

# Brazilian Feminisms in their Relations with the State: Contexts and Uncertainties\*

Lia Zanotta Machado\*\*

## **Abstract**

This text aims to rethink the relationship between Brazilian feminisms and the state. Dialogue and continuous tensions are grounded in the feminist agenda that not only presupposes a cultural revolution regarding subjectivities, but that also exacts a notable reform or political revolution. On the one hand, while addressing violence against women is gaining ground, on the other, education for gender equality and the legalization of abortion suffers what has been called “backlash”. There is a clash between neoconservative movements that seek to impose their moral viewpoint on the whole society and feminist movements that defend the ethics of individual autonomy, plurality and social rights.

**Keywords:** State and Brazilian Feminism, Fundamentalism, Ethics of individual autonomy, Abortion legalization, Violence against women, Sexist education.

---

\* Received February 26 2016, accepted March 29 2016. Translated by Leslie Damasceno.

\*\* Full Professor of Anthropology, Universidade de Brasília, Brasília, DF, Brasil. [liazmac@gmail.com](mailto:liazmac@gmail.com)

Feminist struggles broke out in Brazil, largely dependent on their participation in the general struggle for democracy against the dictatorship and against social inequalities, strongly established in leftist women's organization and closely coordinated with the defense of the rights of citizenship and democracy. As I have stated in another occasion:

In Brazil, the feminist movement in its beginnings during the seventies counted with the international exchange of ideas and propositions by the presence of women exiled in Paris, Berkeley and Santiago. Consciousness raising groups were built around exiled women, writers, university teachers and students, women with origins in leftist political parties, and soon articulated with women such as Romi Medeiros, of the Brazilian elite, a lawyer who had accomplished the approval of the Statute of Married Women in 1962, responsible for removing women from the condition of being "relatively incapable," in relation to her husband against the right to work and to choose their place of residence. (...) These consciousness raising groups introduced propositions similar to those of the American and French movements but are characterized, in Brazil, for seeking to be "good for Brazil", in Goldberg's expression (1991) (Machado 2011:194).

The movement irrupted at the moment when segments of a "civil society" were gaining a possible space to articulate against the "State" which had acted as a military dictatorship since 1964. At the time, these ideas were in dichotomous opposition, serving as a response to the dictatorial military rule. Government Geisel (1974-1979) began the process of political detente, while always warning about the use of dictatorial recourse to repression.

### **1970s and 80s: the interstices of private and public issues and the articulation of women's rights in the struggle for democracy**

Since 1973, consciousness raising groups sprang up in Rio de Janeiro and in São Paulo, and at the end of the seventies, in cities in the Northeast and in the South of Brazil, and through the

Midwest. Adding my personal memories to this data, the group/collective I participated in, *Brasília Mulher*,<sup>1</sup> was organized in 1980 with participants from university professors, lawyers, economists, psychologists, social workers, trade unionists and students. In this group, as in others, women participated with relative diversity as to race and class. Women from popular movements, labor movements, and from leftist parties, as well as groups constituted as SOS groups for women suffering violence, were articulated through these groups, in multiple formats.<sup>2</sup> Although the issue of diversity among women was not on the agenda at that time, as it is today, it was as if the call to civil society and the call to women converged to convene a diversity of women.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *Brasília Mulher (Brasilia Woman)* was founded in 1980 by the fusion between two groups of feminists and through the special initiative of two feminists: Mireya Suarez de Soares, an anthropologist and university professor, from the Goup Mulheres do Cerrado, that particularly met with university researchers and students from UnB (the University of Brasilia); and Marlene Libardoni, economist, the leader of the Grupo Feminista de Brasília, which brought together women linked to civil society, to trade unions and to Itamaraty [the Brazilian foreign ministry]. The meetings of *Brasília Mulher* grew to between 30 to 49 participating women.

<sup>2</sup> The anthropologist Mariza Corrêa points out the diversity of class and the relative racial diversity of São Paulo's feminist groups. She also pointed out that the issue of race was included among feminists of that moment, although not nearly as strong if compared to the issue of a black feminism as occurred in the United State (Corrêa, 2001:13-30). I would add: if there was diversity, the issue of organizations of black women or lesbians was not posed as it came to be at the end of the '90s

<sup>3</sup> My personal memory is inscribed from different angles: as a member of the feminist group Brasília Mulher; as a continuing participant and one of the founders do the Núcleo de Estudos e Pesquisas da Mulher da UnB (University of Brasília Women's Study and Research Nucleus / NEPeM), created in 1986; as a member of the non-governmental organization Ações em Gênero, Cidadania e Desenvolvimento (Actions for Gender, Citizenship and Development / AGENDE); as a member of the Rede Nacional Feminista de Saúde e Direitos Sexuais e Direitos Reprodutivos (National Feminist Network of Health, Sexual and Reproductive Rights / Rede Feminista de Saúde); and as a representative of the Rede Feminista de Saúde on the Conselho Nacional dos Direitos das Mulheres

In 1975, with the celebration of International Women's Year, it was possible to face then current political difficulties to organize a formal event and thus realize the first public act, the Seminário sobre o Papel e o Comportamento da Mulher na Sociedade Brasileira (Seminar on the Role and Action of Women in Brazilian Society) held in Rio de Janeiro, in which the main issues were the condition of Brazilian women: issues relating to work, to physical and mental health, racial discrimination and female homosexuality.

Also in 1975, direct censorship of the press was suspended, but not for magazines and journals, radio and TV. This stimulated the publication of alternative newspapers, among them, two newspapers directed by feminist women. In the post-1975 period, the first newspaper directed to women was *Brasil Mulher* (Brazil Women), published by the Sociedade Brasil Mulher and made by women from Marxist left-wing parties from 1975 to 1980. If Leite (2003) points out that *Brasil Mulher* publishers were already working in conjunction with the *Círculo de Mulheres de Paris* (Women's Circle of Paris), the second newspaper, *Nós Mulheres*, published by the Associação de Mulheres [Association of Women] from 1976-1980, was initiated by the return of Brazilian feminists participating in the *Círculo de Paris*, along the feminists who were active here.<sup>4</sup>

---

(National Council for Women's Rights/2003-2008). My personal history as a feminist is associated with my activities as a researcher, without being confused with this. But, if my research and study have oriented this text, clearly my own experience is interwoven into, and marks, my interpretation of this research.

<sup>4</sup> As Leite tells us: "...it was already known, at that time, that *Brasil Mulher* was made up of militant women from the Partido Comunista do Brasil (Communist Party of Brazil/PCdoB); from the Ação Popular Marxista Leninista (Marxist Leninist Popular Action/APML); and from the Movimento Revolucionário 8 de Outubro (Revolutionary Movement October 8/MR8). In regards to the *Círculo de Mulheres de Paris*, it was made up of feminists from the left, mainly from Debate, a dissident political group that sprang up in exile, with ex-militants of the Vanguarda Popular Revolucionário (Popular Revolutionary Vanguard/VPR); from the Vanguarda Armada Revolucionária Palmares (Armed Revolutionary Vanguard/VAR-Palmares); from the Partido Comunista Brasileiro (Brazilian

If you read the editorials of the two newspapers, beyond their differences, both called for establishing relations between the feminist struggle for women's liberation, for the politicization of the private and for confronting inequalities in public life; but always articulated with the struggle for democracy and seeking links with popular movements or women's community activism.

In the words of *Brasil Mulher* (Editorial 0, 1975):

We want to talk about the problems that are common to all women of the world. We want to speak also of solutions here and in distant places; however, we want to discuss them in function of our Brazilian and Latin American reality (...) Finally, *Brasil Mulher* wants to be part of the democratic press that, in the midst of battles, is emerging in Brazil.

In the words of *Nós Mulheres* (Editorial 1, 1976):

Since we were born, we women, we hear at home, at school, at work, on the street, everywhere, that our role in life is to get married and have children. (...) When we look for a job (...) we always find it more difficult than men, because we are women. (...) We women want to fight, alongside of men for a more just society (...).

The insertion of Brazilian feminists in the struggle for democracy and amnesty (especially the newspaper *Brasil Mulher*) marks a contextual difference from when the movement broke out in France and its beginnings in the United States. The issues, however, are articulated very similarly in terms of proposals presented on behalf of the necessary revolution of women's daily lives, politicizing the private and entering as a political voice in the public sphere, on the behalf of what all women held in common.

---

Communist Party / PCB); and autonomous women (Leite, 2003:234-241). The journalist Mariza Corrêa was among the autonomous women participating (Corrêa, 2001:13-30).

The feminist movement of women's liberation in the United States (sixties) and France (seventies), called "second-wave feminism," emphasized sexual freedom, and denounced the idea that the female body and sex was controlled by men. Thus the struggle for sexual freedom was consistent with the denouncement of sexual violence and of sexual intercourse obtained by force by a partner. It was politicizing the private. But not only this. Everything was seen as linked between private life and public life in the oppression of women and the fight for women's liberation.

In Paris, the newspaper *Le Torchon Brûle*, elaborated collectively from 1970-1972, featured articles on the many different facets of women's lives, such as domestic work, family, unemployment, factory work; always articulating everyday problems in terms of problems of the oppression of women that should be considered and analyzed toward emancipation.

Anywhere you find yourself, you end up reunited with sisters like you, oppressed and sick of that oppression, who will place one day her problem in terms that you be her own, in language that will pass through the body and life, there where the true expression lies (*Le Torchon Brûle*, No. 0. "Pourquoi je suis dans la lutte des femmes" [Why I am in the fight for women], my translation).

In the case of French feminism, the question of revindication for changes in public spaces were made clear through the progress of sexual and contraceptive rights and the legalization of abortion in 1973. In Brazil, the presence of women in public spaces was even more urgent since we were still in full military dictatorship.

The issue raised by the Brazilian movement that gains greater political visibility in the country concerned the murders of women, rather than the critique of everyday and chronic violence against women, a burning issue with the SOS groups. I return here to some earlier considerations (Machado, 2010): the slogan referring to violence that had media repercussions in 1979 around the reporting of homicides committed by husbands against their wives; and the fact that these men were acquitted or had their prison

sentences suspended.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, denunciations of the murders were notable enough to reach the political elites of the time.<sup>6</sup> One fought for the right to survive... This was the big news, listened to through public opinion, expressed in the great repercussion in the press regarding cases of homicides against women in the middle and upper classes. Much less than the claim for sexual freedom, what was heard was the need for the defense of women's lives. Thus began feminist trajectory of denunciation and criticism of the impregnation of misogynistic and discriminatory cultural values into the laws of criminal and civil codes and jurisprudential interpretations.

In 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was adopted by the UN General Assembly. In 1981 the Primer Encuentro Latinoamericano y del Caribe Feminista (First Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounter) was held in Bogota, Colombia. In memory of the murder of the Mirabal sisters by the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic, the meeting declared November 25 as the International Day for No Violence against Women.

Soon, Brazilian feminism sought a closer access to the state, given the relative openness with direct elections for state governors and congressmen. In São Paulo and Minas Gerais, feminists proposed the creation and participation in collegiate groups legitimized by the public authorities. The Councils regarding

---

<sup>5</sup> See Sorj and Montero (1985); Rodrigues, Andréia; Cavalcanti and Heilborn (1985); and Gregori (1993).

<sup>6</sup> One of the most notorious cases was the assassination of Angela Diniz by her partner, Doca Street, both from the social elite; and right after the 1980 homicides of Maria Regina Rocha and Heloisa Ballesteros, both from the state of Minas Gerais. The first trial of Doca Street in 1979, which had a large public audience, revealed a judicial practice of considering the defendant innocent by reason of defending his honor. Stancioli, Heloisa's assassin, was condemned in 1982 to two years of prison, having based his defense on the accusation that Heloisa was more interested in her professional business activities than in being a wife and mother. Christel Johnston was threatened, persecuted and murdered by her husband, who would not accept their separation, although she had appealed to the police and to the Courts, she did not receive protection.

Women and Women's Rights were created as advisory and proposal bodies, but without power of execution. The first to be created was the Conselho da Condição Feminina de São Paulo (Council on the Condition of Women in São Paulo) in 1983, also the first to propose the creation of the first police station to attend to women in 1985. Councils and specialized police stations, or forces, were created over the '80s in several states.

In 1983, in Rio de Janeiro, many feminist groups<sup>7</sup> organized, together, the Encontro sobre saúde, sexualidade, contracepção e aborto (Meeting on health, sexuality, contraception and abortion). According to Barsted (2007:13), this meeting:

[...] constituted a landmark in the public debate on abortion due to it being a national encounter that met for 3 days, gathering about three hundred representatives of 57 women's groups throughout the country as well as parliamentarians (senators, congressmen and state and city councilors).<sup>8</sup> In this meeting, the date of the 28th of September was defined as the National Day of Struggle for the Right to Abortion and was kept as a framework for mobilization in the following decades.

Within Latin America, in 1984, the Red de Salud de las Mujeres Latin American y del Caribe (Latin American and Caribbean Network for Women's Health / RSMLAC) was created during the Primer Encontro Regional de Saúde das Mulheres (First Regional Meeting Health of Women), held in Tenza, Colombia. In 1985, the Conselho Nacional dos Direitos das Mulheres (National Council for Women's Rights / CNDM) was created in response to the Women's Movement for Direct Elections.

In 1988, the Conselho Nacional de Direitos das Mulheres led the formation of the "Lipstick lobby," which presented constituents

---

<sup>7</sup> Grupo Ceres, Casa da Mulher do Rio de Janeiro, Coletivo de Mulheres do Rio de Janeiro, Projeto Mulher do IDAC and Grupo Mulherando, *apud* Barsted, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> *Jornal Mulherio*, May-July, 1983, *apud* Barsted, 2007.

to the “Carta das Mulheres” (“Women’s Charter”), drawn up by a large number of feminists (Pinto, 2003). Here, we see reiterated the uniqueness of the Brazilian movement in the sense that its first revindication was made on the behalf of democracy and social issues: social justice, creation of the Sistema Único de Saúde (Unified Health System), public and free education at all levels, union autonomy, agrarian reform, tax reform and negotiation of the foreign debt. The second part of the letter referred to women’s rights: work, health, property rights, shared leadership in conjugal society, defense of the physical and psychological integrity of women as arguments for combating violence, redefinition of the penal definition of rape, creation of police stations (*delegacias*) specialized in attending to women in all municipalities. The Charter is more timid in relation to its proposal to legalize abortion. It proposes a constitutional principle in these terms: “Women will be guaranteed the right to know and decide on their own bodies.” The principle was not approved.

The effects of the feminist movement are felt at the time of the Constituent Assembly. The right to “gender equality” will be included in the Constitution of 1988. At that moment, pressure and the political context were favorable to the progress of women’s rights, as if they were included in the achievement of democracy and “social progress” even though there was resistance to these inclusions or proposed changes.

In the university environment, feminist intellectuals created research centers on women and on gender relations. The first non-governmental organizations were created (NGOs) especially for monitoring public policies regarding women’s rights, training, advocacy, and to attend women’s rights among the more popular classes.

Internationally, between 1975 and 1985, three World Conferences on Women were held: Mexico, 1975; Copenhagen, 1980, and Nairobi, 1985.

If the United Nations urged States to eliminate legal discrimination against women, to eliminate abuse and violence against women in families and society, the national responses of

Brazilian and other Latin American countries depended fundamentally on their own national feminist mobilizations and the political conditions at the end of dictatorial political regimes.

### **The 1990s and the new millennium: the formation of networks. Articulation and plurality**

In the nineties, the trend of the Brazilian feminist movements was to organized in non-governmental organizations (emerging in the late eighties) and to seek resources to target projects referred to the preparation, monitoring and “social control” of public policy. Financing requests were addressed to the State and to non-governmental organizations, both national and international, a large part of funding solicitations going through the process of public announcements (*editais*) and competitions. The decade was characterized by the production of non-governmental organizational formats able to solicit positive responses in the dialogue with the State.

Given the goal of greater effectiveness of actions of non-governmental organizations and their capacity for lobbying before the Brazilian State and International Conferences that lay ahead, large national networks such as the Rede Nacional Feminista de Saúde e Direitos Sexuais e Direitos Reprodutivos (National Feminist Network for Health and Sexual and Reproductive Rights), established in 1991, were formed as well as the Articulação das Mulheres Brasileiras (the Articulation of Brazilian Women) in the years prior to the preparation of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995). In the early 2000s, the Articulação de ONGs das Mulheres Negras (Articulation of NGOs, Black Women); the Fórum Nacional de Mulheres Negras (National Forum of Black Women); and the Liga Brasileira de Lésbicas (Brazilian League of Lesbians). The World March of Women (Washington, D.C., 2000) consolidated its space in Brazil, with some new regional groups were organized, and networking activities in support of women continued in the area of party politics, such as the Confederação

de Mulheres do Brasil (Women's Confederation of Brazil) and the União Brasileira de Mulheres (Brazilian Union of Women).

The congregation of non-governmental organization networks followed according to the compatibility of the themes and objectives of those NGOs involved, but the actions of each non-governmental organization were conducted independently of the networks.

In turn, the networks gained prominence for joint actions regarding the Brazilian State and in the debates and challenges of global and regional conferences, returning to share decisions in favor of national public policies.<sup>9</sup>

The Brazilian feminist movement associated with Latin American and international women's organizations in preparation of the World Conference II on Human Rights (Vienna, June 1993). The Vienna Declaration stated explicitly that the rights to cultural diversity could not prevail if contrary to the human rights of women to non-violence.

Feminist movements in the Cairo Conference (1994) on Population and Development contributed to its outcome: consolidation of the sexual and reproductive human rights of women within the most different societies and cultures (Alcalá, 1997).

Preparation for the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, authorized by the General Assembly of the Organization of American States, held in June 1994, in Belém, Pará, Brazil, (known as the Convention of Belém do Pará), stimulated the production of new Latin American feminist networks and legislation in the region.

The Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, China, 1995) was preceded by the Seventh Regional Conference of Latin America and the Caribbean held in Mar del Plata, Argentina in

---

<sup>9</sup> I would refer back to inferences regarding the dynamic movement of Brazilian feminism in conjunction with the strong presence of the issue of women's rights within the NGO environment of the 1990s (Machado, 2009).

1994, and was considered by the states of the region as a preparatory conference for Beijing. The Forum of Latin America and the Caribbean NGOs, which developed proposals and negotiations with various governments, had met days earlier.

Thus, the nineties represented a strong relationship and linkage between the growth and consolidation of Brazilian and regional Latin American feminist movements and their synergy with global intergovernmental institutions in the objective to incorporate the recognition and consolidation of women's rights into the programs of national states. However, the Collor government in Brazil incurred a serious crisis in relations with the feminist movement and the CNDM (National Council for Women's Rights), surpassed only partially, after 1995, when the CNDM became linked to the Ministry of Justice during the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso, evidencing the incipient institutional framework of relations between feminist organizations and the Brazilian government.

### **The 2000s. Between successful coalition and backlash**

In 2002, at the end of the second Cardoso government, the Secretaria de Estado dos Direitos da Mulher (Secretariat of State for Women's Rights) was created under the Ministry of Justice. The secretariat set, as priorities: combating violence against women; women's participation in the country's political scenario; and the integration of women into the labor market (Bandeira, 2005). At the same time, the Ministry of Health called upon feminists to continue the Coordenação da Saúde da Mulher (Women's Health Coordination), which included a new policy regarding legal abortion services designating public health services to attend to abortions realized under the conditions decriminalized by the Penal Code (when pregnancy results from rape or when the mother suffers imminent risk of death), and formalized treatment to be given by the Unified Health System for women who had undergone unsafe abortions.

In 2003, the government of Luiz Inácio *Lula* da Silva (*Lula*) introduced political strategies of cooperation with the feminist movement as no other Brazilian government had before. The Secretaria Especial de Políticas par as Mulheres (Special Secretariat of Policies for Women / SPM) was linked directly to the Civil Cabinet, headed by a Secretary with the cabinet status of Minister. This status implied budgetary autonomy and recognized the need for production of specific public policies, and coordination with incentive and activities in other government agencies, with a view to mainstreaming social issues of gender. The status of minister and the direct link of the SPM with the Civil Cabinet were maintained until October 2015 in the second Dilma Rousseff government. The change responded to the current political and economic crisis, with increasing uncertainties and the possibility of intensifying conditions of backlash, given the limited autonomy to confront neo-conservative forces.<sup>10</sup>

In the same year 2003 on the path towards what I would term a successful coalition, seeking government consultation with the feminist movement, the composition of the Conselho Nacional de Direitos das Mulheres was altered so that feminists representatives were directly indicated by the networks to which they belonged and, thus, were no longer political appointments, although this presumed recognition by the movement. To this new composition, the indication of trade unionists and professionals by their respective organizations<sup>11</sup> was added, as well as the indication

---

<sup>10</sup> The Ministério das Mulheres, da Igualdade Racial e dos Direitos Humanos – SEPIIR (Ministry of Women, Racial Equality and Human Rights - SEPIIR) was created in October, 2015, to which the former Secretaria de Políticas para as Mulheres (Secretariat of Policies for Women), the former Secretaria de Igualdade Racial (Secretariat of Racial Equality) and the former Secretaria de Direitos Humanos (Secretariat of Human Rights ) were subordinated.

<sup>11</sup> The CNDM, in 2016, is composed of sixteen representative from the Federal Government (Ministries and Secretariats), fourteen representatives from feminist and defense of women's rights entities; and seven women representing entities of a union nature and other professional groups active in the promotion of women's rights. It also has five alternate representatives of entities of the first category and three alternate members of the second category entities.

of representatives from the Federal Government by the partner ministries and chaired by the Minister (after 2015, the Secretary) of the Secretaria de Políticas para as Mulheres (Secretariat of Policies for Women). A public space for dialogue with feminist movements and women's movements was created: a national conference dedicated to policies for women (the first in July 2004; the second in August 2007; the third in December 2011 during the first Rousseff government; the fourth scheduled from 10 to 13 May 2016). Such decisions have produced a visible approximation between the government with the positions of feminist movements, and vice versa, as well as contributed to the rapprochement between feminist movements, trade unions and liberal professional women's organizations, and the introduction of government mechanisms regarding the introduction of women's rights at state and municipal levels.

Gains resulting from this dialogue and coalition between the goals of the feminist movement and the state, through this new CNDM format, and from national conferences preceded by state and municipal conferences, have effected the involvement of governments and movements, on both the national and local levels. There was also effective involvement and articulation of feminist organizations with unions and associations. It was possible to insert cross-referential public policies for women into the policies and actions of the various federal ministries by encouraging and monitoring the PMS and CNDM. The decisions and results of these conferences should become guidelines of Policy Plans for Women. To this end, the Comitê de Articulação e Monitoramento dos Planos para as Mulheres (Joint Committee and Monitoring Policy Plan for Women) was established with participants from partner ministries. For the first time, a structure of this magnitude was outlined in the Brazilian government.

Clearly, however, each of the ministries had different interests in joining the proposals of the conferences. Largely, participation depended on traditionally inserting deep notions regarding issues of women's rights, such as in the case of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Agrarian Development.

Likewise, many of the proposals did not correspond to a budgeted activity but to a qualitative actuation not always capable of being evaluated.

As a result of the conferences and the activities of SPM, state and local entities were also encouraged to adhere to National Pacts for individual programs, such as the Pact for Combating Violence and the Pact for the Reduction of Maternal Mortality, as well being part of State and Municipal Plans.

The SPM and CNDM brought to the front a bill on domestic violence against women, adopted by the Legislature in 2006 as Law n. 11340/2006, the Maria da Penha Law, which responded positively to earlier pressure from non-governmental women's organizations. Questions and doubts about the format of the law and the make-up of specialized court to attend to women were brought to bear in the CNDM by feminist organization participants who criticized the first proposal produced and presented by the SPM to maintain some of the features present in Law 9099/95. The criticism was accepted and the dialogue expanded to the House of Representatives, giving way to a round of discussion with women organizations in several states. The SPM and CNDM had the capacity to create an extensive referral network for women victims of domestic violence, including the latest creation of the Casa da Mulher Brasileira (Brazilian Women's Home). Recent legislation has had innovative effect on the understanding of femicide. A basic text elaborated for the upcoming Fourth Conference of Policies for Women expresses the scope of the objectives achieved in the First, Second and Third Conferences (SPM and CNDM, June 2015).

Although the numerical relationship between civil society and representative government is in larger in civil society, both in the CNDM and the conferences, the political weight of the decision tends to favor the federal government, because the decisions of the conferences are intended to constitute guidelines for National Policy Plans for Women; and in regards to the Plans, the decision remains with the federal government, not even with the SPM. So this coalition, so effective for feminism to achieve its goals, it is still

asymmetric and is not immune to a certain amount of co-option, since, to be effective in various issues, has received some mild criticism regarding issues fundamental to the feminist movement that governments do not take into account.

In 2004, at the beginning of the Lula government, the SPM and CNDM presented as guidelines bases to be discussed at the first Public Policy Conference on Women, the following themes: empowerment of women and equality in the workplace; inclusive non-racist, non-homophobic and not lesbophobic education; women's health, sexual rights and reproductive rights; confronting all forms of violence against women; and a management and monitoring plan. Independently of the SPM position regarding reproductive rights, the right to termination of pregnancy was proposed by the *Jornadas pelo Aborto Legal e Seguro* (Movement Towards Legal and Safe Abortion), which brought together various organizations and feminist networks,<sup>12</sup> demanding that the federal government propose a bill in respect to the issue. The proposal of the *Jornadas* was adopted by virtually all state conferences, with one exception, and was approved by 90% of the 2,000 delegates present at the National Conference. On the whole, the First Conference mobilized more than 120,000 women.

In 2007, at the Second Conference, the topics proposed by the participants, in addition to continuing issues from the first conference were: sustainable development; the right to decent housing in rural and urban areas; traditional communities, culture and communication; confronting racism; confronting sexism, homophobia and lesbophobia (now considered separately, no longer as part of educational issues). At this point, the internal diversity of the feminist movement and its relationship with the state was clear: demands and disputes now are made in specific guidelines for the diversity of black women, lesbian women, young

---

<sup>12</sup> Integrating this proposal: the *Jornadas Brasileiras pelo Direito ao Aborto Legal e Seguro*, among others, a *Articulação das Mulheres Brasileiras (AMB)* and the *Rede Nacional Feminista de Saúde e Direitos Sexuais e Direitos Reprodutivos (Rede Feminista de Saúde)*.

women, women from forest cultures. Although the Policy Conference for Women II (August 2007) had approved forwarding the pregnancy interruption project from the Executive branch to the Legislature, the proposal approved does not figure into the II National Plan of Policies for Women in 2008.

### **Tensions over rights to termination of pregnancy**

The great tension that changed the terms of negotiation between feminism and the State did not start, as many say, in 2010 – during the campaign of the candidate Dilma Rousseff, but rather in 2005/2006. On behalf of the SPM, and in response to demand from the First Conference, the Minister Nilcéia Freire set up the Tripartite Commission<sup>13</sup> to draft a bill to legalize the termination of pregnancy and submitted it to the Comissão de Segurança Social e Família da Câmara dos Deputados (Commission on Security for Society and Family of the House of Representatives). However, this exact moment marked the denunciation of *Mensalão*,<sup>14</sup> which favored certain conditions of exchange in political currencies: the support of the Conferência Nacional de Bispos do Brasil (CNBB) (National Conference of Catholic Bishops of Brazil) provided that the government withdraw the abortion project or at least did not go forward with it. The minister presented the draft to the rapporteur of the commission on September 27, 2005, but from there, feminists were informed that the minister, or the federal

---

<sup>13</sup> A Comissão Tripartite – made up of members of the Federal Government, from Civil Society and from the National Congress and coordinated by the Secretaria Especial de Políticas Públicas para Mulheres da Presidência da República (Special Secretariat for Women sponsored by the Presidency of the Republic / SPM/PR) – was instituted with the objective to discuss, elaborate and forward the proposal to revise punitive legislation regarding the voluntary interruption of pregnancy, according to Ordinance nº 4, April 6 of 2005. A Comissão Tripartite was composed of 18, members equally distributed between: the Executive branch; the Legislative branch; and Civil Society.

<sup>14</sup> *Mensalão*, or big monthly stipend, refers to a corrupt act in which large sums of money were periodically and illegally transferred to favored interest.

government, were no longer negotiating favorably to the implementation of the project draft, given the political context.

According to Xico Vargas' column published on September 09, 2014:

Nilcéia's work had been shot down by two important texts resulting from the meeting of the CNBB in Itaiaci days before. Both produced under the echo of the explosion of the *mensalão*, with all the dirt that then splattered the government. The proposal of Nilcéia's ministry, the first to be conceived in the Executive branch, was the price the Planalto [seat of the government] accepted pay for nineteen paragraphs of light analysis that the Church proffered on the need for government "To Return to Political Dignity." Dignity". There was not the slightest censure of the government in the document, which was then being besieged by a sea of complaints.

The negotiations between the CNBB and the Lula government in 2005 and 2006 were made in the middle of political effervescence on the debate regarding the Mensalão, with the presentation of the project of an abortion legalization law and the proposed agreement between the Federative Republic of Brazil and the Holy See concerning the legal status of the Catholic Church in Brazil. With the increasing vulnerability of the federal government, the conservative sectors of the Catholic Church were strengthened, and a new status for the Catholic Church in Brazil was signed, which also won recognition for spaces, by analogy, of other religions and Christian sects.

Thus, when strong pressures were, or are, felt from the neoconservative movement against some proposals dear to the feminist movement, resistance and contradictions were also strongly presented within the government itself, distancing the political positions between the government (of Lula and Rousseff) and the feminists' proposals for sexual and reproductive rights of women and for the legalization of abortion.

In October 2005, in immediate response to the drafted proposition of legalized abortion, the first “Parliamentary Front in defense of life against abortion” was held. From the new legislature, the contrary positions in Congress grew in reaction to the project presented, with the formation of another Front: the Parliamentary Front in Favor of the Family. In the following years successive fronts were formed, or reformed. 2015 saw registered the “Joint Parliamentary Front of Family and Support to Life” and the “Parliamentary Front in Defense of Life and Family.” The Comissão de Seguridade Social e Família then passed on to be the coveted commission for the multi-party evangelical bench, created in September 2003, which brought together parliamentarians whose religious convictions centered around traditional family values, against abortion, and against extending rights to homosexual groups. The multiparty evangelical bench has, among its participants, the main proponents and members of the Fronts. The initiative and role in the Fronts is taken by politicians who identify their role as guided by their religious beliefs, whether Evangelical, Catholic or Spiritualist.

The parliamentary fronts for Brazil without abortion and the evangelical bench they constitute came to be spaces in which politics take place in pulpits and television programs. In 2001, before the increase of evangelicals in Brazilian politics, *Veja* magazine pointed out that the number of hours of evangelical programs on TV had gone from one in 1975 to fifteen in 1983, then to forty-five in 1992 and two-hundred and ninety in 2001; and evangelical recording industry totaled ninety-six, with 1,000 artists and bands. The heart of the debate that brings together most of these religious elites focuses on the defense of morality, in place of the traditional model family, as their support; the obligation that intercourse be a matter of fertilization and maternity; and no extension of civil rights to homosexuals and lesbians.

Less a defense of religious freedom, this signified a confrontation between the notion of the Secular State on behalf of a Moral State, inscribed in sectarian religious moralities that claimed to possess or represent universal moral truths, and a way

to “save” politics and society, which becomes clearer in the electoral race that follows.

The 2010 campaign between Rousseff and José Serra consolidated the vulnerability candidates and governments in the face of the growth of an alliance among politicians, who on behalf of their religious beliefs, especially evangelicals and Catholics, positioned themselves against the legalization of abortion and in favor of a traditional family nucleus constituted exclusively by a man and a woman.

Given the discussion within parishes, whose participants were against candidates who supported the legalization of abortion, the Brazilian Commission for Justice and Peace, and organism of the CNBB, published an official note on October 6, 2010, in which it seemed to support the prevailing longstanding Catholic institution of separation between secular and religious powers. Without the president of the CNBB himself having spoken out, the note states that the faithful should choose the candidate not only in line with Church doctrine, but also for his or her commitment to social issues. It adds that, “groups on behalf of the Christian faith, have created difficulties for the free and informed vote.” It seems, therefore, to counter the understanding between religion and secularity, following the boundaries constructed over the centuries between the power of the Vatican in the name of God and the power of states, then monarchies. But soon after, the president of the CNBB, Bishop Geraldo Lyrio Rocha proclaimed that to prevent the Church from discussing such a relevant topic as abortion during majoritarian elections is “to establish a ‘secular dictatorship’,” since democracy is freedom of expression and religion (Duarte, 2011).

The support of the established multi-party evangelical political movement was distributed between Serra and Rousseff, ensuring that both declare themselves against the legalization of abortion or to commit to not implement it. While Walter Pinheiro (PT/BA), Marcelo Crivella (PRB/RJ) and the Bishop of the National Convention of Madureira Assemblies of God, Manoel Ferreira (a former representative), supported Dilma and guaranteed this

commitment, Pastor Wellington Bezerra da Costa, the General Coordinator of the Assemblies of God in Brazil, supported Serra (Duarte, 2011). José Serra began a campaign “in favor of life” from the “womb.” Dilma Rousseff launched the “Letter to the People of God,” ensuring that the task of legislating is up to Congress.

The legalization of abortion became a prohibited subject in the Presidency of Dilma Rousseff. Thus, the alliances and the coalition between feminisms and the second Lula and Dilma governments were broken in regard to the proposition of a bill that, as was presented in the draft to the Comissão de Seguridade Social e Família, would legalize abortion during the first twelve weeks of pregnancy without forcing women to declare their reasons, and would legalize abortion for fetal malformations or serious risk to the health of the pregnant woman.

### **Tensions on rights to sexual diversity and the concept of gender**

A new issue would be placed in the confrontation between the neoconservative movement and feminists in regards to the State in the period of the two Rousseff governments. This is a matter that feminisms have sustained since the beginning, but expressed in these terms since the First National Conference on Public Policies: education for gender equality, and non-sexist, non-homophobic and non-lesbophobic education. The SPM maintained, from 2005-2013, a policy to support the Gender and Sexual Diversity Education Program.

The first incident was related to educational videos produced by non-governmental organizations, requested by the Ministry of Education to promote non-sexist non-homophobic education. However, political and religious leaders pressured the Presidency for the material was recalled, which in fact happened on 25 May 2011. A second incident, in 2015, of great impact, was the National Congress’s withdrawal of goals addressing gender inequality in the Plano Nacional de Educação 2014-2024 (National Education Plan 2014-2024). The Legislature began to promote strong pressure on the government against using the concept of gender, removing

from the PEN the objective to address gender discrimination in schools. The Legislative kept its distance, pressuring the Executive to distance itself again from the feminist agenda and the agenda of the movements for sexual diversity.

The public hearing regarding the content of Motion 083/2015 (on November 10, 2015), held by the Comissão de Educação da Câmara de Deputados (Education Commission of the National House of Representatives), summarizes the confrontation between the Congress and the Executive. The motion argues that this constitutes a disregard for the Resolutions of the National Congress because of the fact that the National Forum of Education published the Final Document of the National Education Conference (CONAE) in 2014, reintroducing the ideology of gender as a guideline, since this terminology has no presence in the PNE of 2014-2024 as modified and approved by Congress. And it accuses the State of committing a crime by inducing the development of state and municipal plans in consonance with the Final Document of the CONAE and therefore in dissonance to what was decided in Congress.

The motion has rejected a “gender ideology” from a biased knowledge, but not innocent, of gender theories. To speak of an “ideology” of gender is to be unaware of, or deliberately distort, the concept and gender theories. The purpose, however, is to force people who are born as male to be heterosexual men and people who are born as female to be heterosexual women. As derived clearly explained, marriages should only be between different sexes. Thus, explicitly derived from this, matrimony is strictly between men and women; and indirectly, should constitute the traditional family, in accordance to the nature of the sex of each: male people should be constituted as heads of households and females as their wives in the traditional mode, with the duty of obedience to husbands.

The motion considers that the terminology of gender is detrimental to the educational process. Arguments that were presented during the public hearing, among those who understood the use of the term gender as harmful, were based on the defense

of the Brazilian tradition of family values and understanding of the “virtuous” naturalized division of social roles for those born sex male and female, and that “virtuous” education be directed toward the exclusive regulation of men and women as heterosexual.

Let us examine our hegemonic “Brazilian tradition” in relation to family, sex/gender and sexuality/gender. We will first discuss the “tradition” of severe social inequalities and discrimination against individuals of the male sex and those of the female sex. Inequalities are formally stated and expressed in state laws. Men and women were unequal citizens in criminal and civil codes during the Colonial period, the Independent Empire to the Republic. Legislative reforms, some earlier and but the majority after the 1988 Constitution, established, at least legally, gender equality in various contexts. The legal power to physically punish women dates from the Afonsinas ordinances of 1446 (promulgated during the reigns of the Portuguese King Dom Afonso V), through the Manueline Ordinances (1512, King Manuel 1) and the Philippine Ordinances (King Phillip I of Portugal/II of Spain: 1603). The power to kill women if they were denounced by their husbands as adulteresses, and even their lovers, if of lower social status to her husband, continued throughout the Colonial era. Women could not correct men in family matters or kill them if they were adulterers ... nor compete in political and professional life. This, of course, created a long-term memory that even today effects gender relations and legal interpretations.

The effects of the colonial religious and legal understandings of sodomy as a sin and crime, and legal and medical understandings of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries of homosexuality as a disease/deviation/madness as well as a crime persisted, and still persist, in social memory. Hence, one can understand the high negative charge and discrimination against homosexuality as an identity and against relations between partners of the same sex.

On February 22, 2016, the CNDM (National Council of Women's Rights) published a public note concerning the unfolding of criticism of alleged gender ideology:

It was with some surprise that we received the news of the approval by the plenary of the House of Representatives, on February 18, 2016, of two issues emphasized in the base text of Provisional Measure 696/15. The first removes the phrase "gender perspective" as one of the tasks of the newly created Ministry of Women, Racial Equality and Human Rights, and the second proposes that the national human rights policy be made to conform with the São José, Costa Rica Pact, in a scathing affront to Brazilian women and against all international commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recently established by the United Nations (UN), with government support from Brazil (CNDM, 2016).

In other words, the backlash is foreshadowed and announced by the political leaders who have essentially have dual seats in Congress and the in fundamentalists and religious neoconservatives movements, and who control forms of television dissemination, which are, ironically, government concessions. Also ironically, these religious segments benefit from tax breaks that allow them to establish and construction of temples and churches. This obviously goes against the grain of the concept of democracy established in the eighties and nineties in terms of the rights of citizens. Thus far, the pressure these leaders exert against the government is by no means small.

### **Going against the backlash**

New groups of feminists are emerging to contest this backlash, on social networks, through public demonstrations and Internet networks. Distinct and collective innovators such as feminist bloggers, cyberfeminists, a *marcha das vadias* (march of the sluts), organizations of indigenous women and forest women,

women from the Amazon, River women who live in river-bank communities – to give a few instances – add new levels to the maintenance and consolidation of diverse feminist struggles and issues. Among the themes we find treated by these groups and collectives, some innovative some old: the legalization of abortion; free and responsible sexuality; autonomy to build diverse family arrangements and lifestyles: equality at work and access to different professions; social rights; freedom from violence; health and reproductive rights; eroticism; “polyamory;” free relations (sexual); gender diversity; the right to dress in a “not behaved” non-censured manner, etc.

Groups of feminist bloggers that accompany events that counter the rights of women, and who report rapes remind me, partly, of the consciousness raising groups of the seventies and early eighties, which provided so many decisions and demonstrations. Cycles alternate.

Could it be that the new feminists are so far from the strong direction that feminists have come to focus on—not only seeking the revolution of subjectivities – but the political reform/revolution needed to legitimize the rights and equal opportunities in accordance with public policy? Distant or close, but conversant in the paths already constructed and those waiting yet to be built?

On the part of the Executive, the invitation to participate in Conferences of Public Policies for Women encourages the incessant process of seeking new public state policies, with space clearly given for the diversity and plurality of women political subjects.

On the other hand, non-governmental organizations and women’s networks established in the nineties and the early 2000s, although many are weakened by lower financial, governmental and intergovernmental support, seek to articulate the various emerging feminisms. This is especially the case the NGO Centro Feminista de Estudos e Assessoria (Feminist Centre for Studies and Advisory Services/CFemea) through its virtual space Universidade Feminista Livre (Free Feminist University), whose partnership with MAMU (Map of Women’s Collectives) names,

monitors and gives visibility to collective that appearance on the web, and to street movements and other spaces (<http://feminismo.org.br/movimentos/>).

The research functions and training of study and research nuclei on gender in different universities and regions, in turn, maintain research, contact and relations with old and new movements. This is especially the case of Núcleo de Estudos de Gênero - Pagu (Gender Studies Nucleus - Pagu), institutionalized in 1993 at Unicamp with 20 years of activity celebrated in 2014. Among others, I can not fail to mention the Núcleo de Estudos e Pesquisas sobre a Mulher (Nucleus for Studies and Research on Women/NEPeM/UnB) at the University of Brasília, in which I participate and that will complete 30 years in 2016.

### **Challenges: ethical demands for plurality in the face of neo-conservative demands for imposing morality**

The relationship between feminist movements and the state pass through the mediation of weighing what governments can actually realize given the clash between conservative forces and emancipatory forces.

Unlike the 1970s to the 2000s, the feminist movement and later the movements for sexual diversity for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Transsexuals, LGBTT, in the middle of the first decade of the new millennium, became demonized: not by evangelicals and Catholics as practicing religious people, since religious freedom and religious adherence are precious, but rather by political leaders who make up the Evangelical Bench in Congress and by politicians who act as conservative Catholics, for whom the recognition of diversity and otherness does not seem to be a priority. The goal is the alleged defense in favor of the traditional family, essential for national salvation. I heard on the Internet a woman pastor who offered this prayer: "I pray that the church go out to shine and to illuminate the political darkness."

It was the current strength of the political leaders of this neoconservative position<sup>15</sup> that blocked the Lula government from 2005/2006 and the two Rousseff governments (2011/2014; 2015-) with respect to maintaining certain policies proposed and renovated in the early part of the decade with feminist movements. Policies, totally or partially blocked, constituted as neuralgic points of disagreement by the neo-conservative forces (fundamentalists): legalization of abortion; care and attention to unsafe abortion; legitimacy of diverse family structures and unions, whether or not the same sex; the proposition of a non-sexist, non-homophobic and non-lesbophobic education; and the use of theories and concept of gender.

Neo-conservatives movements in opposition to the rights of women and homosexuals claim the need for social order and “morality” in order for society to follow in the path of salvation (Duarte, 2011). Feminist movements do not impose rules of conduct, but seek regulatory rights of autonomy and freedom that do not harm third parties. To legalize abortion is to enable women to not suffer and die<sup>16</sup> because they do not have the resources to carry out a particular pregnancy. This in no way forces any woman to do so.

---

<sup>15</sup> I refer to them neo-conservative movements: the narrative regarding the traditional family has long been part of our history, but can no longer accommodate to the reality of the more recent enormous expansion of women’s and homosexual rights. The morality they proposed: to normalize heterosexual relationships and prohibit homosexual relationships to revert to the former conservative morality (“perfectionist” disciplinarian) was, in part, “lost” in the advance of modernity and secularism. It is the desire to return to the foundations of the old social order as seen positively by their religious beliefs. The characterization “neo” is because it no longer presents morality as “natural,” since modernity is organized through television and use virtual, conjoining the political and the religious. They make the pulpit a political soapbox, and the political space for one of religious proselytize.

<sup>16</sup> The present moment of the risk to fetuses and babies with microcephaly has aggravated the situation of women, who are victimized for lack of choice regarding giving birth in light of potential serious neurological and physical health situation.

Nino (1989) considered that the protection of basic rights – freedom which does not harm third parties; freedom to privacy in one’s personal life; bodily and mental integrity; and the right to work – was based on the ethical principle of “individual autonomy.” Operating in opposition to this principle is the principle of “perfectionism,” when the State prefers to impose juridical models of personal virtue and behavior patterns contrary to the principle of individual autonomy. Whenever the State proposes a perfectionism model to define criminal behavior, it does so in the same way that religious and moral spheres give the definitions of the forms of sin.

Every defense made by the feminist movement and/or the movement of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and transsexuals (LGBT) regarding sexual and reproductive rights towards decriminalizing has made also aimed to dismantle the conservative penalization of long date that has considered rape, incest, sodomy, violent indecent assault, abortion, adultery, and prostitution as “crimes against morality.” This way of understanding these acts as “against morality” is similar to how sin is defined. The definition of crimes against morality are based in the criticism of the format of the act, because that act is deemed a prohibited moral act and illegal, but not an as act that impedes the freedom or dignity of another person. Hence, we can see the demand for decriminalization achieved and/or revindicated by feminist movements and/or the rights to sexual diversity in relation to sodomy, adultery, abortion and prostitution in this light.

Sodomy, in particular for being a crime (against morality), in analogy and genealogy with the “sin” of sodomy, left gay people without citizenship and without rights. The decriminalization demanded by homosexual movements was vital to return citizenship to them. Correa and Parker (2004) and Correa (2006) point to the marginal and excluded place of gay subjects in relation to the Civil Contract.

In the conservative conception, abortion derived from rape was considered as decriminalized, because it was considered it as a restorative act of “honor.” The decriminalization of abortion

revindicated by feminist movements is done in the name of autonomy, freedom and responsibility of women to abort based on intimate or private reasons, which the woman does not need to declare, within 12 weeks of gestational age limit when the embryo/fetus is still little developed. As for rape and indecent assault, feminists propose that these are crimes against the dignity and freedom of individuals.

The movements for human rights, sexual and reproductive rights guided by decriminalization, in the name of non-interference of the State the intimacy of “private life,” acted only in targeted contexts to dismantle the regulation based on behalf of conservative morality that pathologizes acts by their form and not because these acts have consequences against people, or against the psychological or physical integrity of others. This morality of long date distinguished, in the sexual realm, between “good manners,” an expression of the legitimate and legal morality, and “bad habits,” an expression that defined a morality of prohibited and illegal acts. From the legal perspective “good manners” would refer to heterosexual relationships, sex aimed at reproduction and legitimate sexual acts. Women were irretrievably divided into two categories: on the one hand, the honest family women; on the other, adulterers, prostitutes, and those who aborted. This classification, present in most criminal and civil codes, derived from the criminalization of acts considered against “morality,” in close analogy and genealogy with acts considered sins.

In the perspective of the feminist movement, the issue of decriminalization of abortion and for the penalization of assault and gender violence in private life and in public spaces becomes an issue of actions against the person and against a person’s integrity. The LGBTTT movement considers the decriminalization of homosexual practices in the name of privacy, and the penalty of aggression and violence in the private and public spheres, such as hate crimes. Both of these have to do the penalization of acts of aggression. We differentiate here “private life” and “public life” in form, but not in terms of being the same within the relational nature of gender and sexuality inequalities.

The demands that these crimes against custom, or analogous to the notion of “sin” be decriminalized had as one of the reasons the defense of “intimacy” or “private life.” Would this seem contradictory to the idea of the “politicization of private life” and the mantra of “the personal is political” of the feminist and LGBTTT movement? The contradiction is only apparent, since it is the same principle of individual autonomy that guides both the decriminalization of sexual practices and abortion as well as the penalization of attacks on privacy. Sexual practices between same-sex partners in their full and reciprocal autonomy do not harm the rights or others’ autonomy, nor does the fact that women’s autonomy over her life and body might determine termination of pregnancy up to 12 weeks harm the autonomy of others. They are private matters, in the sense that are exclusive to the orbit of their individual autonomy.

On the other hand, aggression and violence against family members who participate in “private life,” understood, here, as a space of domestic and family relationships, are practices that harm those with whom they relate. They harm the autonomy of others. This third party is usually female, given the long historical legitimation of the male exercise of power and “physical punishment.” Thus, the penalty of conjugal and family aggression is based on the principle of individual autonomy, understanding “private life” as marital, familiar and domestic relations.

The arguments that attribute the apparent contradiction to the feminist movement for decriminalizing abortion and punishing gender-based violence<sup>17</sup> are linked to and emerge from one of the discourses of the legal narrative universe that seeks decriminalization on behalf of a Minimal State or even an abolitionist Criminology. This is not the narrative repertoire of the feminist movement.<sup>18</sup> The feminist repertoire is always based on

---

<sup>17</sup> See, among other authors: Karam (2006).

<sup>18</sup> In this sense, the Maria da Penha Law cannot be considered proof that feminists are “punitive.” The law is mainly focused on the protection of the battered woman, and although it supposes penalization, in practice has offered but little results in penalizing sentences. However, it effects interrupting the

the use of the principle of defending “autonomy, integrity and personal dignity,” and does not wish to produce a uniform moral discipline and therefore consistently counteracts the principle of “perfectionism” present in the current organization of the fundamentalist neoconservative movement.

To seek recognition of sexual rights is to require that violence or discrimination have no place in “private life,” or the “public life” in the name of gender identity or sexuality of those concerned. Acts of sexual violence, defined as rape or sexual harassment, whether against men, women, heterosexuals, or homosexuals began to be understood as crimes or violations against the freedom and dignity of people. The fight for the preservation of the rights of sexual subjects against their possible aggressors, based exclusively on the issues that these crimes were against people, was behind the feminist and LGBTTT demand for defining criminal laws.

Reflecting on the politicization of “private life” it was necessary to point out the two opposing significations of the term: one relative to the focus to the relationships between people in environment of their privacy, whether they signal conflicts, power or solidarity; and the other the focus on the kinds of sexual practices and reproductive privacy and intimacy of the individual that does not harm others.

While in the United States the strength of the arguments for decriminalizing abortion were based on freedom of privacy and intimacy, in France and in Brazil the arguments were sustained in defense of public health and equality social rights of poor women and the vulnerable that had less access to medical equipment and forms of contraception. However, the protection of privacy is also implicitly present in Brazilian culture, always present among the working classes and middle classes in the double moral reference in the Brazilian tradition. The termination of pregnancy is acceptable when, privately, it is believed that it is socially,

---

situation of aggression by the initiation of proceedings by referral to multidisciplinary teams and protective measures.

economically or emotionally impossible for someone you know to carry out pregnancy. But, one does not publicly declare that others, who do not know the person, can make informed decisions.

Conservative movements against the rights of women, homosexuals and sexual diversity allege the need for social order and “good manners” and are guided by the introduction of a new imposing morality, proposing a uniform State of Moral Imposition for everyone.

The movements for sexual human rights and against violence are against a State of Moral Imposition and, indeed, for a defense of individual rights and an ethical pluralism, which allows the experience of diversity and the recognition of gender equality in relation to political, civil and social rights. The movements for human rights seek a libertarian sense and ethical plurality.

The belief that sexual rights and the rights to non-violence proposed by feminisms are only exports from liberal individual Western values is unfounded. Sexual rights only thrive in conjunction with the economic and social rights and the positive rights derived for the duties of States.

I conclude by saying that feminist revindications and those of new sexual subjects that demand sexual rights and nonviolence go beyond the liberal sense of individual rights capable of free choice exclusively according to their interests and unable to think of the common good, because this impetus is only guided by the rules of the market. Individual choices are made in relational and social contexts and always require information, knowledge and access to public facilities. Individual choices are associated with responsibility, social rights and protection by the State in the face of aggression.

### **Final considerations**

Brazilian feminisms, always in dialogue with the State in search of social, civil and political and public policies for women, passed from criticizing the dictatorial governments to successful

and unsuccessful approximations to democratic governments. Positive coalitions were created in different governments, as can be seen in the history of implementation of rights and policies briefly pointed out here.

Since 2003, the new institutional dialogue formats between feminists and governments have produced strongly positive and successful dimensions for social and governmental incorporation of many of the feminist agendas, such as legislation, service networks and courts to address violence against women. However, important guidelines required by the feminist movement in relation to sexual and reproductive rights, which had seemed to be effectively emerging at the beginning of the millennium, are blocked. These guidelines have been delineated by a backlash of possibly stronger and wider impact, before a current Congress that seems increasingly sensitive to neoconservative agendas and given the current political weakness of the Executive.

However, working against the backlash is the continuity of networks and feminist non-governmental organizations and academic feminism, as well as the emerging presence of new feminisms, virtual networks and new partnerships among feminists, lawyers, doctors, scientists, educators and the call to the various organized segments of civil, union, professional and popular society.

The challenges are in the future.

## References

- ALCALÁ, María José. *Violência de Género en America Latina y el Caribe: Una cuestión de salud y de derechos sexuales y reproductivos*. New York, UNFPA, 1997.
- ALVES, Branca Moreira et al. *Espelho de Vênus: Identidade Social e Sexual da Mulher*. Grupo Ceres, São Paulo, Editora Brasiliense, 1981.
- BANDEIRA, Lourdes M. Desafios da transversalidade de gênero nas políticas públicas. In: SWAIN, Tânia N.; MUNIZ, Diva do C. G. (Orgs).

*Mulheres em ação, práticas discursivas, práticas políticas.* Florianópolis, Ed. Mulheres; BH, PUC/MG, 2005, pp.169-193.

BARSTED, Leila Linhares. *O movimento de mulheres e o debate sobre o aborto.* In: Seminário Estudos sobre a Questão do Aborto. Campinas, Unicamp, 2007.

BRASIL. Presidência da República. Secretaria Especial de Políticas para as Mulheres. *Anais da 1ª Conferência*, Brasília, Secretaria Especial de Políticas para as Mulheres, 2004. Série Documentos. [<http://www.spm.gov.br/assuntos/pnpm/anais.pdf>].

\_\_\_\_\_. Presidência da República. Secretaria Especial de Políticas para as Mulheres. *Anais da 2ª Conferência Nacional de Políticas para as Mulheres*, Brasília, DF, 17 a 20 de agosto de 2007 [<http://www.spm.gov.br/assuntos/pnpm/publicacoes/anais-da-2a-conferencia>].

\_\_\_\_\_. Presidência da República. Secretaria Especial de Políticas para as Mulheres. *Anais da 3ª Conferência Nacional de Políticas para as Mulheres. Autonomia e Igualdade para as Mulheres*, Brasília - DF, 12 a 15 de dezembro de 2011 [<http://www.spm.gov.br/assuntos/pnpm/publicacoes/anais-da-3a-conferencia>].

\_\_\_\_\_. Presidência da República. Secretaria Especial de Políticas para as Mulheres e Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher. *4ª Conferência Nacional de Políticas para as Mulheres. Texto Base.* Secretaria de Políticas para as Mulheres, junho de 2015 [<http://www.carapicuiiba.sp.gov.br/uploads/imgfck/texto%20base%204%C2%BA%20CNPM.pdf>].

\_\_\_\_\_. Presidência da República. Ministério das Mulheres, Igualdade Racial e Direitos Humanos. Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher CNDM. Nota do CNDM: Nenhum Passo Atrás, 22 de fevereiro de 2016 [<http://www.seppir.gov.br/central-de-conteudos/noticias/2016/02-fevereiro/nota-do-cndm-nenhum-passo-atras>].

CORRÊA, Mariza. Do feminismo aos estudos de gênero no Brasil: um exemplo pessoal. *Cadernos Pagu* (16), Campinas-SP, Núcleo de Estudos de Gênero - Pagu/Unicamp, 2001, pp.13-30.

- CORRÊA, Sonia; PARKER, Richard. Sexuality, human rights and demographic thinking: connections and disjunctions in a changing world. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, vol. 1, n° 1, San Francisco, San Francisco State University, 2004, pp.15-38.
- CORRÊA, Sonia. Cruzando a linha vermelha: questões não resolvidas no debate sobre direitos sexuais. *Horizontes Antropológicos*, vol.12, n° 26, Porto Alegre, 2006, pp.101-121.
- DUARTE, Tatiane dos Santos. A casa dos ímpios se desfará, mas a tenda dos retos florescerá: a participação da Frente Parlamentar Evangélica no Legislativo brasileiro. Master's Dissertation, Anthropology, UnB, Brasília, 2011.
- GUERREIRO CAVIEDES, Elizabeth. *Violencia contra las Mujeres en América Latina y El Caribe Español 1990-2000: balance de una década*. Texto de consultoria. Santiago do Chile, ISIS Internacional/UNIFEM, abril de 2002.
- GOLDBERG, Anette. *Le Dire et le Faire Feministes: une approche socioculturelle du Brésil Contemporain*. Doctoral Thesis, Sociology, Université de Paris VII, 1991.
- KARAM, Maria Lúcia. Violência de Gênero: O Paradoxal Entusiasmo pelo Rigor Penal. *Boletim do IBCCrim*, ano 14, n° 168, São Paulo, IBCCRIM, nov. 2006, pp.6-7.
- LEGER, Daniele. *Le Feminisme em France*. Paris, Ed. Lê Sycomore, 1982.
- LEITE, Rosalina de Santa Cruz. Brasil Mulher e Nós Mulheres: origens da imprensa feminista brasileira. *Revista Estudos Feministas*, vol.11, n° 1, Florianópolis, 2003 [<http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0104-026X2003000100014> – referenced on 01/10/2013].
- MACHADO, Lia Zanotta. A Longa Duração da Violência de Gênero na América Latina. In: FERNANDES, Ana M.; RANINCHESKI, Sonia (orgs.). *Américas Compartilhadas*. São Paulo, Ed. Francis, 2009, vol.1, pp.57-83.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Feminismo em Movimento*. São Paulo, Editora Francis, 2010.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Feminist, the State, and Gender Equality. In: FONT, Mauricio e RANDALL, Laura. *The Brazilian State. Debate and Agenda*. Nova Iorque, Lexington Books, 2011, pp.193-218.

- NINO, Carlos Santiago. *Ética y Derechos Humanos. Un Ensayo de fundamentación*. Barcelona, Ed. Ariel, 1989.
- PINTO, Céli Regina Jardim. *Uma história do Feminismo no Brasil*. São Paulo, Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo, 2003.
- RODRIGUES, Andréa; CAVALCANTI, Maria Laura; e HEILBORN, Maria Luiza. SOS-Mulher do Rio de Janeiro: uma entrevista. In: FRANCHETTO, Bruna; CAVALCANTI, Maria Laura; HEILBORN, Maria Luiza (orgs.). *Perspectivas Antropológicas da Mulher. Sobre Mulher e Violência*. Rio de Janeiro, Zahar Editores, 1985, pp.125-135.
- RODRIGUES, Moysés Nogueira. História do Movimento Feminista em Brasília: 1980 a 2000. Monografia (Bacharel em Sociologia), UnB, Brasília, 2013 [<http://bdm.unb.br/handle/10483/6693>].
- SORJ, Bila; MONTERO, Paula. SOS-Mulher e a Luta contra a Violência. In: FRANCHETTO, Bruna; CAVALCANTI, Maria Laura; HEILBORN, Maria Luiza (orgs.). *Perspectivas Antropológicas da Mulher. Sobre Mulher e Violência*. Rio de Janeiro, Zahar Editores, 1985, pp.117-124.
- VARGAS, Xico. Jandira é o resultado do que decidimos ignorar. *Metro Jornal Rio de Janeiro*, 2014. [<http://www.metrojornal.com.br/nacional/xico-vargas/jandira-e-resultado-do-que-decidimos-ignorar-127244> e <http://xicovargas.uol.com.br/index.php/2937>] – referenced on 02/09/2014].

### **Jornais e revistas consultados:**

- BRASIL Mulher. São Paulo, Sociedade Brasil Mulher, nº 0, 9 out. 1975. Editorial.
- NÓS Mulheres. São Paulo, Associação de Mulheres, nº 1, jun. 1976. Editorial.
- NÓS Mulheres. São Paulo, Associação de Mulheres, nº 6, ago./set. 1977. Editorial

### **Sites:**

- <http://feminismo.org.br/?s=bloqueiras+feministas>
- <http://feminismo.org.br/movimentos/>
- <http://feminismo.org.br/>

<http://www.cfemea.org.br/>

<http://www.mamu.net.br/>

<http://www.pagu.unicamp.br/pt-br/o-pagu>