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The *Movimento de Mulheres Negras (MMN)* as a Political and Epistemic Subject: Autonomy and Knowledge Production

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Abstract

This research analyzes the *Movimento de Mulheres Negras* - *MMN* (Black Women's Movement) in the 1980s as a political and epistemic subject, highlighting autonomy as a collective and situated praxis. Based on an intersectional and decolonial approach, we investigate the historical trajectory of the MMN in the context of Rio de Janeiro between 1980 and 1997, its strategies of resistance, and its capacity to produce knowledge rooted in lived experiences. The text articulates three central axes - political action, knowledge production, and the construction of autonomy - in order to understand how the MMN challenges hegemonic structures and affirms epistemologies of the South. By recognizing the protagonism of Black women in the elaboration of ethical and political meanings, the article contributes to debates on epistemic justice, rights, and social transformation.

Keywords: *Black Women; Autonomy; Intersectionality; Black Feminism; Epistemologies of the South; Social Movement.*

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Introduction

In this article, we propose a theoretical debate with Black Brazilian intellectuals, mobilizing a national bibliography committed to Black epistemologies. By engaging with these works, we seek to contribute to the construction of critical and innovative perspectives in the social sciences, recognizing Black Brazilian thought as central to the production of socially situated knowledge. This debate is situated in the context of the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-1985) and the process of redemocratization, a period in which social movements found, within political openings, the possibility of reorganization and collective resistance.

The 1980s were marked by political and social effervescence in Brazil, especially in the context of redemocratization and the mobilization of social movements. In this scenario, the Movimento de Mulheres Negras (Black Women's Movement - MMN) emerged as a collective force that sought to articulate the specificities of the oppressions experienced by Black women, historically made invisible both by the Black men's movement and by the white feminist movement.

The MMN constitutes a political and epistemic subject that, over the last decades, has articulated practices of resistance, knowledge production, and the construction of autonomy in the face of multiple forms of oppression. A political subject is understood here as one who, from a historically subalternized position, formulates collective demands, disputes spaces of power, and builds its own agenda for social transformation. An epistemic subject is understood as one capable of producing knowledge from situated experience, challenging the hegemonic criteria that define what counts as legitimate knowledge. The MMN brings these two dimensions together inseparably: by organizing politically, it also produces knowledge; by producing knowledge, it strengthens its political action. This article proposes a critical analysis of the historical trajectory of the MMN, highlighting how autonomy appears not merely as a starting point, but as a situated, collective, and transformative praxis.

In the 1980s, the knowledge produced by Black women affirmed that race, gender, and class are inseparable in social experience. This knowledge valued everyday life, ancestry, culture, and militancy as legitimate forms of knowledge.

They denounced racism within feminism and sexism within the Black movement, creating an autonomous and critical Black feminism.

From an intersectional and decolonial approach. Intersectional and decolonial example: The MMN analyzes the oppressions of race, gender, and class as historical effects of coloniality. In doing so, it produces its own epistemologies and challenges the centrality of universalist feminism. The text examines how the MMN challenges the limits of hegemonic structures of power and knowledge, producing its own meanings of political action and knowledge rooted in lived experiences. By recognizing the MMN as a space of ethical and epistemic elaboration, the article seeks to understand its contribution to social justice and to the construction of epistemologies of the South.

For this analysis, theoretical frameworks will be mobilized that make it possible to understand the processes of articulation, resistance, and collective construction led by Black women in that period. Among the main theoretical contributions, the thought of Lélia Gonzalez (1988) stands out; she argues that the experience of these women cannot be understood only through the lens of gender, since they are simultaneously subjected to patriarchal domination and racial violence, resulting in multiple forms of exclusion, from physical violence to political and social marginalization.

Lélia Gonzalez's thought is fundamental to understanding the foundations of Black feminism in Brazil. Her reflections show that the struggle of Black women cannot be fully represented by a hegemonic feminism centered on the experiences of white middle-class women. For Gonzalez, feminism must be plural, intersectional, and attentive to the specificities of race and class. Black women cannot occupy a subordinate position or be seen as a subcategory within white feminism, which throughout history has systematically ignored racial inequalities in its political agenda. Gonzalez's proposal goes beyond critique: it points to the construction of a feminism that reflects the reality of Black women, their experiences, and their forms of resistance. This intersectional perspective is essential for understanding the importance of these women's political action and their centrality in movements that articulate gender, race, and class as inseparable elements of oppression and of the struggle for social justice.

Sueli Carneiro (2005), in turn, complements this critique by pointing out that the feminist movement, for the most part, excludes or marginalizes the voices of Black women. Carneiro emphasizes that structural racism is one of the main barriers to the full participation of Black women in feminist discussions and that racial issues must be central to any proposal for women's emancipation. For her, it is impossible to speak of freedom or equality for Black women without a critical analysis of the racism that affects their lives directly and profoundly. Thus, the author reinforces the need for a Black feminism that understands the intersection between gender, race, and class as a fundamental condition for the struggle for equity.

Both Gonzalez and Carneiro show us that a true feminism, capable of addressing the demands of Black women, must be transformative and inclusive, breaking with the dominant narratives that deny the experience of racism. Both authors argue that the construction of Black feminism requires valuing the experiences of Black women and recognizing that their struggles are not secondary, but central to the construction of a just and egalitarian society.

Based on the ideas of Black women intellectuals, the question that grounded this theoretical investigation emerged: how does intersectional feminism, in the multiple dimensions of gender, race, and class, influence Black women's struggle against the forms of domination and oppression of which they have historically been victims? The hypothesis is that the MMN, by articulating race, gender, and class as inseparable dimensions of oppression, not only resisted hegemonic structures of power, but also constituted itself as an autonomous epistemic subject, capable of producing situated knowledge and political practices that challenge both universalist feminism and the androcentric Black movement. In this sense, autonomy is not presented as the final result of the struggle, but as a collective and transformative praxis that runs through the entire historical trajectory of the MMN - being, at the same time, both condition and product of Black women's political resistance and production of knowledge.

To answer this question, it is essential to understand how the intersections between sexism, racism, and classism form a single system of domination that affects Black women in a specific way. Black feminism, therefore, proposes a critical analysis of these combined oppressions, highlighting the need for policies that consider these multiple dimensions. By discussing this intersectional approach, the article seeks to elucidate how it can inform and transform current political practices, making them more inclusive and effective in the struggle against the structural inequalities that affect Black women.

The MMN of the 1980s follows this path by representing a necessary rupture with traditional feminism, claiming a space in which the racial question is central rather than secondary. More than fighting only for gender equality, Black women proposed a structural transformation capable of confronting the racial, social, economic, and political inequalities that directly affected them.

This movement gained even more strength in the context of Brazil's redemocratization, especially in Rio de Janeiro, where, during the 1980s, spaces of political mobilization were in full effervescence. In this scenario, it becomes essential to understand not only the historical demands of Black women, but also their subjective experiences and the forms of political articulation they built during that period. The struggle of Black women was not restricted to a critique of white feminism; it also encompassed multiple social, territorial, and cultural demands, such as combating domestic and institutional violence, access to reproductive health, the valorization of Black culture and ancestry, and political representation in spaces of power.

In this scenario, the I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras (I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras), held in Valença (RJ) in 1988, constitutes a central milestone in this analysis, as it concretely expresses the political and epistemic autonomy built by the MMN throughout the decade. In this article, we use the strategies of the I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras of Valença to trace the step-by-step process of its formation, highlighting how the event was conceived and carried out, the criteria for participation, and the reasons why it became necessary. The methodology consisted of the analysis of editorials from the period and the conducting of semi-structured interviews, associated with active listening to the interlocutors' trajectories, making it possible to understand the historical context and the experiences they constructed. The bulletins also present the justifications for this decision and for the importance of the meeting as a space dedicated to, designed by, and organized by Black women themselves. To complement this, we use the magazine Nzinga, from the period, which followed and documented the developments of the meeting.

A central point of this meeting was the decision not to allow the participation of men or white feminists, reflecting the intention to give voice exclusively to Black women and place their issues at the center of debates and reflections.

The article is organized into three sections. The first examines the emergence of the *Movimento Negro Unificado* - *MNU* (Unified Black Movement) and its relevance to Black women's struggle. The second analyzes women's participation within the MNU, highlighting the confrontation with machismo and the construction of political alliances. The third section discusses autonomy as collective praxis in the MMN, articulating the experience of the I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras of Valença (1988) with the production of situated knowledge and epistemologies of the South. Finally, the conclusion returns to the central axes of the debate and points to the contributions of the MMN to epistemic and social justice.

Methodological and Epistemological Pathway

From a methodological standpoint, this article is situated within a qualitative and interpretive perspective, committed to the production of situated and socially engaged knowledge. The primary sources mobilized - editorials, bulletins, and the magazine Nzinga - were selected because they are documents produced by the MMN itself, which means recognizing Black women not as objects of analysis, but as subjects who produce knowledge. The semi-structured interviews, in turn, were conducted with militants who directly participated in the I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras of Valença (1988), privileging active listening as an instrument for producing knowledge committed to the experiences of the interlocutors.

The analysis of the sources was conducted through critical hermeneutics and situated discourse analysis, methodological procedures consistent with the decolonial epistemological perspective adopted. These

procedures make it possible to interpret the documents not only as historical records, but also as political and epistemic enunciations that reveal the MMN's forms of meaning production.

The intersectional approach, as developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and deepened in the Brazilian context by Sueli Carneiro and Lélia Gonzalez, guides the reading of the sources by revealing how race, gender, and class do not operate in isolation, but are articulated in ways that produce specific and combined forms of oppression. This analytical lens makes it possible to understand why Black women's demands could not be subsumed either by white feminism or by the androcentric Black movement.

The decolonial perspective grounds the critique of hegemonic regimes of knowledge and justifies the centrality of epistemologies of the South in this work. Following Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2010) and Ochy Curiel's (2014) proposal of insurgent autonomy, it is understood that the knowledge produced by the MMN constitutes legitimate and original forms of knowledge, rooted in the bodily, territorial, and affective experiences of Black women. The concept of situated knowledge - developed by Donna Haraway (1995) and reconfigured by Black feminist thought - makes it possible to recognize that all knowledge is produced from a specific social location, and that this location matters politically and epistemically.

In procedural terms, the documentary analysis of the primary sources - editorials, bulletins, and the magazine Nzinga - was guided by three interpretive axes: (i) the identification of the discursive strategies used by the MMN to affirm its political and epistemic autonomy; (ii) the tracking of the forms of production and circulation of collective knowledge; and (iii) the localization of tensions and disputes with other contemporary social movements. These axes were constructed from the dialogue between the intersectional and decolonial theoretical framework and the empirical material, allowing the analytical categories to emerge from the object itself, rather than being imposed on it externally. The semi-structured interviews, conducted with two militants who directly participated in the I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras of Valença, were treated as complementary sources and triangulated with the written documents, in order to contrast individual memories with collective records and verify the interpretive consistency of the findings. This procedure of triangulation between documentary and oral sources is what allows the interpretations presented in this article to be sustained as grounded analysis, and not as arbitrary positioning. Next, we examine how autonomy is historically constructed in the MMN, articulating practices of resistance, knowledge production, and political action.

1. The Trigger for the Creation of the *Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU)* and the Group's Relevance to Black Women's Struggle

The creation of the *Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU)* is situated in a historical context marked by initiatives contesting hegemonic sociopolitical power and by systematic denunciations of institutional violence practiced by the Brazilian State against the Black population. In this scenario, a specific episode acted as a catalyst for the founding of the movement: the murder of Robson Silveira da Luz, a Black taxi driver, in April 1978.

From this articulation, activists from different regions of the country, especially São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, began to develop collective actions to confront structural racism.

The importance of the MNU in the context of the antiracist struggle lies, to a large extent, in the fact that it was one of the first organizations of the Black movement to recognize, explicitly and formally, that Black women face specific challenges aggravated by the intersection between racism and machismo. This understanding indicated that the oppressions experienced by Black women could not be treated in an isolated

or secondary manner, since their condition of double vulnerability, as Black and as women, required a specific political response.

Thus, the emergence of the Black women's movement is intrinsically linked to the concept of intersectionality - the articulation between the oppressions of gender, race, and class within a social structure marked by profound and systemic inequalities. From the 1970s and 1980s onward, Black women began to organize themselves in a more visible and autonomous way, creating their own political spaces and formulating a specific agenda that expressed their demands and experiences.

2. Women's Participation in the MNU: Critical Consciousness and Confronting Machismo

The construction of autonomy in the MMN is intrinsically linked to the production of situated knowledge, which emerges from lived experiences and collective practices of resistance. Within the MNU, the participation of Black women was decisive for deepening a critical and educational reflection on the multiple oppressions to which they were subjected. The militants assumed a central role in organizing regional discussion groups, spaces in which they shared experiences and collectively analyzed the intersectional effects of racism and machismo in their personal, professional, and political trajectories (GONZALEZ, 1988; CARNEIRO, 2003).

More than identifying machismo in interpersonal relations, these debates sought to reveal its structural nature, understood as an instrument of control, exploitation, and maintenance of male supremacy. Lélia Gonzalez (1988) had already pointed to the need to understand how sexism operates in articulation with racism in the production of inequalities that affect Black women in specific ways. In this sense, the initiatives promoted by these militants aimed not only to strengthen their protagonism within the movement, but also to raise awareness among male militants about the importance of incorporating gender equality as a fundamental political and ethical principle in the antiracist struggle (CARNEIRO, 2003).

The creation of these spaces and the systematization of debates revealed the urgency of reconfiguring the internal dynamics of the MNU, in order to promote relations grounded in equity and mutual respect. The objective was to consolidate an organizational environment free from gender discrimination, ensuring Black women due recognition of their political agency, leadership capacity, and theoretical and practical contribution to the movement.

From an external standpoint, the relations established among the *Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU)*, feminist organizations, and women's movements made it possible to build strategic political alliances, especially in confronting the multiple forms of control and violence directed at female bodies. Among the main agendas of these articulations were the denunciation of gender violence and the critique of family-planning policies, frequently implemented without women's consent, especially that of Black and poor women. Such practices were understood as mechanisms of domination that reinforced female marginalization and deepened historical inequalities (CARNEIRO, 2003).

Alliances with other feminist movements aimed to broaden the political reach of Black women's demands, placing them within a broader and intersectional agenda. This articulation made it possible to politicize fundamental issues such as reproductive control, institutional violence, and autonomy over one's own body, based on the understanding that racism and sexism operate in an interconnected way in the lives of Black women (GONZALEZ, 1988).

In this context, Black women's action unfolded along two complementary fronts: internally, in confronting the machismo present in the structures of the MNU itself; and externally, in building alliances with feminist movements to denounce structural practices of exclusion and violence. It was, therefore, a simultaneous struggle for recognition and for social transformation.

In counterpoint to Lemos's (2009) critique of the Black movement, it is also necessary to consider the limitations of white feminism, which, by universalizing women's experience from the perspective of white middle-class women, has historically ignored the specificities of Black women. Authors such as Lélia Gonzalez and Sueli Carneiro denounce this erasure, pointing out that white feminism, by disregarding the intersections between race, class, and gender, reproduces an exclusionary logic similar to the one criticized by Lemos within the Black men's movement. Thus, both the Black men's movement and white feminism, when not intersectional, naturalize a failure to recognize the complexity of the oppressions experienced by Black women.

By affirming its own and collective forms of knowledge, the MMN contributes to the construction of epistemic justice, broadening the horizons of political action and social transformation - aspects that will be taken up again in the conclusion.

3. Autonomy and Knowledge Production: Collective Praxes of the MMN

The creation of the *Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU)* is situated in a historical context marked by initiatives contesting power

Autonomy and knowledge production constitute, in the MMN, two dimensions of the same political praxis. Autonomy is not reduced to organizational independence from other movements - it manifests itself above all in the capacity to name one's own experience, to define the categories through which the world is interpreted, and to formulate collective responses to the oppressions experienced. In this sense, autonomy is also an epistemic act: by refusing the definitions imposed by white feminism and the androcentric Black movement, Black women affirmed the right to produce their own knowledge. In turn, this production of knowledge nourishes and strengthens autonomy,

The Meeting represented a distinctive milestone in relation to previous events, becoming a reference point in the collective organization and political protagonism of Black women. The main difference lay in the implementation of specific methodologies and political practices understood here as "social technologies" that responded, strategically and innovatively, to the demands of that historical period. This process resulted not only in robust organizational articulations, but also in a legacy of public policies and in the strengthening of Black women's agenda on the national stage.

In the 1980s, Black women understood the need to build a collective identity grounded in practices that would enable them to dispute spaces of power and claim their own history of struggles. The formation of collectives did not occur in an isolated or individual manner, but emerged from shared organizational experiences, rooted in common lived experiences and marked by ties of ancestry. This aspect conferred a political and symbolic differential, functioning as a marker of difference and belonging. These women understood that their agendas could not be fragmented, since the oppressions they experienced were simultaneously traversed by race and gender.

They sought recognition, but above all, they demanded equity in the struggle. There was a deep need for autonomy, for the development of social and political actions that would guarantee their representation and the consolidation of the group. To understand the strategies, articulations, and demands made by these women, it is necessary to consider a more participatory government and an egalitarian society. This context

would provide essential reflections on the structuring of the struggle process in activism, allowing these women's demands to be truly addressed and recognized.

It is not possible to narrate the I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras of Valença without looking back at 1988, a remarkable year, filled with historical events that fueled various debates. From Black culture to political reflections around the centennial of the Abolition of Slavery, 1988 was an emblematic year: on February 16, 1988, the Rio de Janeiro samba schools Vila Isabel and Mangueira chose themes that reflected these discussions. Vila Isabel presented the theme "Kizomba: The Festival of the Race," a recovery of the history of the Black people, while Mangueira presented the theme "100 Years of Freedom: Reality or Illusion?," which criticized the type of freedom achieved through Abolition. On May 13, 1988, the Black movement organized the March of 100 Years of the Farce of Abolition, which was marked by repression by the Brazilian Army, which treated the demonstrators as disorderly by preventing the march from passing by the Duque de Caxias Palace. In October 1988, the promulgation of the new Constitution included the significant participation of Black activists. Finally, on December 2, 1988, the I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras of Valença reflected on Abolition and its consequences.

The editorial of the 1988 I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras outlines the entire trajectory of preparation for the event, its structuring, and the importance of this meeting. The text also clarifies the reasons that made this meeting and the formation of the MMN necessary, highlighting its historical role in the development of Black women's political and social thought in Brazil:

> The I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras will be a milestone in our history, less for its political character than for its ideological function. The primary purpose of this meeting is to bring together Black women from all over the national territory and lead us to reflect on the true reason that makes us different, or the reason why we are given treatment different from the other individuals who make up society. (Nzinga, 1988: 2)

Already in this first paragraph, Black women affirm that the First Meeting is a historical milestone, not because of its political seriousness, but especially because of its role in questions of values. What those women defended was that the meeting would not be only about practical or political issues, which at that moment were in a process of maturation. They wanted more than demands, legal transformations, or rights: Black women were claiming something more, situated in the field of subjectivity, the symbolic, the ideological. In short, the Meeting created possibilities for thinking and discussing broader and diverse issues, such as identity, values, struggles, and the resignification of being a Black woman.

The Meeting sought to bring together the largest possible number of Black women from across the country, building a place of speech and exchanging experiences. Their objective was to build a web of cooperation and thus consolidate the MMN in the country through Black women themselves. When they call attention to what makes them different, Black women are, in fact, saying: "Oh! We are more than a mulatta or a domestic worker." The differentiated treatment they point out is what must be understood. For what reason are Black women treated differently in Brazilian society? Differentiated treatment reinforces the idea of structural racism and makes intersectional the combination of race, class, and gender. In this way, Black women reflect on what it means to be a Black woman in Brazil; for this reason, the proposal of this meeting was to analyze the sources of racial and social inequalities and discrimination, and to reflect on deeper experiences, lived realities, and confrontations.

We start from the assumption that social movements aim to achieve social and political changes through social tensions and political clashes. Thus, we could understand that, from the various meetings, the openings that were being created needed to give way to voices not of victimization but of resistance, generating a notion of belonging and citizenship based on ancestry through processes that marked and demarcated perspectives of self-defined self-formation, with postures of resignification and resistance. In this way, we can also cite the line of thought of the informational editorial Nzinga, which shows how in the 1970s there

were many advances in the creation of state and municipal councils, women's police stations, and also greater participation by Black women in meetings, gatherings, and forums, all of which were significant for the struggle of Black people. The editorial further points out that

> What is actually under discussion is the space in which each person wishes to act. And we at NZINGA have chosen to work with Black Women's issues. And it is because we believe in this that we are effectively participating in the organization of the I ENCONTRO NACIONAL DE MULHERES NEGRAS, an idea launched by a group of Black women present at the IX National Feminist Meeting, in the city of Garanhuns (PE), in September 1987. Among the objectives of the Meeting is "... the elaboration of political proposals that advance the organization of Black women, presenting to the world the existence of the Movimento de Mulheres Negras in Brazil in a unitary form and with different political currents." And, also because we believe in this, we will be on December 2 at the National Meeting, somewhere in Rio de Janeiro. (Nzinga, 1988: 2)

The editorial of the I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras, published in the magazine Nzinga, is itself a concrete example of situated knowledge production. By affirming that the meeting would have an ideological function before a political one, Black women were formulating their own theory of what social transformation means - a theory that does not start from academic categories, but from the experiences of those who live oppression daily. In the same way, the MMN's bulletins and communication networks functioned as instruments for systematizing and circulating collective knowledge, creating their own political memory that challenged the historical erasure of Black women. These documents are not only historical sources - they are themselves products of an epistemology under construction.

The historical context during the United Nations Decade for Women (1975 to 1985) was situated between the Dictatorship and the constitution of the MNU, alongside the process of redemocratization and the centennial of Abolition. During these ten years, the collective organization of Black women also took shape, leveraging and activating mechanisms that contributed to the I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras in Valença in 1988.

Among Black women from various segments, there was already an enormous desire to hold the 1988 I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras of Valença as a meeting that would respond to Black women's needs and demands. For this reason, a commission was created to attend the event in Garanhuns (PE). The commission was formed by Sandra Bello, Antônia Inês Nolasco, Regina Café, Joana Angélica, and Joselina Silva (SILVA, 2014). The commission served to articulate the event, focusing on the I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras, since the location would also serve to create networks with other women from different regions of Brazil. If the III Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Meeting of Bertioga 1985 (SP) had already caused estrangement by not including Black women's demands on the agenda, two years later, in 1987, at the IX National Feminist Meeting in Garanhuns (PE), it would be no different: the pending issue of not addressing race and racism on the main agenda remained.

Autonomy, in the context of the MMN, is not presented as an abstract starting point, but as a collective, situated, and relational praxis. It is a historical construction that emerges from lived experiences of confronting racism, sexism, and epistemic marginalization. This insurgent autonomy, as proposed by Ochy Curiel, breaks with the colonial and patriarchal frameworks that denied Black women the right to self-determination, affirming their own ways of existing, resisting, and producing meanings.

In the MMN, autonomy manifests itself in concrete practices of organization, care, denunciation, and political elaboration. Through marches, meetings, support networks, and the production of narratives, Black women build spaces of listening, action, and knowledge that challenge hegemonic structures. This praxis is not limited to the claiming of rights, but involves the creation of embodied epistemologies, rooted in the bodily, affective, and territorial experiences of the participants.

Thus, autonomy becomes an articulating axis between political action and knowledge production. By affirming situated and collective knowledge, the MMN challenges dominant regimes of truth and proposes an ethics of care and resistance. This epistemic construction not only denounces structural violence, but also offers alternatives for the world, contributing to social and epistemic justice from an intersectional and decolonial perspective.

The MMN constitutes itself as a political subject by disputing spaces of power and formulating its own agenda in the face of hegemonic structures. Simultaneously, it is configured as an epistemic subject by producing knowledge that starts from the lived experiences of Black women, challenging dominant regimes of truth and proposing epistemologies rooted in ancestry, the body, and collective resistance. This dual condition - political and epistemic - is what distinguishes the MMN from other contemporary social movements and makes it central to debates on social and epistemic justice. The I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras of Valença materializes this dual condition: it was simultaneously a political act of self-determination and an epistemic gesture of affirming knowledge produced by and for Black women.

Conclusion

In short, what Black women were pointing out was that the I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras was much more than a simple gathering space; it was a place of deep reflection on identity and on the challenges faced by Black women in Brazil. It was a place that served to problematize the issues that permeate Black women in various aspects of their trajectories.

This event was fundamental because it emerged to give visibility and voice to the specific issues of Black women, which were often marginalized both by society in general and within the Black movement itself. Black women face a double oppression, being oppressed by both racism and sexism. The meeting, therefore, represented a legitimate space in which they could discuss their demands and create strategies for action. However, the reaction of certain men within the Black movement, who called the meeting a "dyke meeting," reflects a prejudiced and misogynistic view that attempts to disqualify Black women's struggle through stereotypes about their sexuality. By associating the meeting with lesbians, these men were trying to minimize the importance of the event while, at the same time, reinforcing male control over the movement, where heteronormative masculinity was seen as dominant.

As we have seen, the action of Black women's movements in the 1980s represented a milestone in the reconfiguration of feminist struggles in Brazil, by revealing the limitations of an agenda that, until then, had neglected the specificities of intersectional oppressions. In a scenario in which white, middle-class feminism did not recognize the overlap between racism, sexism, and socioeconomic inequality, Black women developed autonomous forms of political organization, based on collective strategies, ancestral knowledge, and practices of everyday resistance.

These movements not only denounced exclusion within the feminist field itself, but also proposed a new epistemology centered on the lived experience and historical experience of Black women. By articulating race, gender, and class inseparably, these leaders anticipated, in practice, the debates that would later be systematized under the concept of intersectionality. Thus, understanding the strategies and techniques mobilized by these women is fundamental for the critical analysis of power dynamics in social movements and for the construction of a truly plural feminism committed to social justice.

The analyses in this article on the I Encontro Nacional de Mulheres Negras in Valença (1988) show that the form of collective organization adopted was decisive for strengthening political consciousness, for the national integration of leaderships, and for the construction of proposals aimed at social transformation. The

meeting was consolidated as a milestone in the political mobilization of Black women, with significant impact in the political, educational, and cultural spheres, and is considered one of the structuring pillars of Brazilian Black feminism.

Starting from the assumption that the action of social movements has historically been marked by disputes, advances, and contradictions. In the field of the antiracist struggle and white feminism, these tensions become even more evident when we observe how certain experiences are silenced or marginalized within the very spaces of resistance. This article proposes a critical reflection on the invisibilization of Black women both within the Black movement and within hegemonic white feminism, showing how the absence of an intersectional approach compromises the emancipatory potential of these struggles. We seek to understand the limits and possibilities for constructing truly inclusive political practices.

By recognizing the MMN as a political and epistemic subject, this article reaffirms the centrality of autonomy as a collective, situated, and transformative praxis. The trajectory of the MMN reveals not only strategies of resistance in the face of multiple oppressions, but also the capacity to produce knowledge rooted in lived experiences, challenging the limits of hegemonic epistemologies.

In this sense, the MMN contributes decisively to the construction of epistemic and social justice by affirming its own ways of thinking, acting, and intervening in the world. The articulation between political action, knowledge production, and an ethics of care becomes a fundamental legacy for critical studies and for practices committed to transforming realities marked by intersectional inequalities.

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