with a working knowledge of both countries’ past and presents of white superiority, anti-black discrimination and stigmatization (Da Silva 1998; Sansone 2003; Hanchard 1994; J. D. French 2000). However, formal and informal conversations in Rio with “assumed Blacks” revealed to me a deep admiration for the US Civil Rights movement, especially the more radical articulations of Malcolm X and the Black Panthers. The emphasis on crespo (naturally curly) and
turbante (hair wraps) hair styles among some, perhaps more college educated, of Rio’s young Black men and women also highlighted a (re)valorization of Black beauty. The warm reception of Angela Davis at Universidade Federal da Bahia in July 2017, and the frequency with which I observed Black people reading the recent translation of her seminal Women, Race, and Class, showed an engagement with intersectional anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist emancipatory projects.

However, both da Silva and Sansone caution scholars against the assumption that the lack of political activism centered on race “will—or should—‘evolve’ toward some of the traits of the North American situation [of race based political consciousness]” (Sansone 2003, 9). In fact, the Brazilian elite continue to contend that Brazil’s “racial harmony” remains a more evolved, more modern national myth than the “color line” racial dictatorship of the US, with media reports of US police violence against Black men always highlighting race in a way that reports of similar local events rarely do. For Denise Ferreira da Silva, this US-centric interpretation of racial formation rests on the premise that race continues to be viewed as an a priori bio-political category even while it is understood as a social construct (Da Silva 1998).
Da Silva begins her meditation on how “Brazil is not (quite) the US” with a reflection on reactions to Michael Jackson and Spike Lee choosing to film part of the 1996 video for “They Don’t Care About Us” in the favela of Dona Marta, one such South Zone favela above the upper middle-class neighborhood of Botafogo. As the *New York Times* reported at the time, local officials, including then Minister of Sport, famed soccer star Pelé, opposed the plan to film the video in a favela, arguing that the video would show a negative image of Rio, one that officials had been working hard to “rehabilitate” (Schemo 1996). For da Silva, though the song touches on issues of police brutality and poverty as “code words for (and the concrete expressions of) racial subordination in both countries, the similarities stop there” (Da Silva 1998, 203), given the way that Blackness has been absorbed within the national Brazilian subject. However, residents reactions to Jackson’s visit, revealed if not a “race consciousness,” a profoundly territorial subjectivity: “It’s a poor world surrounded by a rich world, an island of misery surrounded by wealth” (Schemo 1996). And the island of wealth, as evident in the policymakers and elites’ opposition to Jackson’s visit, sought to dictate the territoriality, the urban narrative, of the city of Rio. Residents hoped that the government would feel “ashamed of the conditions here” and would thus
contend with the lack of sanitation and public security in Dona Marta, thus enabling them to articulate a sense of territorial belonging to both the postcard image of Rio and the basic rights and services that accompany it. If one were speaking of Metro Rio as a whole, the inverse would hold: an island of wealth surrounded by misery. While the morro-asfalto dynamic, especially in South Zone favelas like Santa Marta, dominates this contrast of wealth and misery, places like the Baixada Fluminense go largely ignored. Like Fórum Grita Baixada’s torch of shame relay 10 years later, the hope was that international visibility would transfer the internalized shame of the residents to the policymakers who should rightfully be ashamed for the neglect that they inflict on to these places deemed unworthy of media attention. While their mobilization was centered around territorial pride, the torch relay repeatedly highlighted the violent victimization of poor, Black and brown youth at the hands of police. However, unlike Santa Marta, the distance between the Baixada and the South Zone cannot be captured in a postcard, and is thus insurmountable in the geographic imagination of many residents and policymakers alike.

Given its social exclusion, the Baixada is best understood as a Black place. Though this in part stems from its majority Afro-Brazilian population, here I am
following scholar and activist Joel Rufino Dos Santos’s formulation of Blackness in Brazil as a social place. Just as ‘place’ is abstract space imbued with meaning through humans’ social, historical, and cultural use of land, dos Santos imbues the abstract formulation of ‘race’ with meaning through his interrogation of what it means for Black people to know their place. For Dos Santos, the social place of Blackness is based on not simply on skin color but also on “popular culture, African ancestrality, being the descendants of slaves (remotely or recently), poverty, being identified as black by others and assuming that identity oneself” (dos Santos 1999, 114). Like the Baixada, the social place of blackness has been stigmatized by dominant narratives that render them both outside of and lower than the projected image of Brazil as racial democracy and (dos Santos 1999). The territoriality of the elite and political class, within both the Baixada itself through negligence and within Rio through stigmatization, “blackens” the Baixada, turning its back and creating a periphery out of a social place that is central to its history, culture, and identity. However, just as dos Santos identifies Black social movements and Black families—focused around the seemingly peripheral figure of the iyá (a Yuroba word for aunt)—as the epistemic site out of Brazilian crisis of racism, incomplete citizenship and national exclusion, the narratives of residents
from the Baixada that I analyze in the next chapters, much like the Torch of
Shame relay, serves as epistemic sites that contest the centrality of Rio and its
incomplete metropolitan project, remapping shame onto those who have
inflicted pain and suffering in the region and reimagining the Baixada as a place of
love and possibility for the poor, Black and brown, youth from the periphery.
3. Spectacle and Hyper (In)Visibility: Black bodies in Black Spaces during the 2016 Olympics

A little over a week after I had declared my intention to focus my dissertation on the Baixada Fluminense to both John and the police officer-cum-uber driver, and roughly three weeks before the August 5th opening ceremony of the 2016 Rio Olympics, I was contacted by two young free-lance reporters fixing for The New York Times’s Brazilian Bureau Chief, Simon Romero. They were hoping to prepare a report on violence in the Baixada Fluminense and had read my RioOnWatch piece from the year before as an English-language primer on the region (Reist 2015). They asked me for an interview and to put them in contact with residents from the Baixada to discuss their perceptions about the Olympics overall. They were especially interested in residents’ claim that the UPPs in Zona Sul had pushed violence northbound. I told them about Fórum Grita Baixada’s then upcoming “Torch of Shame” relay and agreed to put them in touch with residents from the Baixada, particularly students from UFRRJ-IM and Dudu given our recent collaboration. I told them that I was glad to see that the Baixada in particular was getting more international coverage. I confessed to John in an
email that I was personally glad that some were already considering me an authority on the Baixada.

The journalists said Romero was especially interested in their interviews with Douglas of Fórum *Grita Baixada* and with Dudu de Morro Agudo of *Instituto Enraizados*, *The New York Times* never published a story on violence in the Baixada Fluminense. Romero did, nevertheless, publish a piece one day ahead of the Games about Brazilian dissatisfaction with the Olympics, titled, “Olympic Spirit in Brazil? They Stoned the Torch Relay.” Though he was clearly referencing the protests in Angra dos Res, Romero fails to go into any detail about that particular event (Romero 2016). Instead, the article emphasizes the State of Rio de Janeiro’s dire economic situation and the impeachment proceedings facing Dilma Rousseff since Michel Temer took over as interim president in May. “Bear-knuckle political dysfunction,” as Romero (2016) described the political situation, and Temer’s lack of popularity hung over much of the run up to the Games. Even though Dilma would not be officially removed from office until August, Temer announced a new, all white male cabinet and proposed budget cuts to a number of ministries immediately following her stepping down for the impeachment proceedings. In response, young people and
famous artists like Caetano Veloso and Seu Jorge occupied and held
unsanctioned concerts in the Ministry of Culture in downtown Rio to oppose the
ministry’s proposed closing. A number of my friends from the Baixada attended
these concerts and participated in other protests against the Temer
administration, and “Fora Temer” (Out with Temer) became a rallying cry we
happily repeated in many of the IM-Duke team meetings. Due to this turmoil,
Romero characterizes the Brazilian response to the Olympics as either anxiety,
indifference, or anger.

Though Romero makes no reference to the Baixada Fluminense within the
text of the article, all the images in the article are from the official torch relay
passing through the Baixada in Duque de Caxias and São João de Meriti. All
captions for the images state that the images are from Rio de Janeiro, though
local media that re-ran the story translated in Portuguese specified the
municipalities in the Baixada. The cover image for the article even features a
mixed-race crowd of protestors from the São João de Meriti branch of the Union
of State Educational Professionals (SEPE-Sindicato Estadual dos Profissionais da
Educação do Rio de Janeiro), the same union that protested in Angra do Reis. The
protestors are carrying a banner bearing SEPE Meriti’s name that reads “Money for the Olympics, but not for education.”

As discussed in the previous chapter, I also wrote about Brazilian “Olympic spirit” in a piece for RioOnWatch entitled, “Two Torches Passed through Rio’s Baixada Fluminense: One with Pride, the Other with Silver Bullets,” with a specific focus on the Baixada Fluminense. The piece grew out of interviews I conducted with people at both the torch of shame and official torch relays. While Romero chose to focus on the anger, anxiety, and indifference brought on by the economic and political upheaval of the time, I tried to convey the tension between, on the one hand, the historic and ongoing neglect of the region by policymakers that the Games only exacerbated in the minds of many, and, on the other, the desire of those same people to be visible, if only for the fleeting moment of the official torch’s passing. Maria Regina, a black woman who attended the official torch relay in Duque de Caxias with her family, wiping tears from her eyes expressed a long overdue sense of being valorized: “Our whole lives we’ve been waiting for something like this. This is a sacrificed city; it’s not very well taken care of. Having the torch here is an enormous satisfaction,” (Reist 2016). Her response mirrors that of Andrea, who similarly
acknowledged that the torch passing through Caxias as “absurd,” while noting that it was “cool” especially for her niece to do “patriotic things” in this “forgotten city.” Given the New York Time’s international audience, to some degree it makes sense that Romero’s piece did not underscore the relationship between the Baixada Fluminense and the Rio in his analysis of Brazilian responses to the Olympics. However, the presumably editorialized headline and subsequent article make no reference to the police repression that resulted from protestors “stoning the relay,” neither in Angra dos Reis nor in Caxias. Moreover, Romero’s macro-analysis of the Brazilian vexation over the Olympics belies the very real problems faced by residents of the Baixada Fluminense, problems clearly on display in the images the article chose to use.
In this chapter, with the Olympics serving as both a narrative backdrop and a 21st spectacular manifestation of the colonial-matrix of power, being, and knowledge (Quijano 2007; W. D. Mignolo 2011; Debord 2005), I analyze the dialectical relationship between the hypervisibility of the Baixada, evident in *The New York Times* use of photos from the Baixada and its historic and present-day media stigmatization as a place of unrestricted violence, and the invisibility of the Baixada that has rendered it a “sacrificed” and “forgotten” region. Romero’s
article operates on Debord’s notion of the spectacle, both of the Olympics and of Brazil’s political dysfunction.

Debord’s 1967 *Society of the Spectacle* is at once a description and critique of the reciprocal relationship between mass media and consumer capitalism. As he asserts that “[t]he spectacle is capital accumulated to the point that it becomes images;” however, “the spectacle is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images” (Debord 2005, 17,10). Thus, I argue that the spectacle of the Olympics creates a dual hypervisibility/invisibility that mirrors how the image of Blackness mediates “the social relation between people” within Metropolitan Rio. Blackness is ubiquitously usurped and visibilized through those images of Brazilianness that are advertised to the world—feijoada, samba, the dancing mulata—that make all Brazilians “more or less Black” (Da Silva 1998; J. A. Alves 2014), yet invisibilized through the persistent national myth of racial convivality perpetuated by a predominantly white media, through urban segregation, and through state sanctioned violence that many deem an “extermination” of young, Black men (Anistia Internacional Brasil 2014). Although hypervisible images of Blackness are readily used to reinforce Brazilian national identity, White hegemony
operates as the spectacle, since ultimately one’s proximity to whiteness accumulates more cultural capital (Reiter 2009). For both residents of the Baixada and Black Brazilians, the spectacle of whiteness, produces a crisis of self-esteem. I draw from the work of Lélia Gonzalez and Beatriz Nascimento, two Black feminists who vehemently critiqued Brazil’s form of White hegemony, to conceptualize this relationship between Black Brazilian invisibility and hypervisibility and self-esteem and the relationship between spectacle and territoriality.

This chapter is also concerned with how the Olympics function to render the Baixada both hypervisible and invisible by keeping poor, black and brown youth “in their places” through an analysis of investments in both public security and urban mobility. I pay particular attention to the notion of leisure and how the leisure of young Black and brown people from the periphery is stigmatized and rendered suspect through elite territorial control. I take as a theoretical background, Sansone’s notion of “soft and hard areas” of racial relations (Sansone 2003, 53), with a specific emphasis on how these “moments in life” are mapped on to specific geographic space. While Sansone identifies “racially neutral leisure spaces” where “being black is not a hindrance and can even
sometimes bring prestige,” such as soccer games (Sansone 2003, 53), I believe that these spaces are being eroded by Rio’s Olympic investments which seek to prohibit poor, Black and brown bodies from the periphery from engaging in the very notion of leisure. However, this same Black and brown youth has turned to what some would call leisure, though they would call it work, by organizing political acts to occupy spaces, like the rolezinhos discussed in chapter one, and through their own cultural expression in hip hop. I take particular interest in the narratives of poor, Black and brown youth that have not only question “their place,” but also question the marginality of the Baixada through “epistemic disobedience” that exalts the periphery as the place from which both the theory and the practice of their narratives depart (W. D. Mignolo 2011; C. Walsh 2007b).

3.1 Misplaced Priorities to Keep People in Their Place

Prior to writing the RioOnWatch piece on the two torch relays, I had planned to write a different article based on an interview that I had conducted with UFRRJ-IM tourism student and Duke-IM project collaborator, Babi, in early July. During UFRRJ Economist Adrianno Oliveira’s presentation to the Duke-IM group about
the socioeconomic relationship between Rio and the Baixada Fluminense, I asked him if local municipalities were in anyway involved in the planning for the Olympics, if the planning for the Games had taken into account the Baixada. Oliveira responded with a deadpan and resounding “no,” letting the silence between his initial response and his further explanation of that “no” to underscore how true that sentiment was for everyone in the room. I wanted to ask Babi, who was present for Oliveira’s response and with whom I had casually chatted about all manner of current events from Rousseff’s impeachment to the Olympics, her perspective as both a tourism major and a resident of Nova Iguaçu.

Babi, a nineteen years-old self-identifying preta, has been one of the stand-out IM team members for the near poetry of her oratory style, her dedication to the project, and her charismatic warmth that shined through the numerous selfies that the group took together. I met Babi at the IM campus where just a few days before we had been working with the entire team of nearly two dozen Duke and IM students, but with the Duke students heading back to their respective homes and the IM students preparing for final exams, the IM campus seemed
deserted. “The Olympics had everything to go well [dar certo].” From the very start of the interview, Babi cuts to a widespread frustration with mega-events in general: FIFA and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) bank on popular support and the public-private financial and political mobilization that megaevents generate to create this celebratory optimism that everything will dar certo. “There was financing, there was a vision. But there was no planning.” As a tourism student, Babi is frustrated with both the Olympics and World Cup for their lack of the key word in tourism, “planning.” But this planning is not limited to logistics—to making sure there is sufficient accommodations and easily accessible and navigable transportation. In the tourism as practice school of thought within which Babi positions herself, she departs from tourism solely as capitalist pursuit:

When people think of tourism, they think of a highly commercial city, something to generate value, to generate money. And we understand that tourism is not just that. Tourism has the possibility of creating an experience of exchange and from that exchange, to generate good things for the host location.

However, many question whether the mega-event model—from 2008 Beijing, 2012 London, and 2014 Sochi Olympics as well as the 2010 World Cup in
South Africa—has in recent years even aimed to “generate good thing for the host location” (Gaffney 2013; Boykoff 2013, 2016). Brazilians had already begun to question the model during the massive 2013 protests. Though those protests in major cities throughout Brazil had several causes and media narratives, corruption, human rights abuses, forced removals, repressive police tactics, and misplaced government spending led many participants to chant: “there won’t be a [World] Cup” (Não vai ter Copa!) (Saad-Filho and Morais 2013; Maricato 2013). In the case of the Rio 2016 Games, which were mired by the political and economic crises, “Olympics for whom?” became a widespread rallying cry in smaller protests ahead of the Games (Nitahara 2015).

Throughout the interview, Babi stresses that seemingly every aspect of the Olympics failed to be for the Baixada Fluminense in any convincing way, such as the lack of transportation, high ticket prices, and the reliance on volunteer labor that excludes people in the tourism industry who cannot work for free such as herself. Babi even laments that the torch relay in Nova Iguaçu, which at the time of the interview was due to pass in a few weeks and would give the city a “sensation of value,” was not being advertised. Beyond the torch, the only
noticeable difference, the only “little detail [detalhezinho]” that had changed in Nova Iguaçu were new signs indicating a handful of tourist destinations in the city, but there was no coordinated metropolitan tourism campaign, “because the visibility of Rio de Janeiro is only what? The South Zone. Rio is very big and very rich in terms of places to visit. But this is not advertised; these big events, they have everything to show what we have and they don’t, nothing happens.” In July 216, just a month ahead of the Games, Babi did not feel like the Games were for her or her city of Nova Iguaçu.

International megaevents bank on this sensation that not only will something happen, but that they will bring much awaited improvements to most if not all of a city’s problems: infrastructure upgrades, economic growth, reductions in crime, the latest green technology to propel the host city into a 21st century sustainable future. Former US Olympic soccer player and political scientist Jules Boykoff refers to this initial optimism surrounding the Games, Babi’s sentiment that they have “everything to go well,” as “celebration capitalism.” “Celebration capitalism,” is a political-economic formation marked by lopsided public–private partnerships that favor private entities while dumping risk on the taxpayer. The normal rules of politics are temporarily suspended in the name of a media-trumpeted, hyper-commercial
spectacle, all safeguarded by beefed-up security forces responsible for preventing terrorism, corralling political dissent, and protecting the festivities. Celebration capitalism is an upbeat shakedown, trickle-up economics with wrenching human costs. (Boykoff 2016, 155)

Boykoff is primarily concerned with differentiating “celebration capitalism” from neoliberal market driven capital, since his analysis of “celebration capital,” the mark(et)edly joyous inverse of Klein’s notion of “disaster capitalism,” reveals how “the public routinely pays for and meticulously regulates a large majority of Olympic costs, and corporate sponsors hold a privileged position in future pacts—the free market does not decide” (Boykoff 2016, 156). Citing Debord’s spectacle, Boykoff argues that the politics of selling the Olympics begins with how “the IOC circulates, as Debord would have it, ‘an uninterrupted monologue of self-praise’” (Boykoff 2013, 17–18). Once a city is chosen to host the Games, a “happy-faced bait-and-switch” takes place, with politicians at every level of government hyping the boondoggle of public risk and private reward (Boykoff 2016, 160). For many activists and residents of the Baixada that I interviewed, then mayor of Rio, Eduardo Paes typified that “happy-faced bait and switch,” though they preferred the Brazilian Portuguese expression “cara de pau,” literally
“wooden-faced” but used to mean “shameless” to refer to Paes’s own constant “uninterrupted monologue of self-praise.”

Eduardo Paes, Mayor of Rio from January 2009 to December 2016, a timespan that includes both the Olympic bidding process and the Games themselves, in his braggadocious style declared in 2013 that “[t]he vultures are going to come up short [vão se dar mal]. We will reach the Olympics in better conditions than London and leave Barcelona in the dust [no chinelo- literally “on [our] flip-flops,” a reference to the iconic footwear of cariocas]” (Raiter and Sabóia 2013). Barcelona is still touted by some academics, sports journalists, and would be Olympic city hosts as the model for how the Olympics can leave a lasting urban legacy (Boykoff 2016, 136–39). A 36 page English language quick guide to the Rio 2016 Olympics’ public policies disseminated by City Hall ahead of the 2016 Games dedicates a full two-page photographic spread of Ipanema beach from arpoador rock to the Two Brothers Mountains with a quote from then mayor of Barcelona, Pasqual Maragall: “There are two types of Olympics Games: a city that serves the Games, and the Games that serve a city” (Prefeitura do Rio de Janeiro n.d.).
In a 2012 interview with *BBC Brasil*, Paes praises the Olympic model for the “athletic” challenge it creates for the host city to finally get things done:

> Excuse me, but these guys [who ask why these infrastructure projects are not made without the Games] are idiots. It’s like this: you need a goal, you need a date, a challenge. It’s like an athlete who trains a lot and knows that on that day he will compete. The Olympics are like that, it’s like a challenge for the city. Before having the Games, we could do everything, but we didn’t have to. Now, because we’ll have the Games, it’s a fantastic excuse. There’s also the intangible legacy. I was in Paris and London in November, and when I went from Paris to London, I was very impressed. In comparison Paris seemed like a depressed city. London was happening. (Carneiro 2012)

Paes, perhaps in some ways anticipating the rallying cry of “Olympics for whom” but most likely espousing the megaevent party line of inclusivity, insists that this “fantastic excuse” will generate “the greatest change in the legacies left for the poorest people of the city” (Carneiro 2012). In media appearances, Paes repeatedly dubbed Rio 2016 “the ultimately Legacy Games.” However, by 2014, Paes had already backed down from a number of Olympic promises. The $8.5 million reais *Morar Carioca* program—which Paes later claimed was never destined to be a legacy project—that aimed to integrate all of Rio’s over 1000 favelas with better sanitation and health and education services was all but abandoned and no substantial progress had been made in cleaning up the
Guanabara Bay (Barnes 2015; Steiker-Ginzberg 2014; Biller and Smith 2016; Purcell 2017). In a September 2015 op-ed in the Folha de São Paulo, despite these already broken Olympic promises, Paes doubled down on selling the legacy as most beneficial to the city’s poor residents, this time dubbing Rio 2016 “the inclusion games [os jogos da inclusão]” (Paes 2015).

Paes wrote the article in refutation of an earlier op-ed by State Representative Marcelo Freixo that characterized the Games as leaving an “upside-down legacy [legado às avessas].” Freixo pointed to the ways in which the infrastructure projects that displaced thousands of families favored wealthy campaign donors and lacked transparency such that companies involved in the Lava Jato corruption investigation like Odebrecht ended up winning uncompetitive construction bids (Freixo 2015). The Popular Committee of the World Cup and Olympics in Rio de Janeiro (Comitê Popular da Copa e Olimpíadas do Rio de Janeiro), a megaevent watchdog organization comprised of academics (principally from the State University of Rio de Janeiro, UERJ, and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) and various activists groups, organized protests and produced a dossier of human rights violations under the banner
“the exclusion games” (Comite Popular da Copa e Olimpíadas do Rio de Janeiro 2015).

The Paes administration touted two policies as being the centerfold of these “inclusion games:” mass transportation and public security. Both policies regulate the movement of poor, Black and Brown bodies within the space of Metropolitan Rio, ultimately serving to reinforce territorial segregation and the hypervisibility and invisibility of the Baixada Fluminense. The Pacifying Police Units (Unidade Policial Pacificadora-UPP) are the most tangible manifestations of Rio’s promise of Olympic public security. Implemented by the Military Police, and therefore a policy of the State of Rio de Janeiro, 38 UPP were installed in favelas throughout Rio de Janeiro between 2008 and 2014, with only one installed outside of the capital: in the Mangueirinha complex of favelas in Duque de Caxias where I had worked with Programa Raízes Locais. However, with my interview with Babi in the foreground, I will first focus on the issue of mass transportation and how even though no major infrastructure project broke ground in the Baixada Fluminense, the residents of the region were used to sell the “celebration” of Rio’s “inclusion games.”
When I asked Babi what needed to change about megaevent to make them more inclusive in thinking from the Baixada Fluminense, she highlighted transportation, cost, and safety but first she emphasized the question of self-esteem:

Firstly, I think the image of these megaevents need to be transformed. I need to first take care of life here. I need to make sure that these people feel welcome [se sintam à vontade] at these mega-events. Because it’s not enough to...I give you a ticket and you go. These people aren’t going to go there. If there were a raffle and you raffle off two tickets to go see an event, the possibility of these people selling their ticket to another person to get the money is very high. Why? Because people think of two things: the money, obviously, and secondly that feeling of discomfort of being with a bunch of people in a better financial situation. And people from the Baixada Fluminense, they have low self-esteem, they don’t feel inserted, they don’t feel empowered enough to also occupy these spaces. And so, first I think we need to change the sensation of belonging of residents of the Baixada Fluminense. You have to build value [agregar valor] for living in the Baixada Fluminense, because I only see a woman who lives in an apartment in the South Zone, I cannot see a woman who lives the Baixada Fluminense. And so, that the first point, you need to improve the self-esteem of these people. It seems like something silly but when you improve people’s self-esteem that begin to have an outlook on life. If they have an outlook on life, they go after things in better health to obtain things and to feel powerful enough to say, “no, I can; no, I am able to, I can also go there. I can also watch [the games].” So, I think that’s the first point.

The second point is to make both the financial and transportation aspect more feasible, which is the minimum so these people feel able to go to these places. In Nova Iguaçu it takes a very long time to reach the center of Rio. And events end. So, if I take a bus at midnight I don’t feel safe getting back home.
I quote this long response from Babi because it illustrates the relationship between transportation and the stigma experiences by people who live in the Baixada Fluminense and how that mirrors the stigmatization that Black Brazilians experience in different places. As Sansone (2003) notes in his discussion of “hard” and “soft” “areas of color relations”—with “hard areas” being those like work where it is more difficult for Black Brazilians to avoid anti-Black discrimination: “This hierarchization of spaces in relation to the importance of color […] creates a continuum: in the search for work, particularly outside of the neighborhood, and, still more, when “good appearance” is required, there is the most racism, and in the explicitly black spaces, the least,” (p.53). Drawing from his research in Camaçari, an industrial city in Metropolitan Salvador, Sansone observes that “there are racially neutral leisure spaces” such as “samba parties,” “hanging out in bars” and “soccer games” (Sansone 2003, 53). Here Sansone is mostly concerned with abstract spaces of interaction, “different areas and moments in life,” whereas I argue that this continuum of hierarchical
spaces is mapped onto geographical places, both through the top-down territoriality of those who seek to control the movement of people in place—with Olympic related public policies of transportation and public security being the primary examples discussed here—and through bottom up places-making through the valuation of stigmatized places like the Baixada Fluminense. I also contend that the control of “Black mobilities,” to borrow from Cresswell, within geographic place also seeks to control those same black mobilities within abstract space, such that the very concept of Black bodies engaging in leisure activities—going to the beach, skateboarding—is rendered potentially criminal (Cresswell 2016). That is, Black leisure is circumscribed geographically through the concentration of leisure or even safe space in whiter wealthier neighborhoods, and corporally, through the repertoire of activities that young, Black, especially men can engage in—football, samba. Here Babi is telling us as a young Black resident of the Baixada that people from the region would not feel comfortable at this most globally hyped of leisure events. One that necessitates drastic urban infrastructure, either to be upgraded or to be implemented. Where and how this infrastructure comes to be will dictate access to those leisure places, making them
not neutral by default. The assumption is that even the Baixada’s more or less white residents would feel a certain discomfort in attending precisely due to the ways in which the region itself has been stigmatized, that is, blackened (J. H. French 2013; D. F. da Silva 2009; Sansone 2003).

3.2 Black Invisibility through Hypervisibility in the Work of Beatriz Nascimento and Lélia Gonzalez

Before delving into the ways that urban mobility is racialized within the Metropolitan Rio, I want first to reflect upon this lack of self-esteem and how it relates to place and the dichotomy of invisibility and hyper-visibility through a brief discussion of the work of Lélia Gonzalez and Beatriz Nascimento. The quest to find spaces and places to foster Black self-esteem, of Black being, has been a driving force of emancipatory movements in Brazil since the colonial period, and Black movements throughout the 20th and 21 centuries have been critical of the ways in which the place of Black people in Brazilian society has been ignored or colonized to promote Whitening discourses. In her interview in Partrulhas ideológicas (1980), Black feminist anthropologist Lélia Gonzalez is particularly critical of “an attempt by part of the Leftists in general to reduce the issue of
Black people to a mere socio-economic issue,” (C. A. M. Pereira and de Hollanda 1980, 204). This reduction ignores the reality of many Black Brazilians, who form the “bottom of the so-called social pyramid,” and thus, cannot even be considered working class (operários) (C. A. M. Pereira and de Hollanda 1980, 205). Informal labor typically performed by and associated with Black people is ever present, from the train vendors on my way to Caxias to the only recently formalized female domestic workers, two professions that harken back to enslaved labor. For Gonzalez, the left’s disregard for the discrimination and racism that Black Brazilians face stems from the same “ideological discourse” of Eurocentrism:

There we fall right into the issue of Eurocentrism; you see that Brazilian society as a total is a culturally alienated society, culturally colonized in so far as all of the values of thought, of art, that is to say, of everything that comes from Europe, from the Occidental world is the bees knees [o grande barato]. And it’s from there that we can even understand the pitch [empostação] of the left’s very discourse, which is a discourse that is articulated within the values of a Western civilization; well, our [the MNU’s] goal, our objective, which is tough, is exactly to try to subvert the order of this discourse, for the purpose of the people. (C. A. M. Pereira and de Hollanda 1980, 207)

The lack of self-esteem that Babi highlights stems from this culturally alienating society. The invisibility of Black people within so-called progressive thought is
evident even in the interview itself. When the interviewer refers to Black people as “cultural minorities,” Gonzalez is swift to correct them given that not only are Afro-descendants the majority in Brazil but that “Brazilian culture is a Black culture par excellence, even the Portuguese we speak here is different than the Portuguese in Portugal. Our Portuguese isn’t Portuguese, it’s Pretuguese” (a portmanteau of preto and Portuguese) (C. A. M. Pereira and de Hollanda 1980, 205). For Gonzalez, the “mãe preta,” the Black wet nurse and caregiver of the children of the white elite since the times of slavery, “generally pass[es] to the Brazilian, this way of pronouncing, this way of being, of feeling, and of thinking,” (C. A. M. Pereira and de Hollanda 1980, 206). Here, Gonzalez inverts a central concern of Fanon’s in *Black Skin, White Masks*, namely, that “every colonized people […] —finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country” (Fanon 2008, 9). Gonzalez presents the Mãe Preta as an active subject in the formation of a Brazilian culture that is “Black par excellence.” As she states in the article “Racismo e sexismo na cultura brasileira,” which examines the figure of the mãe preta along with the mulata and the domestic worker: “she, simply, is the mother. It’s exactly this.
Because the white woman, in reality, is the other [woman]” (Gonzalez 1983, 235). As the mother, the mãe preta constructs a new language, Pretuguese, on which Brazilian national identity rests. Gonzalez engages in an act of border thinking that does not reject Portuguese itself but argues that Portuguese, the European language, is “no longer the point of reference and of epistemic legitimacy” (Mignolo 2011). In Gonzalez formulation, it is not a colonized Black people that must come “face to face…with the culture of the mother country” but a country that must come face to face with its Black, Pretuguese speaking mother.

This ability of both the Right and the Left to recognize its own Eurocentrism stems in part from the ways in which Debord’s concept of capital as spectacle is fundamentally intertwined with white hegemony. I follow Hesse (1999), in his reading of Debord’s spectacle as a predominantly Western historical phenomenon that attempts to colonize the image of the other and thus how social relations are mediate by that image. Just as Debord argues that “commodity completes its colonization of social life” through the ubiquity of mass media and advertising (Debord 2005), Western hegemony hinges on “the commodification and dissemination of images, voices, texts, memories, histories
and fantasies” that “rehearse and stage the globalization of the West as a
superior, consensual, liberal, universal civilization” (Hesse 1999, 130). Thus, the
spectacle is not only the commodification of social life, but also the relationship
between Modernity — this rendering of the West as universal — and coloniality —
the “dark side of Modernity” that has sought to eradicate the histories, cultures,
cosmovisions and bodies of non-Western people (W. Mignolo 2000). As Hesse
(1999) notes “it is only through the accruing racialized formation of meaning that
the Western spectacle can globalize the ‘non-European’ (‘non-white’) other,
outside the chosen people, as irredeemably deficient, deviant and disorderly”
(Hesse 1999, 131).

Gonzalez offers a poignant articulation of how white hegemony as
spectacles operates in Latin America to maintain racial hierarchies in her oft cited
article, “For an Afro-Latin American Feminism”:

Racism in Latin America is sophisticated enough to keep blacks
and Indians in the subordinate condition within the most
exploited class, because its most effective form of ideology: the
ideology of whitening, so well analyzed by Brazilian scientists.
Transmitted by means of communication and the traditional
ideological systems, it reproduces and perpetuates the belief that
the ratings and values of white Western culture are the only true
and universal. Once established, the myth of white superiority
proves its efficiency and the effects of violent disintegration,
fragmentation of ethnic identity produced by him, the desire to
whiten ("cleaning the blood" as they say in Brazil), is internalized with the consequent denial of their own race and own culture. (Gonzalez 1988)

Brazilian white hegemony disavows through hypervisibility, such as the case of the mãe preta, rendering her motherhood "consensual" so that if everyone has a Black mother there is no need to question the ways Black people have specifically been dehumanized.

Debord insists that the spectacle’s power lies in “its manner of appearing without allowing any reply” (Debord 2005 [1967], 12) wherein even those who oppose it ultimately do so as part of the spectacle:

Wherever the spectacle has its dominion the only organised forces are those which want the spectacle. Thus no one can be the enemy of what exists, nor transgress the omertá which applies to everything. We have dispensed with that disturbing conception, which was dominant for over two hundred years, in which a society was open to criticism or transformation, reform or revolution. Not thanks to any new arguments, but quite simply because all argument has become useless. (Debord 1998 [1988], 21–22)

If “a critique seeking to go beyond the spectacle must know how to wait” for “the self-emancipation of our time […] from the material bases of inverted truth” (Debord 2005 [1967], 80, emphasis in the original), surely those best equipped with this knowledge, or rather knowledges, are those who have endured 500
years of the “colonial wound” (Mignolo 2009, 3), 500 years of the “inverted truth” of “white Western culture are the only true and universal.” To combat the Western spectacle (Hesse 1999), Gonzalez posits Ameircana and Amerindian women as the principal bearers and transmitters of popular culture forms and as leaders of social movements throughout the Americas that have and continue to pay a significant role in developing “forms of resistance” that contribute to the ongoing “struggle for a pluri-secular liberation.” This liberation is as epistemic as it is socio-economic and place-based in its pursuit to recuperate from the fissures fragmented ethnic identities and operates through transnational dialogue between and within marginalized communities, rather than entering into an “argument” with white, Western hegemony. Through their acts of resistance, like the mãe preta’s use of Pretuguese, Ameircana and Amerindian women and others on the periphery do not construct the white and the Western as the enemy, but render the white and the Western one possibility within this “pluri-secular liberation.”

Beatriz Nascimento was also an astute critic of how the Western spectacle functions on both the hypervisibility and invisibility of Afro-Brazilians. In a short
documentary produced by the São Paulo based TV Culture in 1977, then a State of São Paulo government-sponsored but privately-run TV channel owned by Fundación Padre Anchieta, entitled O Negro da senzala ao soul (Black People, from the Slave Quarters to Soul), Beatriz Nascimento was interviewed with other scholar-activists of the time Hamilton Bernardes Cardoso, and Eduardo Oliveira e Oliveira. In her remarks, she is especially critical of how Brazilian history not only fails to “come face to face” with the history of Black people in Brazil, but distorts and teaches that history:

The history of Brazil, I like to say, borrowing a phrase from José Honório Rodrigues, a phrase which is a general assertion, is that the history of Brazil was a history written by white hands. Both Black and indigenous people, which is to say, the people who lived here with white people, do not have their history written yet. And this is a serious problem because we attend university, we go to school, and there is not a correct vision of our past, the past of Black people. So that history was not just omitted; it was even more terrible than that, because in the parts where it is not omitted, they neglected very important facts and very much deformed the history of Black people, treating it only as slavery and leaving out other ways that Black people lived in Brazil such as all the processes of flight that occurred during all four centuries of slavery and principally in relation to the quilombo. (TV Culture de São Paulo 1977)
“White hands” that do not merely omit Black people from the history of Brazil, but deform the history of Black people in Brazil form the basis of both Black hypervisibility and invisibility. In these histories of racial democracy, cities can erect statues to the Mãe Preta as the symbol of Black integration and thus Black submission and inferiority (Alberto 2011). Thus, the Black subject is rendered always the descendant of slaves, and is rarely presented as a free subject that fought for their own liberation as this would undermine the “consensual” nature of the spectacle of white hegemony (Hesse 1999). Throughout much of her career, Nascimento posits the quilombo as both a socio-historic geographic site and as a site from which to re-create other epistemic possibilities of liberation. The quilombo is not just the part of Black Brazilian history that has been omitted and deformed, it is a social process of continual re-organization and re-becoming. As the interview continues, Nascimento affirms: “Basically quilombo is men who consciously seek to organize a society for themselves, where they can live in accordance with their past, African or Brazilian, with their habits, their customs, their culture, their way of being” (TV Culture de São Paulo 1977). She goes on to explain that through both her archival research—the sources of which
must always be read “critically” as historical references to quilombos were often written by repressive “white hands” like the police—and ethnographic research, quilombos must be understood within a historical continuity. Throughout Brazil, and specifically citing Rio and Salvador, Nascimento argues that many favelas emerged in the same geographic locations as then present-day favelas.

In fact, Nascimento opens her 1974 article, “For a History of the Black Man,” with the following quote from Debord’s (2005) Society of the Spectacle:

> Another aspect of the lack of historical life in general is that the individual life is not historical […] This individual experience of a disconnected everyday life remains without language, without concepts, and without critical access to its own past, which has nowhere been recorded. Uncommunicated, misunderstood and forgotten, it is smothered by the spectacle’s false memory of the unmemorable. (60)

This article, as with much of Nascimento’s work, is concerned with a fundamental question: “What are we, Black people, humanly?” (Que somos nós, pretos, humanamente?) (Ratts and Nascimento 2007, 94). Hers is not only an ontological question, but also an epistemological one, for she goes on ask:

> Can we accept that they study us as primitive beings? As artistic expressions of Brazilian society? As a social class, confused with all the other components of the economically downtrodden [rebaixada] class, as many want? I ask in terms of study. Can we,

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Nascimento is thus concerned with how Black people in Brazil know themselves and make themselves known principally to themselves in the face of so much historical negation and erasure, but also in the face of so much studying, that has render Black Brazilians visible as “folklore” and part of the “economically downtrodden,” but not as themselves, not as “lived History” (Ratts and Nascimento 2007, 97). As she affirms, “maybe Brazilian racial democracy exists, but [only] in relation to the inexistent Black man” (Ratts and Nascimento 2007, 94), since racial democracy requires the corporal and historical negation of Black people and leaves them “without language, without concepts, and without critical access to [their] own past,” to use the Debord quote Nascimento cites. Nascimento recognizes the failure of ethnography, sociology, and those “who have studied us during slavery” to understand Black Brazilians “historically;” and, thus, declares: “We are the Living History of the Black Man [Preto], not numbers” (Ratts and Nascimento 2007, 97, emphasis in the original). In order to live this history, Nascimento is perfectly willing to use “the instruments acquired
in white Western culture” through her study of history, though she ultimately finds that “the thing that [she reflects] at this moment already existed in [her] mother’s womb, in any quilombo of the Northeast, in Africa to where [she] already does not want to and can no longer return. Therefore, in her race, in the History of Man” (Ratts and Nascimento 2007, 98).

_Óri_, which she created with director and sociologist Raquel Gerber. While this is not the place for an in-depth analysis of this immensely complex film, the film functions here as a basis for theorizing Black hyper-visibility and invisibility and the search for diasporic “points of reference” for territorial ways of being, for making Black Brazilians re-exist through place making, like the quilombo.
The DVD’s supplemental material describes the documentary as “a film that participated in the life and organization of the Black movement of the 1970s,” that also depicts “various manifestations of Afro-Americanity” that “bring Black yearnings and rhythms as continuators of the History of Black peoples in the Diaspora.” Órí is also “an epic, that by revealing the civilizing hero Zumbi, organizer of the Quilombo do Palmares [the longest lasting maroon society in colonial Brazil] and its democracy, re-thrones him as the organizer of Black consciousness and, for this reason, it is a poetic text.” By interweaving all of these different modes—documentary, poetic text, autobiography, history and historiography—through the use of footage shot between 1977 and 1988 from national and international conferences like the Quinzena do Negro and the 3rd Congress of Black Culture in the Americas in 1982, soul music parties and samba school processions in São Paulo, scenes of the Island of Gorée in Senegal and Dogon Country in Mali, and Candomblé and Umbanda practices, with Nascimento’s poetic, didactic, and at times vulnerably personal narrative throughout, Nascimento and Geber bring to the screen a Trans-Atlantic attempt to counter the Western spectacle that has deformed the place of Black people in
history. Moreover, the centrality of the relationship between Blackness and mobility and corporality anticipate Gilroy’s Anglophone Black Atlantic by a few years.

Nascimento’s schooling had been the principal site in which she faced this deformation, a sentiment she reiterates in a filmed talk at the Quinzena do Negro: “When I entered university, the thing that most shocked me was the eternal study of the slave, as if we had only existed in the nation as slave labor, as labor on plantations and in mining” (Gerber and Nascimento 1989). However, to counter this history, the film rarely turns to archival materials and dwells rather on the repertoire of Black corporality as a means of understanding Black history and territoriality. Thus, this is a film about bodies moving through both time and space, beginning with the colonial dis-encounter. As Nascimento notes off camera in a transition to the 1977 Quinzena do Negro conference at USP, and echoing Gonzalez, “Black culture, which was able to merge with indigenous culture, is really Brazilian culture; it’s a very strong culture, but they insist on imposing a culture, even through the word culture, as something that is noble and European.” Many of the panel conversations of Black student groups and social
movements depicted in the film struggle with this dialectic of Brazil’s ubiquitous and invisible blackness, as Black cultural manifestations remain a form of entertainment for white consumption rather than sites of knowledge production and anti-racist struggle. When Nascimento asks, “where is the quilombo, today?” though the film does journey to the Serra da Barriga in the state of Alagoas, geographic site of the historic Quilombo dos Palmares which Zumbi led, it also responds with various images of dancing at soul parties and of samba schools whose leaders specifically call the schools a form of modern quilombo due to their African repertoire that seeks to embody other ways of being and knowing (Taylor 2003).

For Nascimento, the importance of contemporary quilombos like samba schools, soul parties, and encontros like that of the Quinzena do Negro lies in their possibility for the re-creation of the Black self-image through mutual, collective, corporal reflection. I have self-esteem because you have self-esteem. In a scene of Black men sporting Afros dancing to soul music at one such party, Nascimento’s voice over searches for the recuperation of an image of Blackness that reciprocally recognizes, rather than deforms the Black body in time and place:
Image is necessary to recuperate identity. One must become visible. Because the face of one is the reflection of the other, the body of one is the body of the other and in each the reflection of all bodies. Invisibility is the root of the loss of identity. So I tell my story of not seeing Zumbi, who was a hero to me. (Gerber and Nascimento 1989)

This is what Babi rejects when she laments that you only see “women from the South Zone.” There are few places and moments of life in which poor Black people from the periphery can see themselves in the reflection of the other, of themselves collectively. For Nascimento, recuperating Black history and being means looking for the quilombo, the places where Black corporality constructs its own image.
Figure 10: A friend in front of a re-print of the “Black Rio” spread in *Jornal do Brasil* at a party in Lapa celebrating the article’s 50th anniversary.
Nascimento does not explain the rise of the soul scene throughout Ôrí, allowing the images of prideful, joyful Black bodies in motion, of transnational musical exchange, to speak to the parties as acts of collective place making. In the 70s, according to Black activists of the time, the white middle class began to join samba schools and the schools themselves “became part of the system in terms of tourism,” leading, as Gonzalez states in her interview in *Patrulhas ideológicas*, Black people, especially those who assume their Blackness to feel “expelled” from those places of social construction (C. A. M. Pereira and de Hollanda 1980, 209). Soul parties such as those of Black Rio became new places of Black corporal social organization (C. A. M. Pereira and de Hollanda 1980; Gonzalez and Hasenbalg 1982; Alberto 2009; TV Culture de São Paulo 1977). Though the footage of these parties most likely come from São Paulo’s soul scene, due to Lena Fria’s provocative 1976 four-page spread in *Jornal do Brasil*, “Black Rio: O orgulho (importado) de ser negro no Brasil” (Black Rio: The (Imported) Pride of being Black in Brazil), these soul parties were especially associated with the subúrbio of Rio, where Black people could make-place, could “organize society.”
Leisure places have the semblance of neutrality, especially a race neutrality on the part of Black people themselves, who may even, as Sansone notes, actively seek out the participation of whites (Sansone 2003, 53). However, in Brazil, explicit forms of Afro-syncretic cultural forms have historically been criminalized, as was the case of both candomblê and capoeira. Soul parties, especially given their so-called “imported” display of Black Pride did not escape the scrutiny of the Military dictatorship. As Alberto notes: “The police interpreted as suspicious what they saw as the blacks’ explicit attempts to concentrate people of color around a particular form of style and leisure” (Alberto 2009, 12). According to Alberto, Fria’s 1976 expose on Rio’s soul parties reinforced racial anxieties that Black places, both the parties themselves and subúrbio neighborhoods in which they take place, were disrupting the seeming racial neutrality of leisure:

The soul phenomenon took root in Rio’s working class peripheral neighborhoods (the Zona Norte and Greater Rio), characterized by a greater percentage of inhabitants of color than the whiter, middle and upper-class Zona Sul. In Fria’s and others’ treatments, the fact that mostly black and mulatto cariocas (natives of Rio) attended these dances reinforced images of those neighborhoods as primarily nonwhite (despite the actual ethnic diversity of their inhabitants), literally a black Rio. (Alberto 2009, 18)
The soul parties were problematic for Frias, herself a Black woman, because they undermined national pride—she lamented in her article that they did not have samba and feijoada—especially as articulated by the Left of the time. And for the military dictatorship and the Right, they were potentially criminal for similar reasons, the fear of foreign infiltration (Alberto 2009). In terms of Rio’s specific urban geography, both the Left and the Right decried the ways in which Black Rio signaled an “explicit reconfiguration of Rio’s popular culture — long imagined as unified and shared across social divisions — to match the city’s prevalent spatial segregation” (Alberto 2009, 18).

Hesse (1999) refers to the spectacle as “a commercial for Europeanized global hegemony” (130). As a global megaevent promoted, but not paid for, by the Switzerland based, billion dollar “non-profit” International Olympic Committee, the Olympic Games are a 21st Century mega-commercial, a “disavowal of [the West’s] colonial formation and hegemony” (Hesse 1999, 130). Gonzalez, Nascimento, and many of their Black activist contemporaries frequently criticized the lack of Black representation in Brazil’s media (C. A. M. Pereira and de Hollanda 1980; Ratts and Nascimento 2007), a criticism that Black activists contend has yet to be rectified. Black leisure and the places where they
take place continue to be simultaneously incorporated into the national image—as was the case with samba schools—while also rendered criminally suspect. Like the soul parties of the 1980s, this criminalization is especially true of contemporary *baile funk* created in Rio’s favelas and peripheries like the Baixada Fluminense. *Funk carioca*—rap lyrics, often boasting in pride for favelas and peripheries, over a drum machine batuque, or rhythm section—has little in common musically with its English name sake. Though regarded at once as beautiful and problematic, the Olympic Open Ceremony continues to perpetuate the marketable image, rather than the Nascimento’s recuperative reflection, of both Black bodies and peripheral, Blackened, place through its use of the genre. We see Black leisure televised, but the use of *passinho*—a riff on breakdancing with an emphasis on footwork developed in Rio’s peripheries and *funk* music, but their use belie the ways in pacifying favelas served to criminalize those forms of Black leisure (J. D. de Lima 2017). Though a spectacular performance of Black culture as “Brazilian culture par excellence,” the lack of representation of Black and Indigenous struggle beyond now commercialized forms and the aesthetic appropriation of favelas invisibilize the ongoing coloniality of how the Games segregated urban space. Black and peripheral cultural expressions are valued in
so far as they can be commercialized, but if they attempt to subvert Western hegemony, if they attempt to promote Black self esteem by either rejecting white spaces or by occupying them as in the case of rolezinhos, they are rendered dangerous and potentially criminal. The acknowledgement of the distinct experience of Black Brazilians through a corporal territoriality was precisely the recuperative Black image that Ôri sought to document and re-create and that Babi calls for in tourism that values people and places beyond Rio’s South Zone.

Figure 11: Reprint of a flyer for a soul music party in Mesquita.
3.3 Criminalizing Black Leisure

I now return to the interview with Babi to discuss how these urban mobility and public security policies exacerbated Black hyper visibility and invisibility. Although Babi does not directly cite the use of mass transportation as a cause of low self-esteem, throughout my time traveling between Rio and the Baixada conducting research or simply visiting friends, I became acutely aware of how urban mobility feeds into the stigma of Rio’s peripheries. “The Baixada starts at Central do Brasil,” as does the stigma of living in the subúrbio. The mere act of commuting, especially by train, underscores the lack of belonging. You do not feel “empowered enough to also occupy these spaces” because the very infrastructure is not designed for you to occupy these spaces. Though my commutes to the Baixada had been questioned by a number of my friends and associates a few specific episodes stand out. Most notably, much of the Terra dos homens staff did not use mass transportation to arrive at events at the community-based project in Mangeurinha. Though at time this could make sense—it was worthwhile for a small group to go together by car, they would only be at PRL a short period of time, etc.—when I asked one of the staff why,
she responded with the same sense of fear as people who had no direct relationship with the Baixada Fluminense. The train is dangerous, Central is dangerous, commuting is dangerous. Even people committed to working with marginalized communities reinforced that marginality through the stigmatization of mass transportation.

Another example occurred at a Duke Alumni event held in Rio that I attended with Alexandre and his wife Cristiane as well as the late classical composer and former Duke artist-in-residence Sérgio Roberto de Oliveira. When Alexandre and I presented the Bass Project, the carioca alumni were shocked that I commuted to the Baixada by train. Many had never stepped foot in Central do Brasil, not even, to my shock, to attend one of my favorite events in Rio, the trem do samba: a celebration of the National Day of Samba with trains filled with rodas de samba departing for the North Zone neighborhood of Oswaldo Cruz, home of the famed Portela samba school. However, while the North Zone is at least recognized for its history of samba and other cultural sites that may draw South Zones residents and positive media coverage beyond Maracanã stadium, the Baixada Fluminense is comprised of “dormitory cities” from which one
commutes for work and leisure. And due to the lack of adequate transportation and public security, as “events end” and “não tem condições” [literally “there are no conditions”] to return home at night, even that leisure is restricted.

Will Rio be ready for the Olympics? Ready for whom and in what way? Babi does note that not all events need to be this way, that there are ways for people from the Baixada to have the conditions to attend and to return home. She and other residents of the Baixada regularly attend smaller scale events such as Rock in Rio, a semi-regular music festival that takes place in Barra de Tijuca, where much of the Olympic events were to be held. It is the nature of these international megaevents, that attempt to restructure Rio as a global city for finance, real estate investment, and to serve as an elite playground rather than conceive of Rio as a metropolitan center within a historically and culturally interconnected geographic place. Rock in Rio needs residents from the Baixada to attend to sell tickets, as ticket sales are not the goal of the Olympics, they need not be considered in their plans, as Babi notes:

Rock in Rio was meticulously planned. Not everything went well, but it’s an event where the venue is very good, and the transportation, there was transportation for everyone. Even I, who lives in Nova Iguáçu, was able to attend because there was transportation. Transportation from Nova Iguáçu to Barra and from Barra to here. I didn’t have to put in any effort.
So, this show that this model is already able to embrace other people from the region. It [Rock in Rio] is not as elitist as these big events. We are not able to go to a World Cup game at night from here in the center of Rio. There’s no way. There’s no money for it. There no interest. The Olympics are the same thing. There is not this possibility.

Sports announcers, Olympics organizers, and even the athlete themselves lamented the noticeably empty seats at many of the Olympic events, even for popular games such as the opening soccer match between Brazil and South Africa (Sam Cohen 2016; Ansari 2016). While there was an uptick in sales after Rafaela Silva, from Cidade de Deus, won gold for Brazil in judo, the approximately $17 USD (60 reais), for a ticket was out of reach to many of residents of metropolitan Rio (Zimbalist 2017). As Babi asserts, organizers did not plan for transportation from the Baixada to any of the Olympic sites, and even journalists and tourists located in Rio’s South Zone complained about two hour plus commute times between Olympic venues (Zimbalist 2017). Though marketed as “The Transformation Games” (Os jogos da transformação) by the city government—in a hardcover, dual language book published by city hall no-less—due to the transportation infrastructure that would be their legacy, the
Olympics served not to transform but to exacerbate existing socio-territorial inequality.

Even before the Olympics themselves, much of my work with Programa Raízes Locais as a Felsman Fellow centered around how the lack of access to leisure places both within the Baixada and in Rio fostered this “low self-esteem” and engendered a paucity of “an outlook on like.” To some degree PRL’s very existence was in response to the lack of leisure, safe space for children in Mangueirinha. The espaço de imaginação (the imagination space) was a bit like a Montessori daycare that attended to young children up until the age of 8, while older children and adolescents participated in capoeira, theater, and dance classes. There I worked primarily with the Youth Forum. One of the first events I participated in was a party celebrating skateboarding in late November 2014. However, this was not just any party, the young teens had invited Caxias’s Secretaries of Sport and Leisure, of Education, and of Culture to discuss the possibility of opening a skate park in the community. Knowing that this was a long-term goal, if not a pipedream, their immediate hope was to be able to skate at a local high school in Magueirinha.
This campaign had begun nearly a year before I arrived at PRL. During that year, the teens—a mixed raced and gendered group—distributed surveys to their peers at local high schools to assess what they liked to do in their free time and the accessibility of those activities; they also gathered signatures from other students and adults in support of the skate park. They presented the data and signatures they had collected to the secretaries as part of the opening of the party. The secretaries promised to maintain a dialogue with the forum to work toward both short and long-term solutions.

However, young teens in the Baixada Fluminense, as in other favela and urban peripheral communities, mostly readily “dialogue” with the state through police. This became all too clear one day in either March or April of 2015, shortly after lunch at PRL. It was a Wednesday, the day the forum always met. We had just finished eating lunch, the typical and always delicious rice and beans with either roasted fish or chicken or beef with pumpkin, and Eliza and I were getting ready to meet with the youth forum as the students arrived from school. Eliza, who coordinated the forum and a few other cultural activities at PRL like dance, noticed that two boys, both named Fernando, seemed especially upset. Though
initially hesitant to speak to us, eventual Fernando W. let us know what had happened over the weekend. While skating at the same local high school that they had sought the use of from the local secretaries, they were approached by heavily armed military police. Other young teens, including both students of that school and their friends from other schools, use that same area to play soccer so they did not think they were trespassing. It has a large paved area, making it safer for skating than the narrow streets of Mangueirinha where they compete with cars, zipping motos, and even the occasional horse or pig. Apparently, a custodian at the school, instead of speaking directly to the students, had called the police. Using both their assault rifles and their authoritative voices, the police demanded that the teens leave, showing no interest in the teens justifications, or well-being for that matter.

These young people were learning, and likely not for the first nor the last time, that their leisure, as poor Black and brown youth, was suspect. As far as the two Fernardos and their friends knew, the police had never been called on groups playing soccer. We were all upset because we felt that we had done everything the right way—getting in contact with local officials, encouraging the
teens to open a dialogue with the director of the school—but we had failed to remember that often in neighborhoods like Mangueirinha, police are the most present arm of the state, and we had not included the Mangueirinha UPP in early discussions if only to anticipate such occurrences. Luciano called some associates he knew in both ministries, and we even eventually held a meeting with members of the Mangueirinha UPP to explain the Youth Forum’s work.

However, the event underscored the ways “mobility is implicated” in rendering poor, Black and brown youth delinquents (Cresswell 2016, 22). Though Cresswell’s limits his study of Black mobilities to the US; when thinking about policies like stop-and-frisk and its variants throughout the Americas, his assertion that “whiteness has rested, in part, on the privilege of mobility” (Cresswell 2016, 22), is equally applicable in the Brazilian urban context. While here I am concerned specifically with urban mobility as it relates to leisure, Cresswell’s notion of mobility also included notions of migration, which extend to the racialized nordestinos that make up a significant portion of the Baixada’s population.
If the flaneur is the symbol of the modern city, young Black men apprehended against a wall being frisked is a transnational symbol of anti-black coloniality in the 21st global city.

This aggressive constraint of play by the military police in Mangueirinha occurred within the context of a push by members of the federal Congress, led by then President of the House of Deputies, Eduardo Cunha, to lower the age of criminal responsibility from 18 to 16 years old. Brazil’s constitution defines minors as people below the age of 18, and in some cases 21, and the rights of minors to play, culture, and education are reinforced in the 1990 Children and Adolescents Statute (Estatuto da criança e adolescente-ECA). Due to a perceived upsurge in young criminals, right wing politicians sought to try, convict, and punish minors as young as 16 as adults, often times rabble-rousing the support of concerned citizens while offering little evidence that such a change would actually reduce crime—in fact comparison with the policies of other countries suggest a potential increase in crime (Planalto 2015; C. Moraes 2015). That Congress sought a punitive response to the issue of minors committing crimes, most of which were minor drug infractions, rather than increased access to
education and health speaks to the revanchist political climate since Rousseff’s
election to a second term in 2014. Though the original Chamber of Deputies vote
on the bill on July 1st was defeated, through parliamentary maneuvers
orchestrated by Cunha, a slightly altered version of the bill was passed during
the late night hours, leading other members of congress to refer to the maneuver
as a *golpe* and members of favela and international organizations to speak out
against the amendment (Benites 2015; Freelon and Froio 2015). The amendment
has been tabled in the Senate since 2015, but the debate around the amendment
was reintroduced in the second half of 2017 due to a push by the conservative,
often evangelical, so-called “Bullets, Beef, and Bible” caucus (bancada da bala,

In Rio, this push to criminalize the leisure of Black and brown youth often
manifests itself in one of the oft touted “democratic” territories of the city—Rio’s
beaches. On August 23 2015, a few weeks after I had left Rio upon the completion
of the Felsman Fellowship, Military Police in the city of Rio removed 15
adolescents from various buses traveling from Rio’s North Zone to Copacabana
beach in a *blitz* near the RioSul shopping mall in Botafogo. People on my
Facebook feed were livid, for obvious reasons: the boys, all Black save for one, all residents of either the North Zone or the Baixada, and all under the age of 18 years old, were detained at the Integrated Center for the Care of Children and Adolescents (Centro Integrado de Atendimento à Criança e ao Adolescente CIACA) for several hours, despite never being suspected of a crime (Heringer and Barros 2015). According to interviews with the teens in Extra, they waited four hours before they were given anything to eat by the officials at the child services center.

Due to widespread public outcry—even staff at CIAC objected to the police tactics as they violated the ECA—Governor Luis Fernando Pezão insisted that the detentions were to prevent arrastões—literally “nets,” but used to describe mass robberies on the beach or in other public space—and were the result of intelligence operations that mapped the movements of minors who had been detained in the past:

> There are always repercussions; whether the police act or not. How many arrastões have we had committed by these minors? I’m not saying that all of them that were there…but many of them, mapped, that have already been detained more than five, eight, ten or fifteen times, [some at] Central do Brasil (Viera 2015).

The Baixada, the stigma, starts at Central do Brasil; it also starts at Black
adolescence. For his part, then Secretary of Defense for the State of Rio de Janeiro, José Mariano Beltrame, while maintaining that the detentions were the result of police intelligence, contended that they were carried out not to protect beachgoers, but to protect the youth themselves:

You have a bus full of adolescents that did not pay the fare, that don't have anything to eat, that are hungry, and how do you think there are going to get home? I’m not saying that they were going to rob people, but I think no mother wants her son on the street without money for bus fare and hungry. Nothing good will come of that. They are adolescents in a vulnerable situation, something that isn’t discussed by society. This isn’t a police problem, but the problem always ends up in the hands of the police. And if everything is a police problem, let them do their job their way. (Lo-Bianco 2015)

Beltrame is all but admitting to the criminalization of youth leisure. Though he uses the language of children’s rights, emphasizing their vulnerability and the need for a robust societal response to that vulnerability, Beltrame ultimately upholds the status quo of police repression of minors trying to access leisure places. In the same breath, Beltrame renders these young Black and brown teens both threatening and defenseless precisely because their mobility questions the socio-territorial segregation that seeks to confine Black leisure. Since no other state services are available, best to let police do their job.
The racial territorial logic of that repression was underscored a few weeks later when a number of young men resorted to vigilantism by attacking a North Zone bound bus, imploring the driver to open the door and even breaking windows because “there are criminals inside” (O Globo 2015). None of these men, visibly older and whiter than the youth they were pursuing, were detained. In the wake of this criminalization of the leisure of poor, young Black and brown people, Coletivo Papo Reto (Straight Talk Collective), a grassroots media collective based in the North Zone agglomeration of favelas called Complexo do Alemão, organized a farofaço protest—so named as a re-appropriation of the farofeiro slur used against poor people who bring their ow food, including cassava-meal, farofa, to the beach—to demand free access to Rio’s beaches and other public spaces. Such acts mirrored the rolezinhos (little strolls) that many poor, Black and brown youth engage in in public spaces, especially luxury shopping malls, that represent “the growing desire of youth from the periphery to circulate in the city” evident in “the proliferation of various forms of culture production—like
rap, graffiti, pixação [a cryptic form of tagging], break dancing, and more recently funk—and alternative modes of mobility like parkour, skate, and motorcycling, that all have strong roots in urban peripheries” (T. P. do R. Caldeira 2014).

This logic of controlling the leisure of young Black bodies through the restriction of their urban mobility is not a new phenomenon in Rio. Brazilian Anthropolgist Julia O’Donnel’s (2013) research demonstrates an elite discourse and practice of restricting access to beaches dating back to the early 20th century, precisely when beaches became associated with leisure rather than health. When news broke of the 15 teens being detained by the police, people widely shared a clip from a late 1980’s report by now defunct TV Manchete titled, “Poor People Go to the Beach,” in which a young white woman complains about the “horrible people on the bus who go and dirty the beach” (Giannini 2015). While the young woman never refers to the race of these “sub-humans” who she is even ashamed to say are Brazilians, her invocation of the use of mass transportation underscores her racial and socioeconomic territoriality: “You cannot take a person out of Méier [a North Zone neighborhood], from the marshes [mangue], and take that person to Copacabana because I cannot live along side [conviver] someone who
does not have the bare minimum of manners” (Giannini 2015). Because the video resurfaced in the context of social media, it eventually made its way back to the woman who had made those comments some 30 years before. In a Facebook post and in subsequent interviews, Angela Moss, at age 47, did not try to make excuses for her discriminatory comments, but rather praised the people who shared it. Though she had changed, becoming an avid campaigner for Dilma despite being of the “ultra-right” in her youth, she knew that her hateful views were still shared by many white middle class beachgoers. “There’s no way to deny it: this is the sad face of an egotistical society without compassion and yes, once it was my face. It’s sad, but from the perspective of age I am proud to see my younger self and how I have transformed,” (Giannini 2015).

3.4 Busing While Peripheral in the #CidadeOlimpica

This criminalization of access to leisure, the criminalization of the very youth of Black and brown people through the push to lower the age of criminal responsibility and the effective prohibition of adolescent North Zone residents from reaching Rio’s beaches occurred at the same moment that Olympic mass
transportation infrastructure projects, and their promises of increased urban mobility, were underway. However, that the city itself, exemplified in the gated communities of Barra de Tijuca and with the presence of both state—UPP—and private—Lapa Presente—security forces, has increasingly become fortified, speaks to the ways in which “modern urbanism attributes to cities the functions of leisure, living, work, and circulation” and how leisure, work, and living, are “confined and localized in private spaces” (Rolnik 2000). According to Brazilian Urbanist and former UN Special Rapporteur for Adequate Housing, Raquel Rolnik, circulation remains the only “public” domain of urban living, dictating how and when people can circulate where. One of the city’s first acts to improve Rio’s infrastructure was to expand upon this policy of preventing minors on buses from reaching the South Zone beaches by simply cutting off those bus lines. Through a “rationalization” of the city’s buses that circulate in the South Zone, 51 were eliminated, 26 were modified (mostly shorted requiring passengers to make connections), and 21 new lines were created (Prefeitura do Rio de Janeiro n.d.), with nearly no input from riders themselves (R. H. M. Pereira 2017). Rider from Rio’s West and North Zones who previously depended
on one bus to reach the center or South Zone of the city for work or leisure were
now forced to take 2 or even 3 buses, with the first connection free on buses
circulating within Rio proper so long as you had a *Bilhete Único* transportation
card registered to your CPF (similar to social security number). Though mostly
eliminated in 2017, there were also reduced rates for transfers between
intermunicipal buses arriving from the Baixada and buses, BRT lines, and the
metro that circulate in Rio proper (O Dia 2017). As I experienced and ranted
about firsthand, places to add money to these cards are themselves few and far
between; for example, as of this writing there are no machines at either the
Duque de Caxias or Nova Iguaçu train stations. While the changes to the bus
lines only affected routes within the city of Rio, they, along with the need for a
difficult to obtain and maintain transportation card, signaled the
“rationalization” of Metropolitan Rio’s already socio-racial boundaries: poor
service for Rio’s internal *suburbios* and relative neglect for the Baixada
Fluminense.

By the admission of Paes, of other policymakers, and of partners in the
much touted, though “egregiously lopsided,” Olympic public-private
partnerships (Boykoff 2016, 159), better connecting poor, Black and brown youth to cultural and leisure activists in the South Zone was never the intent of Olympic investments in transportation: maintaining poor people living in the periphery while still allowing them to commute to work was. However, though the Baixada was invoked in this notion of the periphery, it seems as if the Olympics were “meticulously planned,” not for the local population as Babi hoped, but rather to exclude its residents. In an interview on August 10, 2015 with BBC Brasil, real estate developer and so-called “King of Barra,” Carlos Carvalho boasts that the Olympic Legacy infrastructure projects, most notably the BRT (bus rapid transit) and expansion to the metro system, are “bringing this city to everyone, integrating Rio.” Carvalho’s assessment makes an appeal to both metropolitan and socio-economic integration: “the works would bring all of the Baixada here [to Barra], which will relieve the city” and “keep the people (o povo) from suffering from urban errors (erros urbanos)” (Puff 2015b).

None of the projects—neither as proposed nor implemented—actually reach the Baixada. The expansion of the metro system, known as line 4, includes five new stops that connect Ipanema to the beginning of Barra de Tijuca at Jardim Oceânico, passing through the wealthy neighborhoods of Leblon and São
Conrado and by the large and rapidly gentrifying favelas of Vidigal and Rocinha. There was no expansion of the line past the Pavuna stop at the border between Rio proper and São João de Meriti in the Baixada. And residents of Greater Rio across the Guanabara Bay continue to wait for the long-promised line 3 that would connect Rio with Niterói and São Gonçalo via underwater tunnel. The decision to extend the Metro to Barra de Tijuca was not in the original Olympic bid and came after Rio won the right to host the 2016 Games, indicating that local elites, including Adriana de Lourdes Ancelmo, ex-wife of then Governor of Rio Sérgio Cabral, both of whom have since been imprisoned for graft, used the Olympics to funnel public funds toward to reorganize the city around Barra’s fast growing real estate market (Herzog 2013; Gaffney 2016). Urban planners largely criticized the modified line 4, since it is nothing more than an extension of the existing line 1 following the coastline rather than a network system that traverses the city from Jardim Oceânico to the center of the city via the more interior neighborhoods of Humaitá and Larajeiras. Urban planners also denounces the lack of transparency on the part of the State of Rio de Janerio—which is responsible for the metro system—regarding its supposed studies that supported the expansion (Tabak 2012). Even those who favored the expansion of
the line into Barra lamented the fact that it does not go as far as the Alvorada bus terminal, forcing locals to pay an integrated fee of just over 8 reais for the transfer from metro to BRT after the Olympic and Paraolympic games ended.

Similarly, the BRT lines do not extend into the Baixada Fluminense. The TransOeste connects the far northwestern suburbs of Campo Grande and Santa Cruz to Barra de Tijuca, all neighborhoods within Rio proper and more specifically all part of Rio’s West Zone. Though they neighbor Seropédica and Itaguai—recent and often contested additions to the Baixada—these West Zone subúrbios are not part of any contemporary definition of the region, though their socioeconomic conditions and the high presence of militia make Campo Grande and Santa Cruz much more like the Baixada than Carvalho’s Barra de Tijuca (Martín 2016a, 2016b) —a neighborhood known for exclusive gate-condominiums, freeways, and numerous high-end shopping malls following the model of the “global vertical suburb” (Herzog 2013). By purporting that the infrastructure projects “bring all of the Baixada” to Barra de Tijuca, Carvalho conflates Rio’s marginalized North and West zones neighborhoods with the “periphery of the periphery” that is the Baixada Fluminense. He seems to not know much about Rio’s geography or that of the BRT, purporting that “in the
Baixada Fluminense there are more than 6 thousand souls that spend more than two hours in order to get here to Barra and now, with the BRT and TransOlímpica, they will be here in 40 minutes” (Puff 2015b). The “6 thousand souls” that Carvalho claims commute from the Baixada to Barra is minimal in a metropolitan region of over 12 million, most of whom commute to the center of the city, including residents of Barra de Tijuca. This is not to dismiss the need for better mass transportation for the residents of these far west neighborhoods—over half a million live in Campo Grande, Santa Cruz and surrounding smaller neighborhoods—but to highlight Carvalho’s rhetorical conflation of poverty and the Baixada while insisting that these infrastructure projects benefit the most marginalized.

The farthest that the BRT lines run into the North Zone is to Galeão airport on Ilha do Governador on the TransCarioca line, or to Deodoro on the Transolimpico line where it integrates with the Supervia commuter train lines that do in fact extend into the Baixada Fluminense. While Barra served as the primary site of the Olympic Games, BMX, rugby, and equestrian competitions were also held at the Deodoro Olympic Park—hence the name of the line that directly links to two Olympic Zones. However, spectators grumbled at the
venue’s distance—after taking a train or BRT to Deodoro, Olympic ticket holders had to walk nearly 30 minutes to actually enter the venue—from the much touted transportation legacy project (Kassens-Noor et al. 2016; Glendenning 2016). The final BRT line, TransBrasil, is, as of this writing, under construction and official Olympic Legacy materials produced in English by the Mayor’s Office under Paes state that it will benefit commuters from the West and North Zones as well as the Baixada by offering an alternative route to the perennially congested Avenida Brasil (City of Rio de Janeiro, n.d.). Plans indicate that the TransBrasil line, which the current Crivella administration predicts will only be ready in June 2018, will integrate with the BRT lines at Deodoro and traverse Rio’s North Zone before joining Avenida Brasil and connecting to Rio’s center passing near but not directly integrating with, Central do Brasil and ending at Santos Dumount Airport. It too, however, will only go as far North as Parada da Lucas, a neighborhood just south of Caxias on the same commuter train line and site of a large municipal bus terminal, though the system will not be directly integrated with either of these other forms of transportation as noted in a recent report on public policy by the Fundação Gertulio Vargas (FGV/DAPP 2017).
When asked by *Carta Capital* about the lack of metropolitan integration in the legacy projects, Paes defended the BRT lines: “I work within the limits of my city […]. I cannot invade Caxias. The people who come from the Baixada can descend at the [Trevo das Margaridas] station and take a BRT. Instead of being stuck in traffic on Avenida Brasil for two hours, they can make the trip in 30 minutes” (R. Martins 2013). The lack of direct integration may belie actual commute times. Moreover, Paes’s analysis does not take into account the fact the passengers, especially the poor passenger for whom he insists the legacy projects are for, will need to pay a separate, and steadily increasing, fare to take a bus or train before embarking on the BRT (Comite Popular da Copa e Olimpíadas do Rio de Janeiro 2015). Due to Rio’s socioeconomic segregation that pushes poorer people to the outskirts of the city, the relative increase in access to transportation is undermined by a piecemeal transportation system in which different transportation modalities are operated by private entities on a concession basis forcing lower income commuters to pay a larger share of their monthly income toward transportation for work and leisure, sometime in the order of 60% (FGV/DAPP 2016). For this reason I have referred to transportation as either “mass” or, especially when translating from the Portuguese, “collective” rather
than public (Caiafa 2002). Though Paes cannot “invade” Caxias, he heralded the games as a “fantastic excuse” (desculpa fantástica) to change the city (Carneiro 2012), though civil society lamented the lack of vision to use the Olympics as a “fantastic excuse” for better metropolitan integration.

Carvalho’s insistence in the cited BBC Brasil interview that the Olympic legacy projects will “translate into benefits that everyone will have,” including “o povo” from the Baixada, are meant to clarify derogatory comments he made in his interview with Watts of The Guardian in which, due to the high costs of servicing the region like laying water pipes and electricity lines, Carvalho asks “how are you going to put poor people there” (Watts 2015). Thus, Carvalho equates these basic services and even rights enshrined in the Brazilian Constitution as too costly an investment for the poor. He celebrates the increased urban mobility to Barra not as a means of providing social mobility to Rio’s marginalized population, of which the Baixada is emblematic, but as a means of maintaining and expanding Rio’s socio-geographic segregation: “He [the poor person] needs to live nearby because he provides services and earns money with whomever he can (com quem pode) but you should only put people who can [afford it] there, if not you’ll ruin everything (você estraga tudo), you throw money
away. There are many neighborhoods that take in people with more modest buying power” (Puff 2015b). Work here, earn money here, but don’t live here is Carvalho’s message to o pobre. For Carvalho a “favelado” would be unprepared to leave “his habitat” and “pay rent and condominium fees” without first being properly taught; it’d be akin to “living next to an Indian” or someone “who smells” such that “[you] would find another place to live” (Puff 2015b). Carvalho’s deeply colonial language speaks to the ways in which the colonial matrix of power manifests itself not anew, but newly disguised, this time through the celebration capitalism of the Olympics, in order to, following Rolnik (2016), colonize land and housing for the profit of global financial markets.

Yet Carvalho is quick to remind us in the same breath that this socio-geographic segregation is not the result of structural systems that marginalize Rio’s racialized and poor residents, but rather of a functioning meritocracy in which both individuals and entire neighborhoods can ‘move on up’ with the right entrepreneurial spirit: “That was my case. I came to live in Jacarepaguá because that’s where my father could live. I was born there, I went to public school, I made my life. Anyone can do the same thing” (Puff 2015b). Carvalho situates his success as someone from the povo, from the precarious public school
system, from the once periphery. But his vision of social mobility is one in which singular individuals ascend the social ladder and in the process, transform entire neighborhoods for the better. Carvalho’s vision for his land is not the peripheral subúrbio, Jacarepaguá, characterized by public housing and favelas where his father settled, but rather it is Barra de Tijuca, Rio’s new, safe center. While the poor and marginalized can no longer afford to live here, and were being actively removed by the city, most notably in the case of the Vila Autódromo favela adjacent to the Olympic Park (Williamson 2017; Comite Popular da Copa e Olimpíadas do Rio de Janeiro 2015), they can at least be greeted with the Disney World-esque spectacle of a phrase, “Smile! You have arrived in Barra de Tijuca,” in both Portuguese and English, by the voice of a friendly woman as the metro emerges from the dark tunnel beneath Pedra da Gávea to brief views of modern condominiums and shopping centers while on their way to work.

As foreign correspondent Watts wrote on August 4, 2015, exactly a year ahead of the games, Carvalho attempts to explain why the Olympic Athletes

\[\text{For more on Vila Autódromo’s struggle to remain see (Williamson 2017; Talbot and Carter 2018)}\]
Village that his firm Carvalho Hosken was tasked with constructing would not become public housing as was the case for the London 2012 Games:

Carvalho insists the quality of the accommodation must match the tone of a valuable, privileged area. Sitting across from a bust of Napoleon and next to a wall-sized map of Barra, he said: “We think that if the standards were lowered, we would be taking away from what the city – the new city – could represent on the global scene as a city of the elite, of good taste. Ilha Pura could not scratch this destiny that has been given to the region. For this reason, it needed to be noble housing, not housing for the poor.” (Watts 2015)

Carvalho’s vision for the Athletes Village is captured by its very name: Ilha Pura (Pure Island). His “Barra” — of which he owns an estimated ten million square meters — is to be a beach side — or at least private gated community pool side — 21st century extension of the bairros nobres of Zona Sul. His vision, and ostensibly that of Paes and other political allies given the heavy infrastructure investment in the region, is to turn Barra into a new center of real estate speculation and private investment (Herzog 2013). Carvalho has a vested interest in separating the shopping malls and condominiums of Barra from the neighborhood’s former status as a subúrbio, that is, outside the Center and South Zone, and its association with favelas like City of God, Rio das Pedras, and Vila Autódromo,
communities which both predate the urbanization plan laid out for Barra in the 1970s by Lucio Costa, the urbanist who designed Brasília.

In an interview with BBC Brasil, Paes chastised the real estate magnet’s comments for being “childish and of a scary level of prejudice” (Puff 2015a). Paes then went on to contend that Carvalho, whom he had called the “Olympics’ greatest capitalist” only months before at a May 2015 meeting of Brazil’s business leaders in São Paulo, “did not understand what the Olympics mean for Rio” (Puff 2015a). However, Paes’s vision for Rio, both as he himself articulated it and as implemented through the chosen mass transportation investments, were in essence similar to those of Carvalho, though he avoided overt racist and stigmatizing language. In the same March 2012 interview with BBC Brasil in which he declared the Olympics a “fantastic excuse” to transform the city, when Morar Carioca was ostensibly still underway, Paes admits that the goal of transportation investments in part will be to curb the growth of favelas by allowing poor people to live “a bit farther away”

We are sure where we want to go, where we want to be. When we reach 2016, the changes will have made Rio a better city to live and work in, more egalitarian and kinder with its population. Look at the favelas. Why would anyone want to live at the top of a hill, in a dangerous place, in a small and horrible house? This happens because if he goes to live in a better house,
a bit more remote \textit{[afastada]}, he’ll need three or four hours (in transit) to get to work. So that’d be six hours by bus every day. Better to live closer to where you work. When we say that we will increase (the use of mass transportation) from 15\% of the population to 60\%, what we are saying is that there will be a good alternative for poor people not to live next to work, for them to live a bit farther away, in better and safer places, and to arrive to work quickly. That’s how the city is going to improve. (Carneiro 2012)

Paes not only stigmatizes favelas, but also conveniently omits the option of centrally located affordable housing from the very discussion. This is especially egregious considering that these stigmatizing comments against favelas, made up of “small and horrible homes,” came roughly a month before his TedTalk promoting greater social integration and the promise of having “all favelas [estimated at nearly 1000 throughout Rio proper] urbanized by 2020” (Paes 2012). Moreover, in the same interview he reiterates that promise, citing the favelas that the city is “already urbanizing” (Carneiro 2012). Though he does not directly cite the Baixada, the reference to 3 to 4 hour commutes easily alludes to the region, though he is most likely referring to the far West Zone suburbs of Santa Cruz and Campo Grande in “limits of [his] city.” Estimates based on the city’ own numbers affirm that during his two terms in office, Paes removed nearly 67 thousand people, a sum that exceeds removals under Perreira Passos and Carlos
Lacerda combined. (Faulhaber and Azevedo 2015). Many of those removed for BRT and other infrastructure projects received apartments through the federal Minha Casa Minha Vida (My House, My Life) housing program, apartments which were overwhelming located in far these West Zone neighborhoods (Faulhaber and Azevedo 2015). Though Paes is not as openly discriminatory in his remarks as Carvalho, he after all is still a politician who must be mindful of voters’ opinions, Olympic transportation investments, coupled with the vast number of removals that took place under this “fantastic excuse” mirror the words of Carvalho in reference to the removal of Vila Autódromo, whose struggle to remain on the land to which they had legal title became an international symbol of Rio2016 human rights abuses: “They are going to housing at their standard. They have to go” (Watts 2015).

The structural shortcomings of Rio’s transportation system and that the TransBrasil line has yet to be completed indicate an Olympic Legacy geared not so much toward correcting longstanding “urban errors” in the Brazilian metropolitan region with the highest commuting times (FGV/DAPP 2016), but rather toward using the Olympics as a guise to direct public funds toward better integrating the wealthy Barra de Tijuca neighborhood (Comite Popular da Copa
e Olimpíadas do Rio de Janeiro 2015; Kassens-Noor et al. 2016; R. Martins 2013; Barbassa 2017). Both Carvalho and Paes repeatedly sold the infrastructure projects would benefit the poorest members of Rio’s society, and both used the Baixada as short hand for those poorest members. Yet, in true “cara de pau” fashion, the infrastructure projects ultimately fell short geographically, economically, and socially of metropolitan integration and truly serving residents of the Baixada—and they knew they would.

A 2015 report from the federal Applied Economics Research Institute (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada-IPEA) on metropolitan governance, lamented both the concentration of megaevent investment only within the Rio proper, and the long standing lack of region integration in transportation planning, noting that “internal fragmentation, investments concentrated in the city of Rio, and the predominance of busing make any attempt to construct regional [transportation] governance infeasible”(Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada 2015). Moreover, while Paes and Carvalho contend that Olympic Legacy projects are “bringing this city to everyone,” their enthusiasm for urban mobility belies the market-driven territoriality of said mobility. That is, while none of the lines extend to the Baixada, almost all of the infrastructure
leads to Barra de Tijuca, where Paes began his political career as “sub-mayor” of Barra and Jacarepaguá from 1993 to 1996 and where large investment for mega-events began with the 2007 Pan-American Games. A recent statistical analysis of megaevent infrastructure investments in the city confirms that wealthy parts of the city benefited disproportionately (R. H. M. Pereira 2017). In fact, Rio had lost prior Olympic bids in 2004 and 2012 in venues were concentrated in the already relatively well serviced North Zone near Maracanã. Paes, directly invoking celebration capitalism, contends that Rio won the Olympic bid against Chicago, Tokyo, and Madrid precisely because those cities “have everything” and Rio would be an opportunity for the IOC to showcase the fact that “the legacy is the great issue of the Olympics” (Carneiro 2012).

As journalist Juliana Barbassa contends, for the IOC, Brazilian politicians, and other interested private stakeholders like Carvalho, if “the true goal of the Games was to funnel tons of public money into private pockets via the slew of lucrative construction contracts generated by the event, then the 2016 Olympic Games exceeded all expectations” (Barbassa 2017). Douglas of Fórum Grita Baixada expressed a similar sentiment in our interview roughly a year after the Games:
I like sports and I went to a Game, but I never imagined the Baixada Fluminense on the Olympic Map. I also never imagined any legacy, a legacy for the country after the Olympics. I think that this is something that needs to be overcome, not just for Brazil, but when thinking about the Olympics. I don’t know if the objective of the Olympics is to being a legacy. The objective of the Olympics is to hold the Olympic Games. And so the legacy discourse if only to try to convince the population that it’s positive to have the Olympics. Certainly, with the arrival of the Olympics you have the arrival of tourists, of resources, you give the country some visibility, positively or negatively, but I always thought the legacy was a fantastical discourse.

Douglas cuts through the spectacle of the Olympics, the IOC’s objectives are simple, to hold the games, everything else is “fantastical discourse” to justify the spending priorities of the elite that use the Games to expand upon their own spending and revenue priorities.

Beyond improving transportation and, most importantly, the self-esteem of residents of the Baixada Fluminense, when asked how the Olympics could better serve people of the region, Babi suggested having a stadium or hosting some sporting event in one of the cities of the Baixada. That is, she had hoped for more participatory planning that conceived of the Olympics at the Metropolitan level, rather than merely the municipal. In early 2015, Paes did present an “Olympic Package” to the mayors of several cities of Greater Rio ahead of the Games. At the event, Paes encouraged his peers to help with the upcoming
Olympic celebration, especially given the proximity of the Deodoro Olympic site to the Baixada, stating:

> The enormous impact that we will have by hosting the Olympic Games will not only affect the territory of the city of Rio de Janeiro, but also all of the Metropolitan Region. Most of the Olympic installations are even closer to cities in the Baixada then they are to some neighborhoods in the city. We are presenting the mayors with some of the decisions that we have already made and hope that these cities will not only participate in the logistical effort, but will also involving themselves in the Olympic party. It’s not just a party for cariocas, but for all of us. (Soares 2015)

The package did not include infrastructure projects, but rather proposed the creation of two additional state holidays for 2016 on August 5th, the day of the opening ceremony, and August 18th, the day of the Triathlon, since it would interfere with over 40 bus lines. The packaged also redefined the school year so that students would be off from August 1st through 28th. Thus, the package used the “Olympic party” to essentially insist that residents of the Baixada not meddle with the “logistics” of hosting an international sporting event by being present in the city. Talk about a blow to one’s self-esteem, Paes in so many words asked the mayors to encourage the people to Greater Rio to help make this party great by not showing up. As “celebration capitalism’s” “fantastic excuse” for reordering urban space, the Olympics reinforced Rio’s socio-racial segregation, contributing
to the accelerated expansion of internal peripheries in Campo Grande and Santa Cruz, and continuing nearly a century of neglecting the Baixada through concentrated investment in Rio proper. Or as Babi put it: “it’s an event that happens in your home, in Rio de Janeiro, but you don’t have access. It’s like it’s happening in your garage, and you are in your room and you cannot go to the garage. You’re only going to see it from afar.”

3.5 “Black Brazilians live a state of calamity”: Police Violence and the Pacification of Black Bodies and Space

John Surico and Angela Almeida, the two young journalists fixing for The New York Times who emailed me, did publish a piece in the New York-based music and style magazine, The Fader, that featured interviews with Guilherme and Debora from UFRRJ-IM expressing their views of the Olympics along with 3 other young people from Rio. Debora’s response is the first one featured in “5 Young Brazilians Explain the Real Costs of the Olympics,” after an introductory blurb covering Brazil’ recent growth and tackling of poverty through the economic and political crises that led to youth protests at the Ministry of Culture in Rio due to unpopular, then Interim President Michel Temer’s proposed cut
backs to the ministry (Surico and Almeida 2016). Photographed in a public space wearing a colorful scarf and displaying a penetrating far off look in her eyes, Debora laments that she would not be able to attend any volleyball events because tickets are either too expensive, echoing Babi’s critique. For Debora, the Games only serve to exacerbate the inequality between Rio and the Baixada Fluminense, especially given the “state of calamity” of the state government’s coffer: 

I’m in love with volleyball, and so the Olympics always seemed like a dream to me. But I’m not going to be able to go, because on top of the tickets being so expensive, a lot of them are sold to tourist agencies and it becomes inaccessible to us. At this point, [the Games] are the biggest failure that could happen. I’m not seeing any benefits for the residents of Rio, specifically those on the outskirts who need public services. It’s very frustrating. I live in the Baixada Fluminense region, which is so close to Rio — but it’s as if we don’t make up part of the city. It’s not that we’re against the Olympics, but because of the type of politics that have occurred, and the people who need emergency services who aren’t getting them, it has created a critical sense amongst us. We’re only seeing motives driven by money, when we need investment in security, education, and healthcare. So for us, from the metropolitan region, the only thing the Olympics represent is chaos. (Surico and Almeida 2016)

This sense of “chaos” promulgated by the lack of public services, while simultaneously not being against the Olympics in and of themselves, was precisely the “critical sense” that Fórum Grita Baixada torch of shame relay was
trying to convey. This “chaos,” this sense of “the biggest failure” on the heels of
the State of Rio de Janeiro’s “state of calamity” was not the source of the
protestors’ anger, but utter frustration that led some to “stone the torch relay,” as
conveyed in Romero’s headline. Although, as previously noted, the members of
SEPE in Angra do Reis contend that the teachers’ union was not responsible for
that moment of chaos, and that the real responsibility lies in the misplaced
spending and graft of policymakers at all levels of government involved in the
games. Like the protestors, the Olympics frustrated Debora because these were
to be Rio de Janeiro’s Olympic Games, not Metropolitan Rio’s Olympic Games
despite the use of funds from the State of Rio. And even then, the few benefits
that policymakers could point to, infrastructure investments in transportation
infrastructure and controversial changes to public security, both completed and
promised, were primarily concentrated in Rio’s aspiring US-style suburban
neighborhood of Barra de Tijuca. Her assertion that residents “on the outskirts
[…],] are “only seeing motives driven by money” speaks to an Olympics that
exacerbated inequality before the Games even began. The “chaos,” in contrast,
was widespread, effecting state employees—teachers, police, hospital workers—
across Rio State, but to some degree it was also concentrated in the Baixada, “so
close to Rio,” where the Olympics underscored historical neglect and ongoing invisibility, especially in term of violence. “Chaos” was precisely what the Pacifying Police Units, the central public security program of the State of Rio de Janeiro since 2008, had promised to reign in ahead of the Olympics. By 2016, the sense that the UPPs had caused increased chaos in the Baixada Fluminense had led Surico and Almeida to contact me in the first place.

Figure 12: Protestor at the Torch of Shame relay holding a sign from Amnesty International’s campaign that reads, “Violence is not part of this game.”
Conceived and operated by the Secretary of Public Security, José Mariano Beltrame, and implemented by the state Military Police, the UPP were to be a form of proximity or community policing in Rio’s favelas. As McCann notes, the “UPPs explicitly update the mid-1980’s strategies of Colonel Magno Nazareth Cerqueira,” Secretary of the Military Police under both terms of progressive governor Leonel Brizola (McCann 2014, 188). Thus, the UPPs were not the state of Rio’s first foray into a less violent, citizen orient police force. However, while Cerqueira’s vision of a police force that would “uphold human rights,” especially for favelados and Black Brazilians like himself, was widely criticized by his dictatorship era pe na porta, or foot in the door, trained colleagues, Beltrame’s UPP seemed to be widely embraced by both rank-and-file police and commanding officers (McCann 2014, 188). For example, a 2014 report by the Brazilian Forum for Public Security that surveyed over 21 thousand public security officers—of which 51% percent were military police from various states—revealed that over 87% of respondents believe that the function of the military police should be reoriented toward the protection of citizens’ rights and that neighborhood residents should participate in decisions regarding local policing priorities (R. S. de Lima, Bueno, and Santos 2014). However, Beltrame
did admit that the greatest difficulties to developing proximity policing in favelas were institutional since many had “spent their entire lives oriented toward war” (Batista 2013). Beltrame has explicitly stated that the goal of the UPPs is to regain territorial control of favelas that are under the control of traffickers—and to a much lesser extent militias. The program’s tagline, *UPP Veio para ficar*, UPP came to stay put, attests both to this territorial mission and to the promise of an increased positive state presence through community policing and UPP related social programs. In fact, as in his support of the police blitz that removed adolescents traveling from buses travel to Rio’s South Zone beaches from the *subúrbio*, Beltrame has consistently emphasized that investments in health, education, and infrastructure, like those promised by the *Morar-Carioca* program, must follow the installation of UPPs (Gaffney 2012). In a 2011 interview with *O Globo*, he drove home this point, stating in a language similar to that of progressive Cerqueira: “Even though the UPPS are appealing, I have my fears regarding the post-UPP. The UPP are only useful in so far as they offer, make possible the arrival of dignity to the citizen” (E. B. L. Gonçalves 2011).
Figure 13: Street art in Santa Teresa, a stencil of a police officer point his rifle at a scared and squatting child with the caption, pacification?

Ten years after the first UPP was installed in the favela of Santa Marta, where Michael Jackson filmed the “They Don’t Care About Us” music video, the program has largely failed. Despite early signs of success in smaller favelas in the South Zone like Santa Marta where significant resources were spent to ensure a reduction in crime in favelas with high real estate and tourism potential (Freeman 2012; Cummings 2015; Gaffney 2012), the expansion of UPPs to larger favela complexes like Maré and Complexo do Alemão in the North Zone,
coupled with an endemically corrupt police force and that state’s financial crisis have left the program in disarray (Puff 2016). Even during the Olympics, signs of failure were evident with shoot-outs taking place in once gentrifying favelas, confirming for scholars, activists, and commentators what they had long suspected: the UPPs were security theater for megaevent tourists (Dias 2017; Gaffney 2012; Puff 2016). Beltrame resigned in the October after the Olympics citing disillusion with local policymakers’ commitment to bringing infrastructure to pacified favelas (UOL 2016). Given that only one UPP was installed in the Baixada Fluminense, I do not intend to evaluate the program per se, but rather, I take the UPPS, as another Olympic Legacy promise, as a starting point to discuss issues of invisible and hypervisible violence, especially state and para-state sanctioned violence, in the Baixada Fluminense, and how residents of the region leveraged transnational networks to combat that violence.

As Gaffney argues “the concentration of security resources in the wealthiest areas of the city is consistent with the circumscribed geography of Rio’s mega-event investments” (Gaffney 2012). Only one Pacifying Police Unit was installed outside of the city limits of Rio, coincidentally in Mangueirinha, the complex of favelas where Programa Raízes Locais was located. During my time at
PRL, colleagues and the women of the baking collective often commented on how much the neighborhood had improved. “A year ago, there were always shoot-outs on this street,” they’d say. PRL is located at the base of the Morro do Sapo and in prior years it was common to see young gang members yielding guns on your way up when events were held at church perched on top of the hill. Beyond the automatic weapons leaning out of the windows of police cars on patrol throughout metropolitan Rio, from my arrival in October 2014 to my departure in July 2015, I never came across the much-hyped image of rifle toting 8 year-olds dominating the streets of Mangueirinha, or any other favela for that matter (Freire-Medeiros 2011; Williams 2008).

With Luciano, I went to two meetings between the UPP and local community leaders and organizations. The first was nominally a meeting of the “Conselho de Gestão Comunitária” (the Community Management Council), though there were no members of civil society or residents’ associations on the panel. Instead, the Secretary of Security and a representative of the Ministry of Social Assistance for Duque de Caxias, as well as the Capitan of the Mangueirinha UPP, Bruno Leite, led the meeting that was held at the Baptist church down the block from PRL. The officials generally discussed perfunctory positive results due to
the UPP presence: garbage collection was more regular and the UPP had held a number of community events, including the distribution of presents to children for Christmas, over the course of the year. While community leaders attested to the decrease in open gunfire throughout Mangueirinha, they lamented the lack of community involvement in the process, including that very meeting. Luciano, having given a talk on police violence against Black youth in São João de Meriti a few months earlier, lambasted the UPPs as more of the same militarized policing of urban peripheries. At the time, I was generally aware of the UPPs, though the meetings led me to do more research for a subsequent post for the Felsman Blog.

Following an occupation by the BOPE (Batalhão de Operações Policiais Especiais -Special Police Operations Battalion) to round up any arms and lingering traffickers, the Ministry of Public Security installed the UPP in Magueirinha in February 2014. Though there had already been human rights abuses with the program, most notably with the disappearance of Amarildo in 2013 by members of the UPP in Rocinha (Vigna 2013), some mayors and residents of the Baixada had been calling for the expansion of the program into the region (O Dia 2013; Miagusko 2016). This was exacerbated by the perception that the 30 plus units throughout Rio had pushed violence and trafficking into
the region (Miagusko 2016; Do G1 Rio 2013). Somewhat ironically, though the Baixada had long been associated with violence, the presence of militia and death squads had to some degree thwarted the expansion of trafficking gangs into the region, such that residents of the Baixada often associate gun yielding traffickers with Rio’s favelas (Miagusko 2016). In some ways the relationship between residents of the Baixada and the police mirrors the duality of over/under policing in Black neighborhoods in the US (D. Kennedy 2015), where serious crimes are hardly investigated because the victims are predominantly poor, Black and brown men from the periphery (Inzunza and Pardo 2017), while police presence is overwhelming, repressive, and violent in order to control the bodies of poor, Black and brown men within those neighborhoods.

As an isolated form of territorial occupation concerned with resting control from armed trafficking factions, the UPPs ignored much of the para-state violence of favelas and especially the Baixada Fluminense. As Douglas said to me in an interview, “there is no morro and asfalto in the Baixada Fluminense.” Which is to say, that the territorial difference between the formal and the informal, between where the state and the para-state—be it in the form of traffickers or militias—is sovereign are less apparent in this “periphery of the periphery.”
While I did not ask him directly about UPPs, Douglas’s response to a question about violence points both their failure within Rio and to why they were hardly conceived of as a strategy to combat violence in the Baixada:

It is easier for a death squad to kill ten, fifteen people in the Baixada Fluminense and there be no...or the military or even traffickers...and there be no response like in Rio, in a touristic area, even in a favela near a touristic region of Rio. Because when, at least this is what I think, when something happens in a favela in the South Zone and it is covered in the news, the preoccupation is not with the residents of that community. The preoccupation is for those living near that community. So, when there is a massacre in the community, it will be visible because it can go down to the asfalto, it could affect the asfalto. So, there is some control in that area, some control over what is happening there so the problem doesn’t spread to the asfalto. In the Baixada Fluminense, no. In the Baixada, since there is no asfalto, because everything operates under this same logic, what happens here remains invisible. And people reproduce this, this logic, you know. So that, here the solution is always, something that continues reproducing, is that the solution is always in the bullet. It always has been, and this archaic mode of upholding executions as a way of solving the problem of violence. And it keeps being reproduced.

Douglas contends that the UPP were a hyperlocal strategy primarily concerned with the possibility of the problem of violence “affect[ing] the asfalto,” evident in statements made Beltrame affirming that the goal of the UPPS was to “protect the most economically productive areas of Rio de Janeiro” (Gaffney 2012). Similar to proclaiming that Olympic investments in transportation would “bring
the Baixada to Barra,” the discourse of the UPPs promised a breaking of the cycle of war that has dominated the relationship between police and the poor, “more or less” Black residents of favela and periphery communities (McCann 2014). However, ultimately this was not a project concerned with the lives and well-beings of those residents. Though the UPPs boasted of an increase in the “self-esteem” of residents of pacified favelas, the military logic of the program differed little from *pe na porta* logic of the dictatorship era. Favela activists often described the police as just another faction violently competing for control, often with their own corruption schemes. In Complexo do Alemão a tenuous UPP was installed after an intense military occupation that *O Globo* called ‘D-Day for Traffickers.”

In Maré the Federal Government deployed the army for 15 months from April 2014-June 2015 at a cost of double all the municipal investments in the community from 2009-2015, and an UPP was never successful installed (Bacelar 2015). The simultaneous criminalization of *funk* by the UPP and other police forces and its appropriation and commercialization by more or less white artists from more affluent areas, underscores the ways in which militarized police occupation of territory goes hand in hand with the colonization of subaltern cultural forms to disrupt forms of leisure and being (C. Rocha 2017; Sneed 2008).
And in the Baixada, whether the UPPs pushed violence from Rio into the regions a continues to be debated. However, UFRRJ Sociologist José Cláudio Souza Alves, known personally as Zé Cláudio, a leading researcher of territorial violence in the Baixada Fluminense, contends that even if traffickers themselves did not migrate to the Baixada, the UPPS did transform the nature of the drug trade within the region, leading to more sales of crack-cocaine as gangs expanded to “different consumers than the elite of the South Zone” (Fórum Grita Baixada 2016, 38). When dealers or users could not make payments, death was the usual solution (Fórum Grita Baixada 2016, 38). In addition, when comparing January 2005 to January 2016, there is a notable increase in all crimes—robberies, kidnappings, rape, car thefts—although there was a slight decrease in the number of homicides (Fórum Grita Baixada 2016). Much of this increase in crime has been attributed to police no longer working overtime because they were not getting paid on time. The concentration of public security into one policy, that of the UPPs, undermined other forms of police work that looked more holistically at Metropolitan Rio.
Though the UPPs purported to drive out all forms of armed territorial control in favelas, they predominately focused on trafficking, allowing militia control of parts of Rio’s West Zone, the Baixada, and throughout the entire of State of Rio to drastically expand alongside this cornerstone of state public security (M. A. Martins 2014). Though death squads had been active in the Baixada for decades, these 21st century militia, comprised of current and former police officers, firefighters and other security personnel, frequently control territory through extortion, forcing residents to pay for ‘protection’ and basic services like water and garbage collection. Just as a blind eye was turned on the death squads that came to represent the Baixada in sensationalist media and popular songs, the public and politicians have often ignored, or in the case of former Mayor of Rio Cesar Maia, even praised the militia as community self-defense in the face of barbaric traficantes (Ramsey 2014). However, many, like corrupt police-officers (Acebes 2016), willingly cooperate with gangs, levying a fine not to target specific areas (Cano 2016). One militia located in the municipality of the Queimados even accepted hits on Facebook (O Globo 2017a). There was already evidence in 2014 that militias were influencing elections
(Ramsey 2014). That state public security policy allowed to proliferate during the UPP program, speaks to the ways in which the bodies of young black men in urban peripheries are constantly configured as the enemy: Traffickers are the real *bandido* and marginal, not corrupt policemen extorting local communities for their own economic and political gain (M. L. de Souza 2012).

As the Olympics approached, it became increasingly clear that policy makers in the State of Rio were less interested in retaking territory for the benefit of residents in favelas and neighborhoods plagued by violence, and more committed to leaving those communities for the taking by either gentrification in wealth neighborhoods or politically connected militias in the peripheries. At the time, I came to repeat an egregious example of the neglect the Baixada faces concerning militias, including to Dave Zirin and the listeners of his podcast *The Edge of Sports*: 13 candidates for municipal office were killed in the Baixada in the months ahead of the October 2016 election, often due to their ties to militias (Martín 2016b; G1 Rio 2016). Despite the presence of thousands of journalists for the games, these political assassinations went largely uncovered in the nation and international press. Ultimately they were covered, though beyond ongoing police investigations, there seemed to be no policy response to this example of
“uncivil political democracy” obscured by the Olympics (T. P. R. Caldeira and Holston 1999b). For the vast majority of victims in the Baixada Fluminense, as Douglas suggests, there is little non-sensational media coverage and few deaths are ever investigated by the police (Inzunza and Pardo 2017).

In Guilherme’s interview with *The Fader*, which features a photo of him wearing a Duke “Blue Devils” sweatshirt, he reiterates Debora’s sense of frustration as it relates to misplaced public spending and the cloud of corruption hanging over Brazil during the run up to the Olympics. He also underscoring how the issue of police violence and invisibility impact young, Black youth from Brazil’s urban peripheries:

Many of the projects that were built for the Olympics have displaced residents. Basic necessities have been sacrificed so that the event could happen, like healthcare and transportation. So it has generated a huge problem of public dissatisfaction that was already visible during the World Cup. Something so important, globally, is taking place in Rio de Janeiro, and it had everything to be symbolic, but that’s exactly the opposite of what’s happening now. It’s not symbolic — it’s frustrating. We are the biggest, young democracy. Consider the fact that, in recent memory, there was a very long military dictatorship here which oversaw society in a very conservative way. So, in terms of corruption, it’s very hard to determine where corruption started in Brazil.

I was in the United States in April last year for a conference at Duke University. At the time, the riots in Ferguson had happened about a year before. So I learned a lot more on the topic of police brutality, which is also a huge topic here in Brazil. My whole family is black, and in Brazil, even though we’re 50
percent of the population here, we still have the highest number of daily deaths and homicides. We’re sometimes talking about kids that are seven or eight years old. We’re talking about children. Not even Syria, Iraq, or Afghanistan have numbers like we have.

The black population in Brazil lives in a state of calamity. We have this sense here that human rights are not universal, but something of privilege, which is ridiculous. And the military police [here] think they don’t have to respect human rights. We have one of the few urban police in the entire world that carry high-caliber automatic weapons on the streets. And because this person thinks he makes up the armed part of the state, he gets to decide who lives and who dies. There are propositions to demilitarize the police here, but because they’re military police, they go through a completely different judicial process than the civilian police. Today, on social media, though, we have a greater visibility, globally, so we have a way to make an impact. (Surico and Almeida 2016)

Guilherme touches on a number of issues that came together to “generate a huge problem of public dissatisfaction” with megaevents in general: displacement, the lack of investment in basic services, corruption. However, the issue of police violence against Black and brown bodies is not a problem that can strictly be attributed to megaevents, it is endemic to Brazil, it is the “logic of the bullet,” that Douglas mentioned. While in his piece for The New York Times Romero attributes Brazilian anger, anxiety, and indifference to the lack of public services, the political and economic crises plaguing the nation, and, of course, when discussing Brazil, crime, “protests over forced evictions” only get a cursory
mention among other “fiascos” like bad plumbing at the Olympic village. State-sanctioned violence goes completely unnamed.

The “state of calamity” in which Black Brazilians live is precisely that which the coverage of the coup12 and the run up to the Olympics rendered both hyper-visible and invisible. Guilherme’s account is both personal and transnational. Despite he and his family being part of Brazil’s majority Afro-descendant population, the severity of what even a 2015 Parliamentary Inquiry Commission (Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito-CPI) calls a “symbolic genocide” against poor, young Black people in Brazil has largely been ignored by both policymakers and the media in national discourse (M. Souza 2015). Guilherme himself even attributed his if not introduction to the issue then at least his activist engagement with the policy brutality to his exposure to the protests and the growing BlackLivesMatter movement in the United States.

Rates of violent death, regardless of the perpetrator, are high among young, Black and brown men. According to data compiled by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada-IPEA)

12 While ostensibly legal, I agree with the analysis of my informants and of scholars like Sidney Chalhoub and Alexandre Fortes, that Rousseff’s impeachment was a right-wing take over after four lost presidential elections propagated by both Brazilian and international media. See (Chalhoub et al. 2017)
and the Brazilian Public Security Forum (Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública), in 2015, 71% of homicide victims in Brazil are Black (pretos and pardos) and Black youth between the ages of 12 and 29 are particularly vulnerable (Cerqueira et al. 2017, 30). In fact, the same research suggests that between 2005 and 2015, while the homicide rates among non-Black Brazilians (white, indigenous, and people of Asian descent) decreased 12.2%, the homicide rate among Black Brazilians increased 18.2%, underscoring Guilherme’s assertion that “the black population in Brazil lives in a state of calamity” distinct from the rest of the population. While the most violent cities in Brazil can be found in the North and Northeast regions, Brazil’s blackest regions, the municipalities of Queimados and Itaguaí in the Baixada have the highest rates of homicide in the state of Rio (Fórum Grita Baixada 2016).

As Guilheme laments, police violence, and the related militia violence, contributes significantly to the precariousness of life for poor, Black youth in the urban periphery. The idea that “human rights are not universal, but something of a privilege” is underscored by the popular saying “a good thug [literally bandit, but often racialized in the way “thug” is in English], is a dead thug” (bandido bom é bandido morto), attributed to ex-police officer, former deputy to the
legislature of the State of Rio de Janeiro, and alleged member of the infamous death squad, *Scuderie Detetive Le Cocq*, José Guilerhme Godinho Sivuca Ferreira. It is not only that “because this person thinks he makes up the armed part of the state, he gets to decide who lives and who dies,” but that popular support for summary police killings, even and especially among the poor, has been documented by social scientists (T. P. Caldeira 2006; T. P. R. Caldeira and Holston 1999b; J. H. French 2013; Gay 2010). According to a 2009 Human Rights Watch report, police in the State of Rio de Janeiro reported 1,330 resistance killings in 2007 and 1,137 in 2008 (Human Rights Watch 2016). The UPPs brought a temporary drop in these numbers, with 416 police killings in 2013 and 645 in 2015 (Bianchi 2017a). However, by 2016, the year of the Olympics, 920 people had been killed, and by 2017 the State had returned to near pre-UPP incidences of police violence, with 1035 people losing their lives at the hands of police (Bianchi 2017b), attesting to the sense that these reductions were never meant to be permanent.

*Chacinas*, or massacres carried out by the police, are an all too common occurrence through the Baixada. In Greater Rio, between March 2016 and March 2017, 21 *chacinas* were documented, 7 of which took place in the Baixada,
resulting in the deaths of 76 people (J. Gonçalves and Olliveira 2017). As Caldeira notes (2006, 107), during re-democratization, politicians often “resignified” “human rights” as “‘privileges for bandits’” and, despite Brazil’s adoption of the National Program for Human Rights in 1993, “[i]n the context of the naturalization of police violence, many people understand the abuse of police lethal force as their ‘right’” (Caldeira 2006, 109). However, as French (2013) contends, this acceptance of police violence stems in part from the stigmatization of police themselves and the ways in which “the categories of police, black, and poor overlap” (J. H. French 2013, 172). As one of the few avenues for social mobility for Black men in particular in Brazil, rather than a “world that is coded white,” French asserts that the police, and the military police in particular is “an institution that is coded black not only by the rest of society but by the state apparatus itself,” especially through dehumanizing language in reference to particularly egregious, read mass and reported, killings (J. H. French 2013, 170). Day-to-day police violence is thus not an aberration due to what Jaime Amparo Alves calls the “double negation” of Blackness in Brazil such that Black people—be they police or youth from the periphery—“don’t have rights if they are not considered fully human, and Blacks are not quite humans” (J. A. Alves 2014, 198).
145). In contrast to the US, where the police are generally understood as a “world that is coded white,” the police as bandits rhetoric renders their impunity a norm that stems from the ways in which they are expected to act differently in neighborhoods and spaces coded as white than those coded as Black and poor. The outcry against the police violence during the predominately white 2013 protests is a testament to how that racialized brutality should not be exhibited in, again, predominately white, public space (J. A. Alves and Costa Vargas 2017). Rarely has there been an entire media campaign dedicated to police brutality like that of the mostly white celebrities who sported make up to condemn the violence against journalists during the protests (J. A. Alves and Costa Vargas 2017). That poor, Black, resident of the North Zone favela of Vila Cruzeiro, and catador, Rafael Braga, is the only person to have been sentenced following the 2013 protests, in which he did not even participate, for carrying Pine Sol and bleach speaks to how notions of legality are used to control Black bodies in urban space (Benites 2013).13 However, as Guilherme notes, social media has played a

13 Though Rafael Braga gained a conditional release from prison and was forced to where an ankle monitor, he was apprehended by UPP in Penha for supposedly carrying small amounts of marijuana and cocaine. After developing tuberculous in the notorious Bangú prison, he has since been on house release. Because of the disproportionate punishment and constant police harassment he has faced, Braga has become a symbol
significant role in bringing the “state of calamity” in which Black Brazilians live into
dialogue with transnational solidarity movements that affirm that Black lives,
everywhere, matter.

3.6 Making Black Lives Matter in the Baixada Fluminense

“Elaine Freitas, presente!”

The air was heavy as people tried to grasp what had happened the night before. The struggle for Black lives had caused another death, and perhaps there would have been a sense of the bitter irony of history repeating itself had Freitas not passed away mere hours earlier. Activist work is often described as “tireless,” but friends of Freitas proclaimed that though she had not been killed by a bala perdida—a stray, or literally lost, bullet that serves as the fall back excuse when police kill innocent people in favelas and peripheries—the work of fighting against a racist state had ultimately worn her down. On the evening of July 20th, 2016, Freitas was participating in a march demanding the freedom of Rafael

of Brazil’s racist criminal justice system and push towards the mass incarceration of young Black men (Lettiere 2017).
Braga in downtown Rio when she began to feel chest pains. She passed away shortly after leaving the protest.

The march was part of a week of meetings, encounters, and atos, acts or actions, dubbed “Julho Negro,” Black July, organized by Black and anti-police brutality activists as part of a visit by a delegation of members of BlackLivesMatter to Rio ahead of the Olympics. Nearly a hundred journalists and activists had gathered at Ilé Omiojùràò, the candomblé terreiro of Mãe Beata de Iemanjá, in the neighborhood of Miguel Cuoto, roughly 30 minutes by bus from the center of Nova Iguaçu. Despite and in honor of the sudden death of Freitas, those present decided to carry on with the scheduled panel discussion on racism, police brutality, and religious intolerance, with a focus on the Baixada Fluminense. But first, those who knew her, some of whom had even been with her during her final hours fighting for justice for Rafael Braga, spoke affectionately about Freitas, a 34-year-old Black Brazilian woman who had dedicated her life to becoming an educator, poet, and activist in a number of causes. They also spoke defiantly but not incredulously that the struggle against a racist criminal justice system’s targeting of a young Black favelado had contributed to her death, knowing full well the mental and physical toll living
and fighting against anti-Black discrimination can take. After a moment of silence, we all cried out the homage used by activists to revendicate the deaths of those who’ve lost their lives to the state-sanctioned violence: “Elaine Freitas, Presente!” “Elaine Freitas, Present.”

I did not personally know Freitas, but I was aware of her work, especially her support of housing occupations throughout Rio. Born in São João de Meriti, those present commented on the fitting nature of the homage, as many of those in attendance or who were to speak on the panel, from both Brazil and the US, had lost loved ones to the same police violence that Freitas denounced in her work and life. Mãe Beata’s terreiro, as a site of both ancestral worship and anti-racist struggle located in the Baixada, embraced the region’s fallen daughter and those who mourned for her. With Elaine Freitas’s death, and her legacy present, the need to build diasporic solidarity to combat systemic racism, especially its manifestation through state sponsored violence, felt all the heavier and more pressing. The struggle was a matter of life and death.

Though the gathering had transnational ambitions, it was also an opportunity for those gathered to speak to the neglect faced by the Baixada Fluminense in particular. Following the homage to Freitas, Zé Claudio began his
talk citing the official homicides statistic for the Baixada quoted above, and underscored an open secret:

> These indices are not true; I’m here to tell you. These indices are very high, but they don’t correspond to the reality of the region. Here, the practice of summary execution, of murders and assassinations, is carried out, is covered up, by the invisibility of the population that lives in this region, by the absences of news and of mass media, [and] by the structure of power in this region.

Zé Cláudio mapped the permutations of power from death squads to militia to local city council men. Though he noted difference between the death squads of the 60s and 70s under the dictatorship and the more organized, mafia tactics of present-day militias, Zé Cláudio asserted that fundamentally “the structure is built on the power of the state, on the power of capital. Death here gives profits. Death here gives an advantage. This death here is a valuable currency.” Death underpins political careers in the Baixada. And the “blackness” of those who are killed “always-already signifies outsidedness to the territory of the universal principles ruling conceptions of the legal and the just” (Da Silva 2001, 436). They are always-already _bandidos_ simply for being poor, Black, and from the Baixada.

Many of those present were women who had lost sons to police violence. Echoing the invisibility cited by Zé Cláudio and others, Luciene Silva, whose son
Raphael Silva Couto died in the 2005 massacre in which police killed 30 people in Nova Iguaçu and Queimados, spoke of the intense violence in the region and how it impacts mourning: “These deaths that happen in the Baixada, many of them aren’t reported to the police and their bodies aren’t found. Often families can’t even bury [their loved ones].” Just as the wonton violence of *Chacina da Baixada* had spurred the creation of groups like *Fórum Grita Baixada*, members of *Mães de The Mothers of May* movement recounted their political mobilization following the 2006 wave of violence in São Paulo in which police killed nearly 600 people, the vast majority of them young Black men from the periphery, as retaliation against the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* gang. At the opening *Julho Negro* event two days earlier, Mônica Cunha, a resident of the Baixada and later North Zone who lost her son to police violence and founded the *Rede de Comunidades e Movimentos Contra Violência* (The Network of Communities and Movements Against Violence), highlighted the near unspeakable-ness of losing a child: “There is ‘orphan,’ there is ‘widow,’ but there is no word for a mother who loses her child.” Yet even though there is no word for the state of calamity and sorrow in which these mothers found themselves, many expressed having found
their voice through their collective, national, and now diasporic mobilization against police violence.

That Brazilian and US activists had gathered to denounce state-sanctioned violence in one of the most famous and politically active candomblé houses in the entire State, let alone metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro, was not lost on those in attendance. Mãe Beata de Iemanjá, who immigrated to the Baixada as a young mother from the historic Bahian city of Cachoeira, used her spiritual house and recognition in the Baixada as a platform to advocate for religious tolerance and the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian knowledges in health and education. As the president of Crioula, an NGO operated by Black women, she combatted sexism, homophobia, and racism, and condemned the cultural genocide of Afro-Brazilian knowledges, practices, and spirituality, and the corporal genocide against Brazil’s poor, Black and brown youth from the periphery. At the Julho Negro event, she told the crowd about how a bus driver nearly refused to take her and other passengers to Miguel Cuoto due to his fear of the Baixada Fluminense. She had dedicated her activist and religious work to combatting this stigma. “I’m calling on everyone; let’s fight; we won’t fall. This moment is today and now!” We want justice! Will it come for us, Black people of
the Baixada?” In an interview with the newspaper Extra, Mãe Beata underscored the ancestral nature of the Black emancipatory struggle: “Poor boys are targeted for death. Before, the favela was samba and respect for Blacks. Now they call them communities and enter shooting. Once I was asked if I am afraid to die for what I speak out against. I responded that, if I were to die for my race, I would laugh in the face of who killed me. And my ancestors will continue my work” (Lins 2015). At that moment, she was continuing the work of Freitas, and now, after her own death, her return to the sea, in July 2017 at the age of 86, the ancestors are continuing Mãe Beata’s work.

Though the panel discussion went on largely as planned, with images of Orixás decorating the walls, the gathering celebrating Freitas and others who had lost their lives to structural violence, both directly and indirectly, took on diasporic, spiritual proportions. BlackLivesMatter Activist Waltrina Middleton, who had lost her cousin DePayne Middleton-Doctor in 2015’s Charleston massacre at the historic Mother Emanuel church, emphasized this interconnectedness in her eulogy to Freitas:

I come today not as a stranger but as your sister connected through the diaspora and very honored to be able to walk on this sacred ground with you. And I thank the ancestors for making it possible for me to be here. And while I did not know
our sister Elaine, I feel your pain and I grieve with you, but I also
celebrate that she is among the ancestors watching over us.

Music punctuated the end of the gathering, as Reverend Doctor John L. Selders
Jr. of BlackLivesMatter led everyone in singing the gospel song *Speak To My*
*Heart* and the freedom song *Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around*, despite the
language barriers.

Although I had already conducted extensive field research in the Baixada
Fluminense, this event was my first time in the Miguel Cuoto neighborhood and
in Mãe Beata’s spiritual house. The confluence of the diasporic and the local, of
the living and the ancestors, of love and pain, seemed amplified by the fact that
we were in several social and territorial peripheries: The Baixada, Rio’s neglected
suburban outskirts; Miguel Cuoto, an almost rural neighborhood far from the
chaotic urban landscape associated with the municipalities of the Baixada; a
candomblé house, sites that have long been stigmatized and even criminalized in
Catholic, and increasingly Evangelical, Brazil. That journalists, academics, and
activists from throughout Brazil and abroad had all come together in this
periphery of the periphery spoke to the rich, though far too often ignored,
history and present of Black social activism in the region and its repeatedly
stymied potential to escape centuries of near non-existent public investment, to combat state sanctioned violence due to the negligence and clientelism of local policy makers, and to simply celebrate, and mourn, its past, present, and future, and place within Rio and Brazil.

Just as members of Fórum Grita Baixada and other civil society organization seized on the official torch relay, as the only tangible link forged between Rio and Baixada for the Olympic games to gain some level of national and international media coverage, the week of Julho Negro events hoped to bring to light how the globalization of the War on Drugs perpetuated the disregard and disposability of Black life since the onset of Modernity/Coloniality. The BlackLivesMatter delegation and members of a number of activist organizations in Rio and the Baixada Fluminense visited a school in the favela of Manguinhos where they questioned the psychological effects on children of hearing gunshots almost daily, they marched to commemorate the Chacina da Candelária—a 1993 massacre of street children by police in front of the Candelária church in downtown Rio—and on the final day they came together at the Leão Etíope do Méier, a public square in the North Zone neighborhood, to celebrate Black Brazilian dance, music, and struggle.
Hosted by Amnesty International’s #jovemnegrovivo (young, black man alive) campaign, the closing Julho Negro event showcased LGBT youth performing vogue, and talks by former Olympic athlete and Black activist Diogo Silva, as well as number of victims of police violence. Deborah Small, the US lawyer and founder of the Break the Chains movement against the War on Drugs, gave the keynote address. I attended with a 4 female friends, 3 from the US and 1 from Rio, to cover the event for RioOnWatch. We had decided to right
the piece collectively due to the number of events and because each had a different focus: I focused on the Baixada, Sarah on dance and culture, and Mariah and Nia on youth anti-violence mobilization. Thais, our carioca friend, helped with translations.

Small pointed out the absurdity of the globalized nature of the War on Drugs in the US and Brazil, countries that enslaved African people and their descendants in order to export two of the most addictive substances, tobacco and sugar: “Think about what it means to be the descendants of people who were enslaved in order to promote addiction for profit, who are now being subject to punishment by the same government that built its wealth on addiction for profit.” Both governments, she argued, now profit off of the mass incarceration of Black men—Brazil has the 4th largest prison population while the US has the largest; both are disproportionately Black. My friends and I were all delighted to meet and chat with Deborah Small afterward, even managing to get a photo.
Figure 15: Nia, Mariah, Me, Deborah Smalls, Thais, and Sarah at JovemNegroVivo event for Julho Negro.

But the highlight for me was the surprise of seeing Dudu de Morro Agudo there. I had not seen him since our intense day of filming for the Duke-IM project, and I did not know at the time how involved he and members of Instituto Enraizados were in Amnesty International’s campaign. I recognized Babu, one of the young rappers who was involved in the filming as well as Dudu’s daughter, Beatriz, who was taking photos of the event. We chatted for a bit before he prepared to perform, promising to schedule a time to go over our footage before I returned to the states in September to renew my visa. I sat down with my friends in the small amphitheater of the square, eager to have a good view of
Dudu and the young rappers perform as I had never seen them live. Someone from Amnesty International put up a large flag with the lyrics of the rap they were about to perform, which I made sure to take a picture of with my phone after the show. Even when watching, I was taken aback by how their song synthesized not only the talks and actions of Julho Negro, but also a transnational cultural repertoire of emancipation in the face of lethal anti-Blackness.

O jovem negro é o guerreiro da favela
Vítima do genocídio que acontece nela
A burguesia quer o embranquecimento da nação
nos deixam à margem com sua discriminação

Eu vejo sangue na calçada
O mesmo sangue que foi derramado pelo homem de farda
82 jovens são mortos todo dia
77% são negros da periferia
Será utopia mudar essa estatística?
podemos fazer isso com nossa expressão artística
A cor da África é a minha história
Não perdemos a guerra,
estamos numa trajetória pra quem desde Zumbi
ainda é tratado como escória
Tanto da luta dos vivos como dos mortos em glória

Diariamente eu vejo um "Boing negreiro" cair
Como Dandara temos que lutar e resistir
Honrando a luta de nossos pais salvando o futuro de nossos filhos eu quero o jovem negro vivo

The young Black man is a warrior of the favela
Victim of the genocide that happens there
The Bourgeoise wants the whitening of the nation
They leave us on the margins with their discrimination

I see blood on the sidewalk
The same blood that was spilt by the man in uniform
82 young people die every day
77% are Black from the periphery
Will it be a utopia to change this statistic?
We can do it with our expression, artistic
The color of Africa is my history
We haven’t lost the war, we’re on a trajectory
for whom since Zumbi
is still treated like a castaway
in the struggle of both the living and the dead in glory

Everyday I see a Boeing slavership fall
Like Dandara we need to fight and resist
Honoring the struggle of our parents saving the future of our children
I want the young Black men alive
Dudu later told me that the lyrics emerged from a RapLab that he conducted, together with Amnesty, at a *Nave de Conhecimento*—literally a “knowledge ship,” or high tech community centers constructed throughout Rio’s North and West Zones that promote digital inclusion even in the wake of social exclusion (Omari 2015)—located in the North Zone neighborhood of Madureira. Dudu has spent years developing and disseminating the RapLab methodology, where young people at schools or in workshops dedicate three hours to coming up with rap
lyrics around a topic that teachers are trying to get them to learn or around cause like combatting dengue or underaged drinking. In this instance, the adolescents at the Mangueira Nave de Conhecimento were able to write and record the lyrics in one day, and according to Dudu, when he handed over the edited version of the song to members of Amnesty, they “went nuts” over how good the lyrics were.

I still very much must agree. In only a few lines, the lyrics manage to convey both the “state of calamity” that Black youth live in and its causes—embranquecimento, discrimination, being pushed to the margins both geographically and culturally—and the potential of artistic expression from and for those on the periphery to re-image other possibilities. The youth detail the Black experience in Brazil without referring directly to slavery, but rather to figures who combatted it like the famed couple Zumbi and Dandara of the Quilombo de Palmares. The youth’s lyrics denounce police violence, celebrate African heritage and an ancestral legacy of struggle, and aspire to a future in which Black youth live, in which Black youth can be.

Seeing the performance, after a week of following the BlackLivesMatter delegation’s fact-finding mission and push to build a transnational network against police violence and anti-black racism, affirmed to me the transnational
territoriality of these youth. They and the other dance and musical groups that performed that night reclaimed the public space that Olympic investments had systematically attempted to deny to them, they reclaimed their own leisure, if only for a moment.

In a later interview, I asked Dudu what he meant when he said he wanted to bring his neighborhood of Morro Agudo to the world. He responded quite simply, “opportunity.” RapLab and other cultural activists that Instituto Enraizados coordinates tries to combat the problem that “those kids have nothing of good to do in that place [Morro Agudo].” They have no productive leisure, in the sense, that leisure can produce a sense of personal and collective worth and self esteem. Despite “being extremely talented,” the adolescents cannot coordinate rap and cultural events “for fear of shootouts.” He went on to compare the Baixada with places like Rocinha, which even though it is full out war, has a cultural and at least minor public policy visibility given that foreigners go there. When a Spanish tourist was killed by police, the whole world responded because “someone worth more than the million of people who live their died.” Making Morro Agudo a “polo cultural,” a cultural pole, is in part about recognize that it has always been a center for Dudu: he was born, raised,
and continues to live there, it is his name sake. But it’s also about “visibility:”

“The Baixada is this. People only say that the Baixada is terrible. Everything that comes out of the Baixada is terrible. If you can bring me a front-page story in a newspaper, Globo, Dia, Extra, that has a good story about the Baixada, I’ll give you whatever you want.” Dudu, in what I consider a form of “border thinking” recognizes that he is “not going to change a damn think rapping,” and must thus “infiltrate politics, the academy, and a series of things” to bring opportunity to Morro Agudo. His partnerships with Amnesty, with UFRRJ-IM, with me, represent strategic networks that he hopes will “launch Morro Agudo to the world,” not for fame, but rather so that the youth “having something of good to do,” so that they have self-esteem affirming opportunity where they already live, and do not have to travel to Rio, to a center that “leave[s ] them on the margins with their discrimination.”

A month before the Olympics, Eduardo Paes admitted to The Guardian that the “fantastic excuse” of the Olympics had turned into a “lost opportunity” in light of political and economic crises facing Brazil (Watts 2016). He blamed the state and federal governments, but insisted that “it’s crazy to say there is no investment in poor areas” (Watts 2016). In thinking of Dudu, of Rocinha, of
BlackLivesMatter, and of the Baixada, perhaps the issue is not necessarily of where investments are made, but what those investments mean in terms of opportunity: the opportunity to remain in your home that you built, the opportunity to skate at a school or go to a beach without being harassed, the opportunity to live. Lelia Gonzalez, in her 1982 book Lugar de Negro written with Carlos Halsenberg, describes the Baixada Fluminense as a “privileged example” for understanding the mutually reinforcing relationship violence and the need for cheap manual labor in Brazilian cities. That labor is segregated not only from public services like health and education, but is also subjugated to wanton violence for being and living outside the territory of rights (Da Silva 2001; J. A. Alves 2014; Gonzalez and Hasenbalg 1982). Keeping poor, Black and Brown youth in their place, making them know it through long commutes and state violence, is a denial of dignity, of opportunity. What opportunity means, especially in a black place where “death is a valuable currency,” as Alves noted, was the central theme of my interview with Barbara, of The Fader’s interviews with Guilherme and Debora, of the lyrics produced by the youth of Enraizados and Madueira. And as I will discuss in the next chapter, it is at the center of my

Look, logically I am not from here so I can’t say a lot, but I think the question of opportunity is very important. Having a university here is an opportunity in a place that from what I’ve seen doesn’t have many opportunities. And it’s not necessarily about leaving the community, but rather elevating the community, helping the community to, not battle but combat the problems it has. And also to celebrate the community. A university in the Baixada Fluminense will influence the projects of the students here and the student will in one way or another study more about the Baixada Fluminense to give a sense of pride to being from the Baixada Fluminense. That’s the little that I’ve learned in these three weeks about the impact of this university.
-John Victor Alencar, Duke Senior, born in Recife, Pernambuco

“Let’s make a movie!” I cannot remember if it was John or Alexandre who first had this idea, but whoever it was, the one’s ambition fed off the other. This was a hallmark of John and Alexandre’s intellectual and personal relationship over the course of the last 20 years. With numerous academic publications together, the Duke-IM project was just the latest manifestation of that mutually reinforcing ambition. And Alexandre tried to draw me into that ambition by thrusting the position of the film’s director upon me, almost with no discussion. Beyond a casual interest in cinema, conversations about lighting and camera angles with an ex-boyfriend who went to film school, and conceptually helping Sarah edit
her film for the Felsman fellowship, I had no training in any part of the filmmaking process. But Alexandre already had a solution: he wanted to contract local rapper, entrepreneur, web designer, and videographer Dudu de Morro Agudo to assist in the film’s production. Alexandre showed me his admiration for Dudu’s work principally through Instituto Enraizados’s website prior to our first meeting in June. On #PortalEnraizados, Dudu and the youth who participate in his cultural production workshops maintain a multimedia blog, replete with news coverage of local cultural events and rap music videos shot by the young team. Alexandre especially liked the site’s combination of sleek aesthetics and technical skills.

As representatives of two well renowned places of youth knowledge and cultural production in Nova Iguaçu, Alexandre and Dudu have also forged a mutually ambitious partnership over the course of the last few years. I did not know this at the time, but Alexandre had already worked with Dudu on a few occasions prior to our first meeting. Their first encounter took place in 2009, when Alexandre and Álvaro Nascimento, another founding history professor at UFRRJ-IM, interviewed Dudu as part of a project studying the history of social movements in the Baixada. Although Dudu admitted to me in a subsequent
interview that he had forgotten about this initial encounter until a IM graduate reintroduced him to Alexandre in order to develop an extension course on communication at IM, they have since become “partners.” They have appeared together on various panels and at events focusing on the Baixada, such as Casa Fluminense's, a think tank dedicated to better metropolitan integration throughout Greater Rio, annual Fórum Rio conference. According to Dudu, any time there is “something to do with graffiti or youth” at IM, the immediate response is now “call Dudu.” Dudu sees his role in this partnership as “bringing the community to the university,” especially the molecada that participate in Instituto Enraizados so that they feel like “that space (ambiente) is also a space for them.”

In our first meeting, Dudu and Jean Caio (nicknamed Babu) came to Alexandre’s office on the third floor of IM’s administrative building to discuss the film with Alexandre, Claudia—Alexandre’s administrative assistant with a PhD in Education—and me. I was immediately struck by their style. Dudu, wearing a baseball cap and baggy T-shirt looked like a familiar rapper from my youth—he has been rapping since the 1990s—while Babu looked more like the young cats—bleach blonde hair, nose and ear piercings, a bit of a skater-boy vibe.
They looked just as cool as the Enraziados website—hip and professional. As Alexandre and Claudia rallied off their seemingly infinite number of ideas, Dudu tried to stick to logistics. How many days of filming would we do? How long did we want the final product to be? What equipment did the university have? And perhaps most importantly, was there a script for this film? Though he seemed intrigued by the idea of a film related to the Duke-IM project, as someone who had previously created short documentary films, Dudu astutely pointed to the root issue at hand: what exactly would we be documenting?

The film seemed almost like an afterthought, or for the optimistic John and Alexandre, a cherry on top of a sundae, perhaps one served to someone whose eyes were bigger than their stomach. The collaborative team had already spent two of the project’s three weeks in an intensive, and at times downright exhausting, attempt to learn as much about the Baixada as one could in such a short period of time. Between presentations from faculty at IM working on the Baixada like Lúcia da Silva and Álvaro Nascimento, the entire Duke-IM team would hop on a university van and spend full days visiting sites throughout the region: a Movimento Sem Terra settlement in the rural frontier between Duque de Caxias and Nova Iguaçu, the Tinguá National Forest preserve, the Museu
Vivo do São Bento community museum, the private university UNIGRANRIO as well as the samba school Beija Flor in Nilopolis. And on the weekends the Duke group would travel down to Rio to enjoy the city’s beaches and cultural offerings, such as a tour of Rio’s “Little Africa” Port region with my friend and former roommate Kelly. Those who practiced capoeira even ventured with Katya Wesolowki—a Duke cultural anthropology professor, co-director of the project with John, and capoeira instructor—to one of her mestre’s homes in Niterói across the Guanabara Bay.

Much like our hectic, all-be-it semi-structured, research agenda, plans for the film flurried between John, Alexandre, and Claudia: we’ll film a sing-along in the van showcasing both US and Brazilian music, we need footage of everyone eating together in the university’s bandejão (cafeteria), let’s throw an event and invite all of the student groups on campus and the Duke Capoeira Crazies can even do a roda de capoeira. As the film’s co-director, much of the planning for the film fell to me, though I wanted to make collective decisions because in these early stages I had yet to take ownership of the film as my, however collaborative, project. It was John and Alexandre’s idea, I was just going to implement it. Dudu
similarly stated that the film’s artistic vision should be the team’s, or, more specifically mine, as he insisted on calling me “diretora” from then on.

A few days before the filming, we held a team meeting to develop a schedule and discuss our collective vision for the film. After Dudu introduced himself and Instituto Enraizados, Gray, the other Duke graduate student coordinator for the project, asked Alexandre what his vision for the film was seeing that it was his idea originally, leading the group to laugh a bit at the irony of the meeting. Although Dudu and I constantly discussed what exactly our end product would be during the process of editing the film, when listening over the audio-recording of that meeting, themes that would later appear in the 30-minute cut had already emerged. Alexandre stated that he wanted a film that “could present the idea of this project...showing the potential of research done in this type of way, collective, inter-institutional, and with an international connection that automatically brings with it a comparative perspective.” He also wanted a film that would focus on the “issue of youth” and would show the university, which historically in Brazil has been an institution of the elite, as “a space of discovery and a space of possibilities, of realizing potentials.” Katya noted that these questions of the role of the university should first and foremost
be centered around issues of access to higher education in the Baixada, since it was this youth from the periphery, who, as Dudu pointed out, often “stop studying after high school.” For Carla, an IM literature student, families and the support that they offer to their children attending universities—many of whom are the first generation to do so—should be another focus. Yago, a IM law student, and John highlighted issues of university students’ perceptions and experiences of class, race, and gender. We agreed that we would use the Duke-IM research project’s interview protocol with a few modifications to speak more directly to the project in our filmed interviews with students from both universities. We even went so far as conceptualizing the editing of the many interviews together, with Rodrigo, a IM literature student, imaging “a single polyphonic narrative” once people’s responses were filmed. Dudu’s central concern, as it had been from the start, was the director, namely me, would ensure that the film would not “be in his style” (sair com a minha cara).
With a focus on my collaboration with Dudu de Morro Agudo to make the 30 minute documentary, “The Cost of Opportunity,” this chapter is concerned with how, following Black feminist Brazilianists Gladys L. Mitchell-Walthour and Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman, “self-reflexivity and positionality impact transnational dialogues and knowledge production” (2016, 2). My collaboration with Dudu crossed differences in gender, class, and national identity, though our
shared interest in the Black diaspora enabled us to frequently *trocar uma ideia*, or exchange thoughts, to continually construct solidarity. During the process of editing the film, Dudu and I continually discussed for whom and to what end we were making the film and how being able to constantly think about the process together helped us to repeatedly refine how we sought to answer those question. As a middle-class, second generation on both sides college graduate, mixed-race Black woman from an affluent Chicago suburb with very little filmmaking experience, I was both excited and nervous about the opportunity to tell a story about the UFRRJ-IM students in a new medium. I was also incredibly apprehensive about the implications of me, together with Dudu, being the ones to tell that story. As Behar (1996) and others have noted (Pratt 2008; Ellis 2004), one’s own positionality—what Mignolo would call one’s “locus of enunciation” (W. D. Mignolo 2009)—and disciplinary gaze impacts not only the methodological process—access to certain spaces/ people, the types of questions scholars as in their research and of their interview subjects, etc.—but also the process of analysis and the form of knowledge production. As with many African American researchers in Brazil, I am cognizant of how “the economic and cultural position of the United States in the world leads to unequal power
relationships that shape [my] access to education and information,” (Hordge-Freeman and Mitchell-Walthour 2016, 181). Thus, I attempt to constant examine how perceived racial solidarity impacted my knowledge production as a form of “transnational dialogue” in pursuit of an emancipatory political project for those peripheralized in both the US and Brazil. Though these issues have been present throughout my academic career, and similarly emerge in my journalistic writing for RioOnWatch, the collaborative process of making the film and its subsequent goal to reach audiences outside of the academy, particularly other young, poor, black and brown people in the periphery, underscores the attention I pay in this chapter to analyzing my own positionality in trying to tell but one story of, with, and for youth in the Baixada Fluminense as part of a larger project that celebrates the transnational narrative territoriality of this same youth.

Thus, this chapter expands upon and questions my own use of autoethnography throughout this dissertation. This questioning stems in part from two widely used definitions of the term “autoethnography.” For Mary Louis Pratt (2008, 7)—often accredited with coining the term—the “auto” and the “ethno” in question are one in the same, and through the use of this particular form of “graphy” “colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways
that *engage with* the colonizer’s own terms” (2008 [1994], 7, italics in the original).

Thus, Pratt asserts: “If ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations” (2008, 7). This autoethnography is “usually addressed both to metropolitan readers and to literate sectors of the speaker’s own social group” (Pratt 2008, 7–8). In a second definition, the “auto” in question is the researcher who may not be of the “ethno” group in question and autoethnography is, as pioneered by scholars like Carolyn Ellis, “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)” (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011, 273). For Ellis, Adam, and Bochner, autoethnography is “both [a] process and [a] product” that “acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher’s influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don’t exist” (Ellis, Adams, and Bochner 2011, 274). Reed-Danahay believes this double meaning strengthens the possibilities of autobiography as both a method and a product. That “either self (auto) ethnography or an autobiographical (auto)
ethnography can be signaled by "autoethnography" speaks to the ways in which autoethnography," according to Reed-Danahay, functions as a method and product “with which to question the binary conventions of a self/society split, as well as the boundary between the objective and the subjective” (Reed-Danahay 1997, 2). The power dynamics between filmmaker and filmed subjects are no less problematic than those between ethnographer, auto or otherwise, as writer and the “ethno” subject. This was a central aspect of my critique of *Waste Land*, a film which, “uses [Muniz’s] compassion as an excuse for social pornography” (Godmilow 2002), and envisions “media empowerment” as the only way to change the lives of the *catadores* regardless of their own politic mobilization, or whether they wanted their lives changed or not (Rangan 2011).

Indeed, anthropologic filmmaking has its own parallel genealogy of autoethnography, beginning with anthropologists Worth and Adair’s 1966 *Navajo Film Themselves* project (Ginsburg 1999). Vietnamese filmmaker Trinh T Minh-Ha underscores these parallels bluntly:

I think that whether you look at a film, attend a slide show, listen to a lecture, witness the fieldwork by either an expert anthropologist or by any person subjected to the authority of anthropological discourse, the problems of subject and of power relationship are there. They saturate the entire field of anthropological activity. (Minh-ha 1992)
The collaborative process of making the film and subsequent screenings of it in high schools and youth projects throughout Rio underscored the ways in which documentary film, through the interplay of moving picture and, in our case, interviews with and photographs of UFFRJ-IM students, “claim the pedigree of the real and all the attributes and privileges of the real,” in a way that continues to force me to re-evaluate how my own knowledge production, in whatever medium, does the same (Godmilow 2002).

My discussion of the collaborative process of editing the film also serves as a way of analyzing the film itself. I hope to scrutinize some of the choice we made, not objectively, but reflexively. Dudu and I made many of our choices on the fly, especially in the final month before the scheduled March 27, 2017, premiere at a conference at Duke dedicate to the project. Sixteen IM students, faculty, and staff members, as well as Dudu, traveled to the Duke for another intensive 8 days of preparation for the conference. And Dudu and I, due in part to technical difficulties, worked very much down to the wire. While I am ultimately very proud of what we produced, especially because the film has been so well received by the team, I am interested in the ways in which analyzing the
production process can reveal about the final product. Because we did not make
the film linearly, my analysis of it will also not follow the narrative arch of the
final product. Similarly, because we had so much footage, that we both found
wonderful and compelling, here I will reflect a bit more on quotes that we
ultimately did not use in the film, and why that may be for strategic reasons but
also as a matter of happenstance.

4.1 Filming: Becoming a Diretora

Thanks to Katya’s proactive engagement with many of the women who worked
in the cafeteria at the Diocese of Nova Iguaçu where the Duke team was housed
over the course of the June 2016 field visit, we learned that one of the cooks,
Edna, had a daughter studying history at IM. We immediately thought
interviewing her and others parents alongside their chidlren would add another
layer to the film. Since we were going to do all of the filming in one day, the most
that the project could afford to pay Dudu and his crew for their work, we
encouraged IM students to invite their parents to campus to also be interviewed.
Although the details of what exactly we were documenting had not been
completely finalized—we knew, however, that we would not include the much-
hyped send-off party due to lack of organizing—we were especially excited about how the parents, who we had yet to interview in our more formal research, viewed the impact of having UFRRJ-IM in the Baixada.

On the day of the filming, the last Friday before the Duke team’s departure on the following Sunday, I woke up anxious about how the day would unfold. I hoped that Dudu’s technical expertise would make up for my lack of knowledge about filmmaking. However, I also knew from our informal interviews that the basic premise of the film, of the struggles and sacrifices of reaching and remaining in a university, made for a compelling story. I simply worried whether I should be the one to tell it. As Behar asserts in her reflections on the discipline of anthropology, “nothing is stranger than this business of humans observing other humans in order to write about them” (Behar 1996, 4). Though issues of how to conduct critical research with and from subaltern communities had informed much of my academic training (C. Walsh 2007b; W. D. Mignolo 2011), something about making a film, about producing in another medium something that could be widely circulated, heighten my anxieties about that “strange business.” Curiously, I had not had those same anxieties about writing for RioOnWatch. I was happy and proud whenever one of my pieces was
shared on social media, and thanks to both Facebook’s and RioOnWatch’s analytics, I knew exactly how much any given piece had been shared or liked, and often by whom. I think in part my self-doubt stemmed from my understanding of the film, and documentary film more generally, as a medium somewhat in between academic and blog writing, in that documentaries are “an instrument of publicly shared knowledge” (Godmilow 2002, 3). The methods of many documentaries—interviews, participant observation—mirror those of the social sciences, though as publicly facing products, especially when made available on such platforms as Youtube as ours eventually was, they mirror the click and share driven media of the internet. I wanted to make something that drew from and reflected the research project from which it emerged, something academically rigorous. I also wanted to make something that people, *thumbs-up*, liked.

At 7 a.m., Dudu arrived at the Diocese with his crew of four young filmmakers, one of whom was his daughter, Beatriz, who he told me had a very good photographic eye. Babu and Albert (or Einstein NRC by his rap name) oversaw the audio and the crew’s Go-Pro camera. I was tasked with seeking out locations for interviews to have a variety of scenes so the film would not feel like
a static image of changing talking-heads. We began filming during breakfast at the Diocese, showcasing the Duke group’s commitment to language emerging as we all conversed in Portuguese. We were not merely acting for the camera, John, Katya, Gray, and I insisted from the beginning that Portuguese would be the whole team’s primary language of communication during the site visit. However, I do not remember what we discussed as I nervously ate breakfast hoping that we would get the footage we needed, even though I still was not quite sure for what.

“What’s next, diretora?” By continually referring to me as “diretora,” Dudu nudged me into fully assuming the role. Though we did not know exactly what we would be documenting that day, we did need to know how we were going to do it. The basic process was more or less clear: I would pick a relatively seclude spot for the interview—we conducted some at the Diocese and others on the IM Campus—and Dudu would set up the camera tripod while he held one microphone and Babu held another in case of ambient noise. Bea, Dudu’s daughter, mostly took supplemental photos. Then, from behind the camera I would conduct the interviews with the Duke-IM team and with IM students’ parents. Due to her ethnographic expertise, charisma, and envy-inducing carioca
sotaque for a gringa, Katya often sat beside me to help with the flow of the interviews. Prior to setting the cameras to record, I would tell the interviewees that it was important for them to repeat the idea of the question—“I was born...”, “my high school education was...”, “a university in the Baixada is important ...”—because the questions themselves would not appear in the final cut. I had already edited myself out of the film before the cameras even started recording.

We first interviewed Edna and her daughter Luana between Edna’s breakfast and lunch shifts in the Diocese’s kitchen. I picked what looked like a quiet spot at the end of a long open hallway. After we set up the tripod and everyone got into a position to record and respond, Dudu said “take um”—for “take one,” pronounced “take-y”—and the filming began. The interview went well, with me alternating between asking Luana and Edna questions, and Katya pursuing some follow up questions. But then we began to hear the not so distant sound of a box saw. From the annoyance of that one sound, I became more aware of the ambient noises around: cars honking and passing in the street below, people chatting in the park across from the Diocese, dogs barking. Dudu, too, seemed a bit concerned with the sudden explosion, or our sudden awareness, of
all the noise around us. We moved the table back a bit, hoping to decrease the
echo of the box saw in the open hallway, and Babu switched to the other side of
the camera so his microphone would not be facing the source of the sound. Dudu
ensured me that the sound quality would be fine, so we carried on with what
turned out to be the first of many remarkable interviews.

Figure 18: Filming Rodrigo’s interview
As the day progressed, other first-hand lessons in filmmaking presented themselves. “Oh, diretora, the shade from this tree is creating a glare on Malu’s mom’s nose;” “cars will keep making a lot of barulho (noise) as they pass over that speedbump over there;” “diretora, this shot is too dark from this angle.” I would only learn later that how Dudu was interacting with me was an extension of the methodology he uses working with young people at Enraizados. As with his RapLab, where Dudu visits classrooms throughout Rio’s periphery to teach students to create a rap song in 3 hours about whatever topic the teacher is interested in the time, ranging from dengue to police brutality, Dudu took a learn-by-doing approach to working with me, his untrained “diretora.” When I later read Dudu’s book, Enraizados: Os híbridos Glocais, published in 2010 by Aeroplano as part of a Tramas Urbanas collection curated by literary critic Heloisa Buarque de Hollanda, it was evident that this was Dudu’s approach to many of his endeavours. Upon discovering Brazilian rap music in the 1990’s, for example, he wanted to learn more about it by writing to prominent names he came across in hip-hop magazine, but since Dudu was then a self-proclaimed “guy without a history in the world of hip-hop” he feared no one would reply (de Morro Agudo 2010, 61). Undeterred in his own telling, he “had no more doubts” and wrote
saying he was part of “Movimento Enraizados, an organization with the goal of connecting hip-hop artists throughout Brazil,” (de Morro Agudo 2010, 62.) He created the movement with those first letters, and he created his “diretora” by continually asking for my input on where we should shoot even when I thought I had none to give. His applied learning praxis remains a contagious aspect of his personality, and certainly enabled me to assume the role of “diretora.”

I was also grateful for Katya’s presence. Though I had already conducted several semi-structured interviews for my master’s thesis and dissertation research, as part of the Duke-UFRRJ-IM team, and less formal ones for my writing for RioOnWatch, having Katya assist in some of the interviews took some of the pressure off me in this new-found role of “diretora.” Her years as an experienced cultural anthropologist made her more attuned to the types of follow-up questions that should be asked for a constructive interview, whereas I was more concerned with being able to film all of the interviews in that one day alone. Looking back on the individual interviews, it was Katya who asked Gabi’s mother, Maria, the follow up question about her own educational trajectory—which we eventually used in the film—while I had asked a much more general question about her life—which we did not. She also conducted the entire
interview with Debora and her father while I took a break and worked briefly with Beatriz and Babu to find some more B-roll for the film. In that regard, even the interviewing was very collaborative, with a veteran anthropologist showing me the ropes as I struggled to come to my own as both a burgeoning qualitative researcher and filmmaker. Katya reminded me that great interviews, be they for data or for film, ask that the interviewer “reach [the] hidden sides—sides that are undoubtedly large and consequential, not only for the individual, but also for the social order” by listening and probing for meaning (Hermanowicz 2002, 490). During the process of editing, Dudu and I eventually came to refer to Debora as the star of our film and this was in no small part due to Katya’s skills as an interviewer to elicit great responses.

4.2 Editing: Making “O Custo da Oportunidade”

When I came here I was about 8 years old, I’ve lived in the same place for 55 years, more or less, in the Baixada Fluminense. And when I was a kid I thought it was good, I didn’t understand anything and didn’t think there were so many problems. I went to school here, I went to high school at Area Leão [a Rio State engineering high school], which just had its 50th anniversary. My siblings and I were practically the founders of Area Leão, the first class. And, I think about leaving this place, because the difficulties in the Baixada are so great. There are things that haven’t gotten any better over the years. But there’s this feeling
that I was raised here, I first got registered and I’ve voted here for years, but the problems here are the Baixada. I think nobody cares about the Baixada. We’re forgotten. But I like it, I like it.
- Almerinda Lucia dos Santos

I think, I think and I am sure that this campus here was very important for the Baixada Fluminense.
- Irene Bezerra da Silva Alexandre

In total we conducted 13 interviews - 6 with the Duke students, 3 with IM students, and 4 with IM students alongside one of their parents. We had nearly 5 hours of interview footage alone, as most lasted 30-minutes onto themselves.

Beginning at the end of September of 2016—I traveled back to the US shortly after filming in July to renew my visa—Dudu and I began to meet regularly to edit the film. Though he had already dubbed me his diretora during our 10 plus hours of filming, our collaboration and friendship truly began to flourish during this editing process. Our first few meetings were at CISANE (Centro de Integração Social Amigos de Nova Era), a community-based project in the Jardim Nova Era neighborhood of Nova Iguaçu. Taking the train from Central to the center of Nova Iguaçu and then a bus to Nova Era brought home the geological name of the Baixada Fluminense: the neighborhood, almost aggressively flat, sits at the base of small quarried mountain that occupies much of Nova Iguaçu’s land mass. Dudu was working on moving Instituto Enraizados to a new location in
the center of Morro Agudo, his home neighborhood and namesake in Nova Iguaçu, and he even introduced me to the space through Google maps. Babu was occasionally at CISANE while Dudu and I met, and the Enraizados’s logo of three multiracial heads wearing headphones and narrow sunglasses had been spray painted on ones of the walls, but you could tell that it was no longer the home base that Dudu wanted for Enraizados. As he took me on the virtual tour, his enthusiasm for the space that he hoped to create was palpable. He would bring a similar enthusiasm to the process of making the film.

We dedicated those first few meetings at CISANE to thinking about how we wanted to go about editing the film. We felt that only by watching the footage together would we be able to answer the central questions of creating the film: what film are we making? Who is this film for and why is it being made? Who is our prospective audience? After three meetings at CISANE, we eventually moved to the new Enraizados building in the center of Morro Aguduo. There, while we watched all thirteen interviews together, I also watched as Dudu constructed a new home for his organization. Because I was also trying to pick up at least the rudimentary skills of editing film, I watched Dudu watching the interviews almost as much as I watched the interviews themselves. We both took
notes, but Dudu would draw his out on a large piece of paper, linking quotes from one interviewee with arrows and little doodles. My notes looked like a chicken scratch outline, and they worked for me, but I was nevertheless interested in his creative process. He had already made one short documentary, *Mães do hip-hop* (*Mothers of Hip-Hop*), as well as written a number of rap songs, many of which had accompanying music videos.

Feeling a bit inspired by our early meetings, and aware that John and Alexandre were anxious to know what we were working on, I went so far as to edit a short 2:30 minutes trailer for the film. Using the very basic editing software that came with my laptop, I tried to lay out, with my minimal knowledge of said software, the elements of the film that I thought would be important: the Baixada as a forget place through the words of lifelong resident Almerinda Lúcia dos Santos, Guilherme’s mother; the concept of the research project and questions of access to opportunity by quoting Brazilian born Duke student John Victor; and the idea of the university as a site, however entwined with Eurocentric forms of knowledge production (C. Walsh 2007b), of personal opportunity and the forging of collective “intellectual, political, and ethical projects” through the words of UFRRJ-IM history student Luana (C. Walsh 2007b). Though visually
choppy and with uneven audio levels, this short exercise in editing a well-received trailer among the group allowed me to better reckon with what I was to bring to this collaboration with Dudu. Namely, a sense of the larger research project and skills as a storyteller that John and others had already recognized and that I had been cultivating primarily through my writings for RioOnWatch. And like Dudu’s act of creating Movimento Enraizados through his letters to rap artists throughout Brazil and the “laboratory of experimentation” he cultivates in his RapLab, the process allowed me to “have no more doubts” that I was the co-diretora.
Figure 19: A *mutirão*, or collective undertaking, at the Enraizado’s headquarters. Beyond editing the film, Dudu was also reforming the space.

As we watched the interviews, Dudu and I both continually marveled at the sheer wealth of material we had. We began the editing process by establishing themes based on the interview questions—education trajectory, migration, etc.—and then cut the longer individual interviews and grouped the responses together around the chosen themes. Dudu and I had several moments of serendipitously simultaneous thinking. In one of our first viewing sessions, we both, for example, wrote down separately that we wanted Irene, Malu’s mother,
saying “flap your wings and fly” to end the film. Upon re-watching the film, I always smile at the fact that you can hear a bit of Dudu’s laughter as she finishes speaking right before the credits roll. Later, we did encounter a few obstacles. I very much wanted to use one quote from Debora’s father, Paulo, about his personal trajectory, but because we had filmed him and Debora in front of the infamous speed bump, poor audio quality meant we could not use much of his interview. We also lost a scene of the entire team reflecting on that day of filming for the same reason. Thinking about it now, I doubt we would have used it within the film because the round table format was such a departure from the other interviews, though it may have been useful for researcher purposes like this one. I am, however, a bit relieved that the footage of me crying in that meeting due to my emotional investment in the project, and sheer exhaustion from that day, no longer exists, at least in my archive. The quality of the footage and the narrative we hoped to create both determined the film that we would ultimately make.

We could have easily made several 30-minute films: one about the collaborative nature of the project highlighting both Duke and IM’s innovative collaborative approach, one comparing intergenerational educational trajectories
in both countries as many of the Duke students who participated in the project were themselves first generation college students, one about the stigmatization of the Baixada Fluminense. I was reluctant to make a film about the project itself since I found a propaganda film for Duke’s large investment in fostering “global citizenship,” however genuine, to not be very compelling, and certainly there were people at Duke already employed to do just that. Although Alexandre and John had discussed a collaborative project for years, the funding for such a project did not emerge until Duke received two large grants: a Mellon Humanities Writ Large grant that went in part to funding the 3-year, interdisciplinary Global Brazil Lab; and a gift from the Bass family that generated the campus wide, vertical research “Bass Connections” model through which “Duke is channeling its unique culture of collaboration, ambitious entrepreneurial spirit and established record of applying classroom learning to pressing global problems, to create a distinctive new model for education,” (“About Bass Connections | Bass Connections” n.d.). The Duke-IM project received funding from both sources, and falls under the Bass Connection’s “Education and Human Development” umbrella theme. In fact, during the planning meeting for the film, John emphasized that though Duke was a “super
elite university” with “billions of dollars in its coffers,” that our goal was to make a film that “can be used here [in the Baixada] to highlight the project.” While numerous researchers, artists, and activists from both the Global North and South have reflected on the ways in which appeals to European universals in knowledge production impact cross cultural dialogues and artistic collaborations (Gómez-Peña and Levin 2011; C. Walsh 2001; Behar 1993; Quijano 2000a), the Duke-IM project and the film also had the potential to reproduce its corollary: the “white savoir” practice of international volunteerism and service learning.

As Hordge-Freeman notes in her reflections on developing a study abroad program in Salvador for the University of South Florida: “the truly transformative potential of global citizenship and community engagement can be co-opted by programs that promote new forms of imperialistic relations that dismiss the actual needs of local communities,” (Hordge-Freeman 2016, 44).

I am not arguing that Bass or Duke necessarily have these ends, but that we were always mindful of the power and “imperialistic relations” that such a project could potentially produce given Duke’s large financial and human capital investment. In fact, Eric Barstow, videographer for Duke’s Franklin Humanities Institute, which housed the Global Brazil Lab, did make a short, four-minute
promotional video for the project featuring professors John French and Katya Wesolowski and undergraduate linguistic major Adair Necalli. As Katya makes clear: “In our early discussions about this bass project, John and I were emphatic that we wanted it to be collaborative with the Brazilian students, that we did not want our students to go there and feel that they were going to solve the problem of higher education,” (Duke Franklin Humanities Institute 2016). In working with Dudu, and continually seeking input from the Duke-IM team, I envisioned a film that was similarly “collaborative,” one that could use the background of the project to discuss a number of issues related to access to higher education particularly in the Baixada, but also more generally for historically underrepresented populations in both countries.

Much like the Duke team was wary of reproducing “imperialistic relations,” given the obvious financial disparity between the two universities that served to underscore unequal historical and disciplinary power relations between the Global North and the Global South, I too was wary of reproducing what filmmaker Jill Godmilow calls “Nanook problems” (2002, 8), in reference to Robert Flaherty’s 1922, problematic but still widely influential documentary *Nanook of the North*. That is, I was hesitant of the ways in which the documentary
filmmaker “dumb[s]-down, in a particular, ideological way” the lives of others, especially poor, non-Western others, to arrive at some audiovisual “documentary pedigree of truth” (Godmilow 2002, 8). On the one hand, while I admit that I did not read much documentary film theory prior to making O custo da oportunidade, other than articles that I had encountered throughout my graduate career, Godmilow and others’ insights mirrored methodological anxieties that informed my other research practices. On the other hand, I believe Godmilow would place O custo da oportunidade squarely among other “classical documentary films” rather than her preferred medium as an artist of “non-fiction film” (Godmilow 2002). I did not, for example, apply her call to “reframe the footage” in order to make the “spectator self-conscious of the medium, self-conscious of the desire to stare, self-conscious of his/her perplexed pleasure in humiliating images of the other, self-conscious of his/her class position vis-a-vis those portrayed” (Godmilow 2002, 9). Dudu and I did discuss the aesthetics of the film, but not in terms of “kill[ing] the documentary as we know it,” due in part to a desire to make something that would be easily consumable and liked. Even as I write this, knowing that I, Dudu, the IM-Duke team, and others have enjoyed the film, I worry that I, however slightly or egregiously despite my best intentions,
produced what Godmilow calls “social pornography,” and that I continue to re-
produce it in the medium of this dissertation (Godmilow 2002). But then again,
we also wanted those Facebook likes and shares.

Having spent 3 years off-and-on living in Rio and conducting field
research, I was forced to think about these power dynamics in very real, personal
ways. In conducting my masters research on collective titling following the
quilombo model in Rio’s favelas, one male president of a favela residents’
association accused me of simply “treating him as rat in a laboratory.” I contend
that his reaction in part stems from my rejection of his romantic advances in
conversations following our interview—an issue that many female researchers
have experienced (Hanson and Richards 2017). The rather hurtful conversation
nonetheless did highlight how my Blackness does not “presuppose solidarity”
(Gillam 2016, 103), nor does it negate the power relations between middle class
North American and Rio favela resident, woman and man, and researcher and
informant (Goulart and Calvet 2017). Much of my anxieties about being the
“diretora,” stemmed precisely from my positionality. Unlike many of the other
Duke students, let alone IM students, I am not a first-generation college
graduate; in deed both my parents possess advanced degrees—my father in law
and my mother in education. Yet, I suppose among both groups of students, I was the most disposed to assume the role: I had just received FLAS funding to continue my dissertation research in Rio, and while I did not necessarily want to make a promotional video for Duke, or IM for that matter, I was aware of certain institutional demands, or what John might refer to as my “patron-client” obligations.

A comparative film, while potentially more interesting, would have required a lot of background information about the different university systems within and between both countries and how those differences affect access to higher education for historically marginalized group that perhaps would not fit into the 30 minutes we had in mind. In fact, during one of our joint viewing sessions, Dudu and I had discussed making John Victor, a Duke undergraduate majoring in Visual Studies and Economics, the central figure of the film. John Victor was born in Pernambuco, a state in Brazil’s northeast from which many residents of the Baixada migrated, and moved to the US when he was an infant. Over the course of the three weeks, as the Duke team shared our own experiences of higher education with our Brazilian counterparts, John Victor’s story stood out for its ability to bridge the groups. Speaking in his still intact
Pernambucan accent, on several occasions he told us how as a child who had immigrated to the United States with his Portuguese-speaking parents he would sit down with them at the kitchen table to do his homework and teach them the language he too was learning. I made sure to ask him about this during the filmed interviews, knowing it could potentially make for great affective content, and whenever Dudu and I re-watched the interview with John Victor, Dudu’s eye would sparkle and he’d say, “I’m a fan of his.”

This was one of the hardest parts of editing: I was a fan of everyone. We had spent 3 weeks together engaging socially, intellectually, and at times not doing much of anything except being in each other’s presence. While not every Duke or IM student participated in every talk or outing to the cowboy-themed restaurant Sheriff in downtown Nova Iguaçu, we established an intimacy for each other and the project that was evident even to Dudu who at that point had only taken part in one day of filming and a handful of meetings. I wanted to bring to the screen the friendships that people had forged during those 3 weeks. I wanted to draw attention to the similarities in narratives of migration—the transnational migration of many of our Duke students’ parents to the US and the internal migration of the IM students’ Northeastern parents. I wanted to
highlight the different experiences of getting admitted to a university—the US, where students interested in attending elite universities often begin developing their resumes through a so-called well-rounded plethora of extracurricular activities in their early teens, and Brazil, where entrance into a specific university program comes down to a single test, the Enem or the vestibular of specific universities—and how both processes perpetuate historic inequality.

Thus, creating the film made me grapple with another methodological concern as a researcher, one that, while I had thought about it often in the late-night hours of transcribing, became more apparent to me due to the audiovisual nature of film: editing quotes. Though technology has refined audiovisual editing such that sound levels can be mixed to give the semblance that two separate spoken passages are one, film generally renders the editing of quotes much more apparent than they are in a written text. We can hear and sometimes see when someone starts and stops speaking, when the scene cuts to a different speaker, when they smile or laugh or cry or become speechless. One edits a film for both narrative cohesion and affect. One edits the quotes of an interviewee in an ethnographic text for similar reasons, but the process of doing so is much less transparent to the reader or even to the writer themselves. As Bischoping asserts,
for the ethnographer, “[m]uch is known about how she does and should design research, conduct interviews, and analyze data. Yet with few exceptions, her editing processes are ignored by methodologists. What is it that is left on the ethnographer’s cutting room floor, and why?” (2005, 142). That Bischoping uses the film metaphor is telling; much is cut, “ums” and “likes” are removed for clarity, or ellipses serve to indicate a break, who knows of how many words or even transcribed pages, in speech. Writers combine interviewees into a composite informant in order to maintain anonymity or may leave quotes from a given interviewee out of a published work entirely.

And because the film was an extension of a very intimate collaborative process, it worried me to have to turn to Adair, or Mitchel, or Adriana, upon the film’s completion and say they “had no good soundbites” (Bischoping 2005). And even when they had “good soundbites,” given that filmed speech is a time dependent medium unlike texts, I could not edit all of them into the finish project. People would see that I had left them out of a project that we were all working on.

While I understood this conceptually, it was nice to be working with Dudu for his pragmatism in this instance. He told me about his prior experience
making Mães do Hip-Hop. They initially had many more interviews with the hip-hop artists themselves, and the intention was not to focus on the mothers per se, but in the process of editing, the narrative of the mothers emerged. Dudu could not use all the interviews he had, even the good ones, because they no longer fit into the narrative centered around the mothers, and because he was fearful that too many people talking would further muddle the narrative. He wanted to make sure that the audience knew who the people were on screen and how they related to one another, both through onscreen text, but primarily through how the film was cut. He was not as sentimental as I was if that meant cutting someone out of our film.

Ultimately, both Dudu and I wanted to make a film that would speak to the youth that he works with at Enraizados, the youth from the periphery that far too often proclaim that they “have already stopped studying,” as Dudu notes. In re-watching the interviews, we noticed that many of the IM students had similar life histories: they were largely children or grandchildren of people who had migrated from Brazil’s Northeast; they were the first in their families to attend university; they had attended public schools where their education was, as Luana describes it, “basic and quite weak;” they had limited access to exam prep
courses; even if they were admitted, they would need to spend hours commuting to any of the other public universities throughout metropolitan Rio; they felt that attending university had changed their outlook on life, had made them “citizens;” they wanted to become public school teachers to give back. My use of “they” here refers to the IM students. To some extent, by focusing the film on the issue of access to higher education in the Baixada as “a case study” of expansion in Brazil and the rest of the world, as Alexandre calls it, we were forced to eliminate almost all responses from the Duke students. We did use two, the one from John Victor and another from Jessica; but ultimately we opted for the “single polyphonic narrative” that Rodrigo had envisioned during that early planning meeting. As John had mentioned, the primary goal of our film was something that “can be used here [in the Baixada] to highlight the project,” and for both Dudu and I, this meant a film grounded in the responses of the IM students and their parents.

All of the IM students and parents we interviewed for the film cited the proximity of the campus as a determining factor in their decision to study at UFRRJ-IM. This is not surprising for people’s whose daily lives have been defined by mass transportation, in a region that starts historically, figuratively,
and phenomenologically at Central do Brasil. When thinking about the dictating role that transportation plays in people’s lives, Dudu was blown away by the story of Carla and her mother Maria. Carla is a literature major at UFRRJ-IM, but this was actually her second undergraduate degree; she had obtained her first in journalism from PUC-Rio (The Pontifical Catholic University of Rio). PUC-Rio, a private institution, is one of the most renowned universities not only in Brazil, but in the Americas. Typically, in our study or even when people discuss the difference between private and public universities in Brazil, the PUCs are differentiated, as they are not for-profit universities and are committed to both teaching and research. Like elite, private institutions in the US, PUCs are expensive, and while Carla was a bolsista, meaning she received a bolsa, or fellowship, to attend, it did not cover the extra costs associated with commuting to the university and meals throughout the day. There was also the cost to their family life. Once Carla started at PUC, Maria felt compelled to find a job “lá em

14 It is not uncommon for students to obtain a second bachelor’s degree if they are interested in switching careers. Students can earn a licenciatura, or teaching qualification, in academic disciplines like literature and mathematics, while disciplines like journalism and law are viewed as professional degrees requiring internships. All disciplines, whether geared toward education and academia or other profession, carry a more professional weight than they do in the US, with graduates of a discipline frequently identifying themselves with the title in a way commonly reserved for advance degree holders. “I am a historian/anthropologist,” was a common way people would introduce themselves even if they worked in only tangentially related fields.
"baixo," or down in Rio, so that they could at least commute together. They would leave the house as early as 3:30am, a potentially dangerous hour for anyone, let alone a young woman to be out, and even though she only worked until five pm, Maria would wait for Carla until 8pm at Central do Brasil so they could take the train back together. What impressed Dudu and I even more was that they eventually decided to move to Rio for Carla’s last three years of university. Although an exceptional case—Dudu would often describe it as “doido,” or crazy, in admiration—the financial and emotional burden of attending any of the other universities in Greater Rio were repeated in all the interviews.

While bolsistas and other low income or affirmative action admitted students do have the right to a free transport card, the benefits are only valid within the municipality of Rio and cannot be used on trains, the metro, or intermunicipal buses. That this was mandated by state law demonstrates a clear disregard for university students throughout Metropolitan Rio, and especially those in the Baixada. Because Carla, Debora, and Debora’s father Luis mentioned the burdens of commuting to attend universities outside of the Baixada—an experienced burden in the case of Carla attending PUC and a deterrent in the case of Debora who considered attending UFF (Federal
Fluminense University) in Niterói or the UFRRJ campus in Seropédica—we wanted to indicate the distances in some way. Alexandre had already mentioned that he had a friend who could do animations, perhaps one showing a plane full of eager Duke students arriving in Rio’s Galeão airport and heading north on the Linha Vermelha toward the Baixada rather than heading south toward Cristo and the beaches like most tourists, or another of migrant parents arriving to the Baixada from the Northeast. But Dudu and I both knew that animation can be time consuming and we worried that it would not fit into the aesthetics of the film, which we knew would ultimately rely on the B-roll we shot and photos from the Duke-IM team. But mostly we did not have time. In the end, our solution was very barebones, with simple scrolling text indicating the distance in kilometers and miles from the center of Nova Iguaçu to the various campuses.

Although Dudu and I constantly reflected on what it meant to make a film that could appeal to young people in the Baixada, and one that would appease our, let’s call them, executive producers John and Alexandre and by extension the Duke Brazil Lab and the Multidisciplinary Institute, once we had a focus on the challenges and aspirations of the IM student and their families, the editing process became rather fluid. As both the study and the film focused on the
impact of having this university campus in the Baixada Fluminense, we first needed to define the region. The issue of transportation was something we edited fairly quickly, but we did not feel like that was the appropriate starting point for the narrative. Perhaps because I had made the trailer early in the editing process, I was adamant about using the quote cited above from Alerminda. To me, Almerinda captures much of the tension, the love and pain, that residents of the Baixada have for the region. It is her center—where she’s been registered to vote her whole life, where she and her siblings were part of the first class of a renowned state engineering high school—but the negligence on the part of the local government has rendered Nova Iguaçu a perpetual periphery, where the problems are so “great” that they simply “are the Baixada.” Despite the residents of the region being “forgotten,” and her “thinking of leaving,” she ends by repeating, “mas gosto, gosto,” “but I like it, I like it.” This is not an afterthought. This is a sliver of the personal experiences that led Forum Grita Baixada, for example, to hold the torch of shame relay. Though she knows the region has entrenched problems, she refuses to stigmatize it and herself. We underscore Almerinda’s love and pain for the region with a description of how “historically, the Baixada has been seen as a violent place, as a precarious place”
from Ana Carolina, a history major who coordinates UFRRJ-IM’s pré-ENEM college entrance exam preparatory course.

While Dudu agreed that Alerminda and Ana Carolina’s descriptions of the Baixada were important to include for context, he thought they were a bit too heavy to begin the film, especially as they did not address the central message that we wanted to get across to a potential audience, that of access to higher education. We wanted an introduction that anticipates the narrative arch of opportunity and achievement that we found in the interviews. Looking back now, I cannot remember exactly why we settled on the quote from Carla to open the film. In the trailer that I had made, I used a similar quote from Luana that ultimately does not appear in it:

When you enter the academic world, many doors open, your perspective on the world changes, and your dreams become even grander. And we feel like we can, regardless of our financial situation, our social position, that yes, we can be something better or provide something better for our families and dream higher. I think university permitted me to feel this way, and now I have even grander dreams than I had before.

This quote from Luana is lovely. My critical side tells me it captures the ethos of the global “corporate university” that prepares the individual to enter the workforce, to dream of a better quality of life (W. Mignolo 2003). It could easily
appear in college brochures the world over. My sentimental side reminds me of the feeling I had the first time I visited and fell for Williams College, or the hope I see in prospective students, undergraduate and graduate student alike, when they snap selfies and family portraits in front of the Duke Chapel. The parents of the students we interviewed all said they had had dreams of attending university, and as poor residents of the stigmatized Northeast and then the stigmatized Baixada, who took up domestic and factory work, they deferred their dreams to their children. We made sure to include a few quotes from the parents in the beginning of the film for this very reason. Not only to establish a chronological narrative arch of parents who came to the Baixada, but also to establish the idea that residents of the Baixada Fluminense had for generations been systematically denied access to “grander dreams.” It is a powerful feeling, this being “permitted” to dream. And this is, in part, the sense of opportunity that the project and film were attempting to simultaneously understand and convey: what does it mean for the periphery to dream? what does the periphery dream of?

But in the final cut, we did not use Luana’s quote, and in this moment of writing I could not tell you why. Dudu and I had no in-depth discussion that I
can recall, though clearly I was not as wedded to it as I was to the quotes from Almerinda and John Victor. I think Carla’s quote is a fantastic start to the film, and it is, undoubtedly, more political, as she sees the university as a site where she became a “more critical person”, a citizen who learnt to “demand things of the government.” But while some decisions in the process seem so clear to me now, others seemed to have happened in the flow of making the film. Perhaps we chose Carla’s quote with John and Alexandre, and our own personal politics in mind, or perhaps, unlike other quotes, I simply I was more willing to trade Luana’s for Carla’s.

Speaking for myself, but knowing that Dudu is also a fan, I very much wanted to keep John Victor’s response quoted at the beginning of this chapter. I like how he speaks with a noticeable Pernambucan accent, but starts with the declaration, “Look, logically I am not from here so I can’t say a lot,” catching the audience off-guard, highlighting his own hybrid positionality, and dialoguing with the accents of Luís and Maria—Debora and Malu’s parents, respectively, both from Pernambuco. I liked how he repeats the word “oportunidade.” I like that you can glimpse his Duke blue t-shirt. I was a fan, and had already biased myself by using this quote in the trailer. But, Dudu and I both felt that this bias
required some exposition. Why was this young man who speaks in a Pernambucan accent but makes a few grammatic mistakes commenting on the importance of this university in the Baixada? I think in part I identify with the quote from John Victor so much because I too logically am not from here, although through the film and this dissertation I do presume to say a lot, hopefully more in dialogue and exchange than in monologue and isolation.

By February—yes, we had started editing the film in late September, but dissertation chapters, grant applications, a pregnant wife, NGO headquarter remodeling, holidays, the lackadaisical pace of having no clear deadline, and carnaval happen—we had a rough cut of the film. We both felt we needed to interview Alexandre so that John Victor’s quote, and another from Jessica that I very much wanted to use, not to mention the abundance of Duke University t-shirts in the B-roll, made sense within the film. The first rough cut we uploaded to Youtube to share with Alexandre and John even had a brief still with “Alexandre Fortes” written on a gray background to indicate where we would insert his remarks. We asked that he talk about the creation of the university, which both he and John had witnessed being built from the ground up, and how that led to the collaborative research project. The rough cut was already about 25
minutes long, so we informed Alexandre that we needed him to keep his response to about 3 minutes, considering that other changes might need to be made and that we’d have to include the credits as well. Alexandre was not exactly known among the Duke-IM team for his breviloquence, another trait he shared with John. I’d say it’s due to them both being historians—Dudu and I often joked with each other that Guilherme’s detailed, long duree responses were a result of his academic training—but such a generalization would not exactly be based on any rigorous analysis, just anecdotal teasing. While I admired and appreciated, and continue to do so, Alexandre’s in-depth takes on a variety of topics, Dudu and I crossed our figures that we would get a usable take.

We met Alexandre and Claudia in IM’s administration building, in the same office where we had all had our first meeting. Because we were indoors—now that I think about it, it’s the only interview we conducted completely indoors, perhaps reinforcing its managerial content and aesthetic in comparison with the rest of the film—we could better avoid the lighting and sound issues that plagued some of our other footage. We needed this take, and we needed it that day, and we needed it to fit those three minutes. And to use the youth parlance of today, Alexandre nailed it, or arrasou in Portuguese. In two minutes
and forty seconds Alexandre discusses his 20 year-long relationship with Duke University and John and how that relationship led to:

an institutional partnership between the two universities, Duke and the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro with the aim being a multidisciplinary project to study the impact of this expansion of access to higher education into this region. A region marked by so much inequality, so much exclusion, so much violence, with a very strong stigma against it.

Although Dudu and I giggled a few times when re-watching the take—it’s as if Alexandre hardly takes a breath during those 2 minute and 40 seconds—to me it was remarkable how well his response fit into the space that we had merely marked with a still of his name.
Noting that the Baixada is “seen as a region that is always, let's say, in the shadows of Rio de Janeiro and that carries with it only the negative aspects of its link with the metropolitan region,” Alexandre ties back to Almerinda and Ana Carolina’s earlier descriptions of the region. Similarly, in discussing the early idea of the collaborative project to investigate the “new reality of opportunity that the campus would bring to young people in the Baixada Fluminense” and it’s potential as a case study of the effects of an expansion in democratic access to free, public education Alexandre seems to directly respond to Luis’s
lamentations that during his time as a youth in Recife in the 1960s, “it was extremely difficult, nearly impossible for a poor young person to go to university.” He also anticipates the quote we use from Jessica, which I thought in her grammatically correct though a bit choppy Portuguese wonderfully illustrated the Duke team’s commitment to a IM student and local context driven collaboration.

Figure 21: Guilherme and his mother Almerinda laughing during filming

Alexandre’s appearance in the film also serves to reveal precisely who has made the film and to what ends. Although the film did not end up being about the research project in and of itself, or at least not about that particular three-
week manifestation of an ongoing project—we exclude, for example, quotes from both IM and Duke students about the experience—we did not set out to obscure that the film was a product of it. I think it is especially important that it is Alexandre, and not John, Katya, or even any of the Duke or IM students, including, John Victor and Jessica, that introduces the film as one of the project’s products and methods of analysis so that the film’s institutional backing and objectives appear in the film. Alexandre is as much the film’s producer, with perhaps a research funding stake in its success, as Dudu and I are its co-directors. While his inclusion may not resolve potential “Nanook problems” within the film, it is an attempt to avoid “the effacement of the filmmakers, or the invisibility of their politics of non-location” (Minh-ha 1992, 113). Alexandre makes it known that this is a transnational research project rooted in his and John’s decades of expertise in Brazilian labor history and carried out through the, again, transnational, exchange of students between both universities. Though Alexandre never directly names former President Lula da Silva, both his personal and academic politics, as then Dean of the Multidisciplinary Institute, are clear in their pursuit to understand “this question of the significance of
expanding the opportunity of access to higher education to the youth of the Baixada Fluminense.”

Prior to including Alexandre, but knowing that we eventually needed to, Dudu and I had discussed a film that could at least subtly speak to the realities of access to higher education in the US, and that’s when we began to focus on Debora’s interview. Debora’s nearly five-minute response to the question of how she arrived at IM is tumultuous, funny, and more typical of the university experience of young people in both countries, especially poor, racialized, and marginalized young people, than is commonly acknowledged. A high school dropout, to use US terminology, Debora felt pressured, not by her parents but by the “ansia de trabalhar,” the anxiety to work. For Dudu, this anxiety to work stemmed from a similar mentality of the youth that declare that they have already stopped studying upon finishing high school. Because entering university has historically been prohibitively difficult due to the rigorous vestibular exams of public universities or prohibitively expensive due the costs of attending a private university, the idea of obtaining a college education rarely
enter in their realm of possibilities, let alone opportunities.\textsuperscript{15} They were not permitted this dream.

According to the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development’s (OCDE) Programme for International Student Assessment, 44% of Brazilian students aged 15 and 16 work in some capacity, either formally or informally. Only five other OCDE countries have higher rates of employment among this age group (Bermúdez 2017). While this need to work undoubtedly stems from the dire socioeconomic conditions of these young people’s families, 5-hour school days, with morning, afternoon, and evening sessions, structurally accommodate and perpetuate this “anxiety to work” among youth. In addition, as recently as 2016, there were over 1.6 million children throughout Brazil between the ages of 15 and 17 who were out of school entirely, according to the Ministry of Education (Tokarnia 2016). While many of these youth entered the job market, the growth of those dubbed \textit{os nem-nem}, youth who neither study nor

\textsuperscript{15} Prior to 2009, universities administered their own specific entrance exams. Thus, students had to study and pay for exams to each university they applied to. The ENEM (Examen Nacional do Ensino Medio), initially a non-mandatory test administered to students by the federal government to evaluate high school education, has since become the college entrance exam accepted at all federal universities and many public state and private ones. The 10 hour test taken over two days includes 180 divided along 4 major disciplines and 1 argumentative writing sample: Language arts (Portuguese, either English or Spanish, Literature, Information Technology and Art History), Human Sciences (History, Geography, Philosophy, and Sociology), Mathematics, and Natural Sciences (Biology, Physics, Chemistry).
work, especially since the beginning of the economic crisis in 2014, has increasingly preoccupied both government and civil society organizations. According to a 2014 study by Casa Fluminense, a civil society organization that advocates for more participatory metropolitan integration in Greater Rio, 1 in 3 young people between the ages of 18 and 24 in the Baixada Fluminense, or 137,990 of 428,637, neither studied nor worked, with young women making up the vast majority (Barros 2014). It should also be noted that given the increased criminalization of poor, Black and brown youth who live in peripheries through the war on drugs (J. A. Alves 2016), it is likely that a significant number of these young people are part of Brazil’s exploding prison population, which grew 70% among men and 146% among women between 2005 and 2012 (UNDP 2015). English speaking countries have adopted the acronym NEET—Not in Education, Employment, or Training—to describe a similar group of young people, and in the US in 2015, nearly 17% of young people between the ages of 16 and 29 fell into the category (DeSilver 2016). Fifty-seven percent of these young people are women, and rates are highest among African American youth: 22% of all African Americans between these ages are neither studying or employed (DeSilver 2016). A study by the Social Science Research Council on “disconnected youth” found
generational educational attainment and racial segregation to be contributing factors. Eduardo Alves, director of the Rio-based think tank *Observatório das Favelas*, rejects the *nem-nem* term for how it ignores the potential of these youth and the various social programs, cultural projects, or entrepreneurial endeavors in which they might participate and create outside of traditional forms of work and study, while also obscuring that lack of government investment in education, cultural, and employment opportunities that underpins the *nem-nem* condition.

Debora eventually earned her high school degree through Educação Jovens e Adultos (EJA- Education for Youth and Adults—similar to a GED), though she describes the experience as “even worse” than the *ruim*, terrible, public high school education she received. After completing her high school equivalency, Debora had hoped to study architecture, a possibility she describes a “distant reality.” She took her first ENEM (Examen Nacional do Ensino Médio-The National High School Exam) with the hopes of securing a grant from PROUNI, a government grant covering 50-100% of costs for students to attend private universities. However, through a knowing smile, Debora recounts how despite listing architecture, design and other art related field as her top choices,
due to her low score, she was only able to guarantee her spot in a history course at UNIABEU, a private university with campuses in Nova Iguaçu, Belford Roxo and Nilópolis.

Because Debora’s response is nearly five minutes, Dudu and I decided to break it into separate parts and then juxtapose it with other IM students’ tales of entering university. Much like Debora, Luana describes her public high school education as “quite basic, quite weak, and with the absence of many teachers,” often due to strikes. However, Luana was able to study for the ENEM through a college entrance exam preparatory course known as pré-vestibular social, PVS, while Debora makes no mention of having participated in such a course. While we do not go into details about these exams in the film, I especially wanted to include this quote from Luana given that these, often free, college exam preparatory courses have their roots in the Baixada Fluminense, through the pioneering work of Frei David Raimundo Santos. In the early 1990s, Frei David, a Liberation Theologist based in the Baixada, began what he then called pré-vestibular para negros e carentes, college exam prep for Blacks and the needy. As one of few college educated people in his youth, Frei David was dismayed when at a church event attended by nearly 100 mostly Black youth, only 2 people
expressed interest in attending university, while the rest “were ready to be cheap labor for capitalism” (Morau 2017). For Frei David, the exams were necessary due to “the realization that all public secondary schools in all of Brazil, especially in the Baixada Fluminense, where I work, are horrible in quality,” and that “African descendants are the real victims of the abysmal quality of education in Brazilian schools” (A. S. A. Guimarães 2001, 539–40). The initial name of Frei David’s free course, pré-vestibular para negros e carentes, though grounded in “the reality of African descendants,” was intentionally intersectional in its intent:

We saw that, for the great revolution that we want, we have to count on people’s solidarity, and we discovered that the problem of black people was not generated by black people. It was not black people who created slavery here in Brazil, it was not blacks who created laws barring black people’s access to schools, it was not black people who passed the Land Property Law that barred black people’s access to land. So, we discovered this: it would be very mean on our part, to ourselves, to leave the whole task of undoing the evil that was done just to black people alone. We know that this evil done to black people can only be undone when people become aware of the evil done, and we concluded that it was essential to count on people’s solidarity, so we thought it was important to open this movement also to poor whites, to teach them solidarity with our cause. This way, we destroy one of the weapons our opposition forged against us, saying that we are practicing reverse racism. (A. S. A. Guimarães 2001, 541–42)
Frei David’s pré-vestibular and now pré-ENEM courses specifically for poor, often predominately Black and brown youth have expanded throughout Brazil under the new name Educafro (Educação e Cidadania de Afrodescendentes e Carentes- Education and Citizenship for Afro-descendants and the Poor) and over the last 30 years, the organization estimates that over 60 thousand students have been admitted and completed university at either public institutions or private ones with scholarships (Morau 2017).

With an increased number of poor youth attending universities, many have sought to carry on the movement created by Frei David. After the municipal government funded college preparatory course in Nova Iguaçu ended within the first year of IM’s completion, students began to demand that the university establish a new one. In 2015 UFRRJ-IM Geography Professor Francisco das Chagas do Nascimento Júnior provided the faculty support, prior experience, and enthusiasm necessary for IM student volunteers to begin offering pre-ENEM courses at UFRRJ-IM. While the course, dubbed Pré-Enem Éthos, cannot meet the demand of the entire municipality—in 2016 over 500 people applied to the program with only 80 spots, 40 per session in the afternoon and at night—it does prioritize young people who have attended public high
schools and whose families make less than 2 minimum monthly wages per month.\textsuperscript{16} Ana Carolina, the charismatic young women who appears in the beginning of the film to discuss the historic marginalization of the Baixada Fluminense, is one of the IM-student volunteers for the program. We had met Ana Carolina after the Duke team each presented their own educational trajectories to the afternoon session of the pre-ENEM course, followed by a group discussion of what issues impacted their access to higher education. We even shot some B-roll for the film during one of the afternoon sessions, making Dudu aware of the program which he now encourages young people of Enraizados to participate in. His daughter, Beatriz, joined the pre-Enem course in 2017.

Although Frei David’s Educafro and other pre-Enem courses seek to help students enroll in any university that accepts the national exam—all federal university, along with some state and private institutions—they do tend to advocate that students attend public university because they are free and, typically, offer a better-quality education. Debora’s experience at UNIABEAU

\textsuperscript{16} The monthly minimum wage for 2018 was set to R$954, or approximately $290 USD.
attests to this difference. She “hated” history at the private institution, citing the pedagogical style of the professors and the lack of courses for her cohort. This prompted her to leave after only three periods and return to work in a call center. Although Debora claimed she was studying to take another Enem, the demands of a job that “*tem hora para chegar mas nunca tem hora de sair*” —“has a time to arrive but never a time to leave”—left her unable to properly prepare for what came to be “the worst Enem in [her] history.” She frankly tells us that she, again, did not get admitted to an architecture course, but had this time gained admittance to an art conservation and restauration program at a federal university in Minas Gerais. However, the thought of leaving her family caused her “heart to feel heavy,” so Debora nearly took up another ProUni grant to study history at another private university, Estácio de Sá, with campuses throughout Metropolitan Rio. But being accepted to a history program in one federal university gave her the impetus needed to attempt admittance to history at UFRRJ-IM. The shrewd laughter with which she tells us about her intention to later transfer to architecture via her “last choice” of history hints at both the prestige and lack of direct costs associated with attending a public university: “if
I’m going to do history, I should try, because I had never tried to get in to a federal university to study history.“

Given Debora’s rollercoaster journey to enter a federal university, with or without studying her dream major of architecture, Dudu and I decided that Guilherme, who we joked speaks as if he was born a historian, would serve as a good contrast. He speaks of his decision to study history as a result of the “encouragement in his home” and the “political trajectory” of his family of labor union leaders, including a communist grandfather detained by the Military regime. However, like Debora’s access to private institutions through the expansion of PROUNI grants under the Lula administration, Guilherme directly cites the “expansion of the system of higher education in Brazil” as a factor that amplified his ability, his “opportunity,” to attend university. Like Debora, he studied at a public high school and did not have the means to attend a college entry exam preparatory course. A few years older than Debora, Guilherme’s opportunity to apply to universities was even more restricted. Prior to 2009 when the federal government under Lula da Silva adopted the then non-mandatory, evaluative Enem as the university entrance exam for federal universities and grants like PROUNI, each individual university administered their own entrance
exam, known as a *vestibular*. The different *vestibulares* and the “abysmal quality of education in Brazilian schools” resulted in the emergence of many private for-profit prep courses, known as *cursinhos*. As Duke’s own Miguel Nicolelis, a Brazil neuroscientist, attests in a 2010 interview in support of the Enem, these cursinhos were “money making machines” that capitalized on the fact that “the people who did not attend high quality private high schools suffer from the complex that they cannot compete on equal terms” (Lemes 2010). Thus, it would have been a financial burden to take the test repeatedly. For this reason, Frei David’s Pré-Vestibular para Negros e Carentes and Educafro and UFRRJ-IM own Pré-Enem Éthos remain so vitally important for poor, Black and brown access to apply to university. And again, while we do not go into details about this in the film, and Nicolelis even laudes the SAT as a standardized college entry exam in the US, the fact that Guilherme, as he states, “did not have the opportunity to take a prep course,” rings true to the experiences of many students, especially African American and Latino/a students, in the US who suffer from a similar test taking complex that is perpetuated by the costs of test prep, of the test itself including submitting scores to universities, and college application fees. Though I will discuss this in greater detail in the next chapter, the implementation of a
standardized Enem exam should be understood within a context of reforms to increase democratic access to higher education under both Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff’s Worker Party administrations, an increased access that also included affirmative action policies in the form of quotas.

When we cut back to Debora, we learn that she was accepted to history at UFFRJ through the public school quota to guarantee her spot. Although some state universities, most notably the State University of Rio de Janeiro and the State University of Bahia, had begun implementing socioeconomic and/or racial quotas in the early 2000s, affirmative action policies in federal high schools and institutions of higher learning did not become law until 2012, during Dilma Rousseff’s first administration. The Lei das Cotas requires federal educational institutes to reserve 50% of openings in each course for students who only attended public high schools or public education programs like EJA. Of this 50%, half of those students admitted must come from families whose per capita income is only one and a half minimum salaries per month, while the family incomes of the other half may exceed this ceiling. In addition, the racial demographics of students admitted through these socioeconomic quotas must correspond to the racial demographics of the state where the federal institution is
located. In thinking about the molecada of Enraizados, Morro Agudo, and the Baixada in general, Dudu and I felt it was extremely important for quotas to be included in the film, in that they ease some of the complex described by Nicolelis by guaranteeing spots to students based first and foremost on having attended public schools. Debora’s quickly detailed experiencing of having thought she would get into an architecture program through general admission but later realized she would not once students with higher test scores submitted theirs, serves as a clear example of the quota’s potential to materially increase opportunities for predominantly poor public school graduates.

Debora’s story concludes with her admitting through a knowing smile that she “[doesn’t] think of doing architecture anymore” and that she “plans to continue a career in history.” She attributes the change to her “falling in love with education,” such that “history itself interested [her] much more.” In Brazil, many university majors yield either a *licenciatura*, a degree which qualifies you to teach in public and private elementary and high schools, or a *bachalerado*, a degree intended for those who wish to continue within academia or pursue other careers outside of education. It is possible to obtain both degrees simultaneously, with the licenciatura typically requiring pedagogy courses and a teaching
internship and the bachalerado requiring a non-teaching internship and an undergraduate thesis. Many of the IM students, as we included in the film, expressed a desire to become teachers, especially, like Debora, after completing their teaching internships. In Debora’s case, her teaching internship at a public school in Nova Iguaçu put her “in contact with very underprivileged students, even more underprivileged than [she] was at that age. And [she] recognized the importance of education.”

I have no doubt that Debora’s love of education is genuine. Nor do I doubt the desire to teach that the other IM students express both in the film and in the IM-Duke interviews. It is something she and I have discussed numerous times and is evident in her currently pursuing a master’s in history, also at UFRRJ-IM. However, in a region that Lélia Gonzalez called a “privileged example” of the ways in which violence and lack of public services function to maintain a predominately Black population as “the cheapest labor force possible” (Gonzalez and Hasenbalg 1982, 3:16), a teaching degree serves as a secure form of employment other than manual labor. Many of the IM students were aware that teaching, as Gabi says earlier in the film, “is not the most valued profession,” and within IM, our initial study based on a survey of 500 students
and interviews with administration revealed that lower income, Black and Brown students tended to be enrolled in courses that offered a licenciatura, while whites were overrepresent in bachalerado programs like law and administration. Although this was a very incomplete survey, teaching, like working as a police officer (J. H. French 2013), has been one of the few stable, though contested, forms of employment for low income, Black and brown Brazilians throughout the 20th century (Dávila 2003).

In fact, the Baixada’s first public institution of higher learning established in 1966 was Instituto de Educação Governador Roberto Silveira, a precursor to the present-day UERJ Faculdade de Educação da Baixada Fluminense. This teacher’s college offered *magistério* degrees for elementary school teachers. UERJ Faculdade de Educação da Baixada has offered licenciaturas for high school teaching in geography, mathematics, and pedagogy since 2004. Although incredibly necessary, that the only public higher education in the region until 2006 prepared people for a stable though low earning career, speaks to what José Carlos Libâneo (2012) calls the “perverse dualism of education in Brazil.” According to Libâneo, the disregard for the conditions in which teachers work and their salaries is the result of neoliberal reforms pushed since the 1990s by the
World Bank’s Education for All initiative that configured education as a set of minimum workforce ready skills set that teachers must impart to poor, marginalized students, making the schools they attend mere “social care for the poor” (Libâneo 2012). In this way, as two professions historically accessible to and currently held by predominantly lower income, Black and brown people, the low status of the teaching profession parallels the stigmatization of the military police identified by French (2013), such that the problems within both institutions are attributed to the individual street-level bureaucrats rather than structural shortcomings. In a 2014 interview with Época magazine, for example, World Bank representative Barbara Bruns says the number one problem with Brazilian public schools is that they “don’t attract the best and brightest to the profession” (C. Guimarães 2014). While pay should be raised, salary increases should correspond with evaluated “desempenho,” or performance. Bright, motivated, collectively minded people like Debora should certainly become teachers, especially if they express a commitment to fostering dignified education for students that are “even more underprivileged than [she] was.” However, at a time when teachers’ salaries in the state of Rio have been delayed for months, teachers routinely go on strike do to stagnant wages, and a constitutional
amendment (PEC 55) passed under the Temer administration has frozen public spending for 20 years (Long 2016), there is a growing sense among these educated young people from the peripheries that the “state of calamity” brought on by the Olympics and the golpe against Rousseff demonstrate an elite Brazilian desire to maintain the status quo of “abysmal quality of education,” for both the teachers and students alike.

As Bischoping notes with regard to ethnographic writing, researchers are often constrained by the “solitary nature of most editing work” (Bischoping 2005, 151). While researchers may seek advice from advisers and peers on theoretical frameworks for academic writing, how we mobilize which quotes is often a solitary endeavor. Dudu and I, in contrast, continually reflected on which quotes fit best where, and tried to keep in mind who are audience or audiences would be, allowing the future viewer to inform our editing. Alexandre and John also chimed in from time to time, especially once we had produced the first two cuts of the movie. Even though race was a topic Dudu and I frequently discussed, not only in the context of the film but as friends discussing current events and our own lives—at the time, Dudu was even hosting a “cinema preto” night of films that dealt with Black struggles in the Brazil and the diaspora—it was John who
brought up in an email that “the one theme that had not come up with real force, not even from Guilherme, was the racial dimension of the question of higher education access.” Indeed, in the first two rough cuts of the film, we had not included any of the response that explicitly touched upon race. I think this in part stemmed from how we envisioned the responses playing off each other. We had established a general arch of the film: the idea of the university, the historic neglect of the Baixada, the parents from the Northeast who came to “make their lives” in Rio, the IM-Duke project, the importance of the proximity of UFRRJ-IM to the students, the social and cultural significance of having a federal university in the Baixada, Debora’s story of entering university juxtaposed with the others, future aspirations to teach, and concluding with the parents expressing how they were “realizing their dreams” through their children. Looking back now and having re-watched the first rough cut, I think we were very transfixed with the responses about the significance of the university that directly related to the context of the Baixada. This, I’m positive, was a result of my steadfast desire to use John Victor’s quote.

As John mentions, among the team Guilherme was known for being very outspoken and militant about his Black identity, and how his Blackness related
to his working class background and his being from the Baixada. And, indeed, in
the interview, when I asked him how he had changed upon attending university,
he responded by bringing up how it impacted his Black identity formation:

I already recognized myself as Black and the importance that
this has had in my personal trajectory and in the trajectory of my
family. But in university, you gain a greater dimension of
dialogue, of space, of debate, voice, that allows you, in reality, to
amplify the perceptions that I already had but that lacked a
theoretical emphasis and space for debate. The university also
serves as a magnifying glass on these questions that are very
much part of the everyday [lives] of principally Black families
from working class backgrounds in the Baixada Fluminense that
often becoming naturalized.

Unlike Luana’s quote that I had used in the trailer but that we had not included
in the film, I recall why Dudu and I did not include this incredibly worthy quote:
we had already used another quote from Guilherme discussing the importance
of the university within the historical context of social movements’ demands. To
think of UFRRJ-IM arrival in the Baixada Fluminense as “something given,” as
merely a consequence of the program of university expansion, negates the ways
in which, as Guilherme declares: “…it’s our fight, so it’s our right. And I think
that it is also our duty to occupy it.” Given the political climate at the time, the
high school and university occupations, in which UFRRJ-IM participated, against
the PEC 55 amendment, the use of the word “occupy” and its relationship to
decades of student movements resonated with us such that we felt this had to be the quote from Guilherme we would use. We did not want to use another quote from Guilherme because then we would lose the “polyphonic narrative.” And as much as both Dudu and I appreciate Guilherme as a friend and as a collaborator, his often deeply personal and historical responses are lengthy and have a way of overshadowing the responses of others.

At John’s suggestion, we looked to the interview with Rodrigo who had also been very passionate in describing how attending university allowed him to connect with his sense of Blackness. Unlike Guilherme, Rodrigo had always described himself as “moreninho” actively refusing to identify himself as Black. In the interview we included in the film, he says that “literature saved his life” because it allowed him to “salvage” his Black identity. Dudu and I had thought about using this quote, but it didn’t make the first cut because, as I stated, we were much more concerned with the physically presence of the IM in the Baixada Fluminense in this sequence of the film, leaving perhaps the more abstract significance of the university as a “space of debate and voice,” as Guilherme says, to the opening quote from Carla. However, in doing so, we unwittingly fell back on universalizing narratives of the importance of the university. And while
Carla’s appeal to how “the university brings you an education as a citizen, as a person, as a human being” is tremendously important in a region emblematic of how Brazil functions as an “uncivil political democracy,” where residents have been denied citizenship through clientelism, personhood through violence and neglect, and their humanity through stigmatization and marginalization (T. P. R. Caldeira and Holston 1999b), Black people in Brazil have been denied citizenship, personhood, and humanity in specific ways, like the discourse of whitening that compelled Rodrigo to want to identify as moreninho prior to entering university.

To include Rodrigo’s quote and maintain a runtime of 30 minutes, we needed to remove another response. I’m sorry to say that it was relatively easy to decided which response to remove from the rough cut. She is a dear friend of mine and is dedicated to studying the Baixada Fluminense as a resident of the region, but we decided to swap footage of Adriana for two shorter clips of Rodrigo that sandwich Guilherme’s call to occupy the university. Having completed her undergraduate degree at PUC, enduring a similar, burdensome commute as Carla, Adriana chose to pursue her master’s degree at IM precisely because it offered her the opportunity to study the region. Thus, her
understanding of the importance of the university was grounded in a personal, intellectual pursuit, but also in how the university changed the everyday outlook of residents:

A public university here in the Baixada is of extreme importance. I think, first for the recognition of the population because during my whole life...until I studied at PUC, a university was something very...that wasn’t part of everyday life. So we had, there’s UNIG, but that’s a private university. When the rumors began that a campus of Rural, of Federal Rural, was coming here, there was a big buzz. People were very happy and it gives an important status to the place. So, there are possibilities of growth, to also achieve academic objectives, and also socio economic growth. So I think a university in the Baixada is of extreme importance.

What’s difficult to get across in the written text is, at least to me, how nervous Adriana seemed throughout the interview. She prolongs many transition words like “então” and changes the direction of the sentence midway through. This is completely natural in spoken language, and as someone who is comfortable speaking in public, yet becomes very self-conscious when being recorded, I was very impressed by how composed all of our interviewees, including Adriana, were in front of the camera. But when re-watching the clip with Dudu and again upon writing, I believe part of the reason it was relatively easy for us to replace her quote with Rodrigo’s was her timidity in front of the camera. Thus, the
editing process was not simply about creating a “polyphonic narrative” through the content, but also through the visual presence of the interviewees.

Once we had included Rodrigo’s quotes, we had a rough cut of all the interviews. For Dudu, now came the fun, though more technical challenge. We needed to add photos so the “polyphonic narrative” would not appear on screen as be a monotony of talking heads. We needed to add music to set a tone and to drown out some of the background noises in the audio recordings. And we needed to work on the subtitles. We had little over a month to finish the film.

The photos were relatively straightforward. We asked everyone who appeared in the final cut to send us family photos and any pictures they had from the IM-Duke project. I also gathered a few creative commons use photos of the Baixada and of student movements during the dictatorship and reached out to a few IM students who had published photos on IM’s Facebook page from the student occupations. Dudu and I did not painstakingly decide which photos would go where, and I left it mostly up to him after making a few suggestions based on how the image might complement the audio.

I would not say that choosing the music was more difficult, just slightly more interesting. Dudu very much did not want to use hip-hop music, especially
his own. He thought it would give the film too much of his “cara,” or face or appearance. We did not discuss this that much, but I think Dudu in part insisted on having a director because he felt he was commissioned to do a job for UFRRJ-IM and Duke. While he and I worked very much in collaboration, Alexandre and John were our executive producers and Dudu did not want to make a film out of Enraizado’s studio.

Sometime in mid-February, Antonio Acre, formerly of Duke Center for Latin American Studies and the Duke Brazil Initiative, visited Rio as part of his new role as Director of International Development Programs for Latin America & Europe for the Duke Alumni office. Antonio invited Alexandre, his wife Cristiane, and I to speak about the project and make a case for why Duke alumni in Rio should donate to the university. While I did not push for donations, I was excited to meet Duke alumni, most from had attended professional schools, who were from Rio to discuss the film. Apart from their shock that I took the train to the Baixada regularly—these were, unsurprisingly, wealthy South Zone residents—they were very eager to hear about my time in Rio and Duke’s various projects throughout Brazil. Antonio was most eager to introduce me to the, as of this writing, late Sérgio Roberto de Oliveira. While not an alumnus,
Sérgio had been an artist-in-residence at Duke, and joked with the alumni that I liked the blocos and the Trem do Samba more than the parades at the Marquês de Sapucaí—or sambódromo as I had been referring to it without knowing the official name. Already frail from his battle with cancer, Sérgio was incredibly warm and generous and told me to get in contact with him about possibly using some of his music.

In our next editing meeting, I was excited to share the news with Dudu, though he had had a revelation of his own. He showed me a song by one of his friends and Enraizados collaborators, a local Morro Agudo composer named Marcelo Pellegrino. The song, *Pulo no futuro*, matched perfectly: the lyrics conjure up images of someone dreaming of a different future in another place, while Pellegrino whistles and strums a melodic samba on his guitar. It’s very simple, and as one Youtube commenter said on the version we watched, “pura MPB, música popular da Baixada,” a play on the genre Música Popular Brasileira (Brazilian Popular Music). I sent the rough cut of the film and the song to Sérgio to see what his thoughts were. He agreed that the lyrics were great, but felt that the music could better convey the dreams and challenges of the families and suggested we use all or part of his piece *Quadrado*. It’s a very moving
composition, with elements, as Sérgio told me, of Northeastern music which he felt reflected the personal histories of the families in the film. Though it begins melancholically with many minor chords on the violin and viola accompanied by an almost menacing xylophone, the composition crescendos with a lighter, fast paced melody on the flute and piano. *Quadrado* felt to us very much like a film score, and in part, that’s why we only used it sparingly throughout the film, specifically when the students are discussing distances to other universities outside the Baixada. Because our film is so barebones, both Dudu and I wanted music that would stand out and be easily relatable to our intended audience. I do not think *Quadrados* is the type of classical composition that many people presume young people would have an aversion to, but Pellegrino’s whistling and daydreaming lyrics were a much more direct way to communicate the sense of challenge and hope that we wanted to convey in such a short film. Sérgio underscored that his opinion was that of a non-film expert, despite, as I learned when reading his obituary in July 2017, having composed soundtracks that were recognized at international film festivals.

The subtitles were the last thing we worked out and in our scramble to complete the film, and it showed. I had transcribed and translated the film just
prior to the conference at Duke University to premier the film with Dudu and the fifteen IM students and faculty, and had thought the process of adding them to the film would be as collaborative as the previous months. Having watched my fair share of films with subtitles, I knew that the timing of the wording was also important, so to me these translations were never final in that sense. I thought Dudu and I would go through the tedious process of adding them to the frames together so that I could get a sense of how they actually read when compared to the audio. Though I had revised the translation, there were a few typos and I sent new versions to Dudu whenever I caught them, but hoped that, again, any lingering mistakes would be ironed out while adding them. But Dudu’s harddrive crashed. Desperate to have at least a somewhat complete version to show at the conference at Duke, he added the subtitles while using his friends’ computer that had the right software in São Gonçalo, a municipality outside of Niterói with a similar socioeconomic relationship to the city as the relationship between Rio and the municipalities of the Baixada. Obviously the more I panicked, the more typos or just odd turns of phrase I found in the subtitles. I had also planned to send them to the rest of the Duke team to get a second opinion, especially because John had suggested outsourcing the task to someone
else from the beginning. But once we had the final version, I was a bit possessive of it, wanting to translate it the way I thought of the translations in my head, which initially did not work out so well.

I arrived in the US a few days before the IM students and Dudu, desperate the make the changes I had hoped. I accompanied the joy of the IM students at traveling to the US, for the majority it was their first time out of the country, through their Facebook and Instagram accounts. Dudu felt we had run out of options because he no longer had access to a rendered version of the film without the subtitles. The entire team was in a frenzy. John had planned ten very full days of planning for the conference, including a trip to the recently opened National Museum of African American History and Culture in DC. My friendship with Dudu extended to the halls of the museum as I translated placards for him and offered my scarf to him as he endured the tail end of winter in the South.

Once we returned to Duke, Dudu and I worked separately from the rest of the team in our attempts to finalize the documentary. Although he was clearly frustrated with my perfectionism, especially because it had not been present in the translated transcriptions that I had sent him, upon seeing Duke’s resources
he became like a kid in a candy store, snapping selfies of us working in Duke’s Center for Documentary Studies and the Media Lab in Perkins library. Every time I showed him a new lab on campus, Dudu’s eyes would light up with delight and he’d say how this, or even just a fraction of this, was what he wanted to bring back to Morro Agudo and Enraizado’s new headquarters. He came up with an ingenious method of correcting the frames with typos or with too much text. Because we could not delete the subtitles, Dudu simply superimposed the same frame from an older version of the film onto the frame with the typo and added new subtitles. There are a few spots in the film where you can make out that the image was not perfectly matched, but a day or two before the films premiere, which I will discuss in the next chapter, we finished the film. We were both fans.
5. From Knowing your Place to Making your Place Known: Political-Epistemic Insurgency from and for the Baixada

The selfies started at the Rio Galeão airport. During a flight connection in Houston, Rodrigo posted a picture to Facebook with the caption: “‘The whole world is my home.’ The BF invading the States hahaha. Show up ‘cause it’s lit (Brota que tá o bixo).” On Instagram, Dudu posted a picture of him and Rodrigo in a taxi leaving Raleigh-Durham Airport with the caption: “Heading to Duke University with one of the protagonists of the film. The negrão (literally Big black guy but used similarly to how Black Americans use nigga) keeps it real (o negrão só manda ideia firm).” Everyone posted photos- selfies, group shots, landscapes—
of Duke Chapel. For most of the group, it was their first time traveling to the US. Their enthusiasm reminded me of Dudu explaining in his book, *Enraizados: Os Híbridos Glocais*, how with the expansion of Movimento Enraizados he’d send other members to meet with other hip-hop groups through Brazil because he could not miss work: “In some ways it was cool because the crew started to travel by plane and get to know other states and cultures, and traveling by plane was not even a dream in the heads of the *molecada* that lived in the periphery.” In the case of the IM students, the pride with which everyone posted on their Facebook and Instagram accounts about the trip to Duke University, the pride with which they let the world know that they had arrived in the literal and figurative sense, was, to me, already a testament of the significance of the Multidisciplinary Institute in the Baixada Fluminense.

The team of 8 IM students and 8 faculty and staff members plus Dudu traveled to Duke in late March 2017 for a conference dedicated to the project’s findings up until that point. While Dudu and I were editing the film from October through March to premiere at the conference, the IM team was analyzing the qualitative and quantitative data that we had gathered during the first 3-week field visit. In total, the team had conducted 50 interviews with
undergraduate and graduate students and faculty at IM, as well as interviews with Dudu and students in the Pro-Éthos pre-Enem exam preparatory course. Babi, Rodrigo, and Luana took charge of producing summaries of the interviews, coding them for themes, and preparing a power point presentation. The team also expanded during this time. We were joined by Luis Fernando Orleans, a professor of computer science, and two of his undergraduate students, Ana Paula and Juliane. Together with Debora, Carla, and Louise, they analyzed data on enrolled students at IM that we had obtained from IM alumnus and current administrator in the university’s registrar office, Renan, who coincidentally had written his thesis on IM and university expansion in Brazil. Because certain data like the race of students is not collected by the university, the quantitative team also conducted an online survey disseminated through social media of 500 current IM students that asked questions about their race, income, educational background, college major and fellowship (bolsista) and employment status. Pro-Éthos had also given the team the application forms that they used to selected students for the pre-Enem course from 2016. These datasets formed the basis of the Cost of Opportunity Conference at Duke University held on March 27th, 2017. The conference was the team’s first public facing declaration of our research
findings and the beginning of an ongoing project in defense of democratic access to higher education in Brazil. However, the trip was about much more than simply presenting our finding. By traveling to Durham and Duke University, the students also embodied the epistemic insurgency and hope of thinking from the intersectional Black territoriality of the Baixada.

This final chapter explores emergent, hard fought Black intersectional places within metropolitan Rio and the social imaginary of poor, Black and brown youth from the Baixada Fluminense. I begin by reflecting on “The Cost of
Opportunity conference at Duke University, and more specifically the participation and reflections of the IM students. Because the students documented nearly every aspect of the visit via social media and the conference was streamed live on Facebook, I draw substantially from their social media posts and the comments of their families to analyze the importance of UFRRJ-IM as a university conceived of “in the image [com a nossa cara]” of the Baixada Fluminense (G. Souza 2015). As a university dedicated in part to researching this long-forgotten region, as embodied by the very UFRRJ-IM/Duke project, the Institute Multidisciplinar serves as a physical place where and from which local memory and knowledge is collected, analyzed, generated, and simply celebrated. Thus, I contend that UFRRJ-IM is one site among many from which poor, Black and brown youth are constructing a territorial identity of, from, and for the Baixada.

Similarly, I grapple with the idea of the university as a contested and increasingly precarious site of Black Brazilian identity re-creation and recuperation more generally. Here again I turn to the work of Lélia Gonazalez and Beatriz Nascimento for my theoretical framework. I also base this analysis on my experience of screening “The Cost of Opportunity” in several high schools.
throughout Metropolitan Rio and the reactions of students to the revanchist reforms implemented by the Temer administration. Thus, just as the spectacle of the Olympics severed as a backdrop to my analysis of how the local government used the pretext of megaevents to further segregate the city and criminalize poor, mostly Black youth from the city’s peripheries, I contend that the spectacle of Rousseff’s impeachment served to undermine the social advances long advocated by social movements and partially implemented against considerable elite backlash by the successive Workers’ Party governments under former Presidents Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff. However, this generation of youth, who have occupied their high schools and their universities and continue to produce music and films in response to the coup against social rights, as many activists have described it, want to make known that their place within the social and geographic hierarchy of Brazil is not predetermined by class, race, or place of origin, and they will continue to struggle from and for the periphery.

5.1 *Uma universidade com nossa cara*

When I went to the official Olympic torch relay in Caxias, I realized I had not taken the train there for quite some time. My once near daily train and bus rides to Manguerinha had been replaced by weekly care rides with Alexandre to the
UFRRJ-IM campus in Nova Iguaçu in preparation for the 3-week collaborative field visit. I would meet Alexandre and his wife at their home in the upper middle-class Rio neighborhood of Larajeiras and Alexandre would take the Linha Vermelha Expressway to Avenida Brasil to drop Cris off at FIOCRUZ. One of Brazil’s top federal medical research facilities, FIOCRUZ is named after renowned epidemiologist Oswaldo Cruz17 and occupies a vast campus that boasts several laboratories and a technical high school. On the occasional car ride back from Mangueirinha with one of our Terra dos Homens colleagues, Sarah and I would often wonder what the neo-Moorish palace that emerges above the trees and sits surrounded by the favelas of Manguinhos and Maré could possibly be as it seemed out of both time and place, even though we had become used to the proximity of extreme wealth and poverty in Rio. The IM-Duke team visited FIOCRUZ, where we learned of the institution’s collaborations with favela residents in Manguinhos around issues of public health and witnessed the medical researchers’ fierce political opposition to proposed cuts to research and development spending by the Temer administration.

17 Though Oswaldo Cruz is also infamous for adopting a policy of forced vaccinations of the poor, which resulted in the Vaccine Revolt. See: (Fischer 2008).
After passing back onto the highway, Alexandre would eventually make his way to the Dutra, the 250-mile highway that connects Rio and São Paulo via much of the Baixada Fluminense. Going to and from the Baixada by car,
especially to Nova Iguaçu, always strikes me as vastly different than by train, and not merely for the obvious reasons of public vs private transport. Though I did appreciate the comfort of Alexandre and my former colleague’s cars, I generally preferred the train, as traffic could be unpredictable on the highways and even when I did not manage to get a seat on the train, which was rare given that I commute against traffic, the train’s vendors of anything from snacks to cellphone covers to vegetable peelers were bound to make for good people watching. The trains pass through, and in many cases spurred the growth of, the numerous neighborhood centers where the stations are located. Though each neighborhood has its own aesthetic—I always looked forward to a graffití mural at the Olaria stop—small businesses like the biscoito and pão de queijo shops and clothing stores lend a certain familiarity to these neighborhood centers.

In contrast, the Dutra and Linha Vermelha are dominated by surprisingly large seedy motels, super stores like Carrefour, and processed food and chemical factories. This industrial corridor runs through the North Zone and the Baixada and lacks the human scale of the train. Favela are visible on the hills just beyond the factories and megamalls that have partially been constructed and the neighborhoods become denser and more residential the closer you get to central
Rio, but by and large this corridor is a place for work, not life or leisure. Work even makes its way onto the freeways as *camelôs*—ambulatory informal vendors—risk their lives to sell Biscoito Globo and other snacks to commuters when traffic stalls for even a moment. Alexandre and I would often award their determination and bravery during particularly heavy traffic back into Rio. Like other highways in Brazil and throughout Latin America, those looking to cross the multiple lanes must walk significant distances to reach *passarelas*—overpass pedestrian bridges—but the camelôs often cling to the razor-thin safety of the medians. On the Linha Vermelha highway that connects to the Dutra, some camelôs from the favela of Maré had even knocked out panels from the sound barrier that activists felt had been put up ahead of the mega-events to hide the favela from tourists arriving in Rio from Galeão International Airport (Wyllys 2011). Like the trains that depart from Central do Brasil, the highways that connect Rio and its internal and suburban peripheries function to keep out of sight the petrochemical industries and, more insidiously, the black and brown bodies whose labor, even in the most perilous of circumstances on the freeway itself, uphold the beachside, leisurely postcard image of the city.
The IM Campus sits right off the Dutra, a good 20-minute walk from the Nova Iguaçu train station in the center of town. Student groups continue to petition the city government for a proper crosswalk signal to slow the traffic of buses and cars entering and exiting the highway. A plot of land separates the campus from the avenue, and while it remains out of use most of the year, it did serve as carnival grounds during the first field visit of the Duke team in June 2016. Though it was a running joke, we never did step foot on the fairgrounds. While Alexandre contends that the land should belong to the federal university, local officials have yet to concede the plot, making it a constant reminder of the intentionally nebulous loteamento system of land-titles that defines much of the Baixada Fluminense.

Its location is also a constant reminder of the negligence of local politicians. More than once Alexandre and other faculty and students pointed out a helicopter landing at the small airport adjacent to campus. The passenger inside was Nelson Bornier, then mayor of Nova Iguaçu. During his mayoral term, Bornier lived in Rio, more specifically in a beachfront condominium in Barra de Tijuca. According to a report by *O Globo*, the helicopter was owned by a construction company, also in Barra, and was “generously given over by a friend
of the company, who does not receive anything in return” (Bottari, Schmidt, and Ramalho 2015). One person interviewed by O Globo joked that Borneir campaigned in 2012 on relieving traffic in Nova Iguaçu and “at least for him, there are no more traffic jams on the way to work” (Bottari, Schmidt, and Ramalho 2015). Borneir was not alone; according to the same O Globo article, six of the region’s 12 then mayors lived in Rio, while only three had declared this residency to the regional election court (Bottari, Schmidt, and Ramalho 2015). Borneir is a member of the Partido Movimento Democrático Brasileiro (PMDB-Brazilian Democratic Movement Party), Brazil’s largest big tent political party, the same party as President Temer that orchestrated the coup against Rousseff as her vice president, and the dominant party in the state of Rio de Janeiro—then mayor Eduardo Paes and governor Pezão are both members of PMDB.

Many of our IM student and faculty collaborators often joked about how few residents of Nova Iguaçu know about the federal campus, assuming that it was either a hospital or private university. Some mentioned how buses that stop near the campus used to display “UFRJ”—for the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, the main campus of which sits on the Ilha do Fundão some 30 kilometers from downtown Nova Iguaçu—rather than “UFRRJ.” Once on my walk from the
Nova Iguaçu train station to the IM campus, I noticed a local bus that signals that it will take you to the “Faculdade.” When I asked a friend at UFRRJ-IM if I could take it when I did not feel like walking to IM, she answered that the bus actually goes to the other side of town to UNIG, Iguaçu University, a private university established in 1970 and one of the first institutions of higher education in the Baixada Fluminense. Though UFRRJ-IM envisions itself, and we as a research team envision UFRRJ-IM, as a new opportunity for higher education in Nova Iguaçu and in the Baixada, for many in Nova Iguaçu it has not yet become a known faculdade let alone the faculdade.

The Multidisciplinary Institute is not the first public university in the Baixada. The State University of Rio de Janeiro campus in Duque de Caxias has offered teaching degrees (licenciatura) in math, geography, and pedagogy for over 25 years. Similarly, the Nilopolis, Mesquita, Paracambi, and Duque de Caxias campuses of the Federal Institute of Education, Science, and Technology of Rio de Janeiro—which are primarily high schools with an emphasis in technical training—offer various degrees including continuing education certificates in pedagogy and mechanics and advanced degrees in chemistry and cultural production. Both these educational systems serve to meet the economic

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demands of the region, offering teacher and technical training for young people seeking careers in public education and the region’s petrochemical industry visible from the Dutra. And due to the recent expansion of its course offerings and its increased accessibility for students from both the Baixada and Rio’s socioeconomically similar West Zone, the main Seropédica campus of Rural can arguably be thought of as the first federal university in the expanded, 21st Century definition of the Baixada. Yet its 20th century, neo-colonial architecture upon an expansive rural estate still inhabited by capybara speaks to its historic role as the principal federal university for the agricultural elite from throughout Brazil before the urbanization of the Baixada.

IM is the first institution of its kind—federal, and therefore, within the context of Brazil, prestigious almost by default—to think of itself as from and for the Baixada Fluminense. Founded in 2006, the first 250 students took the initial six majors offered in a local high school until the present-day campus was completed in 2010. History and pedagogy were two of these first majors, making many of the team’s faculty collaborators, including Álvaro Nascimento, Márcia Pletsch, and of course Alexandre founding faculty members of the university. A 2005 piece in UFRRJ’s campus newspaper, Rural Semanal, speaks to the
university and the Ministry of Education’s vision in establishing the Nova Iguaçu Campus:

By assuming the difficult task of expanding public, free higher education, the senior administration of UFRRJ undertakes this endeavor keeping in mind the existence of an unmet demand (demanda reprimida—literally ‘repressed demand’) in the region of the Baixada Fluminense for higher education of recognized quality. (Rural Semanal no 41/2005, quoted in Silveira 2011, 162)

Similarly, internal documents on reforms to the History program and the addition of a Computer Science program to the course offerings at UFRRJ-IM highlight how these “represent and will represent a real opportunity for social mobility (ascensão social) for young people and adults in the region of Nova Iguaçu” and “will represent a transformative factor and a great advantage for UFRRJ in the Baixada Fluminense,” respectively (quoted in Silveira 2011, 174).

At one point, federal and state legislators, in collaboration with Alexandre, who was then director of IM-UFRRJ, and with the support of local NGO ComCausa, even sought to transform the campus into its own autonomous university: The Federal University of the Baixada Fluminense (UFBF). The idea of renaming the Seropédica campus UFBF had been discussed since the 1970s, but the national scope of the university led the administration to reject the idea.
Yet, the Instituto Multidisciplinar, with its goal of meeting the largely unmet demand for higher education and ascensão social in the Baixada, seemed to reinvigorate the idea among policymakers. In an interview with Jornal de Hoje from 2015 during the height of the campaign to create UFBF, Adriano Dias of ComCausa underscored this point: “For as many campuses as we have throughout the Baixada, we don’t have a university in our image (com a nossa cara), with its vision directed here” (G. Souza 2015). However, not everyone seemed to share Dias’s optimism, and the plans eventually fizzled out. On one ride to the IM campus, Alexandre confessed to me that even some alumni rejected the idea of having “Baixada Fluminense” on their diplomas, as if the stigma of the region was no match for the prestige of a federal research university.

Though this dream for the Federal University of The Baixada Fluminense may never become a reality, this relationship between the region and the IM campus remains of central interest to both the Duke-IM research project and my own, though our questions diverge. As the project’s website explains: “The Baixada focus in this project is designed to develop better tools to understand the enhanced social mobility made possible by the implantation of a unit of the
expanding Federal University system in Novo Iguaçu in 2006,” (Duke-IM Bass Connections n.d.). Thus, the project asks: Who are the students at IM? Are they from the Baixada Fluminense? What is their family’s average income? Do they represent the Baixada’s predominantly Black and brown population demographics? How many receive additional government support (bolsa auxiliar, bolsa de permanência, etc.)? What are the demographics within each course? What kinds of employment have recent graduates obtained? These were precisely the questions that the IM delegation sought to answer, however initially as the project is ongoing, at the first “The Cost of Opportunity” conference in March 2017. However, the project, somewhat intentionally, has left open the question of how we as a researcher team have been defining social mobility. Unsurprisingly, the quantitative data will likely be used to answer the conventional, though still very pertinent, question of intragenerational social mobility, that is, are the graduates of UFRRJ-IM earning more than their parents? Has a college education allowed them to move up the social ladder, to become part of the once emerging and always precarious Brazilian middle class?

I, in tandem and not in contrast, am much more concerned with the epistemic question of what does it mean for the periphery to not only go to
university, but for the university itself to think from the positionality of the youth that attend it? That is, what does it mean when a group of poor, Black and Brown young people who have been marginalized to “know their place” through “basic and weak” educations, time consuming commutes, and the criminalization of their leisure come to know their place and make their place known culturally, historically, and epistemically? What role does the university play in fostering such insurgent epistemic struggles? And how is that knowledge generated and shared collaboratively and transnationally? What happens when they are permitted to dream and share it?

Encouraged by faculty, many students at IM expressed a sense of re-discovering or re-creating their own interest in the Baixada Fluminense upon entering the university. Thanks to his mother’s involvement with the Catholic church, Douglas of Fórum Grita Baixada, was able to attend a “high school of the elite of the Baixada Fluminense” despite being “if not the poorest, one of the poorest students” at the school. He attributes much of his current work on human rights issues in the Baixada to his Christian, Catholic identity, and his early participation in the youth ministry. However, like many young people, his dream was to leave the Baixada:
I won’t lie, before I turned 16, 15, when I was in high school...everyone heard the same refrain about leaving the Baixada. So, we all ended up saying the same thing. My dream when I was 14, 15 years old was always, clearly, to work, to have a better life, and to transform the lives of others. But that idea of transforming the lives of others, it wasn’t the people present around me, it was another place, not the Baixada Fluminense. And slowly this changed, especially with going to college. I think at 17, when I went to college, 18 years old, when I entered the academic world, participated in the conversations within the university, I began to see more of the reality of the Baixada. That is, knowing the Baixada Fluminense, I started to see that to change the reality of the Baixada, there needs to also be people here in the Baixada doing that questioning.

Like young people of color in the US, the dominant narrative of success is making it out of the proverbial ghetto or barrio. The stigma of the Baixada would undermine all the hard work one did “to have a better life,” and the continued neglect of the region, that nothing has changed in all of Almerinda’s years there, underscores this sense that “nobody cares” forcing one, as she says, to “think about leaving” despite “liking it.” Apart from the desire to demonstrate that he’s succeeded in life by leaving the Baixada, thinking of other interviews I’ve conducted with residents with similar trajectories, I think part of the reason that Douglas did not think about “transforming lives” in the Baixada is the way that it is constructed as a non-place. The problems, again as Almerinda says, are the Baixada. It is upon entering IM and “knowing the Baixada Fluminense,” as a site
with riches histories and cultures, that Douglas is able to conceive of "transforming people's lives" from within the region.

This search for a recuperative reflection for and from the Baixada Fluminense was also a central feature of Samuel’s personal narrative about entering UFRRJ-IM. Samuel is a thin, more or less white, self-identifying queer, literature student from Nova Iguaçu who joined the IM-Duke team during the Duke team’s second field visit in July 2017. During this second field visit our objectives were much more clear, with the quantitative members of the team, joined by Duke and UNC graduate students Travis and Andrew, respectively, and Duke undergrad and descendant of Brazilian grandparents, Joe, working on obtaining data on all the IM students. The qualitative team, joined by Duke undergrad student Chloe, showed “The Cost of Opportunity” in local high schools to hold debates about access to higher education and conduct interviews with local high school teachers. Samuel, a good friend of Rodrigo’s, joined the qualitative team. Together we visited a school in Magé, one of the contested municipalities in the Baixada due to its proximity to the Serra Fluminense mountain range. The visit was a bit chaotic because of technical difficulties presenting the film, but once we finally got everything working, Samuel lead the
mini-focus group we had with 7 students following the screening. Samuel is soft-spoken but deliberate. During the school visit, he was able to connect with the high school students’ conflicting and everchanging hopes for their futures: the desire and pressure to have a good career but also to study something that genuinely interested them, the dismay at the costs of attending a university.

Though we had interacted a few times, I knew little of Samuel’s personal trajectory. Unlike the first field visit during which we spent hours in vans together and interviewed each other in order to better understand our own research question, to improve our interview protocol, and simply to get to know each other, the second field visit was much more planned out, and perhaps not less self-reflexive, but more future focused than present minded within the group. I finally learned a bit more about Samuel during a presentation of the film and project at the Colégio Brasileiro de Altos Estudos (CBAE-Brazilian College of Higher Studies) of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. We had all piled into one of the UFRRJ vans to head from Nova Iguaçu to the CBAE campus housed in a 1920s grand hotel turned university institute nestled in Rio’s upper middle class Botafogo neighborhood with spectacular views of Sugarloaf Mountain.
I presented the film and a bit about the collaborative process of making it with Dudu, while John and Alexandre presented the project. John had me present often to encourage my writing. The rest of the team made up the bulk of the audience, though there were about a dozen people not affiliated with the project in attendance. Even though we were the “panel,” the team was already familiar with John and Alexandre’s tendency to call on anyone and everyone present to say a few words. One Black woman who introduced herself as a professor at the UERJ campus in Duque de Caxias commented on how her students often struggled with a fear of presenting. Having seen that many of the IM student were open to talking, she asked about “the process of convincing these young college students that they can and should have confidence in their professional and intellectual capacities.” In response, Alexandre responded by citing his academic and political coming of age in the movement for popular education as championed by Paulo Freire, a movement that hoped to invert the hierarchies between professor and student by encouraging the latter to speak and the former to listen.

Some twenty minutes later, after other questions had been asked or answered, and John had insisted that more members of the team join the
conversation, Samuel returned to the UERJ professor's question. Though his answer is long, it is worth citing in its entirety as a testimony to IM as a place of collective epistemic reflection and recuperation in the face of low self-esteem:

Something I often asked myself during my time as an undergraduate was how to have confidence in my own intellect. I think it's quite an interesting question because before I studied at Rural in Nova Iguaçu, I majored in literature at UFRJ. My dream was to go there and I got in, just that, I noticed something that I had not envisioned: I started to feel like I did not belong to that space even though I had mastered the material because ever since I was young I had an aunt who was linked to the university, to intellectual issues. And she very much incentivized me to follow this path, and so within literature I always liked questions related to the canon. And I thought at UFRJ I would find peers with whom to discuss these questions. It's just that I felt excluded exactly because even though I knew the more traditional material, I did not belong to that space. And there I began to feel very intellectually inferior, which harmed my performance in that institution and led me to try another vestibular.

Here, Samuel is echoing Babi’s assertion that residents of the Baixada would not want to attend Olympic events due to their lack of self-esteem, to the feeling that they do not belong on those spaces. This sense of inferiority even leads him to doubt his own intellectual abilities, despite having mastered much of the material before even attending university. This sense of social exclusion, of not belonging, propels him to transfer from his dream college:
I started to think about Rural because it is closer. Just that, I did not want to attend IM, which is in Nova Iguaçu. I told my mom some horrible things at the time that I wanted contacted with other people. I didn’t want to be in contact with people from my region, even though Seropédica is the Baixada, it’s different. [Everyone laughed at this point]. The relationship that the students have with the space is different. But it turned out that at my work schedule conflicted with when the literature classes were scheduled in Seropédica. So, I went to IM.

Like Douglas, Samuel expresses the common sentiment of many residents of the Baixada of wanting to leave the region. The extent to which the region had been forgotten compels them to reject it themselves. Yet when he finally enrolled at IM, Samuel found an intellectual and social community that continually reflected on how the social impacts their intellectual thinking, affording young people a sense of belong:

And it was a great surprise because I had a feeling that I did not have at UFRJ which was precisely that feeling of belonging to the place. Because I soon met people with histories similar to mine. I identified with that space and all of the discussions fostered there. And I think that was an important factor that I end up hearing resonated in what people involved in this project say and in what other people I’m in contact with say. It’s identity, that you recognize yourself as part of this space and I recognize myself as a resident of Nova Iguaçu, recognizing that I am part of the geography of the periphery. It completely changed my outlook on my own intellect and it made me realize that the problem wasn’t my intellect but the question of self-esteem precisely due to my geography, due to the place from which I am situated. And I think that this increased myself esteem and made me, as much as I still have insecurities and maybe one day I will know what to do with them, I have courage to try. And these attempts have yielded good fruits in
the sense that, for example, I went and tried for a National Library grant and I looked at the list of people who past and I was the only person from Nova Iguaçu and the only person at Rural. Everyone is from UFRJ. So, while that brings a bit of sadness, it also brings happiness in the sense of occupying that space. And having that consciousness, I now am a worker ant [tenho um trabalho de formiguinha] going up to my peers, and I tell this to Rodrigo that “you have to try too for the National Library grant too and if you need help, I’ll help, because I already know the process.” And so, to conclude, I think you need to give your students, for their intellectual self-esteem, the sense that they belong to that space.

Everyone applauded after Samuel’s response, because he articulated many of the students’ same experiences, arriving at both the affective and analytical crux of our entire project. The implication is that Samuel would have never applied to the National Library grant had he remained enrolled at URFJ, not because he was any less capable, but because without feeling like he belonged to the space of that university, he felt intellectually inferior. We know from members of our own team like Carla and Adriana that students do surmount that grind of the daily commute and the feelings of inadequacy to attend universities in Rio proper and elsewhere. However, the question of self-esteem is not simply a matter of being in those places, but rather, as Samuel makes clear, the discussions and dialogues and the sharing of similar histories that allow for a recuperative reflection in the other. Belonging is a shared pursuit, a constant dialogue of what it means for a
place, in this instance a university, “to be in our image,” with our face. However, as Samuel makes clear with his experience at UFRJ, not all spaces foster such debates, and such dialogues are not always common place even within UFRRJ-IM. Many students we interviewed spoke of the prejudices of their professors who felt the *cotistas* had lowered academic standards. Much of this sense of belonging also involved revealing and undoing the construction of the public university in Brazil as an elite space, in an epistemic sense in terms of moving beyond the Eurocentric curriculum, and also in the sense of citizenship, as lack of opportunity for poor, Black and brown youth has historically rendered the right to higher education an elite privilege. For Samuel, fostering belonging became its own form of knowledge creation, a means through when students came to know themselves so that they can make themselves known.
5.2 ‘There won’t be any poor and Black people attending university nor traveling to another country,’ they said

Figure 25: Luana’s Facebook post following “The Cost of Opportunity Conference.”
A few days after the IM students had already returned to their respective homes following the conference at Duke, Luana posted a picture on Facebook of her and Rodrigo sitting on two chairs in a hallway of what I believe is the new Student Wellness Center at Duke. They have their heads thrown back in full on cackling laughter, legs crossed as if they haven’t a care in the world, except maybe, casually dismantling coloniality through their very joyful presence. The post was marked “feeling thankful with Rodrigo” and she captioned it with a knowing dismissal of an elite that have tried to keep her and Rodrigo in their place: “‘There won’t be any poor and Black people attending university nor traveling to another country,’ they said.” The hashtags #resistindo (resisting) and #rindoatoa (carefree laughing) accompanied those of the two universities.

As briefly touched upon in the previous chapters, universities in the Americas emerged from the violence of European colonial expansion and sustained themselves on a commitment to Eurocentric claims to universal knowledge (C. Walsh, Castro-Gómez, and Schiwy 2002; W. Mignolo 2003; Quijano 2000b). Mignolo (2003) describes this genealogy frankly:

Universities, in the Americas since the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, were created and run by Spanish and British immigrants and by their Creole (Anglo and Spanish) descendants. Thus, the history of this place (America), where a
group of transplanted Europeans ignored and marginalized indigenous knowledge from Patagonia to Labrador, and destroyed the African memories that the slaves brought with them (pp. 99).

While the Portuguese similarly “ignored and marginalized indigenous knowledge,” decimated the populations of the people that bore that knowledge, and “destroyed the African memories” of the enslaved, Mignolo focuses here on the Spanish and British and their respective creole descendants for the simple reason that the Portuguese do not fit within this colonial genealogy. After the genocide against the Taíno people, papal bull established the Universidad Santo Tomás de Aquino on the island of Hispaniola in 1538 and Catholic missionaries, disregarding Incan systems of learning and knowledge, established the Universidad San Marcos in 1551 in Lima, Peru. Roughly a century later, following war and pestilence that wiped out much of the indigenous peoples, the Massachusetts Bay Colony established Harvard University. Though there is some dispute as to which university in Brazil is the oldest, none of the contenders were established before the 20th century. The Portuguese did establish professional schools to supply the Brazilian colony with engineers, doctors and lawyers, but maintained the Universidade da Coimbra as the institution of
higher learning in the Renaissance humanist tradition attended by the wealthiest segment of society (W. Mignolo 2003; Skidmore 2004). Moreover, the first printing press did not arrive in Brazil until 1807, when the Portuguese Royal Court established itself in Rio de Janeiro after fleeing Napoleon. In terms of elementary education, though the Imperial Constitution allowed illiterates to vote and granted the right to free primary education to all citizen—though this was never implemented—the first Republican Constitution of 1891 eliminated both (Skidmore 2004). When Brazil eliminated the literacy requirement in 1985, it was the last nation in Latin America to do so (Holston 2008, 102–3). This lack of investment in education and its relationship to elite dominance and patronage networks in Brazil is indicative of anthropologist and pedagogue Darcy Ribeiro’s oft quoted pronouncement that “the educational crisis in Brazil, about which there is much talk, is not a crisis, it is a program” (Ribeiro 1978, 22).

I first came across a version of this quote on graffiti flyers throughout Rio when conservative members of the national Congress were pushing to lower the age of criminal responsibility from 18 to 16. “Reduction is not a solution” became the rallying cry of social movements, contending that an increased investment in education, not just financial, but social and cultural, would be a far greater
solution than the punitive, *bandido bom, é bandido morto* mentality that has long characterized elite and middle-class views of the poor Black and brown youth. A youth that, as Luana and Rodrigo irreverently note, was never supposed to make it to university in the first place as evident in the precarious public school systems that they attend. The Ribeiro quote, though often slightly misquoted, has become a succinct banner to point to the ruinous project of Brazil’s elite to reduce, rather than produce, all but the most basic forms of work related knowledge and competencies among its poor, Black and brown population.

The phrase is the penultimate sentence of Ribeiro’s 1978 essay “*Sobre o obvio.*” The entire essay remains, 40 years later, an astute critique of the Brazilian educational “program,” which “has not had any failures, precisely because the main requirement for the survival and hegemony of the dominant classes is to keep the population boorish (*xucro*)” (Ribeiro 1978, 16). An ignorant population does not run the risk of electing a populist challenger to that hegemony. In fact, as the Secretary of Education during the Goulart Administration prior to the military coup of 1964, much of the essay is an indictment of the dictatorship era MOBRAL (Movimento Brasileiro de Alfabetização—the Brazilian Literacy
Movement), which sought to combat adult illiteracy but primarily functioned as one of the largest “electoral enterprises” due to its political propaganda and how it diverted funds and energy from basic education. Similarly, he attributes much of the so-called crises of education in Brazil to the lack of civic, that is in his formulation, federally led education. That education became a local, rather than national project, ensured that it would maintain the power of local politicians: “by handing primary education over to exactly those who do not want to educate anyone—because they think it is useless to teach the masses to read, write, and count—by handing it over exactly to them—to the mayor and the governor—the task of generalizing primary education, they condemned it to failure, all of this without ever admitting that its duty was precisely this [failure]” (Ribeiro 1978, 20). According to Havinghurst and Moreira’s groundbreaking Society and Education in Brazil of 1969, in 1950, only 60 out of every 1000 children between the ages of 11 and 17 were enrolled in secondary school. By 1962, 130 out of every 1000 of children within this age group were enrolled (Havighurst and Moreira 1969, 187). These numbers only account for students enrolled in secondary education, not those who went on to complete it.
Though this data is not broken down by race or class, the lack of investment in primary and secondary education undoubtedly disproportionately impacted Brazil’s mostly poor, Black and brown population.

Though he does not attribute this programed failure to the question of race, and rather to elite contempt for the poor, Ribeiro does insist that “Blacks have been inferiorized […] by historic reasons. Reasons that have nothing to do with their innate capacities and aptitudes but, yes, to do with certain very concrete interests” (Ribeiro 1978, 10). Within the context of the article it’s not a stretch to infer that a programmed lack of access to quality education is a central part of this “inferiorizing.” The program is to keep poor people and Black people, who overwhelmingly happen to be poor, inferior. Mignolo (2003) asserts that Spanish and English creoles suffered “a long, historical inferiority complex…with respect to Europe” because “[t]he colonial universities both were and were not European universities; they aspired to be but were not quite” (99). Thus, Brazil differs from the rest of the Americas, according to Ribeiro, in that it had no such aspirations, underdevelopment was the goal.
Ribeiro contends that even within the universities that were eventually created, the knowledge produced sought to defend elite interests.

With the advent of favela tourism and the simultaneous appropriation and criminalization of favela and periphery cultural forms like funk and passinho, the final paragraph, which contains the famous quote, is also prescient. Ribeiro envisions a future in which Brazil could be a “country of tourism” inhabited by “millions of illiterates…with their joyless faces, with this air of malnourishment that they exhibit and that will not exist in the rest of the world” (Ribeiro 1978, 22). Although Ribeiro’s dystopian future of Brazil presumes a Modern notion of human progress and ignores non-literate forms of knowledge, he does anticipate the marketing of inequality made possible by a historic disregard for mass education at every level through exploitative favela tourism and the commercialization and depoliticization of cultural forms like funk from the periphery (Cummings 2015; Freire-Medeiros 2011).

Ribeiro’s dystopia has not quite come to pass, though the expansion of access to higher education is incredibly recent and owes a debt to activists like Nascimento, Gonzalez, and many others, not simply for occupying the space of...
the university but also for their work in recuperating Black thinking and being.

Fifteen years ago it would have been extremely rare for a group of students from the Baixada Fluminense, poor, Black, Brown, and “blackened whites” by way of their residency in the Baixada and/or Northeastern lineage (Da Silva 2001), present collectively at a conference in the US. This is not simply because fifteen years ago there was no Instituto Multidisciplinar in the Baixada Fluminense. This demographic simply did not have access due to a number of factors already discussed: precarious and low quality public high schools, the difficulty and financial burden of the college entrance exam, etc.. Echoing Ribeiro’s analysis of Brazil’s programmed educational crisis, several of the students and professors that the Duke-IM team interviewed referred to the educational system as “perverse” owing to the fact that the students most likely to attend prestigious, free federal universities were the overwhelming white students who attend private, preparatory high schools. Poor and Black students largely attended private for-profit universities. Martinho da Vila’s 1969 samba song “O pequeno borguês” popularized the precarity of lower class social mobility, as the protagonist of the song is mocked for obtaining a degree, though he insists that
he isn’t “borguês” precisely because the school is private. The song’s protagonist was too poor to even attend his own graduation ceremony. John and I even joked about using it in the film, but obtaining the rights to such a classic seemed like a daunting task. As recently as 1997, only 2.2% of pardos and 1.8% of black youth between the ages of 18 and 24 attended any type of university (Formenti, Palhares, and Viera 2016). These dire numbers led Frei David to found his College Entrance Exam for the Black and the Poor in 1992.

In a screening of “The Cost of Opportunity” film with Nova Iguaçu public high school students, Rodrigo discussed this perversion, stating, simply: “I was not meant to be here [in university].” According to a study by the IBGE, in 2004, only 16.7% of preto and pardo people between the ages of 18 and 24 were enrolled in higher education programs at both private and public institutions, while 47.2% of their white counterparts and 32.9% of all Brazilians in this age group were enrolled (IBGE 2015). As public high school educated students from an urban periphery, their chances of obtaining a college education, especially one at a federal university, were almost unheard of a generation ago. By 2014, 45.5% of Black and brown youth in this age group were enrolled in institutions of
higher learning (IBGE 2015). According to the Ministry of Education’s 2016 Higher Education Census data as analyzed by Nexo Jornal, an online media platform that focuses on in depth analysis of issues in Brazil and abroad, preto and pardo students account for over 50% of federal university students, making public federal universities, in contrast to public state and private universities, the only institutions to match Brazil’s racial composition at the national level (Almeida and Zanlorenssi 2017). Similarly, over two-thirds of student in federal universities are from households that earn up to 1.5 times the minimum monthly wage of R$ 1,320 (roughly $402USD) per family member and over 60% of students attended public high schools (R. H. N. Galdino and Barros 2015).

Quotas, both socioeconomic and racial, have arguably been the greatest policy shift implemented to upend the myth of racial democracy and harmony. Though often decried as an importation from the US, and thus a transposition of US “racial consciousness” and a black-white racial dichotomy to Brazil (Pires 2008; Fry and Maggie 2004), as dos Santos citing Abdias de Nascimento demonstrates, Black Brazilian social movements have at least since the 1940 called for quotas in education and political parties “even before these became a political demand in the United States” (S. A. dos Santos 2015, 65). Though not a
central demand of the Unified Black Movement of the 1970s due to the lack of overall high school completion and the desire to focus on other socioeconomic issues, quotas have nonetheless long been a demand of some Black movements, such as Frei David’s EducaAfro, either on the local or national level. The University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) was the first public university to enact racial and socioeconomic quotas in 2001, followed by the State University of Bahia in 2002. In 2003, the University of Brasilia in 2003 became the first federal university to do so. Fernando Henrique Cardoso was the first president post-redemocratization to publicly disavow the myth of racial democracy. In the opening remarks of the 1996 international meeting on Multiculturalism and Racism: The Role of Affirmative Action in Contemporary Democratic States, jointly organized by the University of Brasilia and the Human Rights Department of the Ministry of Justice, he declared: “We in Brazil, have in fact been complicit with discrimination and prejudice […] discrimination has consolidated itself, it seems as something that repeats, that is reproduced,” (Quoted in: dos Santos 2015, 68). As the title of the conference indicates affirmative action policies had already reached the level of national discourse, yet, many Black activists look to the 2001 World Conference against Racism and
Discrimination held in Durban, South Africa as a turning point in the discussion of affirmative action and reparation policies throughout Latin America (C. E. Walsh 2015; S. A. dos Santos 2006). Although the Cardoso administration did little to materially combat anti-black discrimination and promote Black access to dignified work, education, and health, and life, symbolic gestures such as the creation of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group to Valorize the Black Population (Grupo de Trabalho Interministerial (GTI) para a Valorização da População Negra), propelled issues of discrimination into the national discourse due to pressure from various Black social movements (dos Santos 2015).

Despite both Cardoso and Lula having been credited with bringing affirmative action policies to Brazil, Dilma Rousseff’s administration codified them into law. The 2012 Lei de Cotas reserves fifty percent of openings in federal educational institutes (high schools and universities) to public school students and a portion of those that corresponds to the racial demographics of the state in which the institute is located. Similarly, a 2014 law reserves 20% of all, very competitive and coveted, federal public jobs specifically for Blacks. However, by the first year of Lula’s second term in 2007, 84 universities had adopted their
own form of affirmative action policies targeting Black, indigenous, low-income, disabled, and/or graduates of public schools.

From the onset, opponents of quotas and other forms of affirmative action, while at times simultaneously acknowledging anti-black discrimination and racism in Brazil, cited the near impossibility of answering the ontological question of who is Black in Brazil and thus worthy of the benefits of affirmative action proposals. Despite purporting to advocate for socioeconomic quotas, many of these arguments against race-based affirmative action relied on notions of meritocracy, especially given Brazil’s many shades of brown (Fry and Maggie 2004; Maggie and Fry 2004). Even FHC during his 1994 presidential campaign against Lula claimed that he was “bem mulatinho” (quite a bit mulato) and has “um pé na cozinha” (a foot in the kitchen)—a common colloquial allusion to having a Black ancestor tied to the intimate hierarchy of gendered and racialized space within the Brazilian household, as enslaved Black women and later their descendants as domestic servants work in the kitchen (Neri 1994). That a presidential candidate of an established military family would boast of being of African descent through a clearly gendered and racialized reference to both domestic work and potential rape speaks to Da Silva’s claim that any-body is
more or less Black if not by blood than at least by allegiance to the national narrative of miscegenation.

As Twine (1998) contends in her seminal ethnographic analysis of the everyday speech and discourses of Black and white Brazilians, Racism in a Racial Democracy: The Maintenance of White Supremacy in Brazil, “[i]n daily conversation there is no need to explain the whiteness of the local elite. The absence of Afro-Brazilians from the ranks of the elite is unremarkable” (66). Twine argues that the discourse of racial democracy and its reliance on racial mixing, “deracializes the white elite by arguing that the elite is not really white but brown because brunettes and morenos constitute the numerical majority of the people” (74). FHC really is “bem multainho!” When asked by both Brazilian and American friends how racism was different in the two countries, I frequently joked that I did not know of a single visibly and/or self-identifying Black person in the Lava Jato corruption scandal. In the US, any Black participant would have been made to take the fall. My point was that despite increasingly acknowledging anti-black discrimination, the overwhelming whiteness of the elite is often rendered unremarkable. Opponents of affirmative action policies thus reduce the debate to this seeming impossibility, as anyone of any class and color could claim African
As I briefly touched on in my discussion of the criminalization of youth, privileges and rights are often conflated in Brazil, though who bears them is differentiated. As Holston (2008), Fischer (2008), Caldeira (2006) and others have argued, differentiated citizenship means that “Brazilians can consider some Brazilians as ‘citizens’ who have rights and other Brazilians as ‘marginals’ who lack rights” (Holston 2008, 255). Because of the ways that violence is often employed against the marginal, Holston and Caldeira characterize Brazil’s differentiated citizenship as an “uncivil political democracy” (T. P. R. Caldeira and Holston 1999, quoted in French, 2013). Reiter’s (2009) refutes the idea that this “uncivil political democracy” is the result of weak institutions, like public security, and rather contends that it results from how the wealth white elite yield the state apparatus:

Accordingly, it is not the failing state that causes Brazil’s democracy to fall short of its promises, but the extreme societal inequalities that distort communicative processes of Brazilian society and hence provide the Brazilian state with too much autonomy from the will and needs of its majority and not enough autonomy from the interests of a relatively affluent minority. Due to extreme inequality, distorting the quality of societal processes in Brazilian society, privileged groups have long
captured the state and used it to advance their goals without feeling or effectively being accountable to the masses. (20)

As discussed in the previous chapter with Frei David’s college entrance exam for Blacks and the needy, education has been one of the primary manifestations of this elite privileges. In 1948, the conservative Black journalist George Schuyler (1992) remarked that “Brazilian education for all colors seems to be about the level of Negro education in the U.S.A.” (154). Whether or not Schuler’s observation was factually true—he does cite the available statistic of the time—it anticipates Ribeiro’s denunciation of Brazil’s elite created and sustained educational crisis. Only a small number of people were meant to benefit from the free, federal universities established at the turn of the century, while no such national mandate was implemented for elementary and high school education. Active indifference functioned just as well, if not better, than the legalized segregation of Schuyler’s US for the maintenance of a dominant white class.

The largely forgotten, Recife born, Caxias resident, Afro-Brazilian poet Solano Trindade, speaks to this same idea in his poem “Conversa com Luci.” Addressing a young, Black American woman, he writes:
Luci, you can’t enter the University of Alabama.
Other Blacks,
in other countries of the world,
can’t enter universities,
dear.
We here also
have difficulty entering universities,
not for the color, dear,
but for the money.
Here there is no “color line”, girl
but we live on the dollar line,
love. (Trindade 1999)

Trindade thus hints at the circular relationship between poverty and Blackness in Brazil: Black people are poor, and poor people are Black, and for this reason “other Blacks...can’t enter university.” Trindade’s native northeast and adopted home of Caxias, about which he wrote extensively, are both what da Silva (2001) calls the “strange places,” inhabited by “blacks and mestiços, and blackened whites,” that is, “the poor” (441). And though here da Silva is mostly concerned with geographic space, this blackening of whites within the mass of poor, mirrors the mapping of these strange places onto and through “positions, functions, professions, knowledge, lifestyles, and social strata,” as dos Santos (2006, 40) notes, and their association with black bodies. Blacks are always already poor, whereas some whites are blackened through their social and/or
geographic proximity to Blackness and poverty. Trindade’s poem, originally published in 1961, goes on to recount the political assassination of a person named “Ozeías” who “wanted universities for everyone/ for whites and for blacks/ and for this they killed Ozeías.” While a fictional character, Ozeias’s martyrdom speaks to an elite maintenance of “the dollar line” through oppressive tactics. As a resident of Caxias at the height of populist Cavalcanti’s violent, populist political campaigns against both the state and federal elite (Ralston 2013), Solano was well aware of the elite monopoly on violence as a form of maintaining inequality for the benefit of clientelist politics (J. C. S. Alves 2003).

Following Hall’s insight that “the same concept if differently positioned within the logic of different ideological discourses” (Hall 2000, 90), Twine asserts that for working class residents of Vasalia “there is conceptional link between racism and the existence of white poverty” such that they “conclude that Afro- and Euro-Brazilians encounter the same forms for social discrimination” (Twine 1998, 72, emphasis in original). That is, they both cannot enter universities because of the dollar line. To expand on this point with an eye towards Holston’s formulation of the “citizen,” with privileges veiled as universal rights, and the
“marginal,” whose social transgressions—real or perceived—render them privy to neither privileges nor the most basic of rights (a good thug, is a dead thug), I argue that racial democracy and the blackening of whites, of the marginal, in urban peripheries discursively mirrors the deracialization of the elite in order to disavow an association with privilege and whiteness. This is the particularity of the Brazilian form of “the White spectacle” (Hesse 1999), whiteness is also hyper-visible, to the point of being “unremarkable,” and invisible, to the point where Fernando Henrique Cardoso finds it politically beneficial to claim he “has a foot in the kitchen.” Like Luana posted, “‘There won’t be any poor and Black people attending university nor traveling to another country,’ they said.’ The wealthy and race of this “they” is “disavowed” and thus “unremarkable.”

Holston (2008) and Caldeira (2006) have both argued that Brazilians, especially Brazilians from urban peripheries, “have learned to make use of notions of rights, justice, and citizenship to put forward their claims” (T. P. Caldeira 2006, 102). While Fischer contends that this citizenship is not necessarily new or “insurgent” given the ways that poor urban “residents [have been] always careful to hedge their bets” by not only “collaborat[ing] with communists, but [] also forg[ing] links with Catholics, social workers, populists,
and local bosses“ (Fischer 2015, 31), for the purposes of this intersectional analysis, what I find most relevant is that often when people use the language of rights and citizenship, they distance themselves from the marginal in much the same language as Afro-descendent people distance themselves from Blackness: they have formal jobs, they have families, they pay their bills and taxes, they go to church (Da Silva 1998). At the same screening of “The Cost of Opportunity,” Rodrigo went on to express feeling uncomfortable hearing “a bunch of white people talking about Black people and a bunch of middle class people talking about the poor.” Few voices, of students and teachers, represented his own, and it “drove him crazy.” Yet, as he told the crowd of mostly Black and brown high school students, it was precisely this discomfort that drove him to identify more readily as negro:

Something that is very common, is Black people not recognizing themselves as Black. Because we are not seen in spaces of power. Right? If we look at places of prestige, the places of prestige in our society, we do not see ourselves there. So, entering university and having contact with literature was essential for me because I reproduced that same discourse. ‘I am pardo,’ the most I wanted to be was pardo, moreninho, or white. I didn’t want to see myself as Black. Because even within my own family, for example, “oh look at this hair, man.” Because people didn’t accept my hair. “No, you need to change your hair. A Black guy with rough hair (cabelo duro), you need to shave it.” The university, then, beyond academic knowledge...gave me an identity. You know? I found myself. Today I am conscious of
who I am, of my place in society. What I need to do, how I need to act, and this was essential. So, university is a place, especially for someone who is Black, for someone who is poor, for someone who is from the Baixada Fluminense, that we need to occupy. We need to get there and the people there need to hear our voice and know that we also belong in that place.

A frequent retort to the question of who is Black in Brazil is to simply to ask the police (J. H. French 2013; Warner n.d.). That is, ask the people tasked with controlling the marginal. In this way, citizen, “cidadão,” can become a flippant insult said by police arresting poor, Black and brown people (Warner n.d.). Police violence indicates that these respectability politics often have life or death consequences that disproportionately affect poor, young men. Social discrimination is not the same, for the marginal is already Black. In one of the university debates used in the film Ôri, Luis Silva, a Black labor unionist, wants to draw to the audience’s attention the question of children: “The process is that the child grows without any support, the kid is a marginal and all that, so the kid is fabricated by society and later the same society kills, or rather, the dominant class creates and then kills the marginal.” Just as the elite are “unremarkably” presumed to be white, the poor are presumed to be Black by default, as is the marginal, Neguinho de Beija Flor’s “pivete” and “social problem.”
However, despite the deracialization of the elite that Winddance-Twine identifies, the “hierarchization of spaces in relation to color” still pervades Brazilian society, as Rodrigo contends (Sansone 2003). As dos Santos (2006) contends that much of the debate rests on the question of recognizing, that is knowing, the social places of Blacks and whites:

Many identifiable privileged social spaces are occupied and reserved exclusively for whites, and other easily recognized and much less favorable places are deemed suitable only for the black and mestizo masses. Brazilians are also aware of positions, functions, professions, knowledge, lifestyles, and social strata historically dominated and appropriated by whites (mostly of the male gender and bearing specific physical characteristics considered ideal). Perhaps this is the reason there is so much doubt about who is black in Brazil, especially when determining those who should benefit from affirmative action or where there might be some sort of gain or advantage to being thus identified. Since blacks have always been viewed as unequal, disadvantaged outsiders, it is difficult to identify them in a context of perceived power and privilege. (p. 40)

The real issue, as Santos underscores, is associating Blackness with an “identifiable privileged social space” such as a spot in a prestigious federal university. However, privileges do not only manifest themselves in “positions, functions, professions, knowledge, life styles and social strata” but also within the very concept of who is a citizen and thus who is entitled to rights. At the “Cost of Opportunity” Conference that I will discuss at the end of this chapter,
Rodrigo responded confidently and bluntly with the grinning support of his peers to a question from the audience about how the quotas have been received in Brazil. His response is so straightforward because he has not only studied the history of access to higher education including Black movements’ demands for quotas, but also because he is living through a moment in which the system of quotas and other means of democratizing access to free higher education in Brazil are being dismantled, often through racist media narratives:

The quota system is still looked upon with a lot of prejudice in Brazil, because we have an elite that does not accept sharing privileges. And to have a poor, Black, population from the periphery in the university produces a lot of concerns. The system of quotas is not only racial. It is also for people with low incomes. It is principally for those who went to public schools, which are the schools in which education lags most behind in our country. But because we live in a racist society, the racialization of quotas is the main talking point that the elite use to say that quotas aren’t a good thing (legal).

Given Brazil’s observable, historic inequality and especially how it manifests itself in “perverse” public education, elite discourses rarely attack the socioeconomic aspect. In a 2017 editorial following the University of São Paulo’s (USP) decision to adopt socioeconomic and racial quotas, the last prestigious public, albeit state, university to do so, the conservative Folha de São Paulo editorial board condemned the decision. The editorial board insists that “there
are many illusory aspect to what is commonly called meritocracy,” citing “the genetic lottery” and “familiar and cultural surroundings” and ignoring structural inequalities, though nevertheless “defend[ing] for some time that the criteria for special entrance into universities be exclusively social” (Editorial 2017).

“Income,” the Editorial Board argues, “unlike color, is something objectively measurable. What’s more, given the strict correlation between poverty and darker skin color, Black people would also be considered in this way” (Editorial 2017). In a bid to appeal to Black movements, the editorial even goes as far to oppose racial quotas given the potential for fraud with students auto-declaring themselves Black. Opposing racial quotas would thus “avoid the proliferation of the infamous racial classification commissions that evoke the some of the worst moments of humanity” (Editorial 2017). Here the editorial is referencing the commissions, which have largely been backed by Black movements and activists including Frei David, at public universities and federal agencies that corroborate how Afro-descendant someone looks precisely due to this “strict correlation between poverty and dark skin” and a number of other forms of discrimination (Warner n.d.; de Oliveira 2017; D. Santos and Douglas 2016). Rodrigo knowingly mocks such bad faith arguments. Skin color cannot be measured “objectively”
but it can be darker and correlated with poverty. The editorial board “admits”
that meritocracy is a fraught concept, but fails to point to any material reasons
why that may be the case, such a poor investment in public schools. Thus, elites
opposed to racial quotas construct them as privilege, as an assault on rights,
precisely because they upend the whitening discourse from marginal to citizen.
That is, university quotas render remarkable the whiteness of the elite, the “strict
correlation” between their wealth and their whiter skin color and the marginality
of the poor, Black, population from the periphery.

5.3 “The more I deepened my knowledge, the more I rejected my Black
condition”: Education and (Un)Learning to Be Black

Despite having, to his own admission, never read a whole book besides the Bible,
twice, before enrolling at UFRRJ-IM, Rodrigo turned to literature to find a
consciousness of who he is as a Black Brazilian from other Black voices.

However, the prevailing discourse of racial democracy, one that compelled
Rodrigo himself to be “at most pardo” made the university an alienating place
for the few Black students who did attend prior to the implementation of quotas,
like feminist intellectual pioneers Lélia Gonzalez and Beatriz Nascimento. Their
life stories speak to the specificity of Brazilian education for Black and female student. While neither Nascimento nor Gonzalez grew up in the Baixada upon moving to Rio at a young age, they both grew up in nearby North Zone suburbs: Cordovil in the case of Nascimento, and Ricardo de Albuquerque in that of Gonzalez. Similarly, their families’ migration to Rio, especially that of Nascimento’s from Sergipe, mirrors the mass migration of nordestinos and people from other parts of the interior to Southeastern capital cities and their peripheries. That these Black daughters of working class parents completed secondary education, let alone college, was a remarkable feat.

Born in 1935 in Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, the 17th of 18 children, Lélia Gonzalez moved to Rio de Janeiro with her family at the age of 7 due to her brother’s football career with the Flamengo Club. Her father, Acácio Joaquim de Almeida, was a Black railway worker and her mother, Urcinda Serafim de Almeida, was an indigenous domestic worker. As Brazilian geographer Alex Ratts notes, Gonzalez in particular “had an uncommon educational trajectory among Black girls and youth,” (Ratts 2010), due to having studied science at the prestigious Colégio Pedro II high school in Rio’s Centro. In an interview in the
book *Patrulhas ideológicas* (1980) published by Carlos Alberto Perreira and Heloísa Buarque de Hollanda, Gonzalez herself attests to the fact that her educational trajectory was not the norm, even among her family:

> It’s rough. I am a woman born to a poor family, my father was a blue-collar worker, black, my mother an illiterate indigenous woman. They had 18 children and I am the 17th. And it happens that everyone in this family worked, no one passed elementary school, because the ideological path internalized by my family was: study until elementary school, and, then, everyone went to battle in terms of working to help maintain the rest of the family. But in my case, what happened was, as one of the youngest, the second youngest of the family, already spending my infancy with my own nieces and nephews, that is to say, the vision of my parents towards me was already practically like that of a granddaughter. (C. A. M. Pereira and de Hollanda 1980, 201)

Gonzalez’s older siblings thus had trajectories much more similar to those of the vast majority of Brazilian youth during the 1940s-60s. Few gained much education passed primary school, as they had to work to support their families. In interviews with students at UFRRJ-IM, many also attested to the fact that their parents, from roughly the same generation as Gonzalez and Nascimento or the next, also did not complete high school.

This lack of intergenerational educational attainment left poor, Black and brown young people, particularly of Gonzalez and Nascimento’s generation, to
navigate on their own an educational system that rarely taught the role that
Afro-descendent and indigenous peoples played in Brazil’s national, historical
and cultural formation. An educational system that presumed, took as obvious in
Ribeiro’s critique, the inferiority of Black people. Upon reflecting on her
trajectory, Gonzalez notes that the educational system itself served to promote a
discourse of whitening, not only bio-racially, but also in terms of knowledge:

I went to elementary school and passed through that process that I now call ‘brainwashing’ by the Brazilian pedagogical
discourse, because the more I deepened my knowledge, the
more I rejected my Black condition. And, clearly, I attended
gymnasium, [studied] science, all of that. In university, I already
was a cuckoo person [pessoa de cuca], already perfectly whitened,
within the system. And, from there, the contradictions began.
As a woman and as a black person you evidently suffer a greater
process of discrimination. And, clearly, as a very popular
student, as a cool person, that cool pretinha, very intelligent, the
professors liked me, all that jazz. (C. A. M. Pereira and de

Doing well in school meant precisely “rejecting [her] Black condition.” However,
in a country where people avoid using racial extremes to categorize people (Da
Silva 1998), racial epithets, usually in the diminutive grammatical form, are often
used as, however complexly, terms of endearment, thus reinforcing the
whitening, the Black rejection, to become the “cool pretinha.” She is a “pretinha”
a “little black girl” precisely because she has been “perfectly whitened” in her knowledge and being. Her blackness is rendered merely a physical attribute, seemingly devoid of the negative connotations associated with Blackness, with the word *pretol/a* (Da Silva 1998). Yet, the limits of “racial democracy,” as she states, came when she married a white man whose family rejected her and reduced their relationship to “concubinage” (C. A. M. Pereira and de Hollanda 1980, 3). Although her husband confronted his family’s discrimination and they remained together until his death, the limits of her hair straightening and her dressing as a “*lady* [emphasis and English in the original]” were underscored by the fact that no matter how educated or well dressed, unlike her mixed second husband, she could not pass as white. However, “little” she was still “*preta.*”

Beatriz Nascimento, born in Aracaju, Sergipe on July 12, 1942, also viewed school as a particularly white space and place. The 8th of ten children of a housekeeper, Rubina Pereira do Nascimento, and a mason, Francisco Xavier do Nascimento, her family moved to Cordovil when she was 7 years old. As she describes in Ôrì, her family’s journey to Rio was part of “the great dynamic of migration” that marked the lives of *nordestinos* arriving in Brazil’s Southeastern
cities like Rio and São Paulo and Black bodies since the transatlantic slave trade.

In her interview in *Fala, Crioulo* (1982) in which Black journalist Haroldo Costa interviewed Black Brazilian activists, Nascimento describes a concept similar to Dubios’s double consciousness, the personal knowledge and sense of being that you are a Black person in a white world:

> Observing well, you reach the conclusion that you live in a double or triple society. To the extent that this society imposes itself in your head that it is a white society, that your behavior must conform to white diktats, you nullify yourself as a black person, you start to live another life, you float without a base on which to land, without references and without parameters of what your unique form should be. (Costa 1982, 96)

While Gonzalez did not recognize until she was older the ways in which her schooling made her “reject her Black condition,” Nascimento admits to feigning illness as a child to not have to attend the nearly all white school near her grandmother’s home in Aracaju. Even in her youth, Nascimento attempted to resist this feeling of “nullifying [herself]” that weighed over her in places “without references,” that is, without people that looked like her. It is important to note that Nascimento is much darker and bears many more physical characteristics associated with Blackness than Gonzalez. Though Brazil has often
been described as a pigmentocracy, the combination of physical traits—hair texture, nose and lip size, eye color—as well as personal traits—cleanly, educated, well-spoken—that go into one’s more or less blackness reflect what Black American sociologist Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman calls a “traitocracy” (Hordge-Freeman 2015, 241). Thus, the distance between “pretinha” e “preta” was much greater in some respects for Nascimento, which da Silva argues contributed to her being “all but completely alienated from the intellectual and political conditions” in her later life (Da Silva 1998, 229). Her violent death at the hands of her friend’s abusive husband is a testament to her inability to escape her black condition despite her college education and recognition as a then rising intellectual. Like Gonzalez’s “brainwashing,” Nascimento views the process of becoming aware of one’s blackness in this double or triple society dictated by white norms as a “process that is often long and insidious and that already begins in elementary school” (Costa 1982, 96). Nascimeto attributes the poor educational attainment of Black youth to “those mechanics of education that have nothing to do with education within the family, the mechanics of reading,
where you do not know who you are, because you are not in the books” (Costa 1982, 197). However, like Gonzalez, excelling at school also served as her means of combatting the “insidious” process, though expectations also meant repressing her own childhood:

When I began to dive into myself, as a Black woman, it was precisely in school, which was an environment in which I lived along side pure and simple aggression, with isolation, with flawed interpretations, the teachers’ stupidity, the absence of people of my same color in the classroom, the lack of references. In my specific case, the mechanism to break free from this situation of adversity in which I lived was precisely to study and get 100, which was the highest grade in my era. I was an extremely well-behaved child in elementary school; teachers would often praise me because I was the politest, I did not even ask to leave the classroom. What I was was very repressed. Imagine a student that never asks to leave the classroom. (Costas 1982, 197)

This need to excel, to be twice as good, both in intellect and in behavior, marks many personal narratives of social mobility of Black people throughout the diaspora. Nascimento laments the way she repressed herself, even abandoning the normalcies of childhood, the minor social acts of leaving the classroom, to be, to use a phrase entrenched in the consciousnesses of Blacks in the US, “twice as good to get half as far.” Matory’s (2015) research has shown that this self-repression, this desire for, as he said in an interview with Inside Higher Ed about his book Stigma and Culture: Last Place Anxiety in Black America,
“the fourth quintile…to prove to the third quintile that it’s better than the fifth,” through cultural and linguistic distancing from stereotypes of US Blackness is especially present among Blacks in academia (Flaherty 2016). Though his research primarily focuses on Afro-descendant peoples from the US and Caribbean, both Gonzalez’s and Nascimento’s accounts of their educational trajectories speak to the necessity for self-repression as an act of defiance in the face of “teachers’ stupidity” or self-preservation to become the “cool pretinha” among white peers and teachers in their early development.

Schools, at all levels, were thus predominantly white spaces, not only in composition but also in their curriculum. In the first 1948 issue of Abdias do Nascimento’s Jornal Quilombo: Vida, problemas, e aspirações negros, a young Haroldo Costas, a student at the time, lamented in his article, “Queremos Estudar,” the ways in which outright racism, and not just poor investment or lack of finances, often prohibited Black students from studying in prestigious schools, such as those run by the military (Costa 1948). Similarly, in the same issue, Abdias do Nascimento laments the ways in which,

[c]ulture, with an African feeling (intuição) and accent, poetry, thought, fiction, music, as an ethnic expression of the most pigmented Brazilian group, gradually is being relegated to abandonment, ridiculed by the leaders of ‘whitening;’ these
‘aristocrats’ forget that ethnic, cultural, religious and political pluralism gives vitality to national organisms, being the very blood of the democracy. (Nascimento 1948)18

A more representative curriculum, both within schools and within the broader national discourse, that takes into account the importance of Afro-descendant and indigenous people’s role in shaping Brazilian national identity has long been a demand of social movements, and became a central focus of both Gonzalez and Nascimento’s work, in part due to their own personal experience of living in a “double or triple society” in which “you nullify yourself as a black person.”

For Gonzalez, her experience of an “internal division as a Black woman,” led her to return to knowledges that her college education in philosophy had rejected, primarily through a study of Afro-Brazilian cultural forms like candomblé:

It’s unnecessary to say that the internal division of a Black woman in the university is so great that in the moment that you run up against reality of a prejudice and discriminatory ideology that’s there, your head does an incredible dance. I had to go to an analyst, to do analysis, and this helped me a lot. And from their I went to learn from my own people, that is, from

18 It is interesting to note that do Nascimento cites Gilberto Freyre in the last line “sendo o próprio sangue da democracia.” While today many black activists rightfully decry Freyre’s theories of racial conviviality, and how they often obscure violence, Freyre was a departure from the scientific racism that dominated Brazil racial theory in the 19th and early 20th century. As Skidmore notes, “Freyre’s writings also did much to focus attention on the inherent value of the African as the representative of a high civilization in his own right,” thus underscoring miscegenation and multiculturalism as important, laudable aspects of Brazil democracy, though he too maintained black inferiority, thus enabling his ideas to be somewhat coopted by a Brazilian elite invested in whitening the population (Skidmore 1993, 192).
candomblé, macumba, these things that I thought were primitive. Cultural manifestations that I, in the end, with my degree in Philosophy, understood as such a sophisticated Western cultural form, that clearly I couldn’t see them as important things. But anyway, I return to my origins, and looked for my roots and I was about to perceive, for example, the very important role my mother played in my formation. Despite being indigenous and illiterate, she had such an incredible comprehension of the reality in which we live, especially the political reality. (C. A. M. Pereira and de Hollanda 1980, 203)

For Gonzalez, university was an alienating experience, especially once she was confronted with the limits of the racial democracy discourse, a discourse that had actively, especially through the education system, positioned itself as European and Euro-centric. Gonzalez’s search for her roots and her re-affirmation of her indigenous mother express her attempts to un-whiten and decolonize her knowledge. This pursuit of other knowledges was inherently political (C. Walsh 2007a). For Gonzalez, it was especially important that activists and scholars learn with and from people like her mother, “a figure of the people, a fighting woman, a very intelligent woman with a great perception of things” lest they “distance themselves from the people” in “abstractions” and “high theories” (C. A. M. Pereira and de Hollanda 1980, 203). Thus, in both her knowledge production and her political activism as a member of the Unified Black Movimento (Movimento Negro Unificado-MNU), Gonzalez strove to question
the ways in which even “progressive ideological discourse deforms reality” as a “discourse of dis-cognition/re-cognition (desconhecimento/reconhecimento) in so far as it reproduces the interests of certain groups,” (C. A. M. Pereira and de Hollanda 1980). Racial democracy benefits both an elite discourse by negating race as a factor in disparities in the dignity and value that society recognizes in the lives of white and black people, and Left discourses striving for class solidarity ultimately reinforce Eurocentric and white superiority by negating the particular ways Black people have been dehumanized in Brazil.

This dis-cognition is evident, as previously discussed, in white representations of Black Brazilians, such as the “Mãe Preta” as an “integrated Black that accepted [racial] democracy” (C. A. M. Pereira and de Hollanda 1980, 206). Nascimento recounts that “truly the most violent” form of racism that she experienced was by a white intellectual who proclaimed himself Blacker than her because he had written about Afro-Brazilian religions while she was not a candomblé practitioner nor did she use an afro. Thus, she asks, “if a young, blond, middle class [burguês], extremely brilliant intellectual, can reach the conclusion that he is Blacker than I am after a few years of studying one of our cultural manifestations, then what am I?” (Ratts and Nascimento 2007, 96).
Personal accounts like this one, or Gonzalez’s experience with her first husband’s family, reveal that there is often no right way to be Black in a racist society. For both Gonzalez and Nascimento, this dis-cognition was often perpetuated by people on the Left who disregard racism as a factor in Black people’s lives, not only in terms of socio-economic status, but also in terms of political, media and epistemic representation: The racism of considering Afro-Brazilians cultural minorities in a country that speak Pretu-guese and whose culture “is Black culture par excellence” (C. A. M. Pereira and de Hollanda 1980, 205). Or rather, both sought a re-presentation, as in to present anew, of Black Brazilian being and thinking.

Both looked to the university as a potential, though fraught, site to construct not alternative universal ideological discourses, but from which to reconstruct and recuperate Black epistemology and ways of being. Before her disillusionment with the internal divisions within the Unified Black Movement, Nascimento was an active participant in many university debates, including the previously mentioned Quinzena do Negro. As a student at the Federal Fluminense University she helped found the Grupo de Trabalho André Rebouças, a research group dedicated to publishing articles on black culture
named after the famed 19th century Afro-Brazilian engineer. It was not the only space, as evident in both women’s recognition of soul parties, candomblé terreiros, and samba schools. And perhaps due to their corporal recuperative reflections, these spaces better avoided the “high theories” and “abstractions” that Gonzalez warned about and that ultimately became the source of Nascimento’s distancing herself from the movement. According to da Silva, who interviewed Nascimento just a few years before her tragic death, the “young, gifted, and black” militant scholar had ultimately questioned the movement’s direction because the “disregard for the crucial economic and social problems affecting poor blacks were distancing the black social movement from its real objective” (Da Silva 1998, 230). Nonetheless, university students played an important role in many cultural, political expressions, particularly the Black soul scene that both women exalted and admired as sites of searching and recuperating a lost identity. Students at Rio’s private Cândido Mendes University, which also housed the *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* academic journal that published many of Grupo de Trabalho André Rebouças articles, defended Black Rio’s soul scene from attacks from both the left and the right and (Alberto 2009). Gonzalez was similarly skeptical of the university educated students for how
they brought to the Black movement “these vices of language, ideology...[s]o, suddenly, when they go to the communities and [the community] does not understand anything, they want to impose these values” (C. A. M. Pereira and de Hollanda 1980, 212). For this reason, Gonzalez expressed that it was fundamental that militants of the Black movement “already surpass[] their own middle class condition and see themselves above all as Black” (C. A. M. Pereira and de Hollanda 1980, 212). However, despite her misgivings, Gonzalez remained in academia, participating in numerous national and international conferences and becoming the chair of the sociology department at PUC-Rio prior to her death in 1994 from a heart attack.
5.4 Defending Democratic Access to Free, Public Higher Education with and from within the Corporate University: The Cost of Opportunity Conference

Between a one-day trip to Washington D.C. to visit the popularly dubbed Blacksonian, working meetings to finish everyone’s presentations, and Dudu and I frantically trying to finish the film, the 8-day visit by the UFRRJ-IM team remains a bit of a blur. I delighted, but also felt conflicted, when Dudu would
take pictures in one of Duke’s many media labs. “Imagine a lab like this for Enraizados,” he’d say as we condensed the subtitles of Debora’s narrative of entering IM to better fit the timing of the film. Visits to Duke’s new food court/student center/event space replete with its own promotional video only underscored the stark differences in resources between Duke and the IM campus, or any university campus I had visited in Rio, save perhaps for the small private Fundação Getúlio Vargas. UFRRJ Seropédica campus, with its early 20th century colonial style architecture and expansive campus, is considered one of Brazil’s most beautiful universities, but the crumbling buildings speak to a former rather than current grandeur. Even the computers and scanners in IM’s Centro de Documentação e Imagem (Center for Documentation and Imaging), which is dedicated to creating a publicly accessible, digital archive on the Baixada Fluminense, pales in comparison to one of Duke’s 17 computer labs.

Duke is what Aronowitz (2000), Reading (1996), Mignolo (2003) and others have referred to as a corporate university. The corporate university, whose principals emerged in the post-World War Two United States and came to be applied globally (W. Mignolo 2003), “have to justify themselves in terms of optimal performance or return on capital” and “one of whose functions
(products?) is the granting of degrees with cultural cachet, but whose overall nature is corporate rather than cultural” (Readings 1996, 10–11). This is to say that these universities not only operate like corporations, as evident by the increased number of administrative or managerial positions and the decreased number of tenure track professorships, but their ends are corporate, with knowledge production itself being quality controlled for “excellence” and market applicability. As discussed in the previous chapter, global citizenship research and volunteer projects organized or sponsored by universities are often emblematic of the ways in which the corporate university is linked to “the reproduction of coloniality at a global scale under neoliberal values and principles of education” (W. Mignolo 2003, 99). Though Dudu and the students visited UNC’s campus to attend the Southeastern Council on Latin American Studies conference that occurred during the same week of their visit, John and I had also briefly discussed taking the students to North Carolina Central University, the first state funded historically Black university in the US, and Durham Technical Community College, to allow them to see a broader range of
institutions of higher education within the US. At least they got to see the inside of the Languages building on West Campus.¹⁹

These anxieties were not mine alone. When we met with the Brazilian undergraduate students enrolled at Duke, many of the UFRRJ-IM students commented on how the socioeconomic and racial-geographic divide between them was palpable. Though extremely kind and welcoming, these were the young people who were meant to go to university and travel to other countries. A few of the IM students even mentioned to me that they preferred the party they attended hosted by Students of the Caribbean Association, as it felt more familiar. While I had not interacted with many Brazilian students from this upper-class background while at Duke, to earn some extra cash while doing field research I did tutor Brazilian students hoping to study in the US on the SAT and ACT. On some days I would even leave a meeting with Dudu or an interview in Nova Iguaçu to head to an apartment in Leblon. I did not begrudge the students themselves, who were all quite courteous and merely wished to “excel” as I had wished to excel when I applied to Williams and later Duke. However, the

¹⁹ Just kidding. A symptom of the corporate university’s emphasis on STEM.
contrast between their parents who could afford maids who served me water and coffee and roughly $50 an hour ($30 went to me and $20 to the tutoring company) for their student’s test tutoring and the lives of Carla and her mother who moved to Rio so they could avoid the transportation costs of her attending PUC and spend more time together literally hung above my head in the form of an original Miró painting as I sat recalling algebra in a penthouse dining room. Even then I knew that my anxieties extended not only from a critical perspective of the corporate university, but also from something akin to Vik Muniz’s then wife’s, Janaina, hesitancies in the film Waste Land about the project: “If you’re starting to change them already, just bring them to the other studio, just involving them in a different life set in Rio, what’s going to happen to them once you take to - you know, put them in a plane?” (Walker et al. 2011). While our planning for the IM delegation trip and conference was grounded in dialogue between the IM half of the team and the Duke half—John did not simply “put them in a plane”—I did wonder a bit “what’s going to happen to them once” we had scheduled a visit to Duke’s brand new $30 million Student Wellness Center. Call it my intersectional Midwestern, middle-class, Black embarrassment of riches: A mixture of recognizing my privilege in attending such a university,
wanting people to know that I was critical of its ideology and largess, but also wishing there was a way for every university, or small cultural NGO like Enraizados, to have equal, democratic access to such resources. Duke, with its ubiquitous branding and consumer culture engrained into the fabric of university life, a fabric that I actively participate in, seems like an embodiment of Esteva, Babones, and Babcicky’s simple edict in their *Future of Development: A Radical Manifesto* (2013) that “if the rich people in the global North want to help poor people in the global South, they can best do so by taking less rather than giving more” (93).

I was relieved that Adair had scheduled a meeting with Duke’s then President, Richard Brodhead, and with members of the financial aid and student life offices. Brodhead was very excited by the project and gave the group a warm reception, but to me the most important aspect of the meeting was being able to discuss the costs of higher education in the US. While funds for new buildings come from a variety of sources, the meeting was important to contextualize the costs that young people in the US often bear to attend a university like Duke in the form of thousands, sometimes over 100 thousand, dollars of student loans debt which disproportionately impact students of color (B. A. Jackson and

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Reynolds 2013). And given the way the burst of the US housing bubble triggered the global financial and economic crisis of 2008, the growing and looming student loan debt bubble could devastate the globalized economy (Foroohar 2017), with all of the risk socialized to maintain already existing socioeconomic hierarchies within the US and globally. Even a publication no-less conservative than the Financial Times warned of the issue of growing student debt and its neoliberal, globalizing tendencies: “The trend is not limited to the US, of course. In the UK and beyond, completely free post-secondary education is a thing of the past. Beleaguered governments are pushing more and more of the responsibility for the things that make a person middle class—education, healthcare and pension—on to individuals” (Foroohar 2017). “Completely free post-secondary education,” however, is not a thing of the past, and our collective goal within the halls of Duke, in the fissures of its corporate endowed global citizenship programming through the Cost of Opportunity conference, was and is to defend democratic access to free, public higher education in Brazil.

Though the run-up to the conference was a whirlwind of working on our presentations, the Brazilian students wondering why we ate sweet beans (baked beans), runs to the Southpoint mall to buy iPhones and laptops, and hotel room
dance parties, the day of the conference on the day of the conference itself was filled with poise and pride. The conference took place in the Ahmadieh Lecture Hall of the Smith Warehouse, right around the corner from the Global Brazil Lab. It would be one of the labs last events as the 3 year funding from the Mellon foundation ended in 2017. After opening remarks from Prof. Deborah Jenson, Director of the Franklin Humanities Institute, Adair, a charismatic Duke undergraduate student, and Mitchel, an ambitious UNC undergraduate student who joined the team during the 3-week field visit due to his familiarity with Brazil and Portuguese and his ability to secure his own funding, introduced the audience to the basics of higher education in Brazil and a history of its expansion in both the public and private sectors. Claudia then presented a history of the Instituto Multidisciplinar as an example of that public sector expansion. Sandra Regina Sales, a UFRRJ-IM professor of Communication, then presented on media debates surrounding the passing of the Law of Quotas and Duke history graduate student, Travis discussed the judicial debates of the same. Katya, Álvaro, Dudu, and I spoke together on the next panel. I presented a draft of the first 11 or so pages of this dissertation as an introduction to the Baixada Fluminense, while Álvaro gave a detailed history of the racial composition of the
Baixada from slavery during the colonial period through the 20th century migration to the region by racialized nordestinos. Dudu and Katya, whose anthropological research investigates the professionalization and globalization of the once criminalized Afro-Brazilian sport of capoeira, discussed grassroots forms of informal education primarily in the arts.

The highlight for me, however, were the panels presented by the UFRRJ-IM students. It’s not that I did not expect them to be well researched and put together, but rather, because I had been exposed to most of their context, I had not expected to be so moved by them. The quantitative team consisting of Renan, Deborah, Louise, Carla, Ana Paula, and Juliane presented first. Debora highlighted data showing that approximately 25% of the student enrolled at IM receive some form of scholarship and underscored that “although these numbers are low, we’ve advanced a fair amount in comparison to past generations, and the intentions of projects like this one, is to continue pursuing the expansion of higher education for the working and lowest classes of Brazil.”

Babi, Rodrigo, and Luana presented on the 50 universities that the team had conducted during the 3-week period. The group, as Babi described, identified in the interviews “issues that motivated student continuance at the
university” and “obstacles in their academic life.” Among the motivations were “the course load of attending a public university because in Brazil this is very important as they are the best universities,” “discovering dreams and knowing it’s possible to define your future,” “the parents who were not able to study and often don’t even know how to read, who work a lot but earn very little and nonetheless encourage their children to study,” and, most significantly in the context of the IM as a university em nossa cara, “the sense of belonging, which means knowing that that place is yours by being able to meet other people who are part of your world.” Obstacles included lack of financial means, retention, and lack of public infrastructure like “buses that end very early, the lack of policing, and that the university is quite far from the center of the city.” Rodrigo conveyed this sense of belonging by describing how the university enabled him for the first time to self-identify as Black. Luana citing Guilherme’s interview told us about how many students saw studying in a public university as a place of militancy where one “raises the banner of the popular classes” to ensure that others can occupy this space. In the middle of presenting some of the illustrative quotes from the interviews alongside a picture of the person interviewed,
Rodrigo showed a slide with “a picture of our fists, which represents resistance for us, because we resist all the time, including to be here [at this conference].”

Luana closed the panels with a forceful reflection on what our research means today in terms of how IM students represent the demographics of the Baixada Fluminense, and what our research will mean tomorrow in terms of continuing the legacy that we have received by entering university, the difficulties of remaining in university and what that means for the new students who will occupy the IM, and what will be the new struggles of resistance within these place that was difficult to obtain.

Perhaps because Luana had not been part of the Duke-IM team until the final few days when we interviewed her for the film, I had not realized until those concluding remarks how captivating she is as a speaker. Her political sincerity on behalf of her peers and those future IM students was unmistakable:

And once again I want to underscore the importance of having a federal institute in the Baixada Fluminense that allows us to obtain a college education, that allows us to have maintenance and research grants, and that allows us to be here today tell you all a bit of our story. [A story] which has not, is not, and will not be easy going forward, but we will continue to resist.

Then as I moderated the panel and now as I write, Luana’s words culminated two panels that brought tears to my eyes. Not simply out of a sense of being proud of her, of the entire team, of the work we were doing, but also because
watching everyone present that day really did feel like, not the start, but one re-articulation among many of a struggle that has existed in Brazil for generations and that has a resurgent urgency given the reforms pushed by what many felt and feel is an illegitimate government under Michel Temer’s administration. At the time, the state of Rio’s financial collapse had been used to advance calls, from the federal treasury, to privatize the State University of Rio de Janeiro (M. Moraes 2017). The fact that the first public university to offer quotas is now under threat of privatization was not lost on those who defended the right of access to higher education for the poor, Black and brown youth from the periphery (A. Galdino 2017). Luana does not mention the specifics as to why issues like grants for maintenance continue to be a struggle, but those aware of the current situation in Brazil, who live with the anxiety that their bolsa won’t be posted each month, know that it is because of cuts implemented by the federal government (J. D. de Lima 2018).

At this point in the conference, Rodrigo delivered his astute analysis of racist attacked on affirmative action, in a sense underscoring Luana’s call to action, while also grounding it in the particularities of Brazilian racism. Rodrigo
distills dos Santos’s assertion regarding the perceived privilege being afford to Black people seeking access to universities: in a racist society, the question of quotas are easier to undermine if the media narrative misconstrues them as Black privileges. However, Rodrigo astutely inverts this sense of privileges, assigning them to the elite that have, through unequal access, rendered the right of free, public higher education a perverse privilege. Babi underscored how this discourse often becomes internalized by poor and Black students who enter universities through the quota system because they are made to “assume an inferior role, which isn’t the truth” given that the marginalized simply do not have access to the same quality of elementary and high school education as their rich counterparts. Like the question about affirmative action that prompted Rodrigo’s response, many of the questions during the Q&A came from a group of 10 or so students from the historically Black Winston-Salem State University.

Knowing that education had been one of the first policy areas that the Temer administration sought to radically undermine, John asked Luana to comment on the university occupations that had taken place in the previous months. While the high school occupations of the “student spring” in the first
half of 2016 largely took place to protest in solidarity with teachers’ strikes against state level budget cuts—high schools are usually funded by state governments in Brazil except for the 38 federal schools, the student occupations of both high schools and universities following Rousseff’s official ouster in August were in opposition to PEC 55, the amendment which sought to freeze federal spending on health and education for 20 years. Though Luana admits that the occupations were “much more political than practical and effective” given that everyone suspected that it would pass, the process taught her and other students that “knowledge can be construct in various spaces” and that the students “gained much more political knowledge and experience than [they] would have through theory.” Though futile in preventing the passing of the constitutional amendment, the movement’s goal was to “guarantee this space to the next generation who want to be where [they] are now, especially for those who live in the Baixada.” Babi added that the occupations sought to establish a dialogue with the community as well. They organized an “ocupinha,” or little occupation, consisting of events for children who live near the campus and for the children of students. The students also organized street protests attended by
their family members. Babi said that when her mother participated, she and the other parents realized that “it’s not just their children who are in the university, but that they themselves are there.”

This intergenerational sense of occupying the elite space of the university was made affectively clear at one point during the question and answer session. Bryan Pitts, a historian who obtained his PhD at Duke and facilitated with the organization and live interpretations at the conference, pulled me aside to show me a post from one of the participating student’s parents on the conference’s Facebook live stream. I briefly interruption the Q&A to share the post with the audience. Ana Paula’s dad had commented that he loved his daughter and that it was because she is “beautiful and intelligent” that “she was in the USA” and that he and her mother were “crying with joy” and “could die happy seeing his daughter participate in an international debate.” Numerous family members and friends of the IM students commented on the stream, all bursting with pride at seeing their loved ones “showing their potential in the USA,” as one cousin of Rodrigo put it. During the live stream, the video received over 750 views. For my part, I was a bit overwhelmed with emotion that day, not only out of pride for
our team, but also because my parents had traveled from Oak Park to share in it
with me.

Within that context it was especially meaningful to me and Dudu to
premiere the film. Dudu later told me that during the screening he hardly
watched the film, preferring instead to see the reactions of others. Though still a
bit concerned with typos, I was relieved when people laughed when Dudu and I
usually laughed, mostly during Debora’s candid slightly self-deprecating tale.
We did not have much time for Q&A after the film because dinner and a keynote
by the renowned and charismatic Miguel Nicolelis were on the docket, so I tried
to briefly mention some of the decisions we made, like using Pellegrino’s song to
highlight music created in the Baixada. In response to a comment from the Black
female professor from Winston-Salem State, who said that she appreciated the
film because it paralleled the experiences of many of her students, I stressed that
we made the decision to include all of Debora’s story precisely to demonstrate
that there is no straight forward path to a university education, if one choses to
get one at all, and that while the media tries to sell the images of the 4 year
university, of dorm life at Duke essentially, as the typical college experience, we
hoped that the narratives of the students and the sacrifices of their families
resonated with the struggles that students in the US, especially first-generation
and/or students of color, face upon enrolling in university.

Following the film, Nicolelis wowed us all with a humorous,
interdisciplinary, utopian talk about founding the Campus of the Brain, a school
that offers a scientific-social curriculum to young people in the periphery of
Natal. However, the highlight for me, or at least the event that I posted about on
my own Instagram account, was a performance with Dudu and Caique, a
Bahaian musician who has made Durham his home for several years. They sang
classic funk and samba songs, and some of Dudu’s own original music, and my
mom even got John to dance a bit. The IM students and I would all be returning
to the Baixada and Rio a few days later, and it served as a celebratory collective
moment of not only the day’s conference, but also our future plans to continue
both the research and political project of defending democratic access to higher
education in Brazil and beyond. In that space, we all felt that we belonged.
6. Conclusion: ‘Vai ter luta’

Figure 27: Car at Dilma campaign rally in Duque de Caxias in October 2014

My first post for the Felsman blog was titled “Rio Goes Dilmais,” a half decent pun for a Portuguese learner combining Dilma and the Portuguese word for “more” that expressed what I perceived to be mass support for her reelection to a second term. I had written about attending one of Rousseff’s campaign rallies with Luciano in Duque de Caxias in October 2014 following the first round of voting that left her and Aécio Neves of the right wing Brazilian Social Democracy Party (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira-PSDB) the final two candidates. Luciano, a negro assumido, in that moment was also a petista, or Worker’s Party member, assumido. He unapologetically wore PT stickers and T-shirts. He patiently explained to me in half-Spanish, half-Portuguese how important PT had been for, if not dismantling, then at least allowing a growing
number of poor, Black and Brown Brazilians to question the elite “program,” to borrow from Ribeiro’s famous phrase, of inequality in Brazil up until that point. He was not the only one. At the rally, we saw a car entirely covered in Dilma stickers. The mugshots from her arrest under the military dictatorship—during which she was tortured—had been colorized, stylized, and remixed into posters plastered on walls throughout the city. But Luciano’s enthusiasm was contagious and unescapable. So much so that, as I wrote at the time, one of the children at Programa Raizes Locais, an 8-year-old light skinned Black kid whose mother cooked lunch for the staff, felt compelled to ask Luciano why he was such a big fan of Dilma’s. Luciano replied, with his bright eyes and wide smile, that he supported Dilma because he wanted the boy and the other children at PRL to one day be able to attend university.

Though I have for the most part avoided commenting directly on the political turmoil in Brazil that took place during my field research and dissertation write up from 2014 through 2018, Rousseff’s impeachment and the revanchist policies of the Temer Administration are, for me, as many of my friends in the Baixada and throughout Rio articulated in varying ways in person
and on social media, a coup against the young people of PRL, of the Baixada, of the social and geographic periphery. Like Rodrigo’s assessment of the attacks on the quotas system as a manifestation of racist privilege, recent calls to privatize, or at least monetize the federal university system, seem specifically geared toward undermining this place now that it is finally occupied by poor and Black students. The Folha de São Paulo editorial, for example, ended with a call for a “more egalitarian society” by having those who can afford to pay for a university education do so (Editorial 2017). In November of 2017, the World Bank, at the behest of the Temer administration, even joined in on the debate, similarly recommending that students of means pay for a university education. The World Bank made the recommendation in an appeal to elementary and higher education, arguing that investments in higher education benefited the elite at the expense of the poor (O Globo 2017b). Many lamented the methodology of the World Bank report, which simply divided the total annual federal expenditure on federal universities by the number of students enrolled. Such a calculation does not take into account research funding, higher wages for professors with PhDs (compared to private universities where many professors do not have
doctorates), spending on cultural and extension programs, or graduate programming (Jornal do Brasil 2017). What’s more, the World Bank report analyzed years 2013-2015; socioeconomic quotas have only been implemented since 2013, and that implementation was gradual over the course of four years to reach the 50% reserved seats for public school students. Research from the Associação Nacional dos Dirigentes das Instituições Federais de Ensino Superior (the National Association of Directors of Federal Institutions of Higher Learning) indicates that the families of 51.4% of students enrolled in Brazilian federal universities received up to 3 monthly minimum wages, or less than $900USD in 2014 (R. H. N. Galdino and Barros 2015). In the same year, almost half of Brazilian workers earned less than one minimum month wage (Lobato 2014).

Thus, by arguing that 65% of the students enrolled in federal universities come from the top 40% of income earners, the World Bank report fails to account for the growing rate of low income students enter federal universities due to quotas and the inequality within this very 40%.

With the passing of PEC 55 and other cuts to federal universities, many young people feel they have had the rug pulled out from under them by an illegitimate government interested in maintaining white elite privileges. Temer
hardly attempted to mask this when he appointed an all white male cabinet while still serving as interim president before Dilma’s official removal from office. I along with many poor, young Black and brown people and their advocates, like Jurema Werneck of Amnesty International, viewed the impeachment and its still unfolding aftermath as a media orchestrated coup not only against Rousseff but against the advancement of poor and Black people in Brazilian society (Chalhoub et al. 2017; “Series: Impeachment | RioOnWatch” 2016).

This was especially underscored to me when I would show “The Cost of Opportunity” film to high school students. On one occasion organized by Dudu, we rented out a theater in Rio’s North Zone. The students were an unusual group, as the class attended a public, dual language Portuguese-English high school in Morro Agudo with a loose partnership with the US Consulate in Rio. After the screening, I spoke with a group of 5 students: 4 adolescent girls and one boy. While they mentioned that they were lucky to be able to study English at a public school—the bilingual public school in Duque de Caxias teaches Turkish—they expressed anxiety about their future. We held the screening in May 2017, and the student occupation of high schools was still fresh on their minds. When I
asked them about their thoughts on the current political climate, the *negra* *assumida* of the group of mostly lighter skinned students answered:

> Our opportunities grew so much and now they are running the risk of shrinking. We see UERJ, which is one of the best universities in Rio, without professors, without janitors, without classes. You don’t even know if you will be able to enroll. In elementary school you knew your dream was UERJ but getting into high school you see that [you can’t] because of politics.

UERJ’s partial closure over months and ongoing precarious state became a foreboding symbol for what could possibly happen at the federal level. The state’s economic crisis served as a pretext to dismantle not only one of the best universities in Brazil, and the first to implement socioeconomic and racial quotas, but also the dreams of young people. While her peers largely commented on the pressure they felt to study for the ENEM, the Black teen returned to the fear she felt generated by the political situation:

> And speaking about politics, I am frightened by the things that have been happening. Because we know that Brazil, the world, always goes through a political period where it seems like everything is going away at the same time. Something is happening here in Brazil, but not just here, abroad a lot is also happening. I personally think that the question of pension reform will make students finish high school and go work. The incentive is not “make him graduate, make him realize his dream.” You’re cutting off the dreams of this kid, what he could have done, he doesn’t want to even learn or know what a university is. We didn’t know, we found out, and we will go back to not knowing [what a university is] if it’s passed.
This teen expressed fear not because of the direct cuts to education, but because of how a number of policies, like pension reform, interacted to “shrink opportunity.” She sees this as not only a problem in Brazil, but indicative of the present global moment. The stakes in Brazil, however, seem much direr, given this fleeting moment of “a gente,” or “we” but also “people,” knowing what a university is, in all of its capacity for social mobility. This stifling of individual and mass potential is what causes her to worry about not only her future, but that of young people like herself:

My fear is also that, because we don’t see the government [or] society wanting that we become good professionals. We see that they don’t want us to go to college and that we start working in some little store and things like that so that we have something to eat. This fear is very present.

Many Brazilians also live with the fear that the coup is not yet complete and its final stage will be ensuring that Lula is unable to run for president on the upcoming 2018 ballot. Despite, and also due to, having been charged of receiving bribes based off of flimsy, hearsay evidence (Weisbrot 2018), Lula continues to campaign and lead the polls. As part of his campaign, Lua even visited both IM and UERJ on December 8, 2017 to defend higher education. Every IM student and faculty member of the IM-Duke team attended the event and energy was
high. Before he arrived, other beloved progressive politicians descended from his
*Lula pelo Brasil*, Lula through Brazil, tour bus. I snapped a picture with Benedita
Silva, who overcame her humble origins in the South Zone favela of Chapéu
Mangueira to become the first Black woman elected to the national senate before
serving as governor of Rio de Janeiro. I joked with some of the IM students about
the presences of “Lindo-Berg,” or Lindberg Farias, the Worker’s Party senator
with boyish good looks who also served as mayor of Nova Iguaçu from 2005-
2010—when IM was first conceived and began to be constructed. We had met
him a few months earlier when he came to a presentation of the IM-DUKE
project at IM.
Figure 28: A photo of me with Benedita da Silva. Her shirt says “A Black woman is a Black woman

I write about these people sentimentally because that’s how I felt at the time, and still do. Like going to the Dilma rally with Luciano, I was emotionally invested in what I was witnessing. University expansion was not an abstract occurrence, it was a policy implemented due to decades of social movement mobilization finally realized, however, incompletely, by a governmental project.
I have many critiques of PT—Lula played a significant role in securing the Olympic bid for Rio and Dilma deployed the national army to occupy the favela complex of Maré when pacification failed—but I had also spent the better part of 3 years studying increased access to opportunity for poor, Black and brown people under their administrations, and watching, and at times joining in the collective shouting of “Fora Temer,” as those opportunities seemed to slip away. As Obama had said, Lula “is the man;” and one of the embodiments of the “Left turn” in Latin America, however neoliberal, that had defined my graduate reading (Escobar 2010; C. E. Walsh 2015). After the circus of Dilma’s impeachment hearing in the House of Deputies in April 2016—many cast their votes in the name of family and God without even mentioning the charges against her, and even, in the case of Rio de Janeiro State Deputy and presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro, in honor of the architect of the Military Regime’s torture practices, Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra, “the terror of Dilma Rousseff” (Charleaux 2016; Steven Cohen 2016)—I felt like many of my friends had lost the sense of hope that the children of PRL would one day be able to attend university. I know I had. Waiting to hear Lula rekindled that hope, ephemerally but no less real, in many of us. Alexandre seemed like a kid in a
candy store ahead of his meeting with Lula and the other deans of federal universities and high schools that proceeded the speech. Throughout his administration Lula had held similar meetings, unlike his predecessors, as he boasted in his speech. I delighted as Lula took a picture with IM’s student movement doing the “serrada,” a dance move in *passinho* that he had adopted into his repertoire of photos with young people. This was Lula coming to the university in the Baixada that his policies had created; and it was fun, and historic, and fragile.

![Figure 29: Alexandre and the President of UFRRJ with Lula da Silva at IM](image)

Figure 29: Alexandre and the President of UFRRJ with Lula da Silva at IM
When he finally spoke, much of Lula’s speech mirrored Darcy Ribeiro’s “Sobre o obvio” article. He chastised the Brazilian elite for being “so perverse, but so perverse” for not investing in education throughout its history. He, like Ribeiro, lamented that Brazil established its first university in 1920 to award an honorary doctorate to the Belgian king, not to educate its people. This was not my first time seeing Lula speak, but it seemed more significant given the intimate setting of the IM campus, the campus that his policies had created and that the IM-Duke team had been studying. Despite his hoarse voice—he had already been campaigning for months—Lula, as John had always told me, was an amazing public speaker, making the crowd laugh while reflecting on Brazil’s gross inequalities. One of my favorite lines of the speech was a direct unmasking of Temer as an embodiment of capitalism and Euocentric hegemony: “Temer isn’t a president, he isn’t even a golpista, he’s an instrument of the international financial system.” Political rhetoric meets rap battle diss track, and it was awesome to witness.

I did disagree with one part of Lula’s speech. He attributed the elite’s lack of investment in higher education in Brazil to the so-called vira-lata complex, the
mutt complex. Attributed to playwright Nelson Rodrigues, the vira-lata complex is a self-imposed Brazilian inferiority complex. Lula described it as “everything that is from abroad is better than what we produce here,” especially among the elite who are always looking to Europe and the United States. While this may have been true, I do not think this reading sufficiently describes why there is a push to privatize public universities and why Temer is “an instrument of the international financial system.” In thinking of the relationship between the Baixada and Rio and of these poor, Black and brown young people who are scared for their future, I believe something more “perverse” is at hand. From the increasingly segregated beaches and the real estate speculation generated by the megaevents to the undoing of one of Brazil’s most prestigious public universities, the message is not that “what we produce” in Brazil is worse than the equivalent abroad, but that what is produced is too good for the poor, Black and Brown “marginals.” When people asked me to describe the relationship between Rio an the Baixada, I often would respond bluntly that the Baixada is where the wealthy wished all the favelados would live, da Silva’s “strange place” where the norms of liberal citizenship were never meant to apply (Da Silva 2001). They know the views from Vidigal are breathtaking, they know samba is a world
class music genre, they know that feeling safe in your home is something everyone aspires to. However, as Rodrigo frankly stated, the elite are not used to sharing their privileges and are reestablishing a perverse project to keep poor, Black and brown people in their place.

Just as she had helped me with follow up questions during the filming of “The Cost of Opportunity,” during the conference at Duke, Katya asked an essential question to my conceptualization of IM as an example of the way in which the university has become a Black place, however tenuous and complicated. Katya noticed that there was a discrepancy between the data on the demographics of population of the Baixada and the data on those of IM. In IM 10% more people had identified as Black, and she wondered whether this was a result of the quotas or a result of how many students, like Rodrigo, had found themselves as Black while in the university. Katya asked Carla directly because she had presented those data, to which Carla responded:

Well, Katya, I think it’s both. These data that we presented in the graphics of the Baixada are national data from 2010. I believe that, like Rodrigo said, when you enter university, you take notice of racial issues. And the question of quotas helps a lot in Black and brown people entering the university. So, since it is a self-identification, I think both data points complement each other. First, the students in many cases enter university through the quotas and once they are inside they see the reality of their
peers and they also identify as Black. I can say that this happened a bit with me, because in Brazil the race question is a bit different than here. If you have lighter skin, let’s say, often you are not considered Black. But I also have Black people in my family, I am also the descendant of Black people. And some people consider me white, but I consider myself parda or even negra for having these connections to politics, to Black people.

Carla is quite light skinned, and she often dyes her hair bright primary colors. Here, she cautiously assumes her Blackness, identifying as a negra as a political stance, while tacitly remaining mindful of the ways her lighter skin does afford her privileges: she is not always already considered a marginal based on the color of her skin. She knows she is not “preta mesmo,” or really Black in terms of her complexion, but she is also aware that by disavowing her African descent that she would be complicit in Black invisibility. Her Blackness is situated in a political discourse in dialogue with the Blackness of her peers within the university, and the social realities they share in the periphery. While the university is not the only site where this type of intersectional reflection is taking place, given the historic difficulties faced by poor, Black and brown youth from the periphery to have access to the university and that many identify it as a place where, to borrow from Samuel’s impassioned embrace of IM, “you recognize
yourself as part of this space,” the political threats to higher education seem hardly coincidental.

As Luana posted, “‘There won’t be poor and Black people entering the university nor traveling to another country,’ they said.” Because of policies like quotas, more poor, Black and brown students from the periphery are enrolling in universities, and more of them are remarking on precisely who this “they is.”

This they, this small white wealthy elite, manifests itself in unsold luxury condos created for megaevents and in the lethal “balas perdidas” that are always found in the same place, the favela and the periphery (J. C. da Silva 2017). But now that Luana and the Black high school student know what the university is, and what it means for the periphery, for the poor and Black and brown youth to know it and to occupy it, these poor Black and brown young people from the Baixada Fluminense have a response to what “they said”: Vai ter luta, there will be a fight. They are no longer interested in “knowing their place,” and instead will make themselves known.
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Biography

Stephanie Reist was born in Zurich, Switzerland and raised in Oak Park, IL.

Perhaps because her parents met traveling, Stephanie has enjoyed learning new languages and engaging in international dialogues from a young age. She earned a bachelor’s degree from Williams College in Comparative Literature, graduating with honors in 2009. She began her PhD in the Romance Studies Department at Duke University in 2010 and coupled her doctoral research with a Masters in Public Policy from Duke’s Sanford School of Public Policy in 2013. After participating in Duke in Geneva, she received a Felsman Fellowship from the Sanford School and Center for Documentary Studies, which placed her in Rio de Janeiro, thus beginning her personal and intellectual relationship with Brazil. Stephanie taught a number of undergraduate Spanish course and also served as the graduate student coordinator for the Bass Connections “The Cost of Opportunity” research project in the Baixada Fluminense, Brazil. Though not a Durham native, she considers the Bull City a second home. Stephanie is now based in Rio de Janeiro, where she hopes to continue her civically engaged, collaborative academic research on the Baixada Fluminense.