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Legal Sensibilities and Situations of Violence Among Women in the Amazon(s)

Sensibilidades jurídicas e situações de violência entre mulheres nas Amazônias

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Abstract

The research analyzes, in light of the canonical legacies of Legal Anthropology, gender studies, and feminist studies, the ways in which feminist and indigenous women in the Amazonian context construct legal sensibilities and memories regarding violence and rights violations in the region. Drawing upon years of research and experience culminating in both a master's dissertation and a doctoral thesis, this study proposes ethnographic research that emphasizes the life stories of the interlocutors, considering them as active agents in their trajectories and as part of a polyphonic web of women's voices that possess a plural, non-homogeneous, and non-universal character. Given the historical erasure of social, legal, and political processes in the Amazon(s), the research opens up avenues for expanding the listening to silenced voices and knowledge at the national level. This expansion aims to provide support for conceptions of justice and violations of rights that remain largely unknown to the rest of the country, but which can be invaluable in informing the development of public policies, drafting legislation, and producing more informed theoretical constructions about diversity.

Keywords: Legal sensitivities; Violence; Womenities; Amazon(s).

Resumo

A pesquisa analisa, em face dos cânones legados pela Antropologia Jurídica, pelos estudos de gênero e pelos estudos feministas, as formas pelas quais mulheres feministas e indígenas mulheres no contexto amazônico constroem sensibilidades jurídicas e memórias sobre violências e violações de direitos na região. Com base nos anos de pesquisa e experiência que originaram a dissertação do mestrado e a tese de doutorado, propõe-se uma pesquisa de cunho etnográfico, que enfatiza as histórias de vida das interlocutoras, tomando-as como agentes ativos de suas trajetórias e como parte de uma polifônica teia de vozes de mulheres que possui caráter plural e não homogêneo e universal. Considerando o histórico apagamento dos processos sociais, jurídicos e políticos na(s) Amazônia(s), a pesquisa abre margem para a ampliação da escuta de vozes e saberes silenciados na esfera nacional, de modo a fornecer subsídios sobre concepções de justiça e violação de direitos que ainda são pouco conhecidos do restante do país e que podem ser valiosos no fomento de políticas públicas, na elaboração de projetos de lei e na produção de construções teóricas mais informadas sobre a diversidade.

Palavras-chave: Sensibilidades jurídicas; Violência; Mulheridades; Amazônia(s).



1. Amazon(s) and Womenities¹

Recent research has shown that much of the political and intellectual mobilization that has taken place in the Amazon(s)² is led by women, despite the fact that women are also the preferred victims of many crimes (Paula Lacerda³, 2014, 2015; Luzia Álvares, 2010; Cristina Wolff, 1999). One of the privileged settings for this articulation is the Federal University of Pará (UFPA), recognized as the best university in the Northern Region, due to the highest percentage of scientific publications in open access (Highly Cited Papers) in the period from 2019 to 2023, with at least 4,000 publications, which has a long history of discussing gender issues⁴, whether among political collectives, research groups, events and academic productions. In the THE Impact 2024 ranking, UFPA was ranked 4th among the Brazilian universities with the best classification in ODS 5, which aims to achieve gender equality. Paradoxically, little has been written about the trajectories of the intellectuals who passed through the institution and led such initiatives, as found in bibliographic surveys carried out in dissertation and thesis banks and qualified periodicals.

Another scenario of significant political articulation is being constructed among ethnically differentiated collectives, especially indigenous peoples. Within the context of the Amazon region, instances of violence against indigenous women can be likened to those occurring in war settings, where bodies are subjected to continuous violations (Jane Felipe Beltrão, 2012). The genocide of indigenous women⁵ is perpetrated through domestic

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² The term "Amazon(s)" is employed to denote a region characterized by its heterogeneity, which is often overlooked by those who seek to impose a uniformity stemming from a colonial perspective. This term serves as a social space shared by multiple Latin American states, thereby emphasizing its complexity and diversity. The term was coined by anthropologists Jane Felipe Beltrão and Paula Lacerda (2017).

³ The decision was made to write the names of the authors in full, with the objective of underscoring the gendered nature of scientific research. This is a dimension that is often obliterated when only the surname is mentioned.

⁴ In this discussion, the notion of gender is related to the reflections of Joan Scott (1995), for whom gender is: (1) a constitutive element of social relations based on perceived differences between the sexes and (2) a primary way of giving meaning to power relations. According to Joan Scott (1995), the term gained the status of an analytical category, serving as a methodological instrument for understanding the construction, reproduction, and changes of gender identities. The author posits that this category must be analyzed from a relational point of view, taking into account the specificity of the contexts in which it is constructed.

⁵ I use this spelling, which may sound like an inversion, to highlight the fact that, although the women I spoke with may share experiences common to mine in terms of gender marker, the experience of ethnicity specifies



violence, unsafe abortion procedures, forced expulsion, and human trafficking. These actions result in incalculable physical and moral harm to the individuals subjected to them. The relative distance from urban centers facilitates the erasure and concealment of the violence suffered and considerably reduces the possibilities of reporting, receiving support, assistance, and reparation (Jane Felipe Beltrão, 2012). Adding these issues to the State's disregard for indigenous peoples as subjects of rights and holders of specific notions of justice, person and territory, it can be said that, in the Amazon context, the bodies of indigenous women are silently and with impunity violated. Given the paucity of extant literature on both contexts, as well as the relevance of both for understanding the legal and political dynamics in the Amazon(s), this work was created.

The author further asserts that this discourse, although modified, persists in contemporary conservative sectors, which pursuit to recuperate a purportedly golden past, when the indigenous Amazonian population was devoid of any rights, and those residing and expressing themselves within this region were regarded as beings entirely external to the nation. They were subject to the passive acceptance of a paternalistic domination. However, according to João Pacheco de Oliveira (2014), the Amazon currently finds itself in a different historical and memory regime, characterized by inequalities and the persistence of severe forms of oppression. According to the author, it is from this scenario of conflicts that a distinct protagonism emerges, assumed by new agents with very heterogeneous strategies and causes.

In this way, Paula Lacerda (2014) states that the relative scarcity of research on social mobilization in the Amazon is a product (and, concomitantly, a product) of the obliteration of the region's sociodiversity, which is preferentially analysed from the perspective of its biodiversity. This perspective may be illustrated by reference to Médici's "land without men" and the "vague green world" of Benedito Monteiro's literature. However, the author contends that, in the face of the state's inaudibility, the region's political leaders are effectively articulating their positions. The concept of inaudibility is not absolute or constant. Paula Lacerda's (2014) considerations bear a resemblance to those of Rita Segato (2003), insofar as, according to the author, by replicating the language of the dominator, the subordinated agent displaces, wears down, and destabilizes it, thereby

their trajectories, narratives and the violations they face. In this sense, contrary to the belief that womenities is universal, I highlight ethnicity to demonstrate its plural character.



eroding the dominator-dominated dialectic itself and introducing a mark of insubordination.

It is from this understanding that I seek⁶ to understand the construction of legal sensibilities (Clifford Geertz, 1998) and memories of violence against women in the Amazon (s). I am interested in understanding how confronting the inequalities present in the region influences the trajectories of the protagonists, the violations of rights they experience and the political agendas they construct.

In July 2023, I was a Professor in a modular course of the Postgraduate Program in Law at the Federal University of Pará (PPGD-UFPA). The students of this course were indigenous people and quilombolas⁷ which entered the program through affirmative action and dealt with gender and sexuality studies from an intersectional epistemology. The classes took place almost every working day of the week and resulted in intense interaction with the students. For this reason and because of the topic itself, which usually generates debate, a bond was established and the students often spoke about their experiences in their communities and memories related to the subject. One day, a student⁸, member of Guarani people, asked to speak and said the following:

When I was at school, I was one of the best of my class and always had the best grades. There was a girl in my class who was a repeater, older than me, and she always had to catch up. She used to look at me strangely in class, always staring at me and I didn't understand. One day she stopped in front of me and started shouting at me. She said: "I hate you! You're a "bugra" and I hate you! You're horrible. You stink!".

The word "Bugra" is known by indigenous people as a racist term. It is a pejorative term given by europeans to describe indigenous people for not being Christians. The student who used racists words was expelled from school and, for the young indigenous, this situation was paradigmatic to acquire what Veena Das (2008) calls "poison knowledge"

⁶ I will use the first-person singular throughout the text, in line with Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira's (2006) argument that this approach prevents the author from hiding under the cover of an impersonal observer, omniscient and omnipresent collective, using the first-person plural: us. According to the author, the ethnography comprises many voices, that must be distinguished and must never be silenced or eluded by the first-person plural.

⁷ Quilombolas are ethnic groups formed in Brazil through historical processes of resistance and political mobilization by African peoples who were forcibly displaced to the country during the diaspora. Quilombola identity is complex, dynamic, and multifaceted, encompassing, among many issues, the central struggle for the demarcation of Black territories, differentiated healthcare, the demand for an educational system that incorporates anti-racism and the history of Africa and Africans in Brazil, and religious resistance (especially within temple spaces). The term is intentionally kept in Portuguese out of respect for the way these peoples choose to self-identify, including in linguistic terms.

⁸ In respect of the women I interviewed, and to avoid exposing them to an undesirable situation, they were not identified. Their names are fictitious.



– a type of knowledge acquired through experiencing suffering caused by devastating events. The indigenous student understood that:

It was only when I left my community that I understood that I would be considered inferior because I was a woman and because I was indigenous. My parents are leaders, the women in my village are strong, warriors. It was in the white world that I discovered that being indigenous and being a woman was considered a bad thing, that I was seen as inferior.

The testimonial allows to understand at least two legal sensibilities in conflict in her educational trajectory. Firstly, women are perceived by Guarani people as “strong”, “warriors” and with the potential to lead, as the case of the student mother. Secondly, the concept of the “white world” is introduced, in which the young student comes to the realization that being indigenous and a woman can result in being perceived as inferior. This concept of the “white world”, regarded as unjust, has led to a student-led resistance, characterized by a reaffirmation of the Guarani’s legal sensibilities.

The expulsion of the person who insulted her was considered by the school management to be a fair way of dealing with a racist and violent interpellation towards an indigenous student. But as time passed, the interlocutor was able to attest to the inadequacy of this measure: outside of school, as an adult, while walking through the city, the young woman saw the person who had shouted at her at school years before. She said: “I don’t know what happened to me, I saw that girl and I shivered, I felt scared, my blood pressure dropped, I started to feel sick. And she didn’t even see me.

In this sense, it is evident that the impact of racism is enduring, extending beyond the scope of individual measures such as the expulsion of a student. In light of these considerations, the interlocutor elected to engage in social action by joining the indigenous social movement. She acknowledges that her decision to pursue a master’s degree in Law signifies a political commitment. Her involvement in the social movement is indicative of a shared sense of justice and struggle⁹ among the other women I spoke to.

The present study aims to scrutinize the testimonies of feminist women at UFPA and indigenous women¹⁰, interlocutors with whom the author has dialogued throughout all

⁹ On the multiple meanings of the word struggle, see: John Comeford (1999).

¹⁰ The author elucidates the inversion of the customary sequence of the expression in Portuguese from “mulheres indígenas” to “indígenas mulheres”: “I use this spelling, which may sound like an inversion, to highlight the fact that, although the women I spoke to may share common experiences with mine due to the gender marker, the experience of ethnicity specifies their trajectories, narratives and the violations they faced. In this sense, contrary to the belief that womanities is universal, I highlight ethnicity to demonstrate its plural character”.



the years of her anthropological training, in order to understand, from their memories, how the protagonists construct legal sensibilities and think about situations of violence. According to Clifford Geertz (1998), legal sensibilities are defined as the conceptions of justice and its application. The aforementioned concepts are defined as "methodologies and approaches employed in the conceptualization of decision-making scenarios, thereby ensuring the implementation of established legal frameworks in their resolution". (1998, p. 324). Legal sensibilities translate a specific concept of justice, which are specific to each culture and vary according to local knowledge.

Also based on Clifford Geertz (1998), I argue that there should be a hermeneutic exchange between Law and Anthropology, which consists of an attempt to "... talk about irregular things in regular terms, without destroying in the process the irregular quality they possess..." (1998, p. 333). (1998, p. 339). It is the effort to express anomalous things in words that are not too anomalous. In other words, to describe and represent situations - which are generally strange to us or at least unfamiliar - in a useful and informative way, so that we can comment on them in a valid way, thus becoming an exercise in intercultural translation. For the author, law is a kind of social imagination, "... a way of seeing the world, similar... to science, or religion, or ideology, or art - which, in the specific case of law, is connected to a set of practical attitudes about managing disputes that this way of seeing the world imposes on those who adhere to it..." (p. 276).

In Clifford Geertz's (1998) hermeneutic perspective, as opposed to functionalist approaches, law is not merely a set of limited rules, regulations, principles, and values; rather, it is part of a specific way of imagining reality. Law:

[...] with its power to place specific events... in a general framework in such a way that the norms regulating the proper and prudent management of these events seem to arise naturally from the essential elements of their character, is little more than a reflection of inherited wisdom, or a technique for resolving conflicts. (CLIFFORD GEERTZ, 1998, p. 349)

As a product of human behavior, the Law encompasses social meanings: it is saying something about something; it is a certain way of thinking, which not only regulates behavior, but constructs it, by "... giving a specific meaning to specific things in specific places." (p. 351) And this imaginative, constructive or interpretive power of the Law has its origin in the collective resources of culture, not in the isolated capacity of individuals. (p. 351) In this sense, law is one of the great cultural formulations of human life and, as such, is a local construct. For Clifford Geertz, "[the] law ... is local knowledge ... not only with



respect to the place, time, category and variety of its subjects, but also with respect to its characteristic note - vernacular characterizations of what happens linked to vernacular assumptions about what is possible." (p. 324-325)

In this way, law, "... rather than being a mere technical appendage added to a morally (or immorally) ready society, is, along with a huge range of other cultural realities ... an active part of that society." (p. 328-329) The various forms of law give life to communities wherever they exist and transform them into what they are. Even a type of law as technocratic as ours is not only mere procedures; conceptions of what is fact, what the law is, and the relationship between them, contribute to a definition of a social way of life (a culture) just as much as religious or philosophical conceptions. These notions are part of what order means; they are the community's points of view, not its echoes.

The research is ethnographic in nature and is based on the legacy left by references in Legal Anthropology. It is grounded in the formulations of Clifford Geertz (1973), for whom ethnography is a way of describing culture, understood as a system of constructed symbols, capable of what the author himself calls "dense description". Clifford Geertz posits that "[...] in order to understand others' conceptions, it is mandatory that we put aside our own conception and seek to see the experiences of others in relation to their own conception of the 'self'." (2007, p. 91) Not fitting diverse cultural experiences into the framework of our own worldview, relativizing certainties and convictions to perceive the "other" from the place where they speak.

The considerations of Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (2006) provide support for structuring participant observation in the context of research. The author understands that the object we look at is previously modified by the way we view it, as it is conditioned by disciplinary training and the way we see reality. Roberto Magnani (2009), on the other hand, recommends a "close-up and inside" look that takes into account the arrangements of the social actors themselves and, by approaching the "native gaze", can translate it from the anthropological intellectual apparatus.

I am also dialoguing with Claudia Fonseca (1999), for whom the narratives and stories of the interlocutors must be situated in their social context, in an interpretative movement that goes from the particular to the general. Disregarding the historical and cultural context of the interlocutors can imply the "symbolic massacre of the other", as it



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2. Women in Amazon(s): between justice concepts

In a work of great influence and repercussion, Gayatri Spivak (2010) critically questions the (im)possibility of certain groups speaking. The author notes that the subaltern in general, and the historically muted subject of the subaltern woman in particular, have been and are, throughout history, misunderstood or misrepresented by the self-interest of those who have the power to represent. Gayatri Spivak's (2010) thought-provoking proposition not only elucidates silencing, colonialism and violence, but also refers to anti-hegemonic, epistemologically disobedient, decolonial listening.

Inspired by the Indian philosopher's provocative reflection, Paula Lacerda (2014)¹¹ considers that in the midst of silencing attempts, subalternized groups and subjects - and this is a fundamental analytical shift so that subalternity is not understood as a paralyzing and insurmountable place - are speaking. Overcoming the colonialist perspective that aims to “give voice” to subalternized groups through research, Paula Lacerda (2014) stresses the

¹¹ The reference is the result of an oral communication given by the anthropologist on the occasion of “Anthropology in Focus”, a seminar organized by PPGA-UFPA.



question that guides Spivak (2010): how can the non-subalternized, the privileged, listen?

Her interlocutor Carolina corroborates:

Thinking about this process of epistemicide, how can we guarantee the narratives of these subjects who are silenced, oppressed and tortured in a mean and perverse way? Neuza Santos, a black woman psychoanalyst who committed suicide, worked in the slums and also with the wealthy people of Rio de Janeiro. And then you go and study the complaints from psychologists who deny the existence of racism in their offices, you understand the whole process, because black girls don't want to be seen by a white psychologist. But you're going to say that in academia, you're going to say that in the psychology course. No, I'm the hysterical black girl who sees racism in everything. I see it because there is! How do we recover the narratives of these subjects? I was only able to recover these narratives when I joined the movement. When I joined the militancy (Interview with Carolina. Psychologist. Self-declaration: black)

Carolina's testimony shows that part of her understanding of what would be a possible legal sensibility for women is based on the creation of spaces of audibility: in her view, it is necessary to “rescue narratives” that have not found an echo in hegemonic conceptions of history - since there is the continuity of a path of “torture”, “oppression” and ‘silencing’ preventing adequate listening - nor in academic spaces, where, for her, there is a tendency to consider that black people who make complaints of racism are seeing “racism in everything”. In this sense, the social movement, according to Carolina, presents itself as a legitimate space for education, learning and resistance to epistemicide - a term coined by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (1998) to describe the destruction of knowledge and cultures - in a similar way to the Guarani student I had the chance to listen to during a course.

At the same time, these legal sensibilities that suggests listening and legitimacy to silenced narratives coexists with the possibility of the psychic illness of women working in militant spaces: for Carolina, there seems to be a link between the suicide of the intellectual Neusa Santos and the daily experience of racism; the same occurs in the case of black patients who are not adequately attended to by white psychologists who often deny the existence of racism in clinical practice.

Carolina notes through politicization what authors such as Frantz Fanon (1968) systematized through theory and fieldwork. The author practiced clinical and therapeutic listening in the context of the colonial war in Algeria. In a deeply demanding piece of work, Frantz Fanon (1969) listened, in an analytical setting, to the demand to learn how to torture



without remorse, to the traumas arising from daily violence, to the sexual humiliation of men generated by the colonial wound.

What Fanon (1968) detected, after a long time of professional practice, is that the colonial war generates mental disturbance. That psychological suffering, commonly seen as a very personal matter, is directly influenced by social environments marked by racism, colonialism and political conflicts.

At the same time, the perception of legal sensibility on the part of the interlocutors is often linked to a path to emancipation that can only be built collectively, never individually. In this sense, there is a constant emphasis on the correlation between political activism and the possibility of solidarity between women. As interlocutor Beatriz says about her involvement in militancy:

I think we can find these new ways of living in literature, in university, in militancy. To live our struggles. Don't you have days when nothing motivates you? There are days when nothing motivates me. But the possibility of building something beyond myself is something that motivates me. To think that maybe I won't be as widely read as I once dreamed, but if someone reads it and thinks "wow, that happened to me, thank you". When we talk about feminism, we have to talk about a network of support and affection (Interview with Beatriz. Lawyer. Self-declaration: white)

Beatriz seems to be referring, when she talks about new ways of living, to a path of subjectivation, understood here as "the movement of appropriation of the results of their social relations by human subjects" (HELEIETH SAFIOTTI, 2019, p. 147). It's about the emergence of a new way of thinking about oneself and overcoming the tiredness and loneliness that can be caused by various experiences of oppression, starting with sharing a sense of recognition and support. In this sense, the legal sensitivities built up by women within social movements, as well as changing ways of experiencing politics - here understood in the broadest sense - make it possible to produce meaning for women's biographies, who can, motivated and supported by networks of political solidarity, create "something beyond myself". Something, in Beatriz's terms, that includes building a fairer world through networks of support, love and affection, where women don't feel isolated and can say "this also happened to me". In this way, a new form of sensitivity emerges that produces what Margareth Rago (2004) called the "adventure of telling oneself". The author believes that a continuous evaluation of the subjectivities produced within feminist movements is necessary:



Feminism, both as a theory and as a practice, has had and continues to have an eminently political social function, due to its profoundly subversive, destabilizing, critical and untimely potential, as well as its desire to make the world more human, free and supportive, certainly not just for women. For all these reasons, it cannot retreat from the enormous challenge of continually evaluating its own subjectivities and the ethical/aesthetic styles of existence it promotes, preventing the action of paralyzing reterritorializing forces, because feminist ways of existing should only become uncomfortable as intense life-affirming movements. (2004, p. 13)

Talking about feminist women and indigenous women in the Amazon(s) implies understanding the multiple conjunctures that run through these biographies, articulated from political, academic, affective and regional backgrounds. They are therefore dynamic trajectories, open to tensions and discontinuity and imbricated in larger contexts. In order to understand them, I draw on the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu (2006), when he states:

To try to understand a life as a single, self-sufficient series of successive events, with no other link than the association with a 'subject' whose constancy is nothing more than that of a proper name, is almost as absurd as trying to explain the reason for a journey on the subway without considering the structure of the network, that is, the matrix of objective relations between the different stations. (PIERRE BOURDIEU, 2006, p.190)

To understand and analyze the experiences, stories and narratives used by the interlocutors, it is necessary to realize that there are various ways of conceiving the trajectory of the agents. Based on the propositions of Giovanna Levi (2006), the trajectory is thought of in terms of contexts, in which the singularities of individual life can be interpreted historically, taking actions and memories as justifiable and subject to analysis, without closing our eyes to the possible inconstancies and possible particularities of the social agents whose experiences can be interpreted. The paths can be diverse, as can the women's personal and social histories, and investigating these processes is part of a project that seeks to understand how these women communicate with their worlds.

At the same time, this openness to telling their stories also makes the interlocutors uneasy about creating new ways of constructing theory, ways of producing science, which shift the representation of who the subjects authorized to speak are. According to Diana:

I think I'm part of the creation of feminist thinking at UFPA. That's what we're doing when we write a dissertation or thesis that studies gender, women's issues. We are seizing the political discourse and bringing it to academia in intelligible language. We're saying: this is a social movement agenda and this is the theory behind it. (Interview with Diana. Lawyer. Self-declaration: brown)



The theory that emerges from the work written at UFPA by feminist women and indigenous women has no aspirations of neutrality, disembodiment or depoliticization. We come to understand the Amazon(s) as the opposite of a demographic vacuum, or as a simple insertion site for large neoliberal projects: for the women I spoke to, the Amazon(s) is a privileged setting for creating new forms of theory production, epistemology and memory regimes. Entering academic spaces, in a university that is the largest public university in the north of the country in terms of number of students, to carry out research, has the aspiration of self-representation, public policy-making, social intervention and community strengthening. At the same time, many of the women I spoke to are interested in creating new theoretical canons that take into account the struggles against misogyny, racism and homophobia. This is evidenced by the statement made by a philosophy professor at a public event held at UFPA:

As we think about what women are and how they are conceived in philosophy, in the classics, they always appear as irrational, dehumanized, incapable women who don't produce knowledge, who don't produce science, who don't produce theory and who have a very specific place in society. If we look at Aristotle, for example, he considered women to be, by nature, inferior to men and that they should obey because of this. This is the place where we are still placed today: only feeling, given to care, but not to action. Hegel, for example, would say: "Women can naturally be educated, but their minds are not suited to the higher sciences, philosophy and some arts, for example". Women have a very specific place, determined by philosophy and then by science. The sciences in general put women at the center of the construction of knowledge, at the center of the history of knowledge and at the center of history. All our participation in the struggles, in the small and large reforms and revolutions is erased. (Testimony collected at a public event)

In this way, thinking about new conceptions of justice in Amazonian contexts also implies constructing new ways of thinking, disseminating and applying theories. Without ceasing to read the European and Western canons, women in the Amazon(s) assert the need to do so critically, paying attention to the reproduction of inequalities present in such discourses and to the possible innovations contained in the friction between such theories and others, unpublished, produced by Amazonian thinkers. Most importantly, for the women I spoke to, justice is not possible without the emergence of narratives and theories that have been historically silenced by the effects of colonialism in the Amazon(s), which continues to be updated through coloniality. Aníbal Quijano (2005) understands coloniality as a pattern of power founded with the invasion of the Americas and which continues today, with Eurocentrism, capitalism and the racial classification of the world's population



as structural axes. Aníbal Quijano's considerations (2005) are part of the so-called decolonial thinking, a field of study formed by Latin American intellectuals who analyses, through critical historiography, the specificities of Latin American regions in relation to the experience of colonization. In this regard, Leticia points out:

This is in Quijano's text, "Coloniality of Power". We internalize - each of us and our ancestors - we internalize an id-entity of the colonizer. We internalize it, it's there in our unconscious. Deep down. That's why we often find it very difficult to get rid of certain attitudes. We can't. Because we've internalized so much... And it's not me, here, who has internalized it in the time I've been alive. It was my entire ancestry that internalized it. And I received it as a legacy. Because if it were me, now, I'd go to a psychologist, a psychiatrist, I'd try to get rid of this evil, this pathology. But it wasn't. It was my entire ancestry that internalized it. I received the legacy. And, of course, I internalized it. The other stories of the colonized were killed. The colonizer committed epistemicide. It was knowledge that died. (Interview with Leticia, Anthropologist. Self-declaration: black)

Justice in the Amazon(s) therefore means, for women who live, work and do research in the region, recognizing the violence, the knowledge that dies, the legacy of the perpetuation of erasures, so that these situations can be adequately confronted and, on women's political horizons, changed. Philosophy's conception of the rational subject is no different from the conception of a subject of law based on human rights: although there are dissident political uses of human rights, their foundations, the origin on which they are based, is androcentric and Eurocentric. This space of hegemony that silences other forms of existence is represented by the interlocutors:

We always have to talk about hegemony, right? Because there's always a struggle, a conflict, which the hegemon tries to accommodate, tries to tidy up, tries to create consensus. When the conflict comes to light, it tries to tidy things up. The point is that throughout history, hegemony has been built around a certain group. The other stories, those of the colonized, were killed off. The colonizer carried out epistemicide. It was knowledge that died. (Interview with Leticia. Anthropologist. Self-declaration: black)

It is against a notably violent hegemony that the legal narratives and sensitivities of women in the Amazon(s) are rising up, in the belief that new forms of knowledge (which nevertheless refer to a whole politically activated ancestry) can produce recognition, historical reparation and, ultimately, justice for women who have been and are victims of violence, in the Amazon(s) and around the world.

3. Women in the Amazon(s) in the face of suffering and rights violations



Listening to women's accounts of the violations they had experienced and writing them down in anthropological language brought me closer to managing what Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das and Margaret Lock (2005) call "social suffering". According to the authors, social suffering can be understood as the result of devastating forces on human experience, capable of altering that experience. Here, we come close to the writings of Veena Das (2008a), insofar as she problematizes the correlation between pain and language. According to Das, through the expression of pain, it is possible to leave its suffocating privacy. Therefore, extreme violence is not only responsible for the destruction of lives and bodies. They also act in the construction of subjects and languages of pain.

Regarding the memory of the women who paved the way for us to occupy spaces and express ourselves, albeit imperfectly, with autonomy of thought, I reproduce below the statement made by one of the professors of Political Science at UFPA at an event on women and the military dictatorship:

When I was arrested, my five-month pregnant belly was already very visible. I was taken to the Federal Police station, where, faced with my refusal to give information about my husband, I began to hear, under punches and kicks: "A child of this race should not be born". I was then taken to the Criminal Investigation Squad (PIC), where I was threatened with torture on a stick and shocks. A few days later, I learned that my husband was also there. We suffered the torture of the 'spotlights'. They kept us awake all night with a bright light in our faces. We were taken to the Army Police Battalion in Rio de Janeiro, where, as well as putting me in the dragon chair, they beat my face, neck, legs and I was subjected to 'scientific torture' in a brightly lit room. The person I was interrogating was in a higher place, like a pulpit. From the chair we sat on, wires ran up our legs and were tied to our breasts. The sensations this caused were indescribable: heat, cold, asphyxiation. From there, I was taken to the Army Hospital and then back to Brasília, where I was put in a cell full of cockroaches. I was very weak and couldn't stand up or sit down. As I didn't have a mattress, I lay down on the floor. The cockroaches, of all sizes, started gnawing at me. All I could do was take off my bra and cover my mouth and ears. They took me to the garrison hospital in Brasília, where I stayed until my son was born. On that day, to speed things up, the doctor, very angry, induced labor and made the cut without anesthesia. It was a very difficult experience, but I stood firm and didn't cry. After that, people kept saying that I was cold, emotionless, without feelings. Everyone wanted to see who the beast was' that was there. (Testimony collected at a public event)

The testimony is raw and extremely strong, as it tells of the torture to which the professor was subjected during the period of the military dictatorship. The professor in question was one of the first at the university - and this is acknowledged by her colleagues -



to openly declare herself a feminist and to carry out research into the so-called “women's issue”. She is an intellectual pioneer.

At the time she made this statement, her speech was part of the debate following the screening of the film *Torre das Mazelas*, a documentary about the experiences of women imprisoned for being considered communists or subversives during the dictatorship. The film showed, among other things, how in situations of great precariousness, networks of support and solidarity were created among the prisoners. The teacher who gave the testimony above says that, very differently from what was portrayed in the film, her experiences of imprisonment and physical torture were extremely lonely, she did not have the company of other women or militant friends while she was imprisoned.

I know that the content of this testimony may sound shocking to some readers, but I think it is essential that I reproduce it, because it is a memorial record of the horrors produced by the dictatorship in the lives of women in the Amazon context, as well as translating the devastating and practical effects of the suppression of constitutional guarantees and the possibility of political dissent against the governments in power. In the very recent past, basic human rights were brutally violated through state practices and testimonies such as the one made by the interlocutor are living memories of such injustices.

Telling one's story in public, as the teacher did, reflects a commitment to the motto that has become known and repeated about the memories of the dictatorship: lest it be forgotten, lest it never happen again. The legal sensitivities of women in Amazonian contexts also work towards the formation of a policy around women's memories and the possibility for women to tell their stories. One of the contemporary challenges for policies and theories about memory is to break with the practices of domestication and colonization that especially value the memory of power. Public testimonies like this are ways of producing cracks in these hegemonies.

During the interviews, other accounts of sexual violence also emerged, as was the case with Beatriz's testimony:

Ten years ago, I was raped. He was arrested after six months. It was a stranger, he raped several women, several middle-class women. At the time, I think there were about a dozen women. And people got involved, they arrested him and I recognized him in the newspaper. And then the process went by, so what I recounted in my dissertation was something I felt. And when I discovered that this was an object of research, I decided that this was what I wanted to research. This is important for my feminist journey, because it was by reading



about rape culture that I was led to other feminist themes. And it was in my dissertation that I deepened my studies. It was there that I understood what patriarchy was, what gender was, what feminism was like in Brazil. Rape culture led me to pornography, which led me to patriarchy, which led me to gender. (Interview with Beatriz. Lawyer. Self-declaration: white)

Beatriz has a master's degree in law. She has produced a long dissertation on how rape culture is expressed in the judiciary, in the practices of the so-called operators of the law. It seemed hard to imagine how she had decided, during the two intense years that make up a master's degree, to investigate the heart of an event that had devastated her career. But not only did she do it, she was approved for a doctorate focusing on the same subject.

The doctorate consists of making an ethnographic film about the meanings of rape in the Amazon context. The film is currently being shown in various cities throughout the state of Pará to the general public, as well as being the subject of debates in specialized disciplines at the university. As you can see, telling and listening to stories about violence is a fundamental part of the concept of justice of the women I spoke to.

According to Virginie Despentes (2016) rape is at the center, at the heart, at the base of our sexualities. A central rite of sacrifice, since antiquity it has been omnipresent in the arts, represented in texts, statues and paintings. It has been a constant for centuries. Both in the gardens of Paris and in museums, there are depictions of men forcing themselves on women. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Virginie Despentes (2016) points out, it seems that the gods kill time trying to grab women who don't want them, to get what they want by force. Easy, for them who are gods, says the author. And when they become pregnant, it is still on them that the revenge of their wives falls. The female condition, its alphabet. Always guilty for what they do to us. Blamed for the desire they arouse. For Virginie Despentes (2016), rape is a precise political program: the skeleton of capitalism, it is the raw and direct representation of the exercise of power.

Rape, according to Virginie Despentes (2016), has this particularity: it makes us obsessive. Virginie Despentes (2016) says she returns to it all the time. Twenty years after she was raped, the author says: "Every time I think I've finished this story, I come back to it" (p. 44). To say different, contradictory things, novels, short stories, songs, movies. The author says that she always thinks that one day she will be able to put an end to it, liquidate the event, empty it out, exhaust it: "Impossible. It is the founder - of what I am, as a writer,



as a woman who doesn't exactly identify herself as such. It is at the same time what disfigures me and what constitutes me." (p. 45)

Giovana was also a rape survivor. She recounts the following:

In 2014 I began to realize a lot of things, a lot of things I went through because I was a black girl, a black woman. For example, I was sexually abused as a child. And when you start reading, you start to think: who are these children, what is the profile of these children? This brought back many memories of suffering. Two years ago I suffered another abuse. I was at a party, I drank a lot at that party and I remember flashes: me without clothes, on the bed, the person on top of me. And it was a woman. And then I took a long time. I knew I didn't want to, I knew it hadn't been consensual, I knew that if it had been a man, it would have been obvious. But I spent a long time wondering what it had been, because it's not common. Even because she was a woman who called herself a feminist, who said she was against rape culture. It was horrible, not to mention the kind of memory it brings back. What I had studied in terms of feminism hadn't given me the tools to understand it. (Interview with Giovana, Anthropologist. Self-declaration: black)

There are several layers to Giovanna's testimony. Firstly, her narrative contains elements commonly found in stories about rape: the aggressor is usually someone close to the victim, such as a family member, friend or colleague. It is not usually, to use Beatriz's terms, 'the stranger, the maniac'. This makes reporting and breaking the silence even more difficult because it involves not only revealing a deeply traumatic situation, but also reordering practically all of the victim's social relationships. Consequently, many women either never disclose that they were victims of rape, or do so long after the event. For this reason, current investigative methods, such as forensic examinations, are ineffective: if disclosure occurs long afterwards, traces such as bodily fluids, DNA, bruises and visible wounds have disappeared. Listening to survivors could lead to new legal approaches to dealing with this widespread crime in Brazil and around the world, as well as opening up the possibility of creating care systems that do not re-victimise women and children, who are usually the preferred victims of this crime.

Still on the subject of experiences surrounding corporeality, the testimonies they heard also demonstrate that, in addition to the black population, indigenous peoples were racialised based on phenotypic characteristics. An important aspect of the daily lives of indigenous and non-indigenous women alike is the racialisation of their bodies. During one of my conversations with Joana, I learned that:

During my whole life, people didn't believe I was indigenous because I've always looked very white. I remember when I was young and teaching in a state school. I always dressed up because I thought teachers had to dress up. One day,



someone came looking for my father. I was at the door of our house, but the person didn't believe I was his daughter. They said: 'You don't look indigenous. You're pretty, white, and dressed up like that.' (Interview with Joana, retired teacher, self-declared Indigenous)

The questioning reveals the extent to which the indigenous body is exoticized and stereotyped at the margins of otherness, and how this imagery is linked to class distinctions. Color seems to play a significant role in how ethnocentric discourse recreates indigenous "being" and "looking," resulting in tensions and discrimination that disrespect the self-determination of peoples within a homogenizing logic. The incredulity surrounding the idea that an indigenous woman can be "beautiful" reveals the lack of recognition of indigenous peoples as subjects. Reflecting on interethnic relations, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira (2005) argues that identity recognition in contemporary times is a moral imperative as well as a political issue. In this sense, listening, dialogue, and relationships can only exist when we recognize the identities of those who speak to us. Understanding the protagonists' legitimate representations, values, and identities becomes fundamental, according to the author. Recognizing identities, memories, theories, suffering, and political demands is fundamental to what women in the Amazon(s) understand as justice and is part of their legal sensibilities.

Conclusion

Leslie Jamison (2016) writes that considering the narrative of female pain and injustice as overly familiar or somewhat old-fashioned masks deeper accusations – twice told, three times told, a thousand and one nights told. These accusations include the idea that women who suffer are playing the role of victims, weakening themselves, or preferring self-indulgence to bravery. Ignoring the wounds offers a convenient excuse; it prevents people from fighting back against what they hear and say. It's as if our task is to accept the consequences of terminal self-consciousness after the history of all pain has been told.

Leslie Jamison (2016) insists that female pain remains unknown. It's always unknown. We never heard about it. This is especially true for the pain experienced, narrated, and politicized by women in the Amazon(s), which is marked by successive and violent processes of erasure. It is unprecedented for a woman to feel bad about herself



anywhere, anytime. Thus, the author does not believe in a finite economy of empathy. As Leslie Jamison (2016) argues, paying attention pays as much as the price it charges. You learn to start seeing. I believe that conducting research like this, as well as recounting stories such as those I have presented, can produce this effect: the recognition of new legal sensitivities and social recognition of the demands of the protagonists. One day, these violations of women's rights can be overcome. And so that they can be faced in the present moment.

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