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Circular - Carers of the World

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A study on caring

Coordinated by

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Rio de Janeiro, 2024



**To the
Carers
of the World**

IN THIS BRIEF PREFACE, I WOULD LIKE
TO MAKE JUST THREE OBSERVATIONS FOR
THOSE WHO WILL BE READING THIS BOOK.

The first observation is that reading this book challenges us to renew our view of Rio de Janeiro and its metropolitan region. As we know, in a historical vicious circle, the lack of infrastructure in the area surrounding the former federal capital has not attracted sufficient productive activities and, consequently, has created obstacles to the municipalities' ability to generate revenue. For this very reason, these urban spaces function as dormitories for a significant part of the adult population that commutes to the city of Rio. This is why, and not by chance, the news often reports heavy traffic, poor transport, and reports of robbery and theft. On the other hand, the political chronicle of these territories always highlights figures who operate according to a clientelist logic, successively securing legislative and executive positions. Undoubtedly, as several sociological studies show, there is a particular degradation of the metropolitan periphery of Rio de Janeiro.

However, and here comes the second observation, this is not a book of stories of degradation. Certainly, the stories recorded here express the real Brazil, with its persistent social inequalities, constantly fuelled by racial and gender prejudices. Moreover, the geographical location of the stories recorded here also evokes the characteristics of the metropolitan region of Rio de Janeiro, with its violence and precariousness. At the same time, however, they are stories of resistance against the tide of exclusion, against the tide of socio-environmental precariousness. In short, without denying the obvious and persistent neglect, the reader will find in the pages of this book initiatives of care.

The third observation is in fact a question: what are considered "care" initiatives today? In searching for an answer, the reader should not, as the introduction states, expect to find "acts of heroism or extraordinary events" in the pages of this book. Nor should they expect to find exemplary cases that have already received widespread recognition on social media. The stories recorded here could go unnoticed. However, gathered from the perspective of care, they show the difficulties and importance of local actions and movements of people and groups that seek to meet the demands of their territories, without necessarily waiting for initiatives from NGOs, companies, and public authorities.

This is a book about carers who value environmental, religious, ethnic, racial, and gender diversity. In dialogue with lessons learned from so-called "popular education," their work methods evoke cultural manifestations and different artistic languages. In addition, in times of digital communication, they renew the ways of articulating between territories and networks. Therefore, their actions can favor the recovery of affections, anchor belonging, strengthen collective experiences, and contribute to access to rights and public policies.

Reading this book, which is part of the Circular- Carers of the World programme, is very inspiring. Not only because the stories collected here allow us to look at Rio de Janeiro and its metropolitan region in a different way, but also because they encourage a broad reflection on the different forms of resistance, which gain new visibility, meaning, and strength when they are brought together from the perspective of a care policy. Caring is a political act. Hopefully, the network of carers will expand worldwide.

Regina Novaes, Anthropologist

Circular Carers of the World, a study on caring

This study is part of the Circular - Carers of the World programme, which is the result of the search for ways in which culture can help to mobilise people to get involved in the most urgent socio-environmental issues facing our country. These issues have long been important, but lacked the urgency indicated by the catastrophic impacts that came to light in 2023/2024.

The programme, which began in 2018, was designed by Marina Vieira and was structured by her conversations with Raquel Diniz and Guto Gutierrez, which led to meetings at the Blooks bookstore in Rio de Janeiro to collaboratively create Circular - Festival do Bem Viver (Festival of Good Living). The festival proposed to gather and exchange ideas and experiences between initiatives related to sustainability and a new way of life that is emerging. The idea was to disseminate - through meetings, experiences, exhibitions and various artistic presentations - to the general public in an attempt to encourage the multiplication of these movements and the emergence of new practices.

Circular has come a long way. **It is the result of the experience of the exchanges promoted by Tangolomango** - the Festival of Cultural Diversity, which has held 20 editions in cities throughout Brazil and Latin America, using its own methodology to promote dialogue and exchange, bringing together the similarities and differences of artistic thought and practice.

Just as Tangolomango sought to select cultural groups, both contemporary and traditional, for the quality of their work and their desire to share experiences, and not for their media presence, so the Circular Programme, from its inception, has not sought acts of heroism or unusual facts, **but actions to welcome ordinary people who have awakened to new relationships with others, with things, with the environment, and with nature, to encourage more people to experience new ways of thinking and acting.**

Due to the pandemic, we had to stop the meetings and collective construction of the festival. Marina took advantage of this time to reflect on the new environmental issues and the socioeconomic difficulties faced by the most vulnerable, which have become increasingly urgent.

We listened deeply to many voices so that we could build a great storyline to come up with the proposal for the Circular - Carers of the World programme: Antônio Bispo dos Santos (Nêgo Bispo), Bell Hooks, Lélia Gonzalez, Luiz Antônio Simas, Marcelo Gleiser, Djamila Ribeiro, Grada Kilomba, Davi Kopenawa, Renato Nogueira, Bernardo del Toro, Chimananda Ngozi Adichie, Leonardo Boff, Frei Beto, Milton Santos, Sidarta Ribeiro, Eduardo Galeano, and Ailton Krenak, among many others. Some are better known, others less so, but always people who, with their examples, have shown us that there are paths to the process of regeneration. And that there are already many people working in this direction.

This path involves believing in and promoting confluences, as Nêgo Bispo teaches us:

“Our encounters make us stronger, they add to us, they make us greater. When a river meets another river, it doesn't stop being a river, it becomes a bigger, wider and stronger river.”

Marina, Maria José and Raquel came together to conduct this study in search of ways to bring us all out of a situation of disconnection. Our inspiration was Ailton Krenak's invitation to build an ancestral future in which we can build a deep relationship with the land we inhabit and experience the collective with a clear purpose: to restore wisdom, **to restore connection, to restore the collective.**

One of our concerns is how ordinary people, the vast majority of the population, survive the daily chaos, violence, injustice and lack of access to rights. How do these people manage to carry on? One of the hypotheses put forward to answer this question is that, at some point, they are cared for, in some aspect of their lives. And care generates strength, meaning and belonging.

It's true that within communities we have caregivers who are against individuality, competition, and forms of relationships that mistreat others. They seek regenerative relationships that are experienced as dismantling mechanisms of discrimination, exploitation and oppression. They come out in defense of people and the planet. But who are these Caregivers of the World? What makes them dedicate their lives to caring for others? And why? Who cares for and/or offers support to those who care?

The guiding principle for this study was **the desire to learn more about new ways of being and caring for oneself, others and the world, using oral history as a source of research, narrative and listening.** Thus, we wanted to explore not only the causes and actions of caregivers, but also to contribute to recognizing, belonging to, and valuing their stories, dreams, and motivations.

These were the foundations for the development of the Circular Programme: Carers of the World. But since it was first written, the programme has continued to expand, adding new perspectives and insights, as we present in this e-book.

In 2024, through the Paulo Gustavo Law's Diversity in Dialogue call for proposals, we carried out a study in the city of Rio de Janeiro and the Rio metropolitan area to get to know and listen to different caregivers, inviting them to tell us about their practices. We wanted to broaden our understanding of caregiving and offer a pluralistic view of the subject, encouraging reflection and exchange.

The aim is to increase the power and impact of CARING practices carried out in different corners of the city of Rio de Janeiro and the metropolitan region, helping people in vulnerable situations to be less affected by the causes and consequences of socio-environmental inequalities and injustices.

So we started the programme with a desire to learn about different forms of caring and to understand the role of caring in our society. In this e-book, we present the stories of 30 selected care initiatives. They are the protagonists. It is their stories that we want to make visible and empower through different types of knowledge and practices that complement and interconnect each other. Everything else is less important than the stories that show us a Brazil that is real, unequal, tired, bruised, resilient, violent, but also courageous, creative, fascinating and caring. We believe that by telling their stories, we are honoring them and thanking them for taking care of us all.

Culture, Caring, Carers

We see culture as a dynamic and ever-changing concept, not just as a set of traditions, arts and knowledge, but as an interdisciplinary network that interacts with the complexities of life, caring for others and the planet, deeply intertwined with the environment, religiosity, health, memory, care and ancestry. These dimensions reflect the cultural diversity of our country and are fundamental to understanding the present and shaping a sustainable, respectful and inclusive future.

We therefore use the concept of culture explored by Luiz Antônio Simas, as all the human processes of creating ways of living. We want to look at ways of living that are permeated by care, such as the culture experienced by prayer women, artisanal fishermen, agroecologists, indigenous people, mothers of saints, digital activists, educators, popular artists, etc.

We see care as a way of living, an expression of a culture and/or the development of a way of seeing the world.

The **culture of care** plays a fundamental role in rebuilding a healthier, fairer, more balanced and pluralistic way of life, where no one is left out. When care happens, we re-signify, we connect, we listen, we share, we care, we engage. We plunge into a dynamic of interbeing.



Who are we calling carers of the world?

- Those who continually take on the role of caring for, protecting and guarding.
- Guardians of a tradition, a material or immaterial cultural asset and/or a story.
- Those who protect their territories.
- Those who take up a cause.
- Those who are present, available for active listening.
- Those who are connectors and promote dialogues.
- Those who act in a systemic and interconnected way with people and nature.
- Those who articulate a care network, among others.

Listening to stories

It is important to make it clear that our study is not academic, in other words it does not have academic rigour. We have been guided by our objectives, but we have been flexible enough to embrace the reflections that have emerged along the way. The trajectory of the study widened as we talked to new people and added new perspectives.

Based on active listening, we worked with the Oral History methodology because we understood that each story is unique and our main objective was to capture and preserve them in order to understand care in their life trajectories.

We know that the process of listening to the experiences and perspectives of ordinary people broadens our understanding of human history, promoting inclusion, diversity and intercultural dialog. In the contemporary context, Oral History is a relevant and powerful methodology for understanding and interpreting the challenges and possibilities faced by societies in constant transformation.

We are inspired and guided by the practice of the Museu da Pessoa, a virtual and collaborative museum of life stories, open to the participation of all people, with which we identify because of the concept and methodology they have developed over 33 years of operation.

We really wanted to hear the stories of carers, to let them talk about their lives, what led them into caring, what they cared for, how they cared for it, how they felt about the practice of caring, and what they thought about being a carer and about caring itself.

The whole process was co-designed with thinkers and experts on cross-cutting issues and, most importantly, with carers

Our process involved six steps:

Research on the topic

Research based on secondary sources, in a vast field of authors who, directly and indirectly, deal with the subject, as mentioned above.

Conversation circles

Before going into the field, we considered it essential to listen to people who knew and observed the work of caregivers in the countryside. We drew up the names of 12 researchers, specialists, producers, creators and activists to take part in a round of conversations in which we could understand their visions and experiences with the practice of care. They led us through stories of caregivers, helped us raise questions, and suggested caregivers or social and cultural organizations.

The conversations took place via virtual meetings, lasting between 60 and 120 minutes, in which we had the pleasure of speaking with: Carla Carvalho, Cinthia Mendonça, Charles Siqueira, Denise Silva, Graciela Selamein, Guto Gutierrez, Heraldo HB, Isabel Pereira, Júlio Ledo, Leandro Santana, Lisa Gunn and Luciana Bezerra. These affective conversations inspired us and broadened our view of what care is.

Survey of caregivers

We contacted government organisations, social organisations, collectives, researchers and independent consultants who provided us with the names and contact details of carers. The names of all the organisations and people are listed in the acknowledgements of this e-book.

As in the old days, everything was done on the basis of a **network of trust**, where one person believes in, admires and recommends the work of another. We believed them and went to talk to these carers.



Interviews with caregivers

We identified 50 possible carers to interview.

Given the limitations of the proposal, we decided on 30 caring initiatives. The selection criteria were as follows

- Active in Rio and the Rio metropolitan area.
- Different ages, causes, races and locations.
- Caring as part of the daily life of the carer(s).
- That the practice or form of care is at the request of the carer(s) and not imposed.
- There is an audience, an object or a territory of action.
- Work open to the community - public access.
- Intersectionality with other issues related to the culture of care.
- Willingness to share and exchange.
- And above all, the desire to tell their story.

By interviewing them, we sought to understand their perspectives, motivations and challenges, which could help to identify strategies and build more effective approaches to strengthening networks, broadening understanding of the diversity of care, and formulating policies and programmes to support and encourage these initiatives.

The interviews, which lasted between 60 and 120 minutes, were based on oral history methodology. Conducted in thematic 'blocks', the interviewee's narrative and the interviewer's 'script' were conducted in a fluid manner, like a conversation, with empathy and respect being fundamental throughout the process. The 30 interviews were conducted online, with messages exchanged, subsequent phone calls, information sent via WhatsApp, and photographs sent to support the process of constructing our carers' life histories.

Throughout the listening process, we adapted to the rhythm and tone that seemed most appropriate for each carer. Each told us a little about their story, their beliefs, their world views, how they care and what care means in their lives. Although the interview script was structured, we didn't necessarily follow it rigidly and we didn't ask carers to talk about anything they didn't feel comfortable with. For this reason, the recording of their stories shows some variation in text, size and format.

Interviews recorded on video

Out of the 30 caregivers, we selected 10 who were representative of all of the characters that we had identified. As our resources were limited, it wasn't possible to interview everyone in person at this stage. Therefore, our choice of 10 caregivers was based on the diversity of the caregivers' issues, the different territories and the intersectionality with other issues related to the culture of care. Most of the video recordings were made in the caregivers' own territories and focused on listening to their stories and their visions of care.

Data processing

The 30 interviews were transcribed and analysed to produce initial texts which were sent to the carers to verify the information. This was a practical and easy way for them to feel represented and involved in the process.

The interviews and recordings resulted in this e-book, in which we present the stories of these very real people who have this "strange habit of having faith in life", of taking care of their territories, of a collective, of different cultural memories, of a language, of themselves. Stories that deal with the cycles of life, their challenges, their experiences... in a community library, in a terreiro, in a settlement, in the digital world, building new narratives, in a Folia de Reis and so many others. In common, the act of caring.

What we learned

Connection between carers

Most carers already knew each other and shared information and experiences.

Female majority

Women predominated in the universe of 50 carers interviewed, confirming national and global figures which show that caring is predominantly done by women. We tried to include men because we felt it was important to challenge the stereotype that caring is the responsibility of women, especially black women. Undoubtedly, they do most of the caring. However, we want to help change this reality to reduce the emotional burden of caregiving and open up space for opportunities for development, autonomy, and financial independence.

Working classes

The majority belong to the working classes and take care of those around them, but the benefits of their actions go beyond the locality. Normally, those who care are part of the same context as those being cared for and/or have similar life stories.

History of struggle and resilience

Most caregivers have a history of participation in different civil society movements, settlements, unions or are the result of social projects and movements.

Intergenerationality

Care has no age. Our study heard from people between the ages of 23 and 70.

Determination [despite fatigue]

They carry on even without significant financial support. Many have never had access to private social investment, 'philanthropy' or public funding, only donations from individuals. Many take on responsibilities in other jobs in order to finance their caring activities. This reality must change with the democratisation of resources to the grassroots.

Political awareness

Everyone is politically aware and aware of the need for change. Caring is a political act. Many are involved in public policy, both in its formulation and implementation. They are driven by a strong sense of justice.

Appreciation of knowledge

They seek knowledge either through formal education or through the exchange of experiences. Training often comes from other caregivers. They are all very well prepared to do what they do. They have the confidence of someone who knows what they're doing. They're not just intuitive, but committed and clear about what needs to be done. Intuition, intentionality, emotion and preparation.

Food insecurity

One of the greatest concerns of caregivers is the food insecurity of the most vulnerable. The distribution of basic food baskets and meals is part of almost all of their daily lives. The understanding that the right to safe and healthy food is the first basic need.

Food, preparing food, is an important part of the culture of care. There is a clear pride in saying that you personally take care of the food that will be served on feast days in the communities.

Importance of ancestry

Ancestry is the basis and a guide that points the way for most people. The way of caring in many cases is ancestral: herbs, prayers, blessings, circles of care, memory. Indeed, the future is ancestral.

TRANSVERSALITY AND INTERSECTIONALITY OF THEMES

(e.g. health, environment, housing, memory, culture)

The work interconnects with different areas, creating a web that outlines a new social fabric.

FIGHTING INEQUALITIES, SOCIAL INJUSTICE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Tackling urgent issues at grassroots level, generating structural and structural solutions designed and implemented by those who experience the problem. They fight for the democratisation of rights for their territories.

If the fabric is already being woven,
what can be done to strengthen it?

As Nêgo Bispo teaches us,

“*Create a virtuous circle, a circular movement of beginning, middle, beginning, middle, ...*”



We thought about presenting conclusions with references and other data, but we feel that this is not the time for our reflections. This space is for stories about caring, about the pains and delights of the 30 caregivers. They bring up relevant issues for our society from their perspectives and point to practical paths that are already being built by them.

These paths have been traced by those who work with health, education, adaptation to climate change, agroecology, encouraging reading, fair trade, valuing memory, palliative care, anti-ableism, welcoming LGBTQIAPN+ people and many others. They put everything into practice with what they have at hand and often rely on a network of care and support. They need public policies committed to guaranteeing rights for all, quality public services that are accessible, and focus on the well-being of society, including those who care and those who are being cared for.

Our caregivers are full of dreams. Even if they are often permeated by brutality, they dream, they persist, they resist. They do, they transform. At times, their mere presence in a territory, as well as not giving up, is already the possibility of building new relationships. Faced with this scenario, then, we ask ourselves: what values are generated by care?

The 30 initiates of care, each in their own way, teach us that it **is time to dream collectively again**. They believe in the collective. **Collective action** as a strategy and collective action as a goal. There's no point in going it alone or making progress alone. As many of the carers said, "I don't know how to do it any differently". The struggle and the victory are collective.

They experience and see **intersectionality** in practice. They articulate, mobilise, weave threads that connect multiple causes that can only be effectively addressed when analysed and understood in their totality and complexity.


We agree with Sidarta Ribeiro: we are the result of a long **collaborative project**, and valuing this path of **collaboration** is our best chance of continuing to evolve. We have a wealth of ideas and behaviours that have been accumulated by our species and that constitute our common heritage.

We believe that a culture of care plays a fundamental role in rebuilding our **connection** with nature, with others, with the environment and with ourselves. This reconnection will enable us to create healthier, fairer, more balanced, and plural ways of living in which no one is left out because we care. Caring is also about deepening democracy.

What a privilege it was to meet and have an exchange with these 30 caregivers! We learned infinitely, we were transformed, we came out different. And we want more, we want to be able to walk with them, articulate support, talk about their causes, fight for public policies and strategies. We want to go further, we want to meet other carers from all over Brazil.

We hope that our study can add new perspectives to the discussions around the National Care Policy, as well as local public policies and institutional practices that should recognize and redistribute - between the state, the private sector, communities, and families - the unpaid care work carried out, above all, by women, especially black women.

This study doesn't end here. It is the starting point. We want to shed light, strengthen, and empower an **effective network of caregivers** and thus contribute to facing the challenges of survival in this 21st century, systematizing knowledge and joining forces based on diverse knowledge and practices, whose diversity of care can converge in actions that expand, complement, and interconnect.

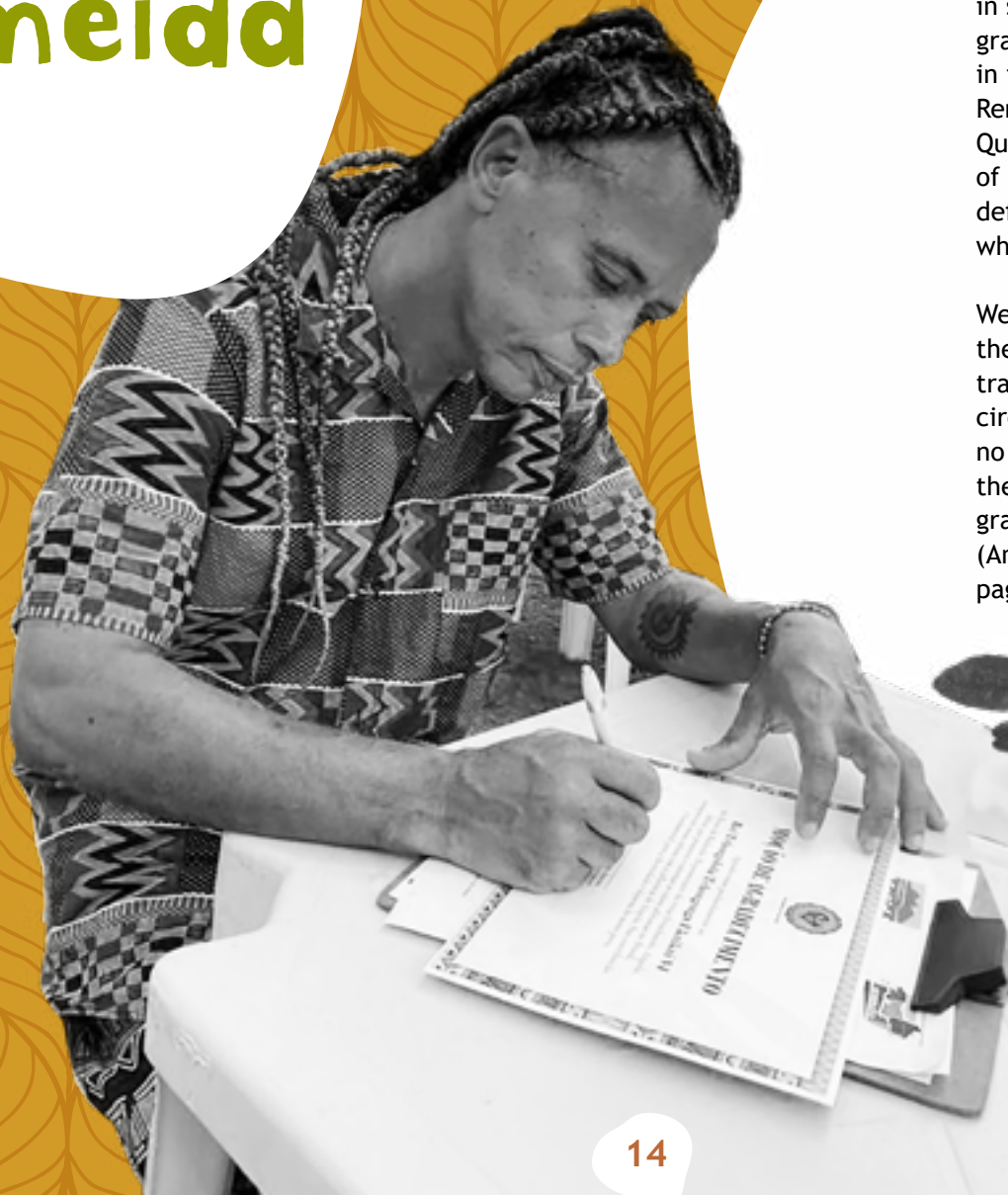


Read, re-read, listen, watch the videos, contact the carers, research their references, share their stories. We hope that by getting to know our caregivers, you will be inspired by their practices and start moving toward what unites us.

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Adilson de Almeida



At the age of seven, Adilson Batista de Almeida used to walk through the woods with his grandmother in search of herbs. His family is Quilombola and his grandmother was a healer. His land is in Jacarepaguá, in the Maciço da Pedra Branca, declared a Quilombo Remnant. He was born and raised in the Camorim Quilombo and today he is the guardian of this land and of the quilombola families, where he is responsible for defending the ancestral culture of the Banto people, who settled in the Quilombo in 1614.

We can't go through Adilson's life without remembering the teachings of Nego Bispo: "We are people of trajectories, we are not people of theory. We are circularity: beginning, middle, beginning. Our lives have no end. The grandmother generation is the beginning, the mother generation is the middle, and the granddaughter generation is the beginning again." (Antônio Bispo dos Santos, "A Terra dá, a Terra quer", page 102.)



We are people of trajectories, we are not people of theory. We are circularity: beginning, middle, beginning. Our lives have no end. The grandmother generation is the beginning, the mother generation is the middle, and the granddaughter generation is the beginning again.

Nêgo Bispo

Adilson's grandmother, Isaura dos Santos, is the beginning. His mother, Alzira Almeida, is the middle. They were the ones who taught him how to recognize the plants in the forest, to understand the value of the forest and the usefulness of each herb. Perhaps this was Adilson's favorite game: walking among large trees, jumping over rocks, smelling the scents, observing the many colors of green, feeling the call of the herbs. His grandmother made a point of repeating the information whenever they were together, so that he

could engrave in his mind the knowledge that came from afar. As well as teaching him what they were used for, his grandmother would then show him how to make a syrup, ointment, bottles and infusions. Each with its own mystery. Each with its own enchantment.

Adilson starts the wheel again. He's also the beginning. As a herbalist, he replicates his grandmother's ancestral knowledge for his quilombola community. He takes great pleasure in going into the forest to look for herbs and says with joy that "the forest is a living pharmacy".

Aged 55, Adilson is a quilombola leader, president and officer of the Quilombo do Camorim Cultural Association - ACUCA, which was set up in 1998 to rescue and protect heritage. ACUCA's mission is to rescue, disseminate and value the history of Quilombo do Camorim through art, memory and the environment.

When the time came to take on his legacy and take charge of his Quilombo, Adilson says he went to the Camorim riverbed, closed his eyes, took a deep breath and asked himself: who am I and what do they want from me? He remembers that he had to talk to his ancestors to find out if he was on the right path to fulfill his mission.

He received an answer, assimilated it and got ready to fight. Adilson works tirelessly for the historical and cultural identity and rights of quilombola peoples. Defending his people means defending the right to memory and better living conditions for the community. It is resistance and existence.

Their home, their land, their Quilombo do Camorim occupies part of the beautiful Maciço da Pedra Branca State Park. Amongst the buildings, condominiums and shops, there is a Quilombo. The name Camorim is of Tupi origin, coming from a fish that the local inhabitants - indigenous Tamoios and Tupinambás and blacks - used to catch in the Jacarepaguá lagoon. The fish is the sea bass.

The history of the Camorim Quilombo was built by the hands of the first Banto blacks to arrive on Brazilian soil. "The main point of reference for ACUCA is the Núcleo Histórico do Engenho do Camorim. The architectural complex, dating back to the 17th century, was made up of the church, the main house of the sugar mill (which today is a private property that has been quite de-characterized) and the Archaeological Site of Engenho do Camorim, registered in 2017 with the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN). The Camorim Mill Archaeological Site was an integral part of a larger complex, where there were traces of the old mill, the slave quarters and other buildings erected during the time of slavery, such as the mill shed. These marks have disappeared with the process of urbanization in the neighbourhood, which means that ACUCA's fight is against the erasure of history." ¹

From the small Church of São Gonçalo do Amarante - built in 1625 by Gonçalo de Sá Correia, son of the governor of the city of Rio de Janeiro, Salvador Correia de Sá - we can trace the history of the sesmaria where the Engenho do Camorim was established, one of the many mills on the Jacarepaguá plain.

In 2016, researcher Silvia Peixoto, with the participation of the community, carried out archaeological research in the area of Quilombo do Camorim, once the lands of Engenho do Camorim. As a result, the archaeological site was registered with the National Historical and Artistic Heritage Institute (IPHAN) (...) Fragments of pots, bowls, roasters, ceramic dishes, among others, as well as pipes made and used by the enslaved groups present at the mill, show cultural marks of these groups and their interrelationships. The large quantity of ceramics with decorations characteristic of the Tupi group led to the conclusion that there was a large native population at the engenho.²

¹ Source: ASSOCIAÇÃO CULTURAL DO QUILOMBO DO CAMORIM. Cartografia Participativa: Quilombo do Camorim - Guardiões da Sankofa. Disponível em: <https://aspta.org.br/files/2022/09/Cartografia-Social-Guardi%25C3%25A3es-de-Sankofa-Quilombo-do-Camorim.pdf>. Visited in: 16 set. 2024.

² Source: ASSOCIAÇÃO CULTURAL DO QUILOMBO DO CAMORIM. Cartografia Participativa: Quilombo do Camorim - Guardiões da Sankofa. Available in: <https://aspta.org.br/files/2022/09/Cartografia-Social-Guardi%25C3%25A3es-de-Sankofa-Quilombo-do-Camorim.pdf>. Visited in: 16 set. 2024.

Adilson emphasizes that **“we need to create strategies against erasure and against the constant harassment of real estate speculation. Every day we are threatened by people who want our land and want to erase our history. In particular, this coexistence has become more difficult during the government of President Bolsonaro, who made a point of saying, even as a candidate, that he wouldn’t give an inch of land to Quilombolas.”**

Adilson rushed to get the Quilombo recognized by the Palmares Foundation and the community has already received the certificate of official recognition of the Quilombo of Camorim and Maciço da Pedra Branca, considered a rural quilombo. The second step towards land regularization is the anthropological survey of the territory, which has already been carried out by INCRA and only needs to be published in the Official Journal.

There are 80 families living around the quilombo, but only 28 of them call themselves quilombolas. With concern, Adilson talks about the influence of neo-Pentecostal religions in relation to the denial of Quilombola origins. Some people who are clearly quilombolas don’t want to seek recognition because they say it’s from “the devil, that they’re not from God.” It’s another challenge for Adilson’s list. He reinforces that the activities carried out within the Quilombo are for everyone’s benefit.

His commitment to the memory and preservation of the lush Atlantic forest has turned Adilson into a guardian of the forest. The answer to the felling of trees in the surrounding area is reforestation. They do it by collecting seeds and replanting them. As guardians of nature’s wisdom, the forest is part of every quilombola. Adilson, an environmental manager, is an advocate of regeneration and sustainable practices. “The care that begins in the quilombo multiplies in the forest. Under his leadership, the community seeks regenerative socio-environmental economic development with urban-rural agro-ecology. The community garden built there contributes to the families’ food security. The protection of quilombola territories also contributes to climate change adaptation and mitigation plans. The waste produced is taken care of by the community, which has developed an ecological toilet.

Having been trained to act as a community-based tourism guide, this activity has become an important front for disseminating the history and valuing the material and immaterial heritage of the Quilombo, as well as a source of income. For many years now, the Quilombo has been open to tourists, welcoming groups with pre-bookings on a guided tour of the waterfall, cave, forest paths and trails, as well as



Jongo and Capoeira performances and a delicious feijoada. Adilson makes a point of saying he makes the feijoada himself. Cooking his people’s ancestral food is also a form of caring.

As the Covid-19 pandemic interrupted the visits project, the community took advantage of the pause to begin work on improving the infrastructure and expanding it to receive larger groups. This was possible because the funds raised from the visits are reinvested in the Quilombo’s maintenance. Adilson says that, as part of the Anti-racist Education Program, the Quilombo is open for guided and educational visits for children, teenagers and young people from state schools, and that young people from state universities also take part in the visits free of charge.

An essential part of this mosaic is the development and promotion of activities that value Afro-Brazilian culture, such as capoeira, jongo, maculelê and popular festivals. Adilson is a capoeira master and gives classes in various places. The Camorim Jongo Group is famous for its originality. Adilson is a Griô, responsible for passing on the stories and philosophy of his people. Popular festivals in the Quilombo are very popular: Jongo Rodas, St. George’s Festival, June Festival, Black Awareness Day.

A Quilombola School was set up to research and teach ancestral knowledge, and Adilson works hard to disseminate the history of the Quilombo and the way Quilombolas understand the world. He notes that **“to talk about the Quilombo is also to show that there are other ways of understanding the world, other ways of relating to the world, to each other and to nature. Care according to the Quilombola way of living and being in the world is collective. Expanding knowledge about quilombola culture is confluence, as master Nego Bispo taught.”**

Adilson works with state and private schools from an anti-racist, ecological and counter-colonial perspective, enforcing Law no. 11.645 of March 10, 2008. It is with great affection that he develops content and activities to maintain, sensitize and mobilize children and adolescents, seeking to preserve and transmit the ancestral knowledge of the quilombolas to young people.

Excited by the educational activity, Adilson says that, around the 2000s, he started working with schools and universities to develop research, and that there are several extremely important papers being published.

Cultural exchanges with other countries are extremely welcome. Adilson is delighted to say that the King of Angola's largest ethnic group, Tchongonga Ekuikui VI, who is Banto, visited the community. The King said: "I feel at home. The visit to the Camorim Quilombo was part of the King's two-day programme in Rio de Janeiro in 2023, as it is the oldest in the city and was occupied by enslaved people brought from Angola. A baobab tree, which is a slow-growing tree, was planted as part of the celebrations.

Care for his community never stops. Adilson says: **"I fight for young people to be studying and to be able to go to college. Just as I fight to ensure health, another important form of care, I strive to bring services, such as vaccination campaigns, into the Quilombo, ensuring that everyone is vaccinated."**

In the midst of so many activities, commitments and responsibilities, Adilson also dedicates part of his time to working for the State Association of Quilombola Communities of the State of Rio de Janeiro - ACQUILERJ, which brings together 52 quilombola communities or mapped quilombo remnants, spread across all regions of the state. This work is very important because the quilombo associations can hold meetings with quilombo leaders to discuss social and racial problems such as the titling of quilombo lands, structural racism, lack of access to education and rights violations.

Regarding partnerships and support for the Quilombo, Adilson says that **"everything is done on a voluntary basis and with a lot of love, with small donations from the community itself and some other one-off donations"**. The intention is to take part in calls for proposals, but there is still little information available on fundraising.

Like all social movements for rights, the Camorim Quilombo is resistance. It is the perpetuation of ancestral care. That's why Adilson takes care every day to ensure that his community and its culture resist the constant threats of violence against the black population, based on the awareness and conviction he learned from his grandmother when he was a child that **"Care is paying attention to each person to find out what they really need. Caring is loving your neighbor as you would like to be loved. This is my mission in life, even if I have to face many challenges. Because when I step on the soil of the Quilombo, everything is light and peaceful."**

“*Samba is spinning,
Capoeira is spinning.
Reggae is spinning,
Gira is spinning,
All ours is in the circularity.”*
Nêgo Bispo

Alexandre Silva



Nurse Alexandre Ernesto Silva is a professor at the Federal University of São João Del Rei-FUSJ. With a PhD in palliative care, he says that for a long time he was driven by the question: how do people die in favelas? His curiosity and years of research led him to create, in 2018, alongside a group of residents and healthcare professionals, the Favela Compassiva project in Rocinha and Vidigal, communities in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro. A pioneering project in Brazil to assist patients who are experiencing life-threatening illnesses and their families.

Alexandre is from Minas Gerais and lives in Rio de Janeiro. As soon as we start talking, he says he is extremely happy to be doing what he is doing in terms of a career. He graduated in 2000 and in the course of these 24 years he has worked in management, care and even before graduation as a teacher and researcher, activities he loves. He says that during his first contacts with patients, whether in hospital or in other healthcare units, he watched carefully how people with chronic and serious illnesses died, feeling deeply uncomfortable about how death happened:

“They die a terrible death at home and in a hospital.”

To illustrate his discomfort, he tells a personal story involving his family: one of his beloved aunts, who had liver cancer, had to go to a hospital constantly. Until one day his grandmother told him that his aunt had “been discharged to die at home”. Outraged, he asked: “What do you mean, discharged to die?”. Until, when he visited her at home, he found his aunt clearly in great pain, repeating over and over that “nobody deserves such pain”. Alexandre says that he saw pain in his aunt’s eyes. It was as if the light of the soul, the light that animates us, had gone out.

For him, the pain and discomfort that preceded death was an enormous nuisance. **“I couldn’t come to terms with this situation, which always bothered me, and I thought: it can’t be like this, it doesn’t have to be like this. I couldn’t do anything when I came across people who had serious illnesses and were going through extreme suffering. At various times in my career, even as a trainee, I heard health professionals say that if the patient had a serious illness, the pain was just like that. It was impossible for me to come to terms with the fact that suffering is normalized when people are at the end of their lives”.**

Alexandre obtained a Master’s degree in Education at the State University of Minas Gerais, while he was getting an MBA in Public Health Management at the Getúlio Vargas Foundation. While he was studying to get his Master’s degree, he began to study palliative care in the hospital environment, becoming interested in understanding how medical staff and nurses understood palliative care. During his MBA, along with his class, he went on a field trip to Complexo do Alemão to analyze how healthcare management was carried out in the favela. Also during the MBA, he visited, with his class, a site created by a trans woman who took care of around 18 people with serious illnesses on her own in Lapa, leaving Alexandre very impressed with her compassion.

His desire to research palliative care in a favela was enormous. He remembers how, as a child, he used to drive past Rocinha and Vidigal favelas with a relative

“*At various times in my career, even as a trainee, I heard health professionals say that if the patient had a serious illness, the pain was just like that. It was impossible for me to come to terms with the fact that suffering is normalized when people are at the end of their lives.*”

who would say: “Duck down, duck down!”. Stubbornly, he says that he didn’t duck, but instead looked with wide eyes and saw workers going back and forth, similar to those in his city. So why should he duck down? And so, as an adult and as a nurse, he wanted to understand how people were cared for in the favela and how they died. Another question that kept popping into his head: How do people die in the favela? He wouldn’t look away any longer, instead, he was going to pay close attention.

When fate led him to meet Marielle Franco, after chatting for a bit, he asked her to take him to visit a favela, a curiosity he had had since he was a child. Marielle arranged for him to spend some time studying in the healthcare units of Complexo da Maré. It was a time of much learning, but unfortunately, after a few months, the research had to be interrupted due to interference from violent groups in the community, which could have put his life in danger.

Determined, Alexandre didn’t give up trying to stay connected with a favela. So when he met and became friends with a couple who owned a hostel in Vidigal, he had to take the opportunity to connect with them. Impressed by the forms of care practiced there, he learned about the network of friendships that exist in communities so that one person takes care of another. Alexandre believes that people in the favelas take care of each other more, but they have less access to services than in the South Zone, on the asphalt. Not only healthcare services, but also drinking water, garbage collection, street cleaning, lighting, housing, etc.

So, once he obtained his Master’s degree and MBA, he decided to start conducting research on how people died in the favela. Along the way, he met a man who was being eaten by rats, a lady who had been eating seasoned cardboard for a week. At these times, her aunt’s gaze would come to his mind.

“ I found my purpose in life in the Compassionate Community. And compassion has the power to heal. I healed my pain by relieving the pain of others. The driving force behind Favela Compassiva Rocinha e Vidigal is compassion. With every patient being cared for, every family welcomed, every pain mitigated, every light returned to the eyes, I remember my aunt. This journey has made sense to me so far.”

The pain, the discomfort, the soul's light had gone out.

Determined to do something for those people, Alexandre started to set up a network in the community so that the residents themselves could support them. Even outside Rio de Janeiro, he tried to articulate how he could promote activities that could alleviate human suffering.

In 2018, he completed his doctorate and was soon invited to take part in the First Palliative Care Congress. Invited to speak about palliative care in the favela, he says that it was at that moment that he “realized” that he was already working in the way he had dreamed of, trying to alleviate human suffering. At Congress, he met someone who named what he was doing: Alexandre was creating a Compassionate Community, which was already happening in England and other European countries.

He explains, in a simple and didactic manner, the difference between the concepts of empathy and compassion: empathy is the pain we feel when we perceive another person's pain. Compassion is when I feel the pain and do something about it to alleviate the other person's pain. And he repeats: compassion heals and I never intend to be without these antidotes to pain. He explains, in a simple and didactic manner, the difference between the concepts of empathy and

compassion: empathy is the pain we feel when we perceive another person's pain. Compassion is when I feel the pain and do something about it to alleviate the other person's pain. And he repeats: compassion heals and I never intend to be without these antidotes to pain.

So, in 2018, Alexandre created the Favela Compassiva project in Rocinha and Vidigal and its mission is to support residents with life-threatening illnesses, as well as their families and caregivers, in addition to working as a volunteer researcher in the Palliative Care Study and Research Group at Fiocruz.

“Palliative care presupposes patient-centered care and not just care for the illness, based on respect for autonomy and human dignity. Every human being has the right to health, the right to pain relief, the right to information on their actual state of health and the right not to be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment.”*

The central strategy of the project is that local volunteers, who live in the favelas, are responsible for the direct care of the patients after a training that guarantees the quality of the care provided. This includes medication control, dressing, bathing, companionship, cleaning the bed, cleaning the house, walking with the patient, active listening, listening to stories, supporting the physiotherapy process and many others.

As well as local volunteers, the project also relies on professional and supportive volunteers, who come together to give these people comfort and dignity. 99.8% of the network's volunteers are brown or black women and cleaners. These are Brazil's caregivers. A management council acts in the lead role, interfacing with the local public health system as a complementary and non-replacement support network. Alexandre liaises with the local health units and also with the Municipal and State Health Departments. As he explains, this is an initiative that goes hand in hand with the public health system, where care is centered on promoting human dignity by relieving pain and other distressing symptoms, as well as promoting autonomy, dignified life and death.

More than 200 patients have already been cared for by volunteers and the multidisciplinary team led by Alexandre. Each month, new patients are selected to receive support in the form of food, medicine, clothing, medical care and whatever else is needed for as long as it takes.

*Source: content published on Favela Compassiva's Instagram account, written by Betina Turner

Whether it's a soup kitchen to ensure the intake of proteins and vitamins for patients who need them, cleaning, bathing or shopping for food for the week.

Alexandre has also built up a network of medical professionals, nurses, physiotherapists, dentists, speech therapists and psychologists to assist patients during the monthly task force, to telemonitor patients and to provide guidance to volunteers, who have access to a WhatsApp group through which they can request support from the group of professionals. Today, the network has around 69 professionals who are involved in task forces or telecare. The group visits patients who have been referred by volunteers for a consultation and analysis of each case, making referrals and indicating how to proceed, always with the focus on relieving pain and generating well-being for patients and, consequently, their families. The WhatsApp group has around 300 support professionals.

The third network of volunteers is made up of supporters of resources, which can be products, materials or money, or even logistics. Alexandre says that he has a reserve for donated medicines, hygiene materials and hospital supplies, which are distributed as and when they are requested by the volunteers. The three networks form a care collective. In each of the communities, Rocinha and Vidigal, there is a headquarters, which is also a social center for training, exchanges, consultations, venting and hugs. Patients who have low mobility or are bedridden are cared for at home.

The impact of Comunidades Compassivas affects several layers of well-being and social cohesion: the patients who are cared for experience a reduction in the signs and symptoms of the disease, as well as relief from suffering and an improvement in quality of life.

The volunteers increase their sense of belonging and well-being, give new meaning to their lives by playing a role that tangibly improves the lives of others

and improves family relationships, minimizing the pressure of the daily need for 24-hour care for the sick family member. Resident volunteers and professional volunteers expand their knowledge; and healthcare professionals and students are able to monitor the results of the care provided, further qualifying and giving new meaning to their practice.

Restless and always looking to improve the project, Alexandre says he wishes he could count on territorial surveys to identify local needs. Due to the lack of implementation of a public policy aimed at meeting this healthcare need and the shortage of services that provide palliative care, there is consequently a lack of reliable indicators for drawing up more effective strategies. Thus, it is not possible to determine the exact number of people who need palliative care.

On the other hand, Alexandre is beginning to hope that the national scenario for palliative care will change: he was recently invited by the Ministry of Health to join the team that is thinking about and planning to introduce palliative care into the SUS throughout the country. For the future, he says he wants to carry out research that qualifies the work of Comunidades Compassivas, expand the qualification of volunteers and care in the communities and implement new Community projects throughout Brazil as a national public policy. After all, we all have the right to receive this approach to care in order to age better, live better and die better.

“*May our care and sobriety allow a person to arrive and depart from this world with dignity. Births and departures, both with respect and compassion. The patients are citizens in situations of extreme social vulnerability, many of them living with other people who also need care or depend on a neighbor for help.*”

The good news is that Comunidades Compassivas converge with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the National Primary Care Policy. His work has been acknowledged inside and outside academia, and Alexandre has been invited to take part in interviews, congresses, study groups and programs to talk about longevity, palliative care and compassionate communities.

Today he is considered a reference on this topic. Recently, in April 2024, he took part in a panel on Globo's Profissão Repórter. He was also one of the experts interviewed for the documentary "Quantos Dias, Quantas Noites". Directed by Cacau Rhoden and produced by Maria Farinha Filmes, the film deals with longevity, intergenerational relationships, time and the impact of inequalities on aging and well-being.

On Favela Compassiva's Instagram, the caregivers are introduced and their stories told. A simple and practical way of valuing and honoring those who dedicate their lives to alleviating the pain and suffering of others, bringing joy, welcome, techniques, hugs, giving new meaning to their relationship with others and strengthening the sense of community. Caring is compassion

"Caring is listening the demand of life. It is not to treat as Death what is life and as a thing what is people."

Eliane Brum
Brazilian journalist and writer

Ana Olívia Cardoso



Ana Olívia, who is Portuguese, was living in Spain when she decided to move to Rio de Janeiro, more specifically to Parada de Lucas and her plan was to teach Spanish in a social project. As a yoga teacher, she started teaching at Redes da Maré. As soon as she started, she realized that it was there, in the Complexo de Favelas da Maré, that she would create a space dedicated to the activity: the Yoga Institute at Maré. Today, Ana Olívia is a yoga teacher, an Ayurvedic therapist (consultation and massages) and a social entrepreneur.

Born in Coimbra, Ana Olívia grew up in a small town near Porto and only returned to Coimbra to study Law at the renowned university, from the age of 18 to 24. She is proud to say that she is the granddaughter and daughter of Portuguese immigrants who, before she was born, lived for more than 25 years in Angola and 5 in Brazil. As her family was really passionate about Angola and Brazil, this inspired her to follow in their footsteps and become an immigrant too.

In 2004, Ana Olivia finally decided to leave Portugal to explore the world and strengthen her career in care. This decision led her to live in Germany and Spain. Six years later, when she took a vacation, she chose Brazil and, at her first stop, in Rio de Janeiro, she simply fell completely in love with the city. When she got to know Rocinha, she was sure that she would return to work in some community in Rio. In 2012, while living in Spain, Ana Olívia received an offer to teach Spanish at a social project in Parada de Lucas, in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro. She was an adventurous soul with no doubts about her decision. Despite the risks, she threw herself into this endeavor, embracing the challenge. Since then, she has also worked in research at the Institute for the Study of Religion - ISER. She realized it was time to use the key to expand his network of relationships and support.

This genuine commitment to her beliefs inspired her to set up two classes in 2015 in collaboration with the social enterprise Redes da Maré. The classes took place in a small room at the institution's headquarters in Nova Holanda, one of the communities in the Complexo da Maré. She was surprised at how many of the local residents joined in. Enthusiastically, she says that "it went down very well and demand quickly increased", which, in Ana's opinion, was because the students, almost 100% women, felt

Rio changed a lot of things in Ana's life and, in return, she decided to take care of the locals. As soon as she arrived, she started practicing yoga, an activity with which she had such a deep connection that she decided to study to teach. She says that the practice did her the world of good, and she was so happy about that that she decided she wanted to share the sense of well-being she felt with others, which is how the desire to teach was born. One idea in particular kept coming to mind: she wanted to teach yoga in Complexo da Maré. She felt a strong urge to help those in Maré find a little peace in the chaos. Ana says they're pretty strong people, but they don't have much access to self-care practices.

confident that she was consistent in her purpose and would stay with them. This belief created a strong bond of trust between the group, which allowed her to gradually introduce Ayurvedic massage techniques.

Just a year later, Ana began to expand her activities, holding her first classes on the streets of Maré and in other areas of the city. Two new classes were opened in Vila do Pinheiro, in a space provided by the Adib Jatene Family Clinic, and in Morro do Timbau, in a space provided by partner institution Espaço Casulo. Also in 2016, she managed to hold the 1st Yoga and Meditation Retreat, in Petrópolis, with around 30 people.

In 2017, Ana Olívia teamed up with Espaço Casulo to offer individual consultations at social prices. This was to help her generate income to finance her activities. She was determined to keep the activities going, so she took the first steps in looking for funding so she could set up their own space. A year later, she was able to make the Yoga Institute in Maré official, in line with the legislation for civil society organizations. With the aim of promoting a culture of peace and offering an integrative health system to the residents of Maré, through the practices of Yoga and Ayurveda, the institute was able to carry out a cycle of actions in the territory of Maré, including classes, clean-up efforts and workshops, thus generating an assertive cycle of care: caring for the other, for oneself and for the territory.

Ana Olívia is bold. It was a daring move to venture into one of Rio's largest favela communities, which is facing significant urban challenges, including persistent violence, human rights violations, and a lack of effective public policies. In a community that cries out for assistance, the right to care emerges with force when, in 2019, the first headquarters of the Yoga Wellness and Health Center in Maré - NUBES - is inaugurated.

For this purpose, a small, cozy space with a slab, kitchen, living room and room for sessions and classes was rented in the Nova Holanda favela. This was another concrete step towards care, which allowed them to increase the number of people benefiting from Ayurvedic massage, physiotherapy and traditional Chinese medicine, as well as holding workshops. New therapies could gradually be added to the Institute and, with the wisdom of local people,

it was possible to launch the “Yoga na Maré” recipe booklet (Source of information: <https://www.yoganamare.com.br/quemsomos>).

The period of the pandemic was really tough, but it also gave them a chance to embrace a new way of working. It was a great opportunity to train new yoga teachers from Maré. There was a big increase in the number of people requiring care, which meant that Ana Olívia had to get new people trained to provide that care. This would create more jobs and bring more income into the local community. A virtuous cycle where everyone wins.

The dream of having a class to train 16 yoga teachers came true in 2023. The semi-presential Teacher Training course, in partnership with the Svadhyaya School, lasted 15 months. Some of the teachers are already teaching at the Institute and at other organizations and yoga studios. A first in-person class outside Maré was opened in partnership with Espaço Terra Mater, benefiting residents of other favelas in Rio. Just as an example, it’s worth mentioning that one of the new teachers trained by the course used to be a street vendor, and this opportunity changed her life.

At the same time as the activities are taking place in Nova Holanda, Ana Olívia is looking for national and international partnerships so that she can continue to provide care. Articulating partnerships is a fundamental task for caregivers, who often learn by doing because they don’t receive training for this activity, which takes up a large part of their days. This is a skill that should be observed in caregivers, as they certainly have a lot to teach us all.

The Yoga Institute at Maré¹ is organized around three areas of activity: health and well-being; culture and citizenship; and training and income generation. It also organizes various workshops, lectures, cultural outings, mountain retreats and outdoor classes. Classes and training meetings take place at the Institute’s headquarters and at three family clinics within the Complex. There are free classes for residents every day, in person and online. And if you are a supporter of the project, you are also entitled to take part in the online classes.

Undeterred, now in 2024, Ana is already working on the construction of the new headquarters of NUBES, the Maré Integrative Health Reference Center. A larger facility planned to be built little by little, according to what can be raised, but without

stopping looking for - and achieving - improvements to make it more comfortable for the yogi community. The idea, and the practical action, is to increasingly expand the scope of therapies and services offered, which now also includes *erveira* (a course taught by a doula every Tuesday), *doulagem*, massage, reiki, shiatsu and acupuncture, in a cycle that promotes collective care and income generation.

“ I try to maintain a very disciplined self-care routine, while being aware that I can’t always do everything as I’d like - and that’s okay, because I do my best every day. From this place, I feel that my purpose in life is really to take care of others - a feeling I’ve carried with me since I was young.”

When asked who Ana Olívia looks after, she says with a twinkle in her eye: **“I look after my yoga students and my Ayurveda patients. I look after Yoga na Maré, which is the NGO I set up and which I care for as if it were my own daughter. I look after my personal relationships. I try to take the best possible care of Mother Earth, reflecting every moment on my choices and priorities and encouraging reflections and actions in this direction. I take care of my physical and mental health so that I can continue to take care of others.”**

In this sense, she explains that the first step towards care is self-care. (...) First of all: I take care of myself. I’m aware that if I don’t prioritize self-care, self-knowledge and my personal development, I won’t be able to listen, observe, welcome or care for anyone. I would lack the health, strength, energy, mental clarity and even the legitimacy to care for and inspire people if I didn’t take care of myself. So I try to maintain a very disciplined self-care routine, while being aware that I can’t always do everything as I’d like - and that’s okay, because I do my best every day. From this place, I feel that my purpose in life is really to take care of others - a feeling I’ve carried with me since I was young.

It’s beautiful to see Ana Olívia’s excitement when she reaffirms that she’s here to stay. With great affection, she talks about the circles of women who began to

¹ Source: [HYPERLINK “https://www.yoganamare.com.br/quemsomos” https://www.yoganamare.com.br/quemsomos](https://www.yoganamare.com.br/quemsomos).

connect with each other when they became part of the NUBES space. They consider NUBES their second homes because in that corner they let off steam, sit quietly when they feel like it, share their pain and joys. Ana also reports the incidence of mental illnesses such as anxiety, depression and chronic pain in women whose routine is a combination of denied health rights and a history of suffering intense violence. According to the research she carried out with her students, 90% had anxiety as a result of the violence, which makes it valuable to have a space for welcoming and self-care, as well as time to breathe and connect. Those are essential practices for the process of integral collective health. Yoga, a hug, a touch, a breath, a maneuver to get out of an anxiety crisis, a listening circle, all of this makes the residents of Complexo da Maré healthier and more balanced to fight for their rights to live well and with dignity.

Ana Olívia points out that she is surrounded by women who are caregivers par excellence - for the whole family, the house, the neighbors... And it is with them that Ana exchanges many lessons on a daily basis. The wheel of care turns.

The Yoga Institute at Maré understands health from a broad concept and approaches each person as a whole, considering them in their various aspects: physical, psychological, emotional and social. By offering Integrative and Complementary Health Practices (PICS) as therapeutic resources, the Institute seeks to prevent illness and recover health. This approach is all about welcoming listening, the development of a therapeutic bond and the overall promotion of human care, especially self-care. As a result of this approach, Ana has been collecting stories of her students beating the odds and overcoming their problems.

“Caring for others is part of the way in which I exist and fulfill myself in this world. I feel very happy and fulfilled.”

Ana Olívia points out that she is surrounded by women who are caregivers par excellence - for the whole family, the house, the neighbors... And it is with them that Ana exchanges many lessons on a daily basis. The wheel of care turns.

“Talking about care is not enough. We need to talk about personal development as part of a collective project. Including ourselves in care is an important step towards including ourselves in the problem. If we do not see ourselves as part of the change we need to make, we are only doing half the job. It is only when we see ourselves as part of the problem that we can expand, change the possibilities and widen our field.”

Graciela Selamein
Executive Director of the Toriba Institute

Anápuàka Tupinambá



Anápuàka begins his testimony by clarifying that the name he is known by today is not the same as the one he was given at birth - Erick Márcio Mendes Muniz - and that it only came into his life later, during a process of affirming his identity.

Born on April 6, 1974, in the south of São Paulo, near Congonhas airport, he came into the world in the Amparo Maternal Hospital, which was intended for single mothers, poor, mixed-race, black women, prostitutes and homeless people. This setting, marked by an explicit social divide, already hinted at the path of struggle and resistance that he would follow.

During his early childhood, he lived in a favela in the south of São Paulo, known as Nova Divinéia. This community, which no longer exists due to its removal by the government to make way for a park and the Roberto Irineu Marinho avenue, was one of the most important places in his life. His father, Dario Muniz Tupinambá, was one of the leaders of the Residents' Association, and his godfather was the founder of the favela.

Anápuàka describes this experience as his first real experience of a community, where everyone knew each other and looked after each other. In a natural way, he makes an analogy with life in an indigenous village, emphasizing how that environment was fundamental to his upbringing. “I think it was the first time I experienced what a community really is. In my 50 years of life, I’ve hardly come across a community like the one I had in my early years. Knowing people, knowing their names, where they come from, and people looking after each other. Looking at it, without saying that I’m a indigenous, it feels like I’m in a village.” This memory dates back to when he was just three years old. His father always told him about his roots, about his culture, and these stories were not always fairytales, but stories of struggle, violence and resistance. He learned to read and write when he was 4/5 years old and at the age of 6, in the 1980s, he was already attending meetings of the National Movement of Indigenous Peoples with his father to read and write for him.

His pride in his father overflows in his words. A bricklayer who worked on the construction of the blue line of the São Paulo subway, he is still a source of inspiration for Anápuàka, who says he always gets emotional when he walks through the stations and remembers what his father did.

His mother, Elisete Mendes Muniz Tupinambá, a black and indigenous Tupinambá woman, comes from a family with a strong matriarchal tradition, something that is rarely found in many indigenous cultures due to the influence of Christian religions. Anápuàka believes that patriarchy is a problem mainly introduced by the Christian religion, but that in his home, spiritual practices have allowed matriarchy to flourish, allowing him to grow up within this culture, learning to cook, look after the house and getting involved in spiritual practices that his mother and his father’s family taught him, such as mandinga and witchcraft. For him, cooking has always been a form of magic, a practice full of symbolism.

“I think it was the first time I experienced what a community really is. In my 50 years of life, I’ve hardly come across a community like the one I had in my early years. Knowing people, knowing their names, where they come from, and people looking after each other. Looking at it, without saying that I’m a indigenous, it feels like I’m in a village.”

At the age of 9, Anápuàka moved to the Caramuru village [formerly the São Lucas farm, reclaimed in 1982], on the Caramuru Catarina Paraguaçu indigenous Land in Pau Brasil, in the south of Bahia. There, he faced a new reality, learning to live in a rural and indigenous environment, experiencing a challenging transition, but at the same time a very rich one, as it was there that he began to truly understand his roots. It was a period of intense training, in which he spent between 14 and 18 hours a day learning to survive in the forest, practicing archery and horseback riding, and understanding the constellations and the stars in a way he had never experienced before. He learned several different things: planting, dealing with animals and finding his way around in the bush allowed him to have a deeper connection with nature. It was in the context of this moment that, under his father’s guidance, he chose his name and was re-born, calling himself Anápuàka Muniz Tupinambá Hã Hã Hae: Anápuàka [in homage to the Anápuàka people, pronounced, “Anápú Ānkâ” and meaning “river that makes noise near the cashew trees”], Muniz [a name used by colonial families who adopted indigenous people], Tupinambá [his ethnic group] and Hã Hã Hae [meaning “other peoples”, an ethnic group from the Caramuru territory].

When Anápuàka turned 12, his parents decided that he and his brother should move to Rio de Janeiro, where their mother was living. The move was part of an agreement between his parents, who, despite being divorced, have always maintained a cooperative relationship when it comes to raising their children, being present and responsible, something they still do today. His father then organizes a rite of passage for him and his brother, which consists of cutting down an almost petrified tree. After completing the rite, they pick up their things and leave. Although he had tears in his eyes, Anápuàka understood that, in indigenous culture, at the age of 12 he is already considered a man who should be responsible for his own life.

Arriving in Rio de Janeiro, the two brothers would go on to live in Santa Cruz, a rural area of Rio de Janeiro at the time. There, he quickly fell in love with the radio, a passion he had cultivated since he lived in São Paulo. The equipment became a constant companion and a way for him to connect with Rio's culture, identifying the unique way Cariocas express themselves on the radio, with its relaxed and engaging style.

As a teenager, he immersed himself in experiments with sound, electronics and technology at a time when the internet was still in its infancy. He was already working with computers, as well as audio and video media. His mind, which he describes as having "accelerated brain syndrome" and "dyslexia", was always a step ahead, looking for new forms of expression and creation, which led to the production of zines and house organs, collages and graphic materials, exploring the power of visual and printed communication.

At the age of 17, Anápuàka began working as a DJ and announcer, and at the age of 19 at an AM radio station in Itaguaí, Rádio Grande Rio, where he initially worked as an audio operator. One day, an announcer was absent and he offered to take over the show. Thus began his career as a broadcaster, presenting a magazine-style show on AM radio. He describes radio as a passion so strong that it consumed him and made him work for free, just to be in front of the microphone.

He later migrated to community radio, a movement that was growing in the 1990s, and went to work at Rádio Santa Cruz FM, where he met and fell in love with an indigenous broadcaster and journalist who would later become his wife. They started working together, both at the radio station and at a newspaper called "Black News - Notícia sem Preconceito" (Black News - News without Prejudice), where he worked as a copy editor and layout artist. It was in the "Black News" newsroom that he realized the need to make the issues of indigenous people visible and convinced the newspaper's owner to create a section with this agenda. It was 1995.

In 2001, Anápuàka came across the "Índios Online" website, a chat forum where indigenous people discussed everyday issues such as the climate, indigenous public policy, agriculture and village life. For him, it was like rediscovering a part of himself. The internet, which he already saw as a powerful communication tool, became a channel for strengthening ties with his culture and roots.

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In 2001, Anápuàka became a Wordpress programmer for "Índios Online", transforming the chat forum into a Content Management System (CMS) platform for meetings and debates, becoming a channel for discussions on the basis of indigenous peoples' struggles.

Five years later, he decided to leave "Índios Online" to embark on a new mission: to teach indigenous people across the country how to create their own blogs. Over the years, he has helped develop more than 500 blogs, disseminating knowledge and strengthening the indigenous voice on the internet.

He then began to study web development tools, determined to build a website capable of becoming a platform for indigenous expression. The internet was still virtually unexplored territory for indigenous peoples, with most of the content available being produced by academics and anthropologists who often had no direct connection to the indigenous peoples they were describing.

For Anápuàka, communication is not just a tool, but a form of resistance and empowerment. He believes that by telling their own stories, indigenous people can not only preserve their culture, but also claim their place in contemporary society.

All this restlessness and movement led him to attend the Campus Party in São Paulo in 2008, a technology event that inspired him to model the social network "Aldeia

Brasil Indígena on Ning” and the blog “Web Rádio Brasil Indígena” on WordPress. This initiative became a definitive milestone in his career, leading him to discover what he conceptualized as “Indigenous Digital Archaeology”, exploring old discontinued websites that still held important stories and memories.

Motivated by this experience, he began to formulate the idea of creating the first indigenous web radio in Brazil, but soon realized that replicating the non-indigenous communication model would not be enough. He understood that, coming from a rich and diverse culture, with more than 300 peoples and 274 languages, it was key to create something that reflected this diversity and uniqueness. Thus, he developed the concept of “Indigenous Ethnomedia”, an approach that is based on the cultural processes of each indigenous people, allowing each group to appropriate communication languages in a way that suits their needs.

Anápuàka is taking this concept to the University of Brasília (UNB) through a project called “Vidas Paralelas Indígenas” (Indigenous Parallel Lives), but is meeting resistance. The project coordinator wants him to teach indigenous people how to use devices: cameras and recorders, but he insists on teaching them to think about communication in a deeper and more culturally relevant way. As this vision is not understood by academia, he believed that he had to leave the project, which was being carried out in Baía da Traição|PB, Potiguara territory, where, after a ritual with Jurema [a drink made from the leaves of the Jurema Preta plant]. He had what he describes as a “mental amplification,” which inspired him to create the first communication company in the country with an indigenous communication concept.

Back in Rio de Janeiro, he began looking for partners for this endeavor. Rádio Yandê [which means “we, our and all of us”], the first indigenous web radio in Brazil, was born out of his determination to create a truly indigenous communication space. To build this platform, which is growing rapidly and reaching millions of listeners in more than 190 countries, he teamed up with partners such as Renata Machado and Denilson Baniwa. Rádio Yandê becomes a powerful tool for amplifying the voices of indigenous peoples, promoting music, art, culture and political debates. He then focused on teaching other indigenous people how to be announcers, interviewers,

influencers and podcasters, creating a new generation of indigenous communicators. Today, he sees Rádio Yandê as an ongoing laboratory of innovation and social impact which, over more than a decade, has changed the landscape of indigenous presence in communication, public policy and the internet in Brazil.

Anápuàka’s career is therefore marked by innovation and the relentless pursuit of indigenous autonomy in communication, with the creation of Rádio Yandê and the development of the concept of “Indigenous Ethnomedia” being important initiatives to strengthen the identity and voice of indigenous peoples in the country. Despite all the challenges faced, he works to ensure that indigenous communication is, in fact, built by indigenous people for indigenous people, respecting and celebrating the cultural and linguistic diversity of their peoples.

Partnerships have always been essential throughout his journey and, in his view, the success of Rádio Yandê and his other initiatives would not have been possible without the support of many people and organizations who believed in his vision. From streaming companies that have supplied the tech to friends who’ve given him their help and support, it’s these partnerships that have been crucial in enabling him to continue his work.

Anápuàka is aware that he has the challenge of reconciling technology with traditional indigenous culture, and so he argues that technology should be seen as a tool at the service of culture, and not as an end in itself. For him, the key is to use technology to preserve and give visibility to the voices and stories of indigenous peoples, ensuring that their culture remains alive and relevant in the contemporary world.

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Anápuàka recognizes that his work is not just a form of communication, but also an act of care. He says he had to reflect and talk to his peers to better elaborate [and accept] the idea of being a caregiver. And he concluded happily that he is. Now, looking at his entire career, he sees himself as a carer of his traditions, of the rights of indigenous peoples, of indigenous philosophy.

And it is with the radio that he manages to materialize this care, making his culture visible and disseminating it in a legitimate way, by the indigenous themselves, with autonomy, and not assistance, as it has been treated until now.

He says that caring is being a “good ancestor”, someone who passes on knowledge, feeds, plays and, above all, lives with awareness and responsibility. Attitudes that are reflected in all her actions, whether in communication, in the preservation of culture or in everyday life. He believes that everyone should strive to be a good ancestor, ensuring that our actions today leave a positive legacy for future generations.

“Never, at any time, has our species had such a wealth of cultural assets to adapt and reinvent itself. What is up to us now is to honor the best of our ancestry.”

Sidarta Ribeiro
Brazilian neuroscientist and writer



CLICK HERE
to watch the
video interview.

Andrea Apolonia

Andrea is the mother of Rafaela, affectionately known as Rafa, a beautiful, strong, and loving 25-year-old who was born with a rare disease called Angelman Syndrome. From the loneliness of a mother of an atypical child, Andrea built a figurative bridge to connect with other atypical mothers. As she felt the need to speak and be heard, to exchange information, to learn about care strategies and, above all, to fight against ableism, Andrea created Juntos.

Andrea lost her father when she was just one year old. Having grown up in a family of women, in a cosy matriarchy - her mother and two older sisters - she is keen to point out that her upbringing was very strong and that the women in her family were very united. Living in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro, she took advantage of the opportunity to practice sports, a passion she had since she was a little girl. Her passion became her profession. She studied Physical Education and is now a teacher.

She got married, got pregnant, dreamed, wished and waited anxiously for her baby. Rafa came into the world healthy and surrounded by love. Only over time did it become clear that there was something different about her daughter's neuropsychomotor and cognitive development.

According to the International Rare Disease Organization (Rareeasyday.org), there are approximately 13 million people in Brazil living with rare diseases, which can be of genetic origin (80%) or of infectious, viral, or degenerative causes (20%). Rare diseases are those that affect up to 65 people per 100,000 individuals or 1.3 per two thousand. They are characterized by a wide range of signs and symptoms, which can vary according to the pathology and the person affected by the condition. (Source: World Health Organization - WHO)

The diagnosis of rare diseases can take 4-7 years and this long wait is exhausting for the parents of atypical children. They have to endure so many doubts, anxieties, doctors, tests, fears, suggestions, and questions. When the family has no financial resources, the journey is even more challenging and can take longer. When the diagnosis is finally made, a new phase begins to find out how best to take care of them. All the organizations dedicated to rare diseases are unanimous: having a support network is key on this journey.

Rafa was diagnosed with Angelman syndrome, a rare neurological disorder that occurs in approximately one in every 15,000 births (1:15,000). It is estimated that there are more than 12,000 people with Angelman in Brazil. In a nutshell, the syndrome is caused by a genetic accident in the region of chromosome 15, involving a single gene, UBE3A. (Source: <https://angelmanbrasil.org.br/>)

The symptoms of Angelman syndrome usually appear at six months of age, with developmental delays usually being the first signs. Other symptoms include hypotonia, sleep disorders, reflux, epilepsy, and balance disorders. Unfortunately, there is no treatment to cure the syndrome, but there are several types of therapies that help with development, such as physiotherapy, speech therapy, and occupational therapy. Some medications are able to treat seizures, reflux, constipation, and other manifestations.

However, the best medicine is always love, a close-knit family, and a support network. Andrea is proud of the support she receives from her mother and sisters. Even though she separated from Rafa's father when she was 11, they are still very close and raise her together, in all her joys and anxieties.

The biggest problem is not the disease itself, but facing ableism, which translates into discrimination and social prejudice against any disability. Unfortunately, prejudice, astonished faces, mockery, lack of accessibility, and invisibility are part of everyday life for families of atypical people. Acts as simple as going to a square to take your child to play can lead to a lot of embarrassment and pain due to the behaviors of others.

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Andrea says that when Rafa was a child, she often had to play "Life is Beautiful", a reference to the Roberto Benigni film. When she went down to the pool with her daughter, many children would literally run out. She would then immediately look at Rafa and say that they were playing tag. It's very powerful when Andréa says that Rafa goes into the world because she takes her into the world, she takes charge of Rafa's connection to the world, without waiting for understanding, adequacy, or open arms. She lovingly throws herself into life with Rafa.

The biggest challenge is at school. It's where atypical children and their families have to fight every day for inclusion, diversity, respect, understanding, empathy and simple adaptations that can make life much easier for children with disabilities and neurodiversity. Andrea says that it is necessary to report to the Public Prosecutor's Office if the school is not adapted and does not create a safe and harmonious environment for loving relationships to develop. Dealing with parents' prejudice or indifference is extremely painful. Seeing your child not invited to parties or outings is a burden on the heart. Hearing from teachers, "Mom, she won't sit still, right?" or "Oh, she's a very difficult child," is infuriating and leads to many other issues in the family dynamic, in the mental health of those involved and trying to ensure that your child's rights are respected requires a lot of determination.

That's why Andréa says she began her activism in 2011, giving talks in schools and wherever she was called because she knew the importance of talking about anti-ableism, the fundamental attitude or behavior that opposes ableism. By doing this, she began to get involved with other mothers, still on an informal basis.

It was also during this period that she took part in the development of the film “Um dia especial”. Released in 2013 and directed by Yuri Amorim, the film follows a day in the life of several Brazilian families with autistic children and other rare syndromes. The incredible stories of the daily lives of women caregivers cross our minds and make us think about how little we know about the daily lives of atypical families and how we, as a society, could think of strategies to be inclusive and diverse.

These were the first steps for Andréa to create Juntos. She says that she “really needed some warmth and exchange”. So, from a WhatsApp group, she created Juntos in partnership with other mothers to support and care for each other. In this care network, they vent, exchange information about doctors and other specialists, mobilize, articulate, protest, denounce, press for legislation and educate society for an anti-capacity future.

Today, in addition to Andrea, Juntos is led by Cecília, Noah’s mother; Juliana, Lucas’ mother; Carla, Danilo’s mother; Carol, Liora’s mother; and Paula, Clarice’s mother. Juntos is a support network with 300 registered families. The desire is to expand and reach low-income communities, where the vulnerability of atypical people is gigantic and the work of mothers endless, giving no chance for the socio-economic development of their families.

Juntos recently became a non-profit civil society association, which can help it raise funds. And since it has never had any social investment to date, the organization mobilizes its support networks to carry out activities and events, such as the Juntos Forum, with a theme defined for each year it is held; welcoming cafés mediated by psychologists and other professionals; round table discussions in schools, as well as, as a collective, joining together to file complaints with the Public Prosecutor’s Office whenever necessary.

“We mobilize as a collective to push for change. These are everyday issues that need to be brought to the attention of those who run a company, offer services, make laws and all families. For example: a mother wanted to take her son to the Botanical Garden, but the cultural center didn’t have an elevator, only stairs, thus preventing wheelchair users and people with limited mobility from getting around. The intention is always to improve the infrastructure, to make it truly inclusive so that everyone can access and enjoy the city. Because the right to the city is for everyone, everyone, everyone,” says Andrea.

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, mothers with atypical children had to demonstrate to demand priority in vaccination, since people with disabilities were not among the priorities. “If we don’t fight, we don’t succeed.” It’s a daily struggle for their rights to be respected and guaranteed by law, and for health insurance companies to fulfill their contracts and offer adequate support.

An excellent strategy created by Juntos is the development and launch of awareness campaigns with videos based on real stories. The mothers create the script themselves and follow every detail. The first began with an outburst from a mother via WhatsApp, whose story was so absurd that they realized it was essential to share it to try to change reality. This was the #EsefosseSeuFilho (What if it was your child) campaign of 2018, in which famous actors told their real stories, which resulted in a great deal of publicity. To access the videos, just go to the Juntos website or social media profiles.

After the success of the first campaign, campaigns are launched every year, some in partnership with other organizations fighting ableism. It’s about caring by sharing stories, it’s about the power of orality, an ancient strategy. Here are some of the themes of the campaigns that have been launched:

- **#Abraceainclusao (Embrace inclusion - 2019)**- inspiring stories about inclusion, people who see the human being before the disability and who know the importance of inclusive practices.
- **#Ofensanaoepiada (Ofensaecrime - 2020)**- #Ofensaecrime (Offending people is a crime) - stories that showcase the negative effects of jokes that use terms and people with disabilities to belittle, to make fun of. It draws attention to the terms we should no longer use in our daily lives.
- **#Paitajunto (A father is present - 2021)** - ,(A father is present)(2021) a campaign in partnership with #paitajunto - inspiring stories of care, which turn the wheel.
- **#Historiaspararefletir (Stories that make you think - 2021)** in partnership with #papoesspecialoficial - stories that show the power of atypical
- **#Campanha Fala Irmão e Fala Irmã (Speak Brother and Speak Sister campaign - 2023)** - stories in which siblings give testimonies that reinforce anti-ableism behaviors and celebrate all the luminous parts of their atypical brothers and sisters.

Andrea is aware of her privileges in that she has an exceptional support network, that Rafa's father is very much a partner and present in his daughter's life, and that she has the financial means to provide comfort and relief for Rafa's health problems. That's why she would love to be closer to atypical mothers in situations of social vulnerability, which is made difficult by a lack of time and resources. The mothers in the group, in addition to their domestic work, their professional work, and Juntos, also have to look after their children, who need their attention practically 24 hours a day, as most of them have trouble sleeping, which makes them feel constantly tired.

Understanding that disability is one of the markers of inequality is fundamental to deconstructing the idea that disability is synonymous with a lack of capacity. Andrea says that Juntos wants to build a support network with interdisciplinary professionals who can provide comprehensive care not only for people with disabilities or neurodiversity but also for their families. Another dream is to create areas to care for children after their parents have passed away. This is a major concern: "What if I die? Who will take care of Rafa?" Andrea asks herself.

When asked what care means to Andrea, she talks about self-care: "It's the pause to be with myself. It's breathing, resting. I take care of myself so that I can take care of my daughter."

When we repeat the question from the movie "Um Dia Especial": What couldn't be left out if your life were a movie? Andrea immediately replies: "**Rafa's birth.**"

"It's the pause to be with myself. It's breathing, resting. I take care of myself so that I can take care of my daughter."

"The culture of caring has to do with love. It even includes loving ourselves. The key message to caregivers is: take care of yourself, or that love won't be able to overflow to take care of others."

Isabel Pereira

Lawyer, enthusiastic about caring and the defense of human rights.

Antonio Carlos Firmino



Antonio Carlos Firmino was born in Miguel Pereira, in the neighborhood of São Conrado, and has lived in Rocinha for over 30 years, but has lived in several neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro. The youngest of six children, he watched closely from a young age as his mother cared for his body and mind with herbs, prayers, and whatever was grown in the garden for the family to eat. He doesn't remember going to the doctor very often as a child, not only because of the scarcity of health services in the city but also because he and his siblings received spiritual care from the knowledge of their ancestors.

Until he left the city at 22, after his military service, to work in Furnas, in Rio de Janeiro, he participated in Catholic youth groups in the city. At this stage, he started going to Baixada Fluminense and getting involved in groups and movements such as the Juventude de Ação Mariana - JAM (Mariana Action Youth), the Juventude Operária Católica - JOC (Catholic Worker Youth) and the Comunidades Eclesiais de Base - CEBS (Basic Ecclesial Communities), increasingly broadening his interest in topics other than Catholicism, such as labor organization, rights to education and better living conditions. These have been years of much reading, production, and debate, which have provided him, as he says, with **“an extremely rich process of qualification”**.

In 1994, he decided to attend the pré-vestibular (pre-university entrance exam) for black and underprivileged people - PVNC, in the Rocinha favela, the first outside the Baixada to be linked to the Black Religious Movement. With the help of his sister Rita de Cassia and Pastor Melquíades, from the Methodist Church, Firmino, as he is known, decided to organize with friends the maintenance of the course, which ran at Caminho dos Boiadeiros (and was later transferred to CIEP Ayrton Senna, in São Conrado), with volunteer teachers and campaigns. He took part in the movements for the right to go to university during a very active period of his youth.

Firmino lived in Engenho de Dentro, a suburb of Rio, but after meeting his future wife at the pré-vestibular (pre-university entrance exam), he decided to move to Rocinha and never leave, as a way of giving back and contributing to the community, although he was often questioned about this choice.

Until 1998, he represented the Rocinha pre-vestibular. Before that, in 1996, he received an invitation from Ação Social Padre Anchieta - ASPA to coordinate the institution that promotes education, culture and leisure for families in the Rocinha community. In 1997, he joined the Faculty of Geography at the Fluminense Federal University (UFF).

In 2002, while still at ASPA, he was asked by the management to establish a partnership with the International Centre for Childhood Studies (CIESPI) in the Brinquedoteca, Peteca and Rede Brincar projects, during this time he began researching children's games and songs, and drew attention to and criticised the massive use of television with children. This work gave rise to the Center for Culture and Ludic Education, and in 2004, as a Rocinha Culture Point, it was selected by the Ministry of Culture. Firmino also highlights the opportunity he had to work on Rocinha's Sectorial (urban planning) and Master Plans (basic sanitation) as another front for working on behalf of the community's residents.

These multiple experiences with people, projects, and intense activism influenced his choices and, today, he is proud to be studying for a master's degree in Social Memory at the Federal University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO).

Access to art, culture, and mobility within the city are some of the things he has learned are important, along with social and human rights: sanitation, housing and taking care of history and memory. A constant struggle, he points out, due to the difficulty society and public authorities have in dealing with diversity, racism, and inequality.

“ We have a policy of whiteness. My commitment to memories and stories involves the right to the memories, stories, and visibility of the Afro-Brazilian and indigenous population.”

Firmino works on many different fronts: with PROFEC - the Ecumenical Training Centre for Community Education, in Duque de Caxias; in caring for mothers whose young black children have disappeared; with GEPUP - the Entrou por uma Porta theater group; at the Afro Digital Museum, caring for the memories of black people, as well as the invisible people who also make up this city; as a Candomblecist ogã and volunteer at the Águas do Amanhã Institute, in Sepetiba, with women in situations of total vulnerability. He is also involved in Food Sovereignty Action, chaired by Iyalorixa Roberta from Ile Aleketu Asè Awon Omo Yemonja; in the Sustainable Favela Network, looking after the memory of the favelas, mapping their environmental impacts and transformations over the years; and in the Social Museology Network (memories, stories, and narratives).

Firmino is also a co-founder and one of the coordinators of the Sankofa Museum of Memory and History of the Rocinha Favela. This is a virtual museum with a route, inspired by some similar initiatives that were taking place in the favelas, such as the Museu da Maré and the Museu de Favela -MUF of the Pavão, Pavãozinho, and Cantagalo favelas. Sankofa goes through alleys, doors, and windows, offering access to information, traveling exhibitions, and publications about Rocinha, without reproducing official history. They are the memories and stories of the people who built the place. Its origin was the Ponto de Cultura Centro de Cultura e Educação Lúdica and Rocinha's first Cultural Forum, in 2007.

On the subject of caring for memory and history, Firmino makes a point of stressing that “The fight for the right to preserve memories is a way to reflect and expose how unequal we are as a society, based on policies of lack of sanitation, mobility, education, housing, and food insecurity”. And he is emphatic when he says that “the favela is power through absence, creating forms of survival, with patterns, daily lives and strategies”.

Firmino is a widower with two daughters: Kinda and Kayla, to whom he imparts the values of respect, appreciation, empathy and solidarity, so that their “locality” (as he prefers to use the term) can enjoy well-being and quality of life. And when asked about his leadership, he says that he sees himself as “a social activist, part of the collective, part of the common good”.

In this sense, caring for Firmino is related to the name of the Sankofa Museum, an adinkra* from Ghana, Côte d’Ivoire, represented by a mythical African bird that flies forward with its head turned back and carrying an egg in its beak - the future, and whose meaning translates into “If I want to build the present, the future, I have to look at the past”.

“*The fight for the right to preserve memories is a way to reflect and expose how unequal we are as a society, based on policies of lack of sanitation, mobility, education, housing, and food insecurity.*”

And he is emphatic when he says that:
“*The favela is power through absence, creating forms of survival, with patterns, daily lives and strategies.*”

* Adinkra is a pictographic writing system of the Akan peoples of Central Africa, especially the Asante of Ghana. It is a set of more than 80 graphic symbols, or ideograms, which represent abstract ideas, moral values, proverbs, the qualities of heroes and events from the oral history of ancestral culture. The Sankofa is one of these 80 symbols.

Ariadne Mendes

Breaking down walls and building affectionate relationships are the expertise of Ariadne de Moura Mendes, psychologist, health worker, general coordinator, and co-founder of the Loucura Suburbana Bloco de Carnaval (Carnaval Block Suburban Madness). When she introduces herself, she immediately says that she is a psychologist, a profession in which she worked at the Ministry of Health until April 2024, when she retired. Her life is now dedicated to the coordination of the Loucura Suburbana Carnival Block and the “Ponto de Cultura Loucura Suburbana: Engenho Arte e Folia” (Ponto de Cultura is a Brazilian national cultural programme that aims to promote the democratisation of and access to culture). She holds a position of trust as Director of the Institute for the Coordination of Health and Culture at the Nise da Silveira Municipal Institute.

Ariadne graduated from the National School of Public Health in Fiocruz. She joined the Ministry of Health as a health worker in 1982. She had also graduated in psychology from the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-RJ) in 1976. She was soon promoted to psychologist. She says that although she wasn't encouraged to join the public service during her studies, she soon became interested in the field of public health. This led her to specialise in public health at the National School of Public Health - ENSP.

Ariadne remembers that in 1983, when she was assigned to what is now the Nise da Silveira Municipal Institute, it was called the Pedro II Psychiatric Centre (CPPII). The three federal hospitals in Rio de Janeiro - CPPII, Instituto Pinel, and Colônia Juliano Moreira - only became part of the municipal health service network at the end of 1999, when federal services were municipalised. This change made all the difference. It provided human resources and made it possible to start networking.

When the Ministry of Health hired her, Ariadne went to work in Brasilia, in the National Mental Health Division (DINSAN), where she stayed for a few months because she felt she was “too disconnected from reality, from events” and too attached to numbers and planning. When she moved from Brasilia to Rio, she thought that she was finally in touch with real life and could experience what treatment was really like, the institutional difficulties, and the suffering.

When she returned to Rio, the movement to build the Unified Health System (Sistema Único de Saúde - SUS) was in full swing, including many discussions about the need for mental health reform in Brazil.

Ariadne has been privileged to take part in discussions that still underpin our health system today. With much struggle, work, and care, she has helped to build a new reality for mental health in Brazil. Proud to have contributed to a new vision of mental health care, she talks about the changes that have taken place:

“One of the first things that needed to be done was to retire the electroshock apparatus, turn it into a museum object, and create an outpatient clinic. In the past, it was a rule and a destiny that people suffering from mental illness would only be admitted to the emergency room, from the emergency room they would go to a ward, where they could spend years, and when they didn’t spend years, they would spend days, months, then they would go home and there would be no treatment of any kind, apart from medication, and then they would be readmitted”. According to her, this was the practice of psychiatry at the time.

In such a scenario, the readmission rate was extremely high. The other was to fight against “privatisation, private interests”. There were private clinics that, in agreement with the SUS, were given privileges to admit patients. Doctors who worked for both the SUS and private clinics ended up admitting their patients to private clinics when there were vacancies in public hospitals.

“When I arrived, I met a group of young people like me. They were mental health workers, and together we began to try some measures of humanisation and rationalisation. This rationalisation was already the path of the SUS: regionalisation of services, hierarchisation, decentralisation and universalisation. The SUS brought with it a set of principles that we also tried to apply. All of us - health and mental health workers - were very much part of a single movement at that time.”

Ariadne believes that mental health brought together people who thought the same way. On the other hand, some clung to the most violent and aggressive traditions. It was a united movement, she says, that knew clearly and objectively what it wanted to do. It simply wanted an end to mental institutions, which is what the anti-asylum movement was about.

For her, the creation of the outpatient clinic is a turning point in terms of care and treatment. Instead of people coming through A&E, often in crisis or being involuntarily admitted and even restrained, they now have the outpatient clinic as their gateway. “With the outpatient clinic, the mental health

treatment scenario begins to change. People start to look for the outpatient clinic where there is a support group. We had two people here who really stimulated this work:

Jurandir Freire Costa and Benilton Bezerra Junior. We had the privilege of working with them and with Paulo Amarante, who was a very important person in all this work. It’s allowed us to have reception groups in the outpatient clinic and to make referrals that are not necessarily for hospitalisation, but for outpatient continuity,” says Ariadne proudly.

“How does this affect me? When I joined Nise da Silveira, I started working in planning, but due to an institutional crisis, in 1988 I was transferred to Colônia Juliano Moreira, where I worked for a year as a psychologist in a pavilion, at the Jurandir Manfredini Hospital and at the Study Centre, after attending an international HR course at ENSP/Fiocruz.”

Then, inspired by CAPS Alameda in São Paulo, the first in Brazil, Espaço Aberto ao Tempo was built, created by Lula Wanderley. It wasn't yet a CAPS (Psychosocial Care Center), but it already had all the essence of what is known today as a CAPS. Ariadne pauses and asks the question: "How does this affect me? When I joined Nise da Silveira, I started working in planning, but due to an institutional crisis, in 1988 I was transferred to Colônia Juliano Moreira, where I worked for a year as a psychologist in a pavilion, at the Jurandir Manfredini Hospital and at the Study Centre, after attending an international HR course at ENSP/Fiocruz".

Ariadne says that she wasn't a civil servant, but was hired permanently, and it was there, at Juliano Moreira, that her life began to change. It was a long way behind in terms of humanising treatment, and Ariadne says that the nursing assistants in the institution were still called guards. It was such a sad backwardness that she couldn't bear it for long. As a way out, she decided to take a course at Fiocruz, which took her to Jurandir Manfredini's outpatient clinic, where she began to provide therapeutic care, something she had never done before. She fell in love with the clinic and, when she returned to Nise da Silveira, she negotiated to be able to spend half her time in the planning department and the other half working in the Central Outpatient Clinic.

After the outpatient clinic, the Casa d'Engenho was set up to prevent people from being admitted to the hospital. Anyone who arrived at the age of 18 or a little over that age was kept out of the emergency room, even if they were very sick, so they wouldn't be hospitalised. She says that the room later became a CAPS - CAPS Torquato Neto. The Casa d'Engenho, the Central Outpatient Clinic, and the Espaço Aberto ao Tempo (EAT) were then used for mental health care, leaving the rest of the Nise da Silveira for hospitalisation.

After working in the outpatient clinic for a long time, the space was municipalised and she was invited to run the service. This change was all Ariadne needed to begin her transformation process. One of the changes linked to care was the creation of the

art workshop, much inspired by Lula Wanderley and the principles with which he ran his practice at the EAT (Espaço Aberto ao Tempo): affection, welcome, the patient's right to discuss their medication.

For her, bonding is one of the most important things that happens in care practice. Being very observant, she began to see people forming groups and acting as groups, until one very special, almost magical day when a group suggested having a carnival party. Ariadne is keen to point out that the idea didn't come from the professionals, but from the patients themselves, who wanted to celebrate Carnaval with a parade in the institution. She says the idea immediately brought back a feeling from her childhood, when she used to celebrate Carnival in the Rio suburb of Vila Cosmos, in Vicente de Carvalho. There was a bloco de carnaval (carnival block) where everyone, families, and neighbours, celebrated. **"The patients' suggestion was my inspiration, and it was also what I was able to revive and propose Loucura Suburbana,"** she says excitedly.

And so it was, in the context of the process of deconstructing the asylum model at the Nise da Silveira Municipal Institute, that Loucura Suburbana was born in 2001, as a way of reviving Engenho de Dentro's street carnival and integrating residents of the neighborhood, patients, family members and employees of the mental health network. Today the Bloco Loucura Suburbana is a "classic" of Rio's carnival, bringing people together. The activities throughout the year make it possible for the professionals who were each working with their patients in their own units to work together. Something new was created with this movement that brought people together and took to the streets, which also ended up transforming the neighborhood, which resumed its street carnival and began to integrate health service users more.

Ariadne speaks enthusiastically about the change that occurred with the neighborhood's residents, who were afraid of the institution: **"It was surprising to see people's surprised reaction when they saw the crazy people singing in the street. After we had chosen the name of the bloco, we held a samba competition for the first samba, and the winning samba was sung. The response was incredible. There was a homeless woman who took a banner and became a porta bandeira (flag bearer) with the banner in her hand. A couple**

“ *His human closeness to his patients impressed and touched me throughout my career. I wanted to set up an art workshop because I thought it was absurd that people should spend a whole day waiting to be seen by their professionals sitting in a chair. And it worked, because not only did people come in and get something to do while they waited, but they also started to form bonds, bonds with the workshop and bonds with each other.”*

of patients also took another banner and another mestre sala (samba master) appeared with his porta bandeira (flag bearer).”

In order to organise the Bloco Loucura Suburbana, an organising committee was set up with the participation of several professionals, including cleaners, caretakers, and doctors... Anyone who wanted psychiatric reform came naturally, recalls Ariadne, who adds: ‘Obviously, there was an ideological question behind it all.

This multidisciplinary association was inspired by Jurandir Costa, who created the CISME (Integrated Mental Health Course) in the 1980s, proposing joint readings and debates on institutional issues once a month. The activity lasted for a long time and then changed its format, so that the General Assemblies, in which the whole institution participated, became eternal. The learning has remained. Caring is also about honouring those who have gone before us and honouring their teachings.

When it comes to breaking down walls, Ariadne says there is a lot of dismantling going on before the wall, referring to segregating professional categories.

She says that when they decided to create the bloco, the patients started composing songs in unusual spaces with the help of a music therapy resident at the time, Leandro Freixo. An organising committee was soon formed and, before they knew it, the bloco was on the streets within a month. It started out as a small block of around 200 people, but it grew to such an extent on the streets of Engenho de Dentro that the residents, with their prejudices against the psychiatric institution, began to see Loucura as “their” bloco. Loucura revived the neighbourhood’s street carnival, and in February 2024 the parade attracted more than 3,000 people from all over the city.

“Isn’t it beautiful? In an institution where the medical hierarchy was absolute, as it usually is in institutions, this hierarchy is very powerful, but at Nise da Silveira it is no longer so, to the point where, until recently, all the units were run by women, most of them psychologists. Now that the institution is no longer a mental hospital - it’s the Nise da Silveira Urban Park - there are no more care units, apart from an outpatient clinic, but cultural, income-generating and sports facilities. This is also the result of this work to break down barriers.”

In the following two years, 2002 and 2003, an information and communication technologies (ICTs) school was set up, the Nise da Silveira School of Informatics and Citizenship (EIC), and a publishing house, Encantarte Editora, which has already published around 50 titles, including books and manuals, as well as making promotional graphics.

The EIC was created through an agreement between the municipal health department and the CDI (Committee for the Democratisation of Information Technology) with the aim of digital inclusion, with patients trained by the CDI acting as teachers. Once again, hierarchies have been broken down. Ariadne can’t contain herself when she says: “It was great! The staff having classes with the patients, learning new things, new knowledge”. The school, which ran until 2013, trained more than 600 students.

Encantarte Editora, which has created a space for people with mental illnesses to talk about their problems and tell their life stories, works with the authors, most of whom are users of mental health services, helping them to design the cover, format the content, etc., with great care. Everything has always been done with great care to make the authors feel heard and respected.

Ariadne greatly appreciates the fact that a tripod was created collectively and with the massive presence of users of Nise da Silveira’s services: the Block, Encantarte Editora and the IT School. “That was the fun part. Nowadays, the Nise da Silveira Institute is no longer an asylum and, although there are naturally fewer users circulating, there are still many users from the CAP network in the Loucura Suburbana workshops and in Nise’s cultural spaces,” she says happily.

Through the EIC and Encantarte, they were able to generate the first funds to better equip the publishing house, as well as publicize their work in the mainstream media. Undoubtedly, this was an important moment for discovering the importance and possibility of raising funds through calls for proposals. As a result, by winning a call for proposals, it was possible to transform Loucura Suburbana into the first Cultural Point for mental health in the city of Rio de Janeiro - the “Ponto de Cultura Loucura Suburbana:

“We’re a cultural group here, not concerned with being therapeutic or caring, but it’s obvious that we are caring. We really need to revive the word care. We offer spaces of freedom for people to express themselves and what culture is proving is that it is highly transformative and, of course, this is a form of care.”

Engenho Arte e Folia” - which allows us to offer permanent and free activities open to the population, rescuing the memory of samba and carnival, citizenship, and incorporating culture into mental health devices and the population into the creative and innovative world of madness.

She cites the story of the bloco porta bandeira (block’s flag-bearer) Elisama as an example:

“She used to work as a cleaning lady.

When she started at the ICT school, she began to rediscover her ability to draw, took part in the embryonic creation of the Props and Costumes Workshop, and circulated around the institution’s various cultural sites.

She is an incredible artist who draws, paints, makes props, and composes music. She now works at the Institute’s Memory Centre on a socialization grant and is very proud of her work. Several of the bloco’s T-shirts are printed with her drawings.”

At Loucura, the practice is to allow creativity to run free, and to be a space for socializing, working, and building, as Ariadne explains:

“People can talk about their suffering, their condition as mental health patients, no longer with shame, no longer belittling themselves, thinking that this is why they have less value. But as a way of placing themselves in life as part of a diversity, without being ashamed of being happy the way they are. This voice that is coming out of people, which we saw more timidly, now I’m seeing with a lot of strength because this has given people this courage, this condition to be able to transform themselves, literally.”

People come to Loucura freely as soon as it is advertised. On average, around 70 people take part in the art and music workshops, and another 40 or so pass through the institution each week. In the months leading up to the carnival, participation in the activities increases significantly

Ariadne says that it is important to highlight the musical excellence that the block has achieved: the teaching musicians are top quality professionals, such as Abel Luiz, who is the Bloco’s musical coordinator, and Fernando Mesquyta, the master of Percussion of A insandecida. In 2024, 36 sambas were entered to choose the winner. A real blast! With the support of the Brazil Foundation, in 2009 it was possible to hire the first master of percussion. The drum lessons currently take place twice a week and are open to the public, as are the other workshops.

Great care is always taken when selecting musicians for an event when it is not possible to include everyone. In these cases, according to Ariadne, the criterion is inclusion combined with quality.

Loucura has managed to develop a mental health technology based on processes of integration, inclusion, freedom, creativity, self-management, and organization. Care permeates all the spaces that art transforms. This is how the table that used to be used for team meetings has become a painting studio.

Another example worth sharing is the story of Jairo Florentino. A percussionist, artist, and patient of today’s CAPS (Psychosocial Healthcare Centres) Espaço Aberto ao Tempo, he developed different cultural works with Lula Wanderley. Jairo began to draw again and his drawings gradually changed and became rich in detail. He likes to talk about Loucura Suburbana as a space that fosters freedom. When Ariadne complimented him and said that he was doing very well with his drawings, Jairo replied: “It’s because I don’t feel pressured here. I’m a citizen”. Care restores citizenship.

The story of Elisângela, the passista (samba dancer), also speaks of freedom, of choosing in freedom. She was hospitalised for a long time, and Ariadne says that even though she was in hospital, one day she came in and said: “I’m going to be the passista of this bloco”. She signed up and showed up.

This meeting, imbued with culture, allows potential to flourish, creating spaces of freedom and creative experimentation that have a positive impact on the dignity and empowerment of people with mental health problems.

Ariadne ensures that the mental health system adopts a caring approach in all its practices.

This attitude and the daily practice of Loucura Suburbana, where respect, freedom, and creativity are taught through art, truly promote a happier life for people with mental illness and their families.

Bia and Shirley

Two women who met in the struggle for land.



Ana Beatriz, who has lived in settlements since she was three, says: “I have learned so much from this experience that I feel like I have a degree. “Born in Nova Iguaçu, in Baixada Fluminense, Ana Beatriz is now 43, better known as Bia Carvalho. Her family moved from rural Minas Gerais to a land occupation in 1984, on Fazenda Campo Alegre, also located in Baixada Fluminense. Bia’s parents, who had always dreamed of having their own land, joined other families in the occupation, supported by the Diocese of Nova Iguaçu.

Shirley, 30 years old, was also born and raised in Baixada Fluminense. She began her journey in the struggle for land at the age of 16, when her mother went to an encampment. She has been involved in the movement ever since.

Bia sees herself as a daughter of the struggle for agrarian reform, as her family’s history was marked by the search for land. Her father worked in the fields but never had land in rural Minas Gerais, where he experienced violent labor relations. After a coffee crisis, he moved to Rio de Janeiro in search of better opportunities, initially working in construction.

In 1984, the occupation of the Campo Alegre farm gave Bia's family the chance to make their dream come true. Despite not being recognised by the state, the encampment organized several collective initiatives. One of them was the construction of a community school, where Bia studied. The school was built in 1986. The workers, including her family, helped to build it. Bia's first teacher, Sônia, taught under a tree and was from the Pastoral Land Commission (Comissão Pastoral da Terra - CPT). According to Bia, the school still exists today.

Her upbringing was marked by a commitment to social causes and movements, she has been involved in the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra - MST (Landless Rural Workers' Movement) since it was founded in 1994. She participated in the Youth Ministry and workers' marches with her late brother, the political activist Oseas Carvalho, who was murdered in the early hours of 19 March 2009 in the Campo Belo settlement.

In 2001, she participated "organically", as she puts it, in the MST, getting involved in several different occupations and actions in the state of Rio de Janeiro. In 2002, after a meeting of young people at Unicamp, where agrarian and land issues were

being debated in a national context, Bia reinforced her commitment to the struggle for land and the need to contribute to other families

in Rio de Janeiro. With this in mind, she decided to get to know all the

settlements in the state of Rio de Janeiro in order to experience them and to contribute to the organization of the settlement.

"When we move somewhere, the first thing we want to know is where our children are going to study, where the school is, where the health center is, and that's always done from a care perspective. Even if we are settling by the roadside or in a remote location, we have to make sure that we have a minimum quality of life to live there," she says.

"When we move somewhere, the first thing we want to know is where our children are going to study, where the school is, where the health center is, and that's always done from a care perspective. Even if we are settling by the roadside or in a remote location, we have to make sure that we have a minimum quality of life to live there."

Bia believes that the encampments and occupations fulfill a role of "Schools of Life", where the task is arduous but the experience is marked by human care and solidarity. The communal kitchen, for example, is a space for socializing and sharing. Activities are organized jointly and food production is one of the ways to guarantee the sustainability and dignity of the settled families. What is valuable, however, is that despite the hardships, there is always the prospect of a better future and better living conditions.

Along the way, she met her partner, Cosme, who, young like her, was also taking part in the fight for land, working in the northern region of Rio de Janeiro. They met at movement activities and began to deepen their relationship. It was a time when Bia and the MST learned more about the agrarian question and its challenges in the state of Rio de Janeiro. They became closer to other social movements and organizations. Then they decided to start a family, to "put down roots". **"And then the best place is where our family is. I'm here today in Terra Prometida with my family, but I'm also close to my mother, Dona Geralda, who is 83 and has been in the Campo Alegre settlement for 40 years. My father, Adir, died five years ago, but he left us this legacy: of love for the land, love for life, love for the community. It was something he did until his last days."**

Her relationship with Cosme gave birth to Ana Sofia, who is now 11 years old. This was an important milestone in her life, as she says **"...the most special thing that happened was that I met my partner and my daughter was born. So, that's why I say that all the stages, from childhood to youth and political maturity, have been within the struggle for agrarian reform. So this is something I won't give up..."**

The Terra Prometida Settlement originated in the occupation of Fazenda Santana, in Miguel Pereira, on November 28, 1999. It was later transferred to Santa Cruz due to the state's interest in building the Companhia Siderúrgica do Atlântico (CSA) in that area. This project caused environmental damage, which made it impossible to set up an agrarian reform settlement. After yet another expulsion process, it was negotiated that the families would be relocated to an area 9 kilometers away, known as JR Paraíso. However, this area could not accommodate all the families, leading to the need to also occupy Fazenda Sempre Verde to accommodate the 74 families involved.

The continuous process of displacement and reoccupation discouraged many people, causing credibility and trust to wane. The six-month agreement, with its promises of basic infrastructure such as houses, roads and electricity, has not been fulfilled and living conditions are still very precarious. In this sense, Bia is affirmative when

she says that “agrarian reform is not just about distributing land, but also includes creating the right structural conditions to live on it.” This is in addition to the important challenge of ensuring that all plots are occupied in order to ensure security, community cohesion and the welcome and integration of new families.

Shirley shared her story alongside Bia, and told us how she got to the occupations. She joined the fight when she was still a teenager, influenced by her mother, Dona Luzia, who worked on the dump and dreamed of having a farm. Her mother got to know the MST and moved to an encampment in Paracambi, when she became interested in the cause. She married a fellow fighter, Enildo Caetano, and they moved to the encampment. After facing several hardships, such as repossessions and environmental disasters, they decided to join the reoccupation of the plots in Terra Prometida in 2018. She receives support and welcome from the community, especially from Bia and Cosme, who helped her overcome personal challenges and grow.

She has learned to lead meetings and actively participate in community decisions, feeling more and more an integral part of the movement and overcoming the insecurities that previously limited her. She and her mother participate in the health collective, producing herbal medicines, soaps, shampoos, and conditioners, as well as promoting agroecological production and the appreciation of medicinal herbs. Her testimony is emotional and reveals a lot about the power of a community that welcomes, supports, and recognizes the potential of its members.

Bia and Shirley see themselves as caretakers in many ways: of the land, of people, of animals and of the community. They emphasize the importance of healthy, poison-free food and the need for public policies that guarantee access to organic food for everyone. In the settlement, they created Coletivo Terra which, during the pandemic, helped organize the distribution of base baskets [a reference to the basis of food which is fruit, vegetables and greens], organic food and natural products, to urban and peripheral families affected by isolation and the economic crisis.

This action not only provided food, but also strengthened ties between the countryside and the city, showing the importance of interdependence and cooperation in times of crisis. Shirley reflects on care “we take care to be able to deal with people, when we

talk about the land, when we talk about food, we also talk about love, friendship. We should have for people empathy, and solidarity, I think that goes into every sense of saying care.” And Bia adds: “This issue goes beyond that, it’s about caring for life in its fullness, because we don’t want it just for ourselves, I want good food for everyone. In Coletivo Terra we have already discussed giving the poor access to organic food, and this has been very strong during the pandemic. We have to widen access, that’s care.

The importance of adequate public policies for agrarian reform is a recurring issue, as there is a lack of successful examples in Rio de Janeiro. Bia believes that with more support and investment many more could benefit from life in the countryside. Collective struggle and resistance are key to overcoming difficulties and building a fairer, more sustainable society.

Agroecology and ancestral care go hand in hand, as Bia says: **“From the perspective of each farmer, each woman farmer, as caretakers of the land, as producers of this biodiversity, when we look at the indigenous villages, at our quilombola brothers and sisters, they were already practicing agroecology long before us. Nego Bispo points out: “Agroecology is actually a name given at the university to something we’ve been doing for thousands of years.”**

With her experience, Shirley addresses the farmers’ commitment to caring for their legacy of struggle and building values for new generations: “Farmers must work to teach their children to love the land, to love what they do, to love farming and, if they later want to leave because of other dreams, let it be because of personal choices and not because they see farming as something exhausting, tiring or discouraging. Everyone needs a profession in life and farmers are responsible for feeding the nation.”

Bia and Shirley share their experiences, reflecting on the challenges and achievements in rural settlements. Despite the adversities they face, they persist in the fight, highlighting the community’s resilience and determination.

“We take care to be able to deal with people, when we talk about the land, when we talk about food, we also talk about love, friendship. We should have for people empathy, and solidarity, I think that goes into every sense of saying care.”

Bia describes Terra Prometida not just as a place to live, but as a space for learning and strengthening the community. The settlement, she says, has been the scene of intense social and political mobilization, uniting residents around common goals such as environmental protection and sustainable production. She emphasizes that “the land is not just a resource to be exploited, but a home to be cared for, where every bit of soil and every drop of water is valued.”

The production of organic food and the use of medicinal herbs are pillars of life in Terra Prometida. Bia and Shirley, along with other families in the settlement, invest in agroecological farming, which not only provides healthy food for the community but also creates a model of sustainability that can be replicated elsewhere. They see the land as a source of health and well-being, where every plant grown and every natural product developed contributes to the health of the community.

Bia and Shirley’s testimonies are marked by strength and resistance, as well as sweetness and hope for better times. It is clear from their speeches how important well-structured and politically active communities are for the success of agrarian reform. They argue that the true success of a settlement is not only measured by the land won, but by the well-being of the community, the sustainability of the environment and the ongoing commitment to social justice. The struggle for effective agrarian reform is long and complex, but women like Bia and Shirley inspire us to believe in the possibility of change, redefining what it means to live and fight for land.

“The land is not just a resource to be exploited, but a home to be cared for, where every bit of soil and every drop of water is valued.”

“Caring starts with something that affects you. It can be motivated by a process of ‘joining’ a cause because there is no way out or because it is the way out.”

Carla Carvalho
Resident of an occupation organized by the CDDH in 1984, in Alto Independência. Pedagogue, general coordinator of the Petrópolis Center for the Defense of Human Rights



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video interview.

Eliene Vieira



A member of movements of mothers whose children faced violence enforced by the state, Eliene Maria Vieira is an active combatant in the fight for decarceration. She has been part of the National Network of Mothers and Families Victims of State Terrorism. Eliene has been a popular legal promoter, acting as a community leader trained to help the population and combat violence and discrimination. She provides support to mothers throughout Brazil. Today, she works as an expert within the State Mechanism for Preventing and Combating Torture, a public body linked to ALERJ, resulting from UN guidelines, State Law No. 5.778 of June 30, 2010.

Eliene, 48 years old, from Vicência, Pernambuco, moved to Rio de Janeiro as a child, where she lives in the Rocha neighborhood. A typical Brazilian citizen, the result of miscegenation between Portuguese, Italians and indigenous people, she says that her paternal grandmother spoke indigenous language. She has three children, two boys and a girl, and two grandchildren. Two of her children are black, and one of them was arbitrarily shot and imprisoned, turning her life upside down.

After graduating from Estácio de Sá University in Human Resources Management, Eliene was employed by a telecommunications company and lived like most Brazilian workers: from home to work and from work straight home to look after her family. This daily routine was painfully disrupted when, one early morning in 2016, her phone rang and a panting voice on the other end told her that her 19-year-old son had been shot and was lying on the ground during a police operation in Manguinhos, the neighborhood where he lived. Desperate, she left the house without even knowing how or where to find her boy.

Hours later, when she found him, she realized that a bullet had gone through her son's chest and that he would have to undergo urgent surgery to remove the bullet. In the midst of this immense pain, she is also informed by the police that her son is a criminal and that he has been arrested. Outraged and unable to believe what she was hearing, Eliene was taken to the police station to give explanations. Amid feelings of fear and emotion, Eliene told the police that her son had been shot in the street, which was not true. Eliene repeated many times that she was afraid, very afraid. A police chief then ordered Eliene's arrest for false witness to a crime.

After more than 12 hours in detention, Eliene was only released by the police at seven o'clock in the evening. From that moment on, she began a real saga to find out which hospital her son was in. After exhaustively searching everywhere, she finally managed to see him. In an increasingly serious condition, after 15 days, the boy had to be taken to the Intensive Care Center, and it wasn't clear to Eliene why, instead of getting better, her son only got worse. When he finally recovered, her son was taken straight to prison, without Eliene having any information about which prison. She faced yet another battle: finding out which prison he was in so that she could visit her son and understand what had happened.

On the first visit, he tells his mother that he was tortured by military police during his stay in hospital, which intensifies Eliene's feelings of pain, fear and indignation. Moved to seek justice and to cry out to the world about the irregularities in her son's trial, Eliene decided think strategically. Luckily she knew Mônica Francisco, now a State Representative in Rio de Janeiro, who took

her by the hand to join the movements formed by mothers who have their children imprisoned or who have lost them to the armed arm of the State. These movements mobilize for the right to memory, truth, justice, reparations and accountability for the perpetrators of violence. There, Eliene understood the potential of collective struggle and that, together with other mothers, she could fight for the rights of her son and the whole family.

In order to understand her son's case and her rights, Eliene took the Popular Legal Promoters (Promotoras Legais Populares- PLPs) course (Source: <https://themis.org.br>), learning the basics of law, women's human rights, the organization of the state and the judiciary, among other relevant topics, depending on the local context. After this training, Eliene not only used the knowledge she had acquired for herself and her family, but also began to work voluntarily in the fields of defence (accompaniment and screening of claims for violations), prevention of violations (socio-community education in joint actions and workshops) and promotion of rights (participation and representation in councils, conferences, commissions and forums).

In 2017, as a result of her experience and deep involvement with the subject, Eliene began working at the Institute for Studies of Religion - ISER, in the area of Rights, as a researcher on the criminal justice system and people's rights. Admired by the ISER team, who call her a "Penal Abolitionist", Eliene

says: "That's when I became a caregiver, taking care of other mothers, listening to their stories, offering guidance for criminal proceedings or referrals for legal assistance, often in partnership with ISER. At other times, I go after the benefits that the prisoner's family is entitled to, I move for donations of food parcels, I seek referrals to the Public Defender's Office or, sometimes, I hold a conversation so that everyone can listen to each other. This is very important so that mothers and relatives of people suffering violence and torture at the hands of the state can hug each other and take care of themselves."

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“ Society looks at the mothers and family members of those in prison as criminals. We are seen as criminals just like the people inside. Even if your child has been wrongly imprisoned, society doesn't care who is inside. Mothers and family members then feel lonely, lost. Because of the prejudices they face, it is vital that they seek support from networks that welcome and fight for them.”

According to her, these long-suffering mothers come to her through referrals. But you don't just have to be a mother to receive care. Eliene sees all family members, including those from other states, which is possible because the movements are articulated in national networks, managing to mobilize local partners for the services. Eliene is keen to emphasize that no movement seeks visibility, only a focus on justice.

Eliene says that her son's imprisonment for two years and nine months, in a trial full of errors and arbitrariness, has been a source of strength and determination for her to do more than just seek a solution to her family's problem. In her struggle, she has discovered the existence of thousands of family members throughout Brazil who have similar problems: sons and daughters arbitrarily imprisoned, murders that are never investigated, children who disappear, children subjected to torture and abuse by the state. There are countless proceedings that are not understood by many families, who are being "literally steamrollered" for years by the state that was supposed to protect them. Eliene took a collective step forward. She transformed her pain into the strength to fight.

Thus, in the midst of her pain, Eliene joined the Rio de Janeiro State Front for Decarceration - FRENTE-RJ -, a network founded in January 2017 with around

100 civil society organizations involved, including social movements of family members and survivors of imprisonment. FRENTE-RJ's mission is to confront mass incarceration and the illnesses generated by prison, based on the concrete experiences of people who have had their lives impacted by the penal state, acting to denounce the racist, genocidal and cisheterosexist project carried out by the justice system. The main objective is to strengthen the struggle of people who have survived imprisonment and their families. (Source: <https://wikifavelas.com.br/>)

With her experience, Eliene is able to present herself in the fight to denounce the serious human rights violations that occur in prisons, questioning actors in the justice system and promoting mobilization through advocacy campaigns and strategic litigation. She is also active in the National Network of Mothers and Families as a representative of the Rio de Janeiro State Mechanism to Combat Torture. This network aims to denounce the genocide of black people, the slaughters in favelas, the increase in the number of homicides in the country and to seek answers from the state in relation to each of these cases. (Source: <https://wikifavelas.com.br/>)

Naturally, its agenda meets with the National Agenda for Decarceration, a national movement of family members of prisoners and survivors of the prison system, which works to strengthen the links between family members of prisoners, survivors of imprisonment and other human rights movements in Brazil. The movement works on communication, strategic litigation, legal advice, organizing events, building campaigns and providing various types of support to local movements.

Also naturally, the movements intersect and strengthen each other, complementing and broadening Eliene's scope of action. In 2022, after passing a selection process, Eliene became an expert at the State Mechanism to Combat Torture in Rio de Janeiro - MEPCT/RJ. This is an important public human rights body linked to the House of Representatives of Rio de Janeiro - ALERJ. Created in 2010, it is the result of UN guidelines, and its main objectives are to plan, carry out and conduct periodic and regular visits to places where people are deprived of their liberty - such as prisons, custody and psychiatric treatment hospitals, retirement homes, among others - actively preventing, through recommendations and the identification of situations or risks of torture, as well as other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment. The Mechanism is also tasked with recommending measures to adapt places of deprivation of liberty to international and national standards, as well as monitoring the measures implemented. (Source: <https://www.mecanismo.rj.com.br/>). To date, more than 360 places of deprivation of liberty have been visited.

"I try to look after helpless mothers, desperate for answers, for justice, to stop the violence and torture coming from the state. Other mothers take care of many other mothers. It's the wheel of care turning and expanding. I can no longer imagine not working on these fronts, this is my life now. I feel desperate when I see arbitrary arrests taking place, especially when the violence comes from the state. I often feel frustrated, powerless and revolted by the prejudiced view of society, which doesn't understand the context in which it is inserted. In the future, I'm thinking of expanding my network and promoting more political and human rights training," says Eliene.

When asked who takes care of her and if she feels cared for, Eliene answers with a half-smile: "Taking care of myself is seeing that my children are doing well. But, I confess, I'm going to have to take care of myself."

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"The invention of a Brazil that we want to pass for a broad discussion on the right to the street, to the city and to the bodies."

Luiz Antônio Simas.
Brazilian writer and professor

Flávia Souza



As if that weren't enough, as well as being a multi-artist, dancer, singer, writer, cultural producer, choreographer and casting coach, Flávia is also the founder and coordinator of the Grupo Afrolaje Cultural Association and a member of the National Forum for the Development of Public Policies for Women in the Hip-Hop Movement, set up by the Ministry of Women. The aim of the Forum is completely in line with Flavia's cause: to formulate public policies and campaigns to end discrimination against women in the Hip-Hop movement and to combat misogyny.

Flávia has many activities and many talents, but at the heart of everything is dance and movement. Lara Sayão, PhD in philosophy from the State University of Rio de Janeiro/UERJ, says: “Nobody dances alone. Dance with, dance for, dance together. Dancing is fascination, it’s resistance, it’s movement from within announced in the body, this partner that allows us to say who we are. Dance is an expression that there is something vibrating, something being.” This excerpt has a lot to do with Flávia and her art, her body, her dance, identity and movement.

“*Nobody dances alone. Dance with, dance for, dance together. Dancing is fascination, it’s resistance, it’s movement from within announced in the body, this partner that allows us to say who we are. Dance is an expression that there is something vibrating, something being.*”
Lara Sayão

Flávia, who was born in the Carmela Dutra Maternity Hospital in Méier and raised in Engenho de Dentro, has been living in Vila Militar in Deodoro for the last ten years. As a child, she felt extremely free on the streets of Rio’s suburbs, but she also faced domestic violence. In the 1980s, when she studied at the Brigadeiro Faria Lima School, built on top of the Ary Franco prison, she already felt the weight of oppression and racism. Flávia says that, even at early age, she stood out as a leader and recalls that, at the age of eight, when a classmate said that her hair was “ugly”, she reacted immediately by saying “my hair doesn’t hurt anyone”.

As a result, the fight escalated, the boy ran after her saying he was going to hit her and, while trying to escape, she ran so hard that she hit her face on a pole. The pain was so great that she fainted and her little girl’s face was badly bruised. This was just one of many episodes throughout her life. This is why she is keen to point out that racism kills and that it manifests itself in many ways, in different layers.

Even back then, Flávia said she wanted to be an artist. She was always dancing, singing and acting because she couldn’t sit still. Whenever she could, her mother enrolled her on courses at an institution now called FAETEC. Courses that could train her for some kind of income-generating activity, such as manicure, hairdressing, typing. Finally, a theater course came up and she enrolled without her mother knowing because she felt she couldn’t miss the opportunity. So she decided to take theater classes and, only at the final performance of the course,

did she call her mother, who simply couldn’t believe what she was seeing on stage. Luckily for Flávia, that same evening she received an invitation to sign a contract with the SESC Madureira theater company. Her mother and grandmother had been domestic workers for years and at that point, with the contract with Sesc, Flávia, who was under 18, would be paid more than her mother and grandmother combined.

Flávia never stopped working with art, but it was always with great difficulty. This was due to structural and institutional racism and the low level of formal inclusion of black people in the cultural production chain at the time. Determined, of course, she carried on, grabbing every opportunity she could, including joining the Companhia de Teatro dos Comuns.

With a lot of encouragement from friends, she took the entrance exam for the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro - UFRJ, believing that she wouldn’t pass. But not only did she pass, she came third in the competition. So she graduated in Dance and has a postgraduate degree in Teaching in Primary and Secondary Education from AVM / Cândido Mendes University.

A pioneer, Flávia carries with her the symbol of being the first person in her family to graduate from university. She has acted in more than 20 theater productions and musicals, made films and television and traveled internationally with various groups to countries in Europe and Latin America. However, Flávia points out that it’s a career with ups and downs, sometimes even more downs than ups, which frustrates her. Flávia’s husband is a civil servant and, at many times, she has had to rely on his stability at work in order to move forward.

In her youth, she became fascinated and involved with the Hip-Hop Movement, which, being a plural and diverse cultural manifestation that involves different forms of artistic expression (graffiti, rap, DJ, dance) and knowledge, expanded Flávia’s field of activity even further. As a rap singer, her songs denounce violence against women. It is in this field that she takes the opportunity to discuss the social reality that surrounds her, the role of youth, identity, blackness, as well as remaining active in the fight against all forms of violence. Hip-Hop enters her life as an agent of change, as a way of understanding and intervening in the world, as a movement that denounces inequalities.

She is part of the National Front for Hip-Hop, is a representative in Rio de Janeiro and, recently, as a member of the 1st Forum of Women in Hip-Hop, she became an important leader in the movement’s grassroots discussions.

She points out that, with the Hip-Hop movement, she learned to be ready for the fight, but at the same time, she says that, at many moments, she felt tired of the “fields of dispute”. She compares the hip-hop movement to the quilombolas, the former being more “on the doorstep” and immediate because it deals with violence in the urban space and therefore requires more direct responses to its demands. The second, in her opinion, is calmer, requiring patience, resilience and collective acceptance. The experience of real daily war and denunciation of hip-hop has certainly an impact on mental health.

Flávia’s jongo ancestry spoke louder and she, who was already a member of the Hip-Hop movement, started gathering people in jongo circles on the slab of her mother’s house in Méier, reviving an old family tradition. Her relationship with the Jongo is ancestral, but she didn’t even know it.

“Jongo was following me. When I was going to theater classes in college, the professor put me in Jongo class with Mestre Darcy. At the time, I must admit that I didn’t like it, I thought it was quite boring. But Mestre insisted, saying that I was a Jongueira (...) **It took me a while to pay attention, and suddenly I got involved. I auditioned for the Plataforma concert hall and was approved because it had an Afro section and I knew how to dance Jongo and Afro dances. Then, at university, in order to get a scholarship and not have to work, I took an exam for a folklore company and passed it because of Jongo”.**

Flávia says she had no idea about her history, which was gradually revealed by her grandmother. Her great-grandmother was a great jongueira leader and suffered constant persecution because of her tradition. Threatened with being burned, she had to flee out of fear. Her great-grandmother then decided to leave her 8-year-old daughter with a white family to be raised. This girl was Flavia’s grandmother. The

white family turned her grandmother into a maid on the pretext of providing her with food and shelter. She was never paid. They used her like a “20th century slave”.

Her grandmother resented the Jongo because she understood that it changed her destiny and took her away from her mother. With the rehearsals of the Jongo in her daughter’s house, the listening to the drums, the “rodas”, the laughter, the joy, her grandmother gradually rediscovered her ancestry. She could not help herself, and little by little she joined in. It was in the Jongo, throwing her skirt, spinning, dancing, that she found herself again. It was then that Flávia understood that it was her mission to be the caretaker of this family tradition.



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At the time, I must admit that I didn’t like it, I thought it was quite boring. But Mestre insisted, saying that I was a Jongueira (...) It took me a while to pay attention, and suddenly I got involved.”*

It’s very symbolic to occupy the space of the slab to start rescuing the memory and tradition of the Jongo. It’s a reinterpretation of the significance of the slab in community houses, a place commonly recognized as a meeting place for ghettos and a focus for cultural resistance. In addition to the Jongo, there is also the practice of Capoeira Angola on the slab and gatherings to research, preserve and disseminate the memory of Afro-Brazilian popular culture.

In 2011, Flávia founded the AFROLAJE Group, in partnership with her husband, Professor Ivan Junior, with the aim of caring for the ancestral heritage of Afro-Brazilian cultural manifestations. “With AFROLAJE, we seek to rescue, preserve and spread the diversity of Afro-Brazilian culture through dance, music, percussion, research and black body expression. Our desire is to spread the culture of African origin with performances in public and/or private spaces, mixing dance, percussion and research, taking advantage of group moments for collective learning,” says Flávia.

Regularly, on the last Sunday of each month, they hold a cultural meeting of Jongo, Capoeira Angola and related events in Praça Agripino Grieco, in Méier. Their aim is to occupy and use public space as a resistance movement, giving people in the surrounding area the opportunity to experience popular culture of Afro-Brazilian origin, thus contributing to its dissemination, appreciation, recognition and celebration. They also hold free dance workshops on Afro-Brazilian popular culture, talks and experiences with traditional quilombola communities.

AFROLAJE is made up of mostly black children, young people and adults who live at a social and economic disadvantage. With the help of field research, meetings and debates with popular masters, the group aims not only to develop movement and sound, but also, and above all, to provide its members with historical tools, in order to stimulate the construction of identity and appreciation of Afro-Brazilian culture. The percussive music and dances of African origin are one of the country's main cultural symbols, and learning them provides young people and adults with the knowledge and protagonism of the history of their ancestors.

The meetings are packed with drums and berimbaus, and the public is welcomed with games, singing, playing, playing and dancing, through interactive presentations, workshops, experiences and rounds of dialog. Through art, dance, music, expression, rhythms, touches, singing and the fruits of Afro-Brazilian culture, Afrolaje seeks to reinforce respect for Brazil's cultural diversity, as well as contributing to the elimination of racism in our society.

Having gone through a panic attack and depression, the hardest thing for Flávia was to accept that she was facing a mental illness, since there is still a lot of prejudice and misunderstanding of the illness. As if a black woman couldn't be depressed. According to her, it was common to hear that "you don't have time for that" or that "it's a white woman's thing", which made her realize that overcoming prejudice is the first step.

"I took one medicine after another and it seemed like I couldn't get out of my sofa, many different doctors. There came a time when I couldn't take any more medication. So I looked inward, gathered my strength and all my knowledge. I dedicated myself to researching physical methods of dance and movement that could be used in a healing process. I did a lot of research and was inspired by Inês Galvão, mixing rhythms, Kalimba, aniti-gymnastics and the limits of the body. From there, I was able to develop a body-dynamic methodology called MOVIMENCURE to support the healing process of people with mental illness, with the aim of "unveiling, not labelling and with transversal strategies". says Flávia about this painful time.

Based on her experience, Flávia has transformed the methodology into a dynamic that can be applied for 1-3 hours. The technique she created allows us to reflect on how the body in movement is fundamental to the process of healing and self-care. It proposes a physical and scenic encounter through Afro-diasporic

"I took one medicine after another and it seemed like I couldn't get out of my sofa, many different doctors. There came a time when I couldn't take any more medication."

movements. Using different rhythms inspired by Orixás, Jongo, Samba and Hip-Hop among others, different experiences are promoted through breathing exercises. It encourages moments of expression, collective sharing and interpersonal communication, always focusing on the connection between mind and body to promote health and healing. MOVIMENCURE is an example of the practice of caring for others and oneself that Flávia also uses as a methodology for preparing her cast.

Using MOVIMENCURE, Flávia created, developed, produced and acted in the play "Tempestuosa Depressagem". Directed by actress and director Tatiana Tibúrcio, the play portrays the nuances and consequences of Panic Disorder and Depression, with a focus on the black population - especially women. Flávia, who is the main actress and has the special participation of singer and jongueira Daniella Gomes, draws on her own experience to reflect on the subject and how the body in movement can help overcome this problem.

The show uses video reports, live music, dance and acting to shed light on the subjective experiences of human beings, proposing to discuss the consequences of these subjectivities from a racial perspective. The aim is to denounce the fact that, in the face of a structurally racist context, black people are silenced and made invisible. Flávia won the Culture and Diversity Award. She is in negotiations for a possible film.

Reflecting on her role as caretaker of an ancestral heritage of Afro-Brazilian cultural manifestations, Flávia gets very emotional and her eyes fill with tears because, as she makes a point of saying, her relationship as caretaker of her ancestral culture is very strong.

“I, for example, have no financial support most of the time. In 12 years, there have only been three calls for proposals for Afrolaje. We can't talk about care practices without talking about democratizing access to funding for care.”

“I feel like a caretaker of souls, of people, of energies, of religion, of Ifá. I really feel like a caregiver, but I'm also very tired. I wanted to stop for a while, but I can't. We have to take care of everything so that caring can happen. Caregiver fatigue is a fundamental issue when we talk about public care policies. I, for example, have no financial support most of the time. In 12 years, there have only been three calls for proposals for Afrolaje. We can't talk about care practices without talking about democratizing access to funding for care,” she concludes, tired but not discouraged.



“I am not discriminated against 'Cause I'm different, I become different through discrimination.”

Grada Kilomba
Writer, psychologist and
Portuguese artist

Flávio and Massari



A couple, he a geography teacher, she a physical education teacher, both passionate about suburban culture. Together they founded the CASARTI Cultural Centre - Casa do Artista Independente in Vista Alegre, Rio de Janeiro, intending to support and provide a space for independent artists from different fields to show their work, as well as disseminate and promote quality popular culture and education for local residents. It's also a Culture Point, where a film club is open to the community. Caring for the intangible art of the periphery, memories, and stories, and celebrating the lives of peripheral artists is a true profession of faith for the couple.

A geographer with a degree from the Universidade Federal Fluminense/UFF, Flávio is a teacher, singer, songwriter, producer, and cultural manager. He is proud to say that he comes from a black family. He was born in the former state of Guanabara, more precisely in Rocinha, where he lived until the age of ten. Eliana Massari Simões, who calls herself Massari Simões, was born in Oswaldo Cruz to a very strict and conservative father who raised her to be a wife and have children. She says that this upbringing never stopped her from being avant-garde, daring, and ahead of her time.

Massari has always been a feminist. When she was eight years old, she fought at school to be able to participate in all sports without gender restrictions. She says that her political, physical, mental, and cultural horizons were forever broadened during her time at Colégio Visconde de Cairu. She also says that she was precocious enough to drive a car or a motorbike and to start working. In her neighbourhood, she fought for the rights denied to the inhabitants and began to produce her first events.

She was a handball and soccer player in the 70s. She graduated in Physical Education and worked as a teacher until 1988. Today she is a cultural producer, a manager, and president of CASARTI.

Flávio and Massari have been together for 33 years. They met at a school in Rio de Janeiro where they both taught. Massari points out that even before they had an emotional relationship, they were cultural producers and managers, partners. Respect and passion for suburban art were other things they had in common. Massari praises her partnership with Flávio, saying that he has always been a man who defends women's rights and has always been at her side unconditionally.

The couple's first cultural production was 'Projeto Cantoria', created in 1988 to open up space for independent artists from the suburbs. The two were already emerging as cultural leaders, fighting for suburban culture. In an article published in O Globo on 20 September 1988, there is a photo of Flávio and Massari when they were young. The headline reads: "Artists put Projeto Cantoria on the street". The project aimed to support semi-professional theater groups, poets, visual artists, craftspeople, and independent singers or bands and, as they didn't have a fixed space to hold their events, Flávio and Massari used the Lons Culturais or alternative areas in bars, restaurants, and concert halls.

Flávio, who was already an artist and had often experienced the disregard and disrespectful treatment of professional independent artists by the owners of the establishments, felt uneasy about the injustices and inequalities in the chain of the productive economy of culture, such as low fees, lack of infrastructure, failure to pay on time and the exclusion of black artists, among others. This recurring situation led him to think about strategies to improve the conditions of

artistic creation and work for suburban artists. His great desire was to create an infrastructure for popular artists in the suburbs and to promote and create opportunities for independent artists.

In order to rent a space to host CASARTI, on Rua Ponta Porã, in Vista Alegre/Rio de Janeiro, Flávio used the money he received from a work indemnity. Years later, due to the rent increase (CASARTI does not receive public funding), they renovated the shed at the back of the house where they live and transformed it into a cozy and welcoming place for everyone. CASARTI is currently located in Cordovil/RJ, a neighborhood next to Vista Alegre.

As an activist in the anti-racist movement and an advocate of public policies for culture and education in Rio's suburbs, Flávio, together with his wife and partner, has been involved for years in movements that discuss and propose public policies for the sector. Together, in 2006, they founded the CASARTI Cultural Center - Casa do Artista Independente (House of the Independent Artist), which houses cultural and educational projects and creates jobs for teachers, masters of their craft, artists, and technicians.

The site was structured to have a stage for concerts, a library, a film club, a multipurpose Room for free courses, and a second-hand shop. Among the activities they develop and offer to the public are music workshops, soirees, discussion groups, interviews, workshops, sketches, lectures, screenings of independent national films, reading circles with children, and tutoring sessions with local tutors. Massari says they also use the street space for activities with children, encouraging them to take part in reading circles and music activities. Their pride overflows when they tell us that they were one of the first to become a Ponto de Cultura in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro.

When asked who they look after, they say they look after independent artists from various segments and technicians from the cultural production chain, as well as children and pre-teens from the area. At the same time, they don't stop looking after their territory, the place where they live, the stories, and the art that is produced there. They take care of the intangible art of the periphery and make a point of paying homage to and celebrating local artists and artists from the suburbs in general, doing research, creating shows, and holding talks about them.

They also make sure that independent artists have better opportunities to develop their art and perform and support them in negotiating contracts, making sure that they are fair. They provide a place for them to rehearse and provide infrastructure for rehearsals and concerts. Everything is done collectively and jointly. CASARTI has a bar that is open to the public when there are concerts and other activities, generating funds for the preservation of the space and the activities that take place there.

Flávio says that the work is carried out in partnership with other caretakers: Luiz Claudio Motta Lima, from the “Subúrbio em Transe” film club; Mano Kinho Chinfra, from the “Suburbagem” project; Ulisses Conti, from MIC - Movimento de Integração Cultural (manager of Areninha João Bosco); Amauri Oliveira da Silva, from “M.A.I.S. - Movimento dos Artistas Independentes dos Subúrbios”; and Teresa Guilhon, from the “Diálogos Suburbanos” project.

“These projects are aligned and have been doing integrated arts work for over 20 years. This was the way we found to exchange information and achievements, practicing the most genuine collaborative work.”

CineClube, which works in partnership with “Subúrbio em Transe”, has Eryk Rocha, Glauber Rocha’s son, as its godfather. It is a space for collective construction that provides moments of study and debate on films and relevant themes. The community library in CASARTI is also very busy with reading groups and mediations led by Flávio and guests.

Flávio makes a point of emphasizing the popular nature of the education and culture they promote at CASARTI. The CASARTI Cultural Center is, in fact, more than a space where numerous cultural and educational projects of a popular nature are developed. He explains that the focus is on creating a support network for people who don’t have access to intangible goods on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro.

There are many activities and projects developed at CASARTI. All the time, the couple invent new strategies to mobilise the public, creating projects such as “Toque Show, a different talk show” (2022); “Causos, Causas & Canções” (Causes, Causes & Songs) (2013 to 2024); and “Mulheres que Cantam Homens” (Women Who Sing Men’s Songs), a tribute to poets who have set poetry to music and composers who have written lyrics, in which the songs are interpreted by independent singers. The project was inaugurated by the poet and lyricist Sérgio Natureza with his show “Natureza das Mulheres”. The poet Salgado Maranhão was also honoured with the show “Encantos do Maranhão”.

In 2022, Flávio directed the documentary “A Cor do Vil” and Massari was executive producer. The film portrays the daily life of a school in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro that applies a Freirian and anti-racist pedagogy, in accordance with Law 10.639: the Embaixador Barros Hurtado Municipal School in Cordovil, which has become a great example of anti-racist practices in the school environment. These are remarkable testimonies from teachers, directors, coordinators, students, parents, and support staff about their experiences at the school. This is how Flávio and Massari fight injustices that occur in the music production chain: by taking care of independent artists and guaranteeing the right to culture and leisure for the population of Cordovil, Vista Alegre, and the surrounding area.

With regard to the act of caring, Flávio emphasises the value of belonging with which he has been blessed: **“When I care for others, I feel like a citizen who belongs to my territory in my knowledge and actions.”**

Activities at CASARTI take place throughout the week. However, Flávio and Massari have recently had to take a break to look after their health. Long live the art of Rio’s suburbs and CASARTI’s carers!

“Caring is good for the soul and the spirit. Flávio and I tuned in, because we understand care as a way of being in the world. Caring is collaboration. We share what we have and not what is left. Giving up what you have to share is what I call care. Caring is looking at the other and understanding what they need and not just giving what you want to give.”

“There is a relationship between the caregivers and their territories. They are the “crias” of the place. The “crias” take care of their territories.”

Luciana Bezerra
Filmmaker and actress

Fleury Johnson



Fleury Johnson has been dreaming of becoming a doctor since he was four years old. He also had a desire to have experience outside of Togo, the West African country of his birth. He decided to study medicine at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), combining these two aspirations. He graduated as a general practitioner, specializing in the health of the black population. Dr. Fleury proposes care in a welcoming way so that black people are treated and “touched” considering their integrity and spirituality.

A Togolese national aged 32, he has been living in Brazil for 13 years. He is a General Practitioner qualified by Pasteur Hospital. He is a researcher, lecturer, social and digital activist on black health. His focus is on generating health information in a simplified and democratic way.

Dr. Fleury says it's very common to be asked if he left Africa escaping from war, if he's a refugee or if he left his country because he was suffering so much that he couldn't bear to stay. He explains:

“Why does it attract so much attention for a young black African to want to leave his country to study? I simply had the dream of studying abroad, just as thousands of young people want to experience life outside their countries.”

His grandmother's brother, who was a doctor, died before he was born, but there are several generations of doctors in the family. Dr. Fleury says that he grew up hearing from his grandmother that he was the reincarnation of his grand uncle. Coincidentally or not, reincarnation or not, he also says that, from the age of four, he would ask everyone what he had to do to become a doctor.

Looking back at his life story, he remembers that, when he was 10, he told a teacher that one day he would like to live in Brazil. At that time, he used to hear that Brazil was growing economically, creating opportunities and, as he had always found Brazil an interesting place, that captured his imagination. He opted for our country when he decided to study medicine. A former French colony, Togo is a French-speaking country and it is more common for young people to have aspirations of going to France or Canada. His uncle, for example, who is also a doctor, studied in Russia when it was still the Soviet Union.

In Togo, people commented that those who study abroad get more job opportunities and, consequently, social mobility when they return home, and this was something he wanted for his life when he returned. As a teenager, he thought about studying in Senegal, following in the footsteps of his grandfather who had studied there. So, when he was about to finish high school and finally enter his dream medical school, he tried to get a visa to study medicine in Senegal and France. However, he didn't get through to university in Senegal and they didn't accept him for the course in France on the grounds that there was already a medical course in Togo.

Faced with this situation, he decided to study in Togo, but at the end of his first year, a friend told him some good news: the Brazilian embassy had opened up places for foreigners to study medicine in Brazil. With this information in hand, he wasted no time: he went to the embassy early the next morning. The result was that he was selected as the first candidate for the Foreign Student Programme, but without any prediction as to when the programme would actually begin.

Impatient and eager to get started, Dr. Fleury decided to try out for other countries. He passed for Guinea Bissau, moved to the country and, a week later, when he was already settled in, he found out that he had passed for Senegal and that he would also be called to Brazil. Faced with so many options at the same time, he says he was left with a huge question mark over which way to go. He then decided to talk to his father and together they phoned to assess the future prospects in each country and he ended up choosing Brazil.

With a smile on his face, Dr. Fleury says he didn't understand a word of Portuguese, and that was the situation for his family and other friends and acquaintances who had also been on the exchange programme. Even so, they all signed the contract, thinking that they would have accommodation, a scholarship from the second year onwards and that someone from the Exchange Program would welcome them on arrival. But it didn't quite happen that way.

When she finally managed to speak to someone in charge of the program, he learned that there was no scholarship, no accommodation, no support for food and no one to guide them. As he arrived in Brazil with only U\$500.00, which at the time was equivalent to around R\$800.00, he used R\$400.00 to pay the rent for a room in the Santa Teresa neighborhood run by nuns, not knowing how she would survive in the country. When he called his father to ask if it would be better to return, he was categorical with his son: “Now that you're there, it's better to stay and face it. Believe me, it will get better. Smiling again, he says that he's glad he decided to stay and that if he'd known about the details of the Program he certainly wouldn't have come.

Under the Foreign Student Programme rules, no student on the programme could work while studying and risk being sent back to their country of origin if they failed to comply. A program that undoubtedly seems unsuitable and out of touch with reality for students with few financial resources.

Paying rent for a place to live and stay at university turned out to be a huge battle. For a while, he continued to live in the nuns' house, but with the Olympics, he had to leave because they needed to renovate the space. Faced with this situation, the family eventually sold a piece of land in Togo to help with his expenses, and even wedding rings were sold so that the parents could send some extra money.

At the end of his first year of medicine, he finally got a scholarship worth R\$622.00. As the amount was insufficient to support himself, he began to get by as best he could: he started giving French lessons to some acquaintances and selling clothes made from African fabrics that his family made and sent. The clothes arrived here in the luggage of clients of an uncle who had a tourist agency and took advantage of trips to Brazil to send him a suitcase of clothes to sell.

It was a period of real pilgrimage, during which he lived in accommodation at UFRJ and then in a small windowless room, full of mold and stuffy in a favela in Rio, in a very precarious and violent environment. On rent day, for example, the landlord would collect the rent with a rifle in his hand. As a result, every 10th of the month when the rent was due became a stress, with sweat dripping down his back. Fortunately, with a lot of perseverance, things began to improve.

As for the university, Dr Fleury says he was struck by the lack of black students on the course. He couldn't understand how Brazil, with its huge population, could have so few black students and teachers, especially at a public university. In his class, for example, there was only him and one other student. The inequality of opportunities was glaring. He says he was shocked to see that, while he struggled daily to pay the bus fare to get to university, like his black colleague, the number of rich white people with cars and full access to any course, congress or material was striking.

Dr. Fleury says that he was really shocked to realize that there were so few black people not only at university, but also occupying spaces of power, decision-making spaces. According to him, this scenario has changed since the implementation of public affirmative action policies, such as quotas. It has resulted in an increase in the number of black people in universities, but this is still not reflected in courses such as Medicine.

As a black man from an African country, Dr. Fleury says that he had to resignify his blackness when he realized what it was like to be black in a racist and extremely unequal society.

Still with a certain amazement, he recalls a striking episode that occurred when the biochemistry teacher was handing out the test marks. Many students were curious to see what his grade had been. Among them, they wondered how that African boy had done, until one of them asked bluntly: "How come your grade is higher than mine?". Once again, he was shocked to realize that the majority thought he couldn't possibly have the same level of knowledge as the whites in his class. At the teaching hospital, he also faced patients who didn't understand how he could be there studying to be a doctor. There were many times when Dr. Fleury was mistaken for a stretcher-bearer, a nurse or a cleaner. What lies behind this has only one name: structural and institutional racism.

"I had never thought that I would have to face racism in Brazil, a country that everyone told me was very open. The kingdom of racial democracy that people used to tell me Brazil was, I could never experience. I had to build my racial consciousness."

At university he was always interested in issues relating to the structure of society, its composition, diversity, racism, fair and equal health for all. Many of his classmates and professors said that he had a great ability to relate to patients and their families and an ease in conducting consultations, listening carefully to patients' stories and creating a bond with them. As a result, he decided to specialize in general practice in order to provide **"humanized care, as all care should be"**.

Things began to look up when he finished university and started working. Money started coming in and Dr. Fleury was able to stabilize himself. From specialization, he defined his residency: Cardiology. But as soon as he started his residency, he decided to take a break to broaden his horizons and his knowledge of medical management. He studied for an MBA in Health Management at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro/PUC-RIO, as well as specializing in Leadership Management at Harvard Business School in the United States.

"Even with all the difficulties, I never thought of giving up, and I always said to myself: it'll pass, I'll get through all this. It will work out, trust in the process. Do your own thing."

Today, as well as working in the office he set up in the Tijuca neighborhood, he also offers online consultations. His practice is open to everyone, but because he specializes in the health of the black population, 95% of her 500 or so clients are of African descent. The need to specialize in the health of the black population arose from her practical clinical experience, in which she saw, and still sees, the inequality and structural and institutional racism that directly impacts on black people's access to health. His focus is on boosting the health of the black population, dismantling practices of inequality and exclusion, with the patient as the focus of care.

He cites a few examples to illustrate how racism makes black people physically and mentally ill. **Racism limits not only access to health services, but also access to information, quality education, leisure and culture. For Dr. Fleury, these are universal and fundamental rights that make up and build the well-being and health of a population.**

According to the doctor, many studies and surveys in Brazil, such as those carried out by Fiocruz, show that the black population has higher mortality rates and how the injustices of the system seem to punish black women. Compared to white pregnant women, black women have less access to prenatal care during pregnancy, for example. Of the 6-7 prenatal appointments over 9 months prescribed by the Ministry of Health, only 30% of black women have access to all these appointments, while 70% of white women have access to the 6-7 appointments indicated.

Dr. Fleury says there are also studies that show that black people have less consultation time than white people, and that they also receive less anaesthesia and are touched less during consultations. The doctor and activist Jurema Werneck, one of the most important black leaders in the country, has developed studies and reflections on this reality.

For him, another important factor is that health conditions are also perceived and "accepted" differently in society depending on the color of the person.

His experience as a doctor of mostly black patients gives him a painful understanding of structural racism in Brazil and its consequences: **"Racism makes people sicker. Chronic non-communicable diseases, such as body aches, high blood pressure and diabetes, for example, are more common in the black and poor population. The place where a person lives and their daily life are highly linked to health conditions. A human being who travels three hours from the Baixada Fluminense to the Zona Sul every day, and then takes another three hours to get home,**

cannot be in good health. We need to look at sleep, diet, physical activity and housing conditions, among other habits, in order to be able to assess the patient as a whole and then come up with a treatment proposal."

Racism has an impact on health at different levels.

Black people die earlier from illnesses that could be treated and are also more underserved.

We need to take a transversal and intersectional look at the effects of racism on black bodies. Many health professionals don't take these health determinants into account. Dr Fleury says that all health professionals need to understand the patient as a whole, in the context of his or her life, so that they can propose a mechanism that corresponds to the individual reality of each person.

In his view, structural racism has a direct impact when there is a National Policy for the Black Population that is implemented by only 57 municipalities throughout Brazil. This policy, instituted by Portaria 92/2009, defines principles, guidelines and responsibilities for improving the health conditions of the black population. There is also Law no. 12.288, of 2010, which established the Statute of Racial Equality, defining that the right to health must be achieved through universal, social and economic policies to reduce the risk of disease and other health problems.

Dr. Fleury also believes that the operation of the SUS is challenging because Brazil, with its continental dimensions, is very complex, which aggravates the problems to be faced, requiring a lot of planning, organization, budget forecasting and adequate infrastructure, with doctors prepared to put the patient at the center of care. On the other hand, he appreciates the fact that the SUS is universal and open to all, noting the advantage of its existence, and that the challenge now is to improve it.

" *In Brazil, black people are disadvantaged in everything and mental health is no different. If a white autistic person has a crisis, they are supported. If a black autistic person has a crisis, they run the risk of being arrested or killed because they are perceived as a threat."*

Even with all the challenges of the SUS, Dr. Fleury thinks it is the best public health system compared to the countries he knows and works in. His new dream, now as a grown man who has faced and overcome diversity, is to one day be able to take the SUS model to his country, Togo.

His understanding is that it's necessary to have frank and transparent conversations with patients, giving them clear information so that they can take part in making decisions about their treatment and medication. It is also important to be open to other practices that complement traditional medicine, since communities are full of people who take care of each other with ancestral knowledge. These are the herbalists, the pray-ers, the benzedeiros, as well as spaces such as terreiros, quilombolas and indigenous communities who use what nature gives us for care and healing processes.

“We need to take care of our health by integrating our thinking in relation to the world, nature and the forces of nature. Health is relational and intersectional. There are some cultural practices in Togo that are closely linked to nature. Child baptisms, for example, always take place on the 7th or 14th. Babies are blessed by an element of nature that will protect the child.”

Dr Fleury's focus is on democratizing health information so that it is accessible to everyone, especially black people. He has created a channel on social networks

and is starting to act as a digital activist. His posts transmit information about well-being and health, understanding health in its broad, integral concept. For him, disease prevention is a very important point and there is no way to talk about disease prevention without addressing issues such as racism, xenophobia, homophobia and any other type of prejudice. In a racist, unequal and unjust society, the impacts on physical and emotional health are statistical. In general, his contributions draw attention to the following topics: chronic stress; racism and cancer: a toxic relationship; anxiety and racism; the most common diseases among black people; climate change and its impact on health; environmental racism and health, among others.

“Healthcare is a form of disease prevention. Care must be welcoming, black people must be treated, touched, listened to, respected in their beliefs, cultures and faith. There are patients who have been able to leave in peace when their beliefs in African religions have been respected. We need to understand pain, we need to understand spirituality, we need to respect people's beliefs. And understand that everyone has their own time to assimilate. The most important thing is that the doctor doesn't stop providing care.”

Another of Dr Fleury's initiatives is the recent creation of the Institute for Diversity and Inclusion in Health/DIS, which aims to bring more diversity and inclusion in health to public and private health organizations, training professionals to address the health of the Black population, the health of the LGBTQIAPN+ population, and including approaches to the importance of anti-chapism and combating machismo so that people are treated in a dignified and respectful manner. This way of being and acting as a doctor was the way he found to help change the Brazilian scenario.

Dr. Fleury also teaches collective health at the Fluminense Federal University (UFF) as a guest professor. To relax after so many activities, he likes to take care of plants, play sports, enjoy cultural activities and show African cuisine to his friends, not least because he loves to cook.

For him, health care practices mean bringing the person to the center of care. In his opinion, a person is born a caregiver, and those who are born that way already have a distinctive eye for the peculiarities of each person, because each one is unique and important as a whole. He is excited to say that he knows many doctors who are passing on their practices, considering the perspective of inequality, which fills his life with hope. He concludes:

“I take care of lives and people. And I’m very proud to be a black doctor who is available to treat all people, taking into account their characteristics, history, culture, beliefs and needs.”

“For us, racism is the symptom that characterizes Brazilian cultural neurosis.”

Lelia Gonzalez
Brazilian author and activist

Geraldo Bastos



Geraldo da Silva Bastos does not come alone: he's the great-grandson and son of a herbalist, Mrs. Deise, and the grandson of a healer woman. He grew up amid social movements since the 1980s. He's a herbalist with a Master's degree in Community Psychosociology and Social Ecology and a PhD from Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro - UFRJ. He is a researcher at LABMENS - Laboratório de Memórias, Territórios e Ocupações, Rastros Sensíveis. He was the founder of several pré-vestibular (university entrance exam) courses in Baixada Fluminense (RJ) and ensured that many young people had their right to education guaranteed. He coordinated projects at the Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro - UERJ's union and at the Nova Iguaçu Cathedral. He also coordinates the Quilombo Kilombá Popular Education Project in the Ilê Asé Ogun Alakoro's terreiro.

His political and life background is intertwined with the history of Brazil's Social Movements and, more specifically, those active in Nova Iguaçu and other parts of Baixada Fluminense. Influenced by Liberation Theology, Geraldo decided to fight alongside the people, the landless, the homeless, trade unionists, domestic workers and laborers. It was there, in the Comunidade Eclesiais de Base (Basic Ecclesial Communities), that he began his fight for human rights, being greatly influenced by the philosophical orientation of Dom Adriano Hipólito, bishop of the Diocese of Nova Iguaçu, who was very combative and committed to popular issues.

In telling his story, he points out that three people were very important in his formation and changed his life: Father Matteo Vivalda (Geraldo's confirmation catechist), Father João Martins and Sister Maria Oderda. Geraldo points out that the understanding of the three religions was that the Christ to be venerated as a Christ committed to the struggle of workers, women, and the marginalised, like Jesus Christ of the early communities.

At the age of 15, Geraldo took part in an occupation along with the priests in the Nova Aurora collective, in Belford Roxo (RJ), which became the largest urban collective in Latin America. In the 1970s and 1980s, the issue of housing shortages exploded in Brazil, and social movements, influenced by the Movimentos dos Camponeses (Peasants' Movement), started mobilizing to push for change by occupying land. Geraldo remembers that the army showed up and beat everyone up, but that after the military left, everyone started occupying everything again. In 1983, Leonel Brizola, then Governor of the State of Rio, committed himself to the struggle after intense popular pressure and ceded the lands of the Nova Aurora collective. Unfortunately, the land has not been regularized to this day, just as the Campo Alegre settlement has not. And since the land didn't always belong to the state, at the time Brizola ceded the use of the land so that those people could live there.

Along with the Catholic Church, Geraldo also created the Nova Iguaçu Domestic Workers' Union. Considering himself a "child" of the combination of Liberation Theology, the struggle of landless and homeless workers, and the struggle of domestic workers, he says that, through the Workers' Pastoral, he saw the struggle of the metalworkers' unions up close.

Throughout the interview, he often takes up Bishop Hipólito's phrases, such as: "If you want to be on Christ's side and find him, go and meet the workers,

“Father João used to tell me: Geraldinho, if we want to reach Christ, we have to look at the poorest, the beggars, the prostitutes, those who have nothing and no one wants to be around them. That's the way to reach Christ. And that made a big impression on me, because I was only 14.”

go and meet the women facing violence, go and meet the abandoned children, the elderly... Then you will find Christ.”

At the age of 22, Geraldo joined the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party). In 1984, he went to Italy as part of a political-cultural exchange, having been selected with two other people who were politically active within the Church to speak to young Italian Catholic youth. He ended up on the football field, playing in the second division of Italian football, and only returned after a while because he missed his mother.

On his return to Brazil, he decided to take a course with Dom Paulo Evaristo Arns, in the Diocese of São Paulo, where Luís Inácio Lula da Silva was a lecturer. When he finished the course, he says he left with the certainty that he had to help elect Lula president of the country.

With an emotional and vibrant voice, Geraldo says: **“We play a small part in these movements and are formed as human beings, as political citizens, as citizens who are active in the transformation of society. I have to admit that even though I'm now a Candomblé member, the Catholic Church, with its theology of liberation, was the first agent to give me this perspective of commitment to changing the social structure. This view made me see society in a different light. At the same time, it was Liberation Theology that took away the idea that I should experience religion in the church. That's because, in Liberation Theology, we talked a lot about the struggle with a commitment to social change. We didn't really talk about religion. There were celebrations, but the word commitment was very strong at the time. And commitment to God was linked to commitment to the social struggle. So this thing about worship, mass, and liturgy passed me by. I began to be very committed to this idea that being a Christian means being committed to the struggle. And then I went to fight.”**

For 50 years, he says he was a Catholic, but 10 years ago he embraced Candomblé. He says that he was very curious about diversity. African religions always caught his attention and that, even when he was a catechist, he would take his confirmation students to see the terreiros and the entities as a way of combating religious racism. Some priests got angry and wanted to expel him from the church, but Geraldo says he continued with this practice because he felt the students had the right to learn about different worldviews.

Geraldo recalls that he was arrested several times. In the 1980s, he was arrested for going on strike because he closed the Dutra highway and boycotted companies as part of the metalworkers' and shopworkers' struggle for a pay rise. Other times he was arrested for loitering, which was common because, in the 1980s, there was still a culture of the police arresting people based on Article 59 of Law 3.688, enacted in 1941.

Together with the Pastoral Operária (Workers' Pastoral) and the Pastora da Juventude (Youth Pastoral), Geraldo became a political activist and later became involved in trade unionism. "In 1994, at the invitation of Frei Davi, a very important leader in the popular education movement, we founded a pre-university entrance exam project at the Nova Iguaçu Cathedral with another group of people, which still exists today. At the start of the first class, we were surprised at the scale of the problem: we had 40 places on the course and only 13 black people were on the course. The pre-vestibular course (pre-university entrance exam) was for blacks (PVN), but there were few people with high school diplomas, because blacks usually drop out of school to work. How could we attract and find these young people? Together with Frei David, we decided to open the Pré Vestibular (university entrance examination) Course for Blacks and People in Need, changing the acronym to PVNC (Pré Vestibular for Blacks and People in Need) and welcoming whites and poor people as well," says Geraldo.

From that beginning, he dedicated himself to helping found 15 other centers in Baixada, including several neighborhoods in Nova Iguaçu, Belford Roxo and Mesquita, among others. He is proud to say that the popular education nucleus he set up

“ In reality, we were arrested for being black. Racism has always guided police action in Brazil. As I was studying at night, the police would pass by and ask for a signed license and, as I didn't have one because I was still studying, they would arrest me. Several times I was taken to the police station and I was also detained in the barracks accused by the military of being a communist.”

managed to get some students into public universities and, shortly afterwards, Frei David worked with his contacts to obtain a 100% scholarship at PUC-Rio for the students who passed the entrance exams. In 1998, Geraldo was invited to found and coordinate a pré-vestibular (university entrance exam) course at the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). Several years of hard work and achievements led him to organize and found the Quilombo Kilombá Popular Education Project, at the Ilê Asé Ogun Alakoro terreiro, in Magé (RJ).

In 2002, Geraldo suffered from Burnout Syndrome and had to take time off work because he was experiencing psychological violence and bullying from the political group that had won the elections in the UERJ Workers' Union. Geraldo took time off to take care of his mental health and was taken in by his family and by psychologist Conceição Pereira das Chagas, PhD, from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, and Dr. Isabela Vieira, a psychiatrist from UFRJ. Six years later, when he was discharged from treatment, he used her experience to carry out research, resulting in the production of the first booklet on bullying in Rio de Janeiro. In his research, he discovered that many union workers also suffered from bullying.

In 2008, Geraldo worked as Chief of Staff for the Secretary of Science and Technology of Belford Roxo and then in the Education sub-secretariat of the government of Mayor Lindbergh Farias (PT), in Nova Iguaçu, and in Social Assistance in the same city.

Geraldo says that he passed the UERJ entrance exam three times, but never found the time to go ahead because he was always working so hard. In 2010, however, he decided to focus on going to university to start an academic career. And since he wanted to lead people and teams, he chose to study Human Resources at Universidade Iguaçu/UNIG, and got involved in research right from the start.

“ I think I came out very strong because even though I was in treatment for six years, it gave me a foundation and a structure of identity and strength because I never went through it again. It's very difficult for anything to get me down now because I've become much stronger.”

Encouraged by his friend Celso Sanches, a professor at UNIRIO, Geraldo decided in 2017 to get a master's degree in the psychosociology programme at the UFRJ School of Psychology, which runs from 2018 to 2020. He says he didn't think he could get into a master's programme at a public university, but Celso disagreed and agreed to study with him. Once again, Geraldo felt the strength and importance of care in his life. Reinforcing his friend's belief, he came first in the competition for the Master's degree and, soon after graduating, found out that there was a competition for a PhD. **"I thought: That's already too much for a black, peripheral, Baixada-born, favela-dweller. But, encouraged by Claudia Miranda, who was from UNIRIO and who had set it on fire, I decided to do it and came first again,"** he says emotionally.

Geraldo researches resistance and violence, prayer and women healers, and many other topics related to the reality of Baixada Fluminense at the Laboratory of Memories, Territories and Occupations, Rastros Sensíveis/LABMENS. His Master's thesis was on prayer and healers, entitled 'Women who pray and heal: narratives and resistance in Nova Iguaçu, Baixada Fluminense (RJ)'. In his doctorate, he developed a thesis on the process of resistance in Baixada Fluminense, based on the situation of violence created by the state, the militia and the "Jesus traffickers" in the terreiros and rural settlements.

Geraldo's research into the prayers and healers shows that they have always provided holistic care to the people in their communities. He says: "Unfortunately, we are seeing a decline in the number of prayers and healers as a result of violent attacks by extremist practitioners of other religions. This is causing them to stop for fear of the physical and psychological aggression that many suffer.

In practice, Geraldo has noticed that the healing and prayer processes that take place within the communities have a predominance of women prayer leaders. In his thesis, he states that "this is a social intervention of great importance, since there is a great lack of access to health services for the population, especially for the population living in the outskirts of the city, which is mainly black, in a region

of strong political and religious conflicts, where most of the attacks on Afro-Brazilian religious terreiros take place". *In his research, Geraldo wants to know more about the ways in which racism and religious intolerance are articulated in the current scenario of violence in Nova Iguaçu, and how this affects the women who pray and heal.

Regarding the role of violence in Baixada, he believes that "violence is a symptom that is very present in the daily life of the Baixada Fluminense region, hitting a large number of women hard, both directly through femicide, and indirectly, in the case of the prayers, through prejudice and discrimination, which have religious racism as their main support".

"That's my journey, as a black man from the periphery, who's lost a brother murdered, who's lost 15 friends murdered by exterminating groups, by the police, 13 of them black. And we bring those marks with us. They have marked us, but they have also given us the potential to understand the political process and the extent to which the development of capitalism in our society is disrupting life, right?"

In his analysis, Geraldo shows that syncretism and religious racism permeate the activities of women who pray and heal in the city of Nova Iguaçu. Racism has a direct impact on care practices, both by increasing the need for physical and spiritual care, and by decreasing the number of people who care because of the fear of persecution, violence, and extermination. Based on this understanding.

In a natural manner, he connects his trajectory with his perception of care: "So for me, care is about reconnecting with life. Caring is about respecting your life and the lives of others. Caring is about the love we have and respecting the universe that has allowed us to exist. And caring for others is like continuing that magic. So every time we care for others, we are continuing the magic of creation."

When talking about life, Geraldo refers to all forms of life: "And then I'm talking about life as a whole, not just human life or ancestral life, but animal life, water life, river life, sea life, air life. The life of a human being is important, but I don't know if it's more important than the life of a dog, a cat, a tree, a riverbed, a wave on the beach. All life forms, if created by the universe, must exist. That's what I care about. And that's what I'm committed to, not least because of family tradition. I'm the great-grandson of a prayers, I'm the grandson of a prayer and my mother is a herbalist."

So his herbalist side comes from his ancestry. From the strength of the matriarchy that guided his life. And he continues this legacy of wisdom, turning the wheel and sharing his care for nature and people in the same way they taught him. Geraldo says that it was an encounter in Italy that awakened him to his destiny as an herbalist. **“I came into contact with herbs after meeting a prayer in Italy. And it never left me. Every day we make tea, every day my mother and I go out in search of a plant. We can’t live without taking care of it. I’ve been there, I’ve massaged her, I’ve given her medicine because she’s in so much pain. She’s already brought me tea. As long as people need it, I take care of them. Like my neighbor who was going to lose his finger because it was full of bugs, so I took care of him and we went to the hospital.”**

“ *The life of a human being is important, but I don’t know if it is more important than that of a dog, a cat, a tree, a riverbed, a wave on a beach. All forms of life, if they were created by the universe, they must exist. This is care for me and that’s what I’m getting involved in, even because of the family tradition. I am the great-grandson of a praying woman, I am the grandson of a praying woman and my mother is a herbalist.* **”**

His work caring for herbs works organically. Whenever someone knocks on his door, whenever he realizes he can intervene in a case, Geraldo begins a process of care using the herbs and the wisdom he has inherited. He stresses that it’s not a job of curing because there are several factors that make a disease be cured. But it is fundamental care for re-establishing the person’s cognitive link and spirituality.

At the age of 60, with three children and three grandchildren, Geraldo says he has matured and will continue to do so, as he expects to live for at least another 40 years. With regard to his research, he explains that he is working a lot on the issue of subjectivity because he is interested in understanding how violence affects people’s subjectivity and what mechanisms we can create from this encounter between violence and resistance. “How do we create mechanisms to overcome this process? Why is there a large number of people here who use drugs, who are alcoholics, people who talk to themselves in the middle of the street? I want to understand whether these things have anything to do with the violence we experience. To do this, I use the teachings of Frantz Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Mask*. For Fanon, colonial violence is what causes the number of people in psychiatry. Insanity is the fruit of colonial violence. This thesis is still valid today, because it hasn’t changed much”.

Geraldo reveres Antônio Bispo dos Santos in the book “A terra dá, a terra quer” and his thesis on confluence and transfluence in colonization and quilombos. He talks about the importance of crossing thoughts, of different perspectives on life, of

meeting other possibilities that are not just your own. He tells us that he had the pleasure of attending a lecture at UFRJ with Nego Bispo and, again, cites his trajectory as an example to explain Bispo’s concept of confluence.

“When you ask me how white people can help, I think we need to come together. I’m a black man who had a very deep relationship with white people, like Father Matteo, Father João and Sister Maria. I was brought up by a white man because my mother divorced my father when I was really young and it was Bastos, a white man, who brought me and even gave me his name. I think we need to be available for the other’s struggle, starting from others, we shouldn’t do it for others, but do our part, starting from a process in which we have solidarity, always starting from others. I have a son with a disability. So I keep trying to understand how he, with the potential he has, can show me and point out ways for me to show solidarity in his struggle as a disabled person. When I wrote my dissertation on prayer and healer women, I did it from their perspective, so much so that I didn’t change their testimony. I put it in its entirety, because when a woman speaks, a man can’t tamper with her text, he can’t keep interpreting what she’s saying. This is what those who are white and in favor of black people in the anti-racism struggle need to do. It’s being together from the other person’s perspective, not theirs, because white people’s upbringing is based on the idea that they are superior. So you have to get out of this place of being a superior race and place yourself as a normal race. In my doctoral thesis, I bring some of this discussion to anthropology. So when I look at anthropology from Luzia’s standpoint, I feel revolted in the middle of the thesis because when I did some studies on her, I discovered that she was here 13,000 years ago, here in the Southeast region, in Minas Gerais. She’s an ancestral woman and we’re going to realize that what differentiates you, Raquel** and me is just the way we adapted to the climate of each region, but there’s nothing else that differentiates us biologically speaking. Many DNA tests carried out today show that many blacks have European DNA and many whites have African DNA. So there’s no such thing as the difference that was created in biology by Linnaeus in 1738, when he classified living beings. There’s no scientific proof, but that’s what has lasted until now. We were different for a long time, but now we need to be equal in outlook, weaknesses and strengths. No one is better than the other, even in terms of gender. And that goes for white and black, and for men and women too.”

Geraldo believes the border is a place of encounter, not a place of limits. He says that he is currently managing a culture project in three different municipalities. It's the Cultura na Faixa project, which takes place in communities that are in conflict with the violence of drug traffickers and militias. He also says that he is about to publish his first book on his master's dissertation, and is starting to write another book on his doctoral thesis, focusing on violence against terreiros and rural settlements.

In carrying out his research, Geraldo says he meets many caregivers, which makes him very happy:

Through his studies and the dissemination of the richness of Afro-Brazilian ancestral wisdom, Geraldo is a guardian of spirituality, the intangible and the enchanted. He fights against racism and inequality in all its aspects.

“ *Many people are doing this work of care that can save so many people. And it's this care, this love that we have for others that doesn't let us succumb. I'm going to copy you. I'd like to make an affective map of the communities and replicate our research on the culture of care in your community and the surrounding area. Do you know that there are many caregivers building networks of protection and healing for marginalized and invisible populations? I hope we can find them, honor them and learn from them.*”

“Caring is dialogue. It is participating in the world, being in the world, realising that everything around us is alive.”

Guto Gutierrez
Human biologist and
organisational gardener

Gilza Rosa



Gilza Rosa Moraes dos Santos was born and raised in Japeri, a rural town in Baixada where her grandparents, uncles and parents, who came from São Fidélis, north of Rio de Janeiro, settled around 60 years ago in search of a better life. There, they all grew crops and raised animals. With a childhood typical of the rural periphery, today, at the age of 54, Gilza recalls that, for much of her adult life, she worked as a maid, as well as doing sales activities and working in a home studio in the center of Rio de Janeiro.

For many years, she faced the long and exhausting commute between Japeri and the southern zone of Rio de Janeiro, which deprived her of fully enjoying her children's childhood and adolescence. In order to have a better quality of life, she started looking for work opportunities closer to home.

“I knew very little about my municipality, but when I started working less in the south zone (of Rio de Janeiro), I had more time to get to know it. Because when you work Monday to Friday in the south, at the weekend you just want to rest. There’s no time left for sightseeing, and that happened to me for many years.”

About 10 years ago, a friend took her to a meeting about the solidarity economy. That was when Gilza was introduced to the Solidarity Economy Forum, which gave her a new interest and a different view of her own city. At first, she didn’t fully understand the concept of solidarity economy, but as she attended meetings and studied the subject, she began to realize the countless possibilities that this initiative could bring to her life and to the local community. Little by little, she became more deeply involved, taking courses in eco-design, costume jewelry and others related to the solidarity economy. “I

went to the first meeting. I saw that the participants were artisans, and I wasn’t an artisan and didn’t know anything about handicrafts, but I liked it because they talked a bit about public policies and various other things. So I went to the first one, the second one and the third one and started to get a taste for the subject, which I hadn’t known anything about until then”.

Over time, Gilza became a central figure in the movement, attending various municipal councils to discuss public policies, such as those focusing on culture, environment and social welfare. She soon took on a leading role, being elected president of the Solidarity Economy Council. Proudly, she recalls that one of her greatest achievements was the approval of the Solidarity Economy Fund in the City Council, guaranteeing resources for the continuity of the projects, even when she is no longer at the head of the movement.

Gilza believes that her work is an act of caring, not just for people, but also for her municipality, her territory. With a natural talent for developing herself and others, she takes great pride in helping people discover their abilities, overcome challenges and find new ways to generate income and improve their lives. She claims that caring means stripping away prejudices and looking at others with empathy, offering support and encouragement. She highlights moments of collective victory, such as when they are able to pass laws or implement improvements in the municipality through their participation in councils. These moments strengthen her and reaffirm

her conviction that she is on the right track. She believes that she is contributing to future generations having a more dignified life, with better opportunities, without having to make the same sacrifices that she and many others have.

Recognizing that it is not possible to tackle all the issues that arise in her community on her own, Gilza sees her care-taking actions as a collective act and, precisely for this reason, she values the importance of having a group of people who collaborate and articulate in the conversation between the community and the authorities. She also stresses that it is essential to have the support of other organizations and groups in order to achieve effective results.

For Gilza, care means identifying the needs of each person and meeting those demands in the best possible way. She believes that care should take into account what each individual really needs, and not just what seems necessary from an external perspective.

In her work as a caregiver and coordinator, she has learned to face constant challenges. Financial hardships are one of the main obstacles, as is the lack of mobility in the municipality, which often prevents the rapid delivery of food staples or other resources. In addition, Gilza notes that many managers see community organizers as enemies, when in fact they are partners who want the best for the municipality. The need to balance their financial responsibilities with their voluntary activities on the public policies councils is also a daily challenge.

She confesses that she has thought about giving up, especially at times when adversity seems insurmountable. However, what stops her from giving up is the realization that many people are counting on her and her work. Gilza knows that if she gives up, she will be abandoning not only her own struggle, but also the struggle of many others who rely on her leadership and care.

Among the partners Gilza mentions are the Solidarity Economy Forum, FAMEJA (a group of rural producers from Japeri), MOBILIZA (focused on mobility issues), residents’ and farmers’ associations, and religious groups such as the Vincentians and the Afro Pastoral. These partners work together to strengthen the municipality, addressing and fighting for various issues, from mobility to culture.

In moments of fatigue and doubt, she makes a point of looking to the future to keep moving forward in her struggle to contribute to further improving public policies in Japeri, especially through the creation and implementation of laws that ensure that improvements really reach the grassroots, the people most in need. She recognizes that the Solidarity Economy Conferences and the City Council on Solidarity Economy are important steps on this path, and stresses the importance of making Japeri positively visible: its nature, its culture, its handicraft potential, contributing to women feeling more empowered through a better quality of life, the improvement of their handicrafts and their “rodas” of conversations and welcome.

At the end of her testimony, Gilza leaves a message: she believes that by taking care of others, she is taking care of herself. She says with conviction: “**Never give up caring for others, because every time you are caring for others, you are caring for yourself.**”

For Gilza, caring means identifying the needs of each person and meeting these demands in the best possible way. She believes that care should take into account what each individual really needs, and not just what seems to be necessary from an external perspective.

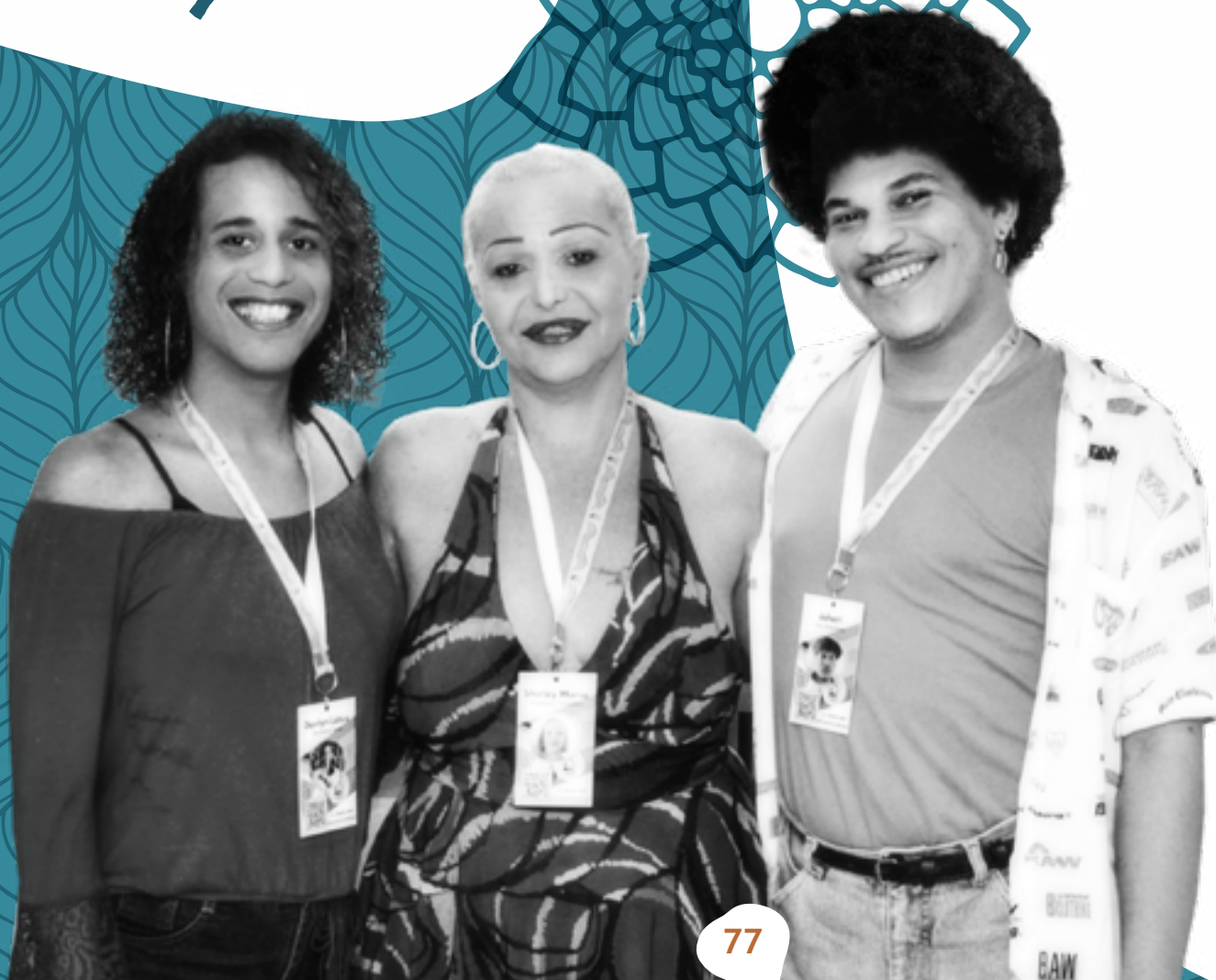
“Caring is ‘seeing’ others, taking care of yourself and others, ‘listening’. Art and theater can be a path to understanding, and awakening new and different world views. Everyone has the right to flow and to make art.”

Leandro Santanna
Actor, cultural producer
and public manager



CLICK HERE
to watch the
video interview.

Johari, Shirley and Davlyn



A perfect trio formed by Shirley, Johari and Davlyn supports Casa Dulce Seixas, which is the first LGBTQIAPN+ shelter in Baixada Fluminense, offering a home to people living on the streets, or who are living in social vulnerability and/or food insecurity. The trio founded Casa Dulce and today they are at the forefront of the public policy in LGBTQIAPN+ shelter and care in Nova Iguaçu, a municipality in the state of Rio de Janeiro, working to guarantee the right to life of the LGBTQIAPN+ population and providing a highly relevant service to the community.

Shirley Maria de Souza, also known as Shirley Maria Padilha, is 48 years old and was born in Acopiara, Ceará. At the age of 14, she decided to move to Rio de Janeiro in search of a better life. The dream soon turned into a nightmare, and Shirley experienced hunger, prejudice and homelessness. Forced to live on the streets for a time, she had to resort to prostitution until she established herself as an Iyalorixá (saint's mother) in Nova Iguaçu. Today she runs Casa Dulce. She is a "traviarca", as she likes to say, a transvestite matriarch.

Shirley is well aware of the vulnerabilities and social injustices faced by those housed at Casa Dulce Seixas as she has been there before. As Iyalorixá of the Ilê Omim Dewa Asé Odé Candomblé terreiro (an african brazilian religious), Shirley has been taking people in for over 14 years. One of her most devoted Filhas de Santo (Daughters of a Saint), Dulce Seixas Cordeiro, not only encouraged her to open a shelter and continue the work she was already doing, but also donated the land and the house so that Shirley could provide quality shelter for LGBTQIAPN+ people. In recognition of her compassion and care for the cause, she has been honoured with the naming of the house after her.

Johari Silva, who is vice-president of Casa Dulce Seixas and identifies as non-binary trans, is from Nova Iguaçu. He has a degree in Public Policy from Casa Fluminense and is an important civil society leader in Baixada Fluminense region, amplifying the voice and cause of Casa Dulce Seixas. He is also the artistic producer of Nova Iguaçu's LGBT+ Pride Parade and works as an assistant for networks and campaigns at the NGO Ação da Cidadania.

Davlyn Lótus is a trans woman and psychologist who graduated from Uniabeu in Belford Roxo. A poet and cultural producer, she manages Casa's finances and projects. She arrived in 2021, using her experience as a producer at the Donana Cultural Centre to broaden Casa Dulce's horizons and engaging in dialogue with other cultural organizations and academia.

Casa Dulce Seixas is a permanent shelter for LGBTQIAPN+ people who are homeless, socio-economically vulnerable or experiencing domestic violence, and

also welcomes heterocisnormative women who are victims of gender-based violence or in a situation of vulnerability. It is the first and only shelter in Baixada Fluminense, an area where it has been operating for four years, but the work is carried out as if it had been in operation for much longer, given the articulation and advocacy capacity of the three caregivers.

Casa's mission is to save lives, ensuring that LGBTQIAPN+ people and other minority groups live well, with dignity and access to food, health, education and culture. The mission also includes developing public policies and actions aimed at reducing social inequalities, guaranteeing human rights and full citizenship for all.

Since it opened, Casa Dulce Seixas has welcomed more than 200 people from all over the country, not just from Baixada Fluminense. Johari says that some people come from far away because they know that they will be welcomed with affection and without judgement. About 20 people live at Casa Dulce, where they stay for as long as they need, and others come and go to enjoy the food, take a shower, take part in the training workshops and conversation circles, in other words, to be cared for by Casa Dulce.

Johari emphasises that there is no time limit on the stay, and adds that there are, of course, rules of coexistence designed to guarantee freedom and autonomy. It's worth noting that the institution is located in a Casa de Santo, an Ilê Axé, which is a Candomblé temple, but without any religious ties or bias. The practice of religion does not involve the residents, but if one of the residents is religious, it's optional.

“We look after LGBTQIAPN+ people who are homeless, socio-economically vulnerable and/or victims of domestic violence. We also take care of the people who live around Casa Dulce Seixas, who, in most cases, are women responsible for supporting their families.”

The government is negligent if it does not promote public policies to support LGBTQIAPN+ people who are victims of domestic violence, who are socio-economically vulnerable or homeless, who suffer or have suffered violence at the hands of families who don't accept them for who they are. In addition, their lives are extremely marked by poverty, inequality and social injustice due to societal attitudes of prejudice, transphobia and racism.

“The Casa Dulce project had been on the drawing board for a few years, but it was during the pandemic, when we saw the increase in LGBT+ people who were losing their homes because they had no way of supporting themselves, that we decided it was necessary to help those who had nothing.”

Added to this is the promise Shirley made in 2021, when she contracted COVID-19 and was in critical condition.

“As my recovery process was very difficult, I made a deal with the Orixá Omolú that, if I survived the disease, I would dedicate my time and strength to caring for people from the community I belong to: LGBTQIAPN+”.

Shirley says that her personal history, marked by her father's prejudice and brutality, directly affects Casa Dulce's activities:

“My father was horrible to me, always threatening me with a machete and saying that if he ever found out I had a son who was a ‘baitola’ - as gays are called in my hometown - he would cut him up like the tobacco he sold on the street, which traumatised me. When I was 13, I left home to work as a maid. When I was 14, I hitchhiked for nine days to Rio de Janeiro. I lived with people on the streets, people who were addicted to drugs precisely because of the contempt and abandonment of their families. A little bit of everything, that's how I started this work. I decided that if I could, I would help other people in the same situation. I wouldn't wish what I've been through on anyone. And whatever I can do, I will do,” she says with determination.

The three caregivers say they want to consolidate Casa Dulce Seixas as an entity for social transformation, becoming a national and international benchmark for welcoming, training and rehabilitating LGBTQIAPN+ people. Their daily struggle is to provide opportunities for people to have their basic needs met in a space

to call home, with access to food and in a clean place, full of love and people who listen to them. And they want to go further, working with culture as a transformative axis because there are many challenges, but there are also dreams.

Davlyn speaks with sadness about the large number of cases of trans people and transvestites who continue to be brutally killed not only in the region where they work, but throughout the country. It's a struggle to exist and survive. According to data from the Dossier on Lethal LGBTIphobia, in 2023 there were 230 violent deaths of LGBT people in the country. (Link to article: <https://observatoriomorteseviolenciaslgbtbrasil.org/dossie/mortes-lgbt-2023/>)

The work of Casa Dulce Seixas is divided into four areas: Reception, Social Assistance, Training and Culture. In addition, through political advocacy in the area, the organization also carries out social assistance actions with the Municipal Department of Social Assistance, promoting access to public policies for minority groups. And it is through the main program, Dulce'mente Acolhedora, that the residents and users of the house - young people, adults and the elderly - are given a home, a family, food, emotional and psychological support, as well as prospects for the future.

Through the Dulce'mente Capacitadora program, Casa Dulce Seixas offers workshops and training to help people have access to the formal job market or strengthening the businesses of those receiving assistance. This is a practical way of promoting the financial autonomy of those involved.

Another front is the articulation of partnerships with healthcare networks - such as Psychosocial Care Centers/CAPs, psychiatric UPA and FIOCRUZ - to ensure the monitoring and control of STIs, which include HIV/AIDS, hepatitis and syphilis, among other diseases. All the actions aim to protect the LGBTQIAPN+ population and guarantee their rights to healthcare and information.

“We want to have a space for democratizing access to books and reading, valuing the different forms of cultural expression and the multiple expressions of art.”

Davlyn explains that it is often Shirley herself who takes all those who need it to Caps and to medical appointments, carefully monitoring and encouraging them to follow through with their treatment. The people in care are also sent to get their documents, as many of them are undocumented, and some have never had any, have lost them or have outdated documents. Shirley often says that she makes herself available to listen actively and provide the necessary support. The trio tries to understand the life process of each resident at the home to see if there is anything they can do to provide the help they need. Casa Dulce offers psychological support, since most of them arrive with traumas from the physical or psychological violence they have suffered throughout their lives.

Food security is another aspect of care. All the food is carefully thought out so that everyone has the right quantity and quality of food to regenerate their physical and mental health. The organization holds a weekly Solidarity Lunch, in which it provides 100 meals for food insecure families around Casa Dulce. In addition, through the Dulce'mente Solidária program, Casa Dulce's team has distributed more than 800 food baskets.

One of the organization's biggest challenges today is raising funds to expand the shelter, maintain existing activities and programs and pay monthly expenses. Throughout its work, Casa Dulce has already secured partnerships with the International Trans Fund, the Fondo de Acción Urgente de América Latina y el Caribe, the German Consulate and, recently, the Ministry of Human Rights and Citizenship.

Regarding the results that have been achieved along the way, Johari says:

“ Casa Dulce Seixas has changed the lives of all of us who are on the front line coordinating this important project. Being able to welcome people who are going through something we've already experienced changes us in so many ways, and that's really good.”

Johari also says that Casa Dulce Seixas is part of REBRACA - the Brazilian Network of LGBTI+ Shelters, which allows for the opportunity to exchange affection, vent and share experiences. **“Although each of us is in a different state, our experiences of coordinating a shelter for LGBTQIA+ people are very similar and our profile is, in fact, very similar,”** says Johari.

“ Caring for wounded people, with traumas caused by physical and psychological violence, is very complex and demands a lot from our psychology. While we feel very fulfilled by the work we do, we are also stunned when we hear multiple reports that make us reflect on how great our struggle still is. However, we are not going to give up, we are not going to lie down!”

The organization is also part of the Rio de Janeiro State Council for LGBTQIAPN+ Policies, which the trio of caretakers consider to be a fundamental activity in the necessary fight for public policies for their community. In the future, the institution wants to become a meeting and exchange point, where people from the area can come seeking to improve with the help of workshops and also deconstruct prejudices. Using culture as a mediator. Shirley, Johari and Davlyn believe that the best way to further integrate the LGBTQIAPN+ population with the area is to encourage the exchange of knowledge and broaden the debate on freedom of gender and sexual orientation.

At Casa Dulce Seixas, many stories are transformed and shared. More than just a house, it's a home that gives people time to recover, to discover themselves, to understand their sexuality and their place in the world. A necessary time to learn where to access the public services that support them and to look for stable work, since they can give a reference address and receive guidance for work. Time to concentrate, time to study.

“*Time for exchange and silence, away from the streets and violence, where everyone can be more connected to a “family” that favours connecting time, creating routines and bonds that create an environment more conducive to diversity, inclusion and mutual respect. Because caring time is transformative.*”

“Caring is an exercise in gratitude for being in this place, for belonging. Exercising care is exercising humanity.”

Denise Silva
Pantaneira, social entrepreneur and enthusiast for possible futures

Joyce Santos



Joyce, who was born in Campinas - São Paulo, moved to Rio de Janeiro in 2004 in pursuit of her dream of going to university, becoming the first person in her family to study at university level. As housemaids, her mother, grandmother and aunts were denied the right to education and, therefore, the opportunity to choose their professions. Today, Joyce is a project manager at Olabi/PretaLab, working to ensure that black and indigenous women have equal opportunities, autonomy and choice: to be and to be everywhere.

Joyce makes a point of saying that she comes from a very close-knit and loving family, and that it was difficult to leave the comforts of home to set up in Rio de Janeiro. With a lot of courage and the dream of going to university in her suitcase, she arrived in Rio to study Languages at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. She says that this decision was made because, in Campinas, the competition to get into university was very high, making it difficult for a student from a public school to get a place.

Encouraged by her parents to pursue her dream and go to university, Joyce says she had all the support she needed to build her own path. “My mother really wanted us to change our destiny. And care at these times is key to paving the next step”, she says.

“My mother really wanted us to change our destiny. And care at these times is key to paving the next step.”

After getting into university to study Languages and Literature, she ended up switching to Library Science. Joyce soon realized that the biggest challenge was not getting into university, but keeping up with her studies, which she managed to do by selling her crochet art at fairs and on the beaches of Rio and, later on, when she started working in the administrative areas of companies and then as a librarian for SESI and SENAI.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Joyce experienced what she calls a major revolution in her life. Through a friend, she meets Sil Bahia, a journalist and executive director of OLABI, a social organization focused on technology, innovation and diversity. Within OLABI, Sil created Pretalab (<https://www.pretalab.com/>,) in 2017, a platform that connects black and indigenous women who are or would like to be in the field of technology. Pretalab was created with two initial objectives: first, to research who the technology owners are in Brazil and who are the black women producing and thinking about technology; and the second objective was to hold activities that would bring these women together through a strengthening network that would give visibility to professional technologists and also to those interested in making a career transition.

As she was extremely interested, Joyce asked Sil if there was any work in which she could get involved in that universe which, although unknown to her, seemed innovative and fascinating. Can you imagine the power of working with black and indigenous women? Joyce started out as a freelancer and, in 2022, joined the team, becoming a manager at Pretalab. **“By the time I realized it, I had already taken on the fight to democratize access to technology for black and indigenous women and combat inequalities in gender opportunities. I then immersed myself more and more in studies on technology, race and gender inequalities to strengthen this militancy,”** says Joyce.

With the studies carried out by Olabi/Pretalab and the first training cycles underway, she says she realized that this was not just a project, but a project-cause, given the urgency of including black women in the debate and production of technology. It became clear that there was a need to address the absence of black and indigenous

women in the field, the barriers created for them to access it, the silencing, and what needed to be done to encourage and retain women in technology. And, of course, to celebrate those who are already in it!

Pretalab does research, mentoring, training and curates events and the more its members walk through this fertile field, the more they learn about the importance of the cause for strengthening democracy and equity. Pretalab has thus become an effective link between black and indigenous women in technology and in the job market, engaging in conversation to break down practices of inequality, such as unequal salaries, lack of representation and voice. Through the platform, it is possible to access profiles of technology professionals. Do you need a game programmer? An IT engineer? Go to the Pretalab website and find the supplier you need.

As a project manager, Joyce offers training cycles and workshops to train technologists in a safe space for their development. Based on her practical experience, she emphasizes the importance of offering a safe and welcoming space for the participants throughout the training cycles, in contrast to what the technology market usually offers women, which is sometimes hostile, unequal and marked by many forms of harassment.

Through the meetings with the women, with a lot of active listening and welcoming, Joyce and her team realized that, in addition to technical training, it was essential to create spaces for self-awareness so that the women could develop emotionally, talk openly about their fears and traumas and strengthen their voice in an expanding market that is still dominated by whites and males. Self-knowledge is therefore one of the fundamental pillars of the training cycles.

To this end, meetings mediated by a psychologist were created to support the journey of self-awareness and the development of new skills. There were many testimonies from women who had been hurt and traumatized by racism and also by misogyny, attitudes that translate into everyday harassment. Joyce was moved to tell countless stories of overcoming, of women who arrived depressed, often quiet and lacking in self-confidence, but who, once they share their stories and listen to each other, the wheel turns and generates belonging. **The voices identify with each other, they understand that they are not alone, that it is not just a private problem, but the problem of a sick society with many developmental flaws.**

More than 800 black and indigenous women from all over Brazil have already been trained. Would they have had the same result if the women they helped had not taken care to open up a space for listening throughout the professional training period?” Joyce asks herself, and then says: **”I always see in the groups the transformative power of a black woman’s autonomy, which always spills over into the collective. Because when a black woman manages to rise, she takes many others with her.”**

Joyce believes that technology is also a political arena and, as such, technology needs to have the face of black women, who are the majority of the Brazilian population. And it is precisely for this reason that it can be said that the production of technology and content are strategies for combating inequalities. This realization led Pretalab to develop, alongside the Black Women Decide Movement (MND), a Digital Care Guide - lessons learned from the Cyberactivism and Digital Care training. It’s excellent material, which she recommends reading.

Pretalab’s current goal is to open more online classes for black and indigenous women from all over Brazil; to hold more in-person and local courses and events, using a network of partners; and specific technology training and events to include mothers.

Joyce emphasized that she feels cared for by her family. She also takes care of them, in particular her nephews and godchildren. With great affection and respect, she talks about her religion: the Barquinha, a doctrine founded by Frei Daniel, a man who was born in the state of Maranhão and moved to Rio Branco, the capital of Acre, where he founded the first Barquinha house. It is a syncretic religious system that incorporates elements of a very devotional Christianity with others from Afro-Brazilian and Amerindian beliefs. Barquinha has care as its way of being in the world, where, according to Joyce, caring for others and the community is the essence. She says that it is also necessary to protect the knowledge and practices of her religion against religious intolerance.

“*Care is about looking at black women and encouraging them to occupy whatever space they want. And giving them a safe space to exercise their potential or discover new possibilities. I work every day to get black women into the formal tech job market.”*

Jurema



Her official name is Adelina da Silva D'oria, but she says she only recognises herself as Jurema. It was a nickname she got as a child when her friends called her cabocla Jurema. She has been planting and harvesting cassava since she was six years old and today, at the age of 70, she is a reference in the town of Japeri as an expert in the culinary culture of this typical Brazilian root. Many recipes were developed by her mother, others were invented by Jurema, and many others were tested by Jurema to improve the town's main agricultural product. She tells her life story with pride and dignity, appreciating the care taken to ensure that the culture of growing and eating cassava is preserved and passed on from generation to generation.

The daughter of indigenous parents, Jurema says she was born and raised in the bush.

“I grew up on a farm, in the forest, eating green bananas, boiled potatoes, yams, tapioca beiju,” she says.

Her parents had 11 children, all of whom were named with the initial A. Jurema can't tell you the indigenous ethnicity of her parents, but she can tell you about the ancestral wisdom of her mother and grandmother. She says they knew how to make remedies from all kinds of herbs, they always had a solution for the illnesses that affected the family and the neighborhood, they just used what nature provided.

If someone had a broken leg, her mother would grate cassava on the spot so that it was fresh and wouldn't give her a fever, mix it with tabatinga and make a kind of "mud". Then she would add a new leaf that grows at the base of coconut trees and line it with the "clay" inside. Then she would tie it up with the vine and, voila, there was a natural plaster, hard like the kind made in a hospital. After a week with the natural plaster, the leg healed. The antibiotic, on the other hand, was extracted from herbs and bottled.

Her parents raised their 11 children, planting, making flour, selling it in neighboring towns, or exchanging it for other products. The family's diet was based on cassava, potatoes, and rice, which they planted and had a few cows to milk. Jurema remembers that, from the age of six, she would go planting crops with her father, the forest was very closed and there were many jaguars. The family slept under the protection of banana leaves and the little ones slept in rafters hanging from above because of the risk of snakes

Have you ever heard of cassava coffee powder? Well, Jurema's mother developed something special for those with hypertension: she would plant and harvest the coffees, dry them and, when it was time to roast them, she would put them together with cornmeal and the cassava paste after it had been washed to remove the starch. Everything was pounded together and out came a special coffee powder. She says she has not yet tested this recipe for the public. But she will soon.

Jurema speaks fondly of her family life and says that to this day she enjoys sitting around with her siblings and reminiscing about her childhood. She is proud of the fact that she has rarely been ill in her life and that she does not have any illnesses thanks to the care she has received. When she was 12, she had to leave home to help support her family, which led her to work in a circus in Silva Jardim for three years, taming animals. That's right: Jurema became an animal tamer, but soon after she got married and left the circus.

As she didn't have much luck with her first marriage, Jurema soon split up and went to work in the city, where she took the opportunity to improve her Portuguese and learn how to deal better with people, she says. She would take classes at night and even worked in a beauty salon as a hairdresser. At the time, she says she looked at herself in the salon mirror, thought she was beautiful, and loved the work she did, but knew that deep down there was an emptiness. The truth is that she missed the countryside very much.

In order to look after her family, she had to change jobs many times. After separating, she married twice more and had three children and two grandchildren. Determined, she says that she always had a lot of courage to face every situation in her life, but that it wasn't easy. But as she wasn't afraid of life, she says she learned a lot and was able to take advantage of every opportunity that came her way.

Jurema says that she has learned a lot about dealing with nature and that she knows how to make a lot of handicrafts and dishes, always based on agroecology. She doesn't use pesticides at all and respects Mother Nature's timetable. In doing so, she takes care of nature so that it can take care of her. Another tubercle she considers important is potatoes, which, according to Jurema, are valuable for guaranteeing food security for families, as well as being very nutritious, easy to grow, and making it possible to make a wide variety of recipes, including ice cream.

“Nature is my foot, my ground, my life. That's why, more than 15 years ago, I moved back to my farm in rural Japeri. Here, I dedicate my life to taking care of myself and the main product I grow and harvest from nature, the cassava, which allows me to make a variety of dishes.”

When she says that her farming is organic, family-run, and ancestral, she fills her chest with pride. Fabio, her eldest son, also works with cassava and today she has Igor and Maralice as her team to help her daily.

She makes a living from cassava and makes a point of distributing her treats and ancestral knowledge. She makes mayonnaise, ice cream, pastries, various pies, juices, kibbeh, cocada, porridge, panettone, all with cassava, of which she even uses the peel in many recipes. With her enormous talent, she also makes dishes with other tubers, such as beet flour. She is much in demand for events, parties, and trade fairs. She is always happy to have the opportunity to showcase her food because it is by word of mouth that she gets her message across.

Her talent also shines through in handicrafts, where she has developed a cassava-based mortar to make screeds and decorative artifacts. After explaining that she combines cassava paste without the gum with white cement, Jurema makes a point of inviting the interviewer to visit her home and see her work of art in person. There, the wood stove reigns alone in her kitchen, where she makes everything as naturally as possible, avoiding industrialized products in her delicacies.

Jorge Braga, Japeri's current secretary of culture, was exploring the municipality's countryside with the secretary of agriculture when they met Jurema. Both were surprised and delighted by the deliciousness and variety not only of her cuisine but also of her food knowledge. Since everything was so tasty, they invited her to take part in nine events in the town to showcase her art.

Proudly, Jurema says that she is an educator who teaches how to make full use of food and contributes to reducing food waste. It is in public schools that she loves to give her workshops, where she teaches everything from the best way to grow cassava to its traditions, always happily telling us that agriculture has a history. Of course, there's no shortage of recipes, and she swears she teaches everything without keeping any secrets!

"Yes, I feel like a caregiver. I pass on the knowledge given to me by my parents and grandparents. I make sure that people have more love for nature and the food that this land gives us. I feel I must pass it on to those who need it. I teach them how to prepare the soil, how to plant, how to harvest, and what to do with the peel, with the water from the cassava, with the gum, in short, with everything. Because everything can be used from the cassava."

In 2022, Jurema received the Aldir Blanc Law Award for Food Culture. A very important recognition because it values her beliefs, knowledge, identity, social cohesion and ancestral practices as a way of life, demonstrating the sacred dimension of food cultures. She is happy to say that from 2023, Japeri's main agricultural product will have its festival: the Festa do Aipim ('Cassava Festival').

Intuitively, Jurema cares and fights for healthy food systems and for her traditions to be passed on to new generations and adapted to reality, always thinking about evolution and meaning. After all, food production is linked to our way of life. As for the future, Jurema wants to continue to multiply her knowledge. Perhaps now for school cooks, nutritionists, and those who care about children's food safety? Just give her a call.

Generous, Jurema is keen to share some of her recipes. Oh, and she wants to hear your comments after you've tried them.

Sweet cassava cake

Ingredients:

- 1kg of cassava grated into coarse pieces (like potato sticks)
- 100g grated Parmesan cheese
- 100g curd cheese
- 200g minas cheese
- 1 can or carton of sweetened condensed milk
- 200g grated coconut
- half a liter of milk
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 egg whites
- 4 teaspoons of organic yeast

Instructions:

- Mix everything together in a bowl or pyrex and beat well.
- Let the dough rest for 15 minutes.
- Grease the pan with butter or margarine.
- Bake to your liking.
- Let it cool.

Cake topping

- 200g powdered milk (she recommends Ninho)
- 100g heavy cream
- 100g finely grated coconut (always prefer natural products, not industrialized products)
- use the juice of half an orange to complement the icing
- add sugar to taste

Tip - this cake is great for birthdays, family gatherings, get-togethers, or any other event, and can be made two or three days in advance, using as much filling as you like in between.

Cassava Vitamin

Ingredients:

- 1l of milk
- 5 cornstarch cookies
- 4 tablespoons of oatmeal
- 100g cooked cassava, without the stalks.

Instructions:

Mix everything in a blender and you're done! Drink away!

Coffee made from cassava and corn

Ingredients:

- 700g of unpeeled coffee beans
- 100g crystal sugar
- 100g corn kernels
- 100g grated cassava

Instructions:

- Heat it in an iron pan.
- Stir it until it becomes crispy and it is loose from the bottom of the pan.
- Mix it in a blender, let it cool and you're done.

A recommendation:

Always give preference to natural, unprocessed products.



Yes, I feel like a caregiver. I pass on the knowledge given to me by my parents and grandparents. I make sure that people have more love for nature and the food that this land gives us. I feel I must pass it on to those who need it. I teach them how to prepare the soil, how to plant, how to harvest, and what to do with the peel, with the water from the cassava, with the gum, in short, with everything. Because everything can be used from the cassava."

"We have to stop developing and start getting involved."

Ailton Krenak
Indigenous leader, environmentalist,
Philosopher, poet and writer

Laura Torres



Laura Ramos Torres, who was born and lives in Jardim Catarina, in São Gonçalo|RJ, is 28 years old, a doula, researcher and director of Espaço Gaia. Her family, which she describes as a strong matriarchy, originated in rural Ceará, and is made up of seven women, with only one father figure - her grandfather, who is now deceased. For her, the practice of caring has always been present in her family, as she was brought up with a great sense of community, in which everyone is responsible for each other.

From this family experience, Laura draws the meaning of being a doula. In conversations with relatives, she discovered that there was a midwife in her family who helped all the women give birth, including her grandmother, who had 18 children. This made her understand why doula work awakened something so strong within her.

Laura initially worked in tourism, but realized that it didn't make her happy. Then, at a moment she can't pinpoint exactly, she recalls that when she saw a doula called Gabriela Garbin, from São Paulo, **she realized that this was what made her 'eyes light up' and her 'heart beat faster'**. Determined, she quit her job and, with the money from her severance pay, paid for her doula course.

Laura explains, in a didactic but simple manner, that the doula is a professional who has a classification in the job market [Brazilian Classification of Occupations|CBO] and that the activity goes far beyond childbirth. She emphasizes the importance of the doula's work in different contexts, such as perinatal education, informing pregnant women about what obstetric violence is, clarifying how the body works during pregnancy, and guiding women's reconnection with their own bodies, something that, as she emphasizes, **"patriarchy has historically tried to break down so that women lose autonomy over themselves."**

During pregnancy, doulas offer emotional, physical and informational support, helping pregnant women to understand what to expect from childbirth, to recognize what a contraction is and not to fear the process. In the postpartum period, they continue to offer support, helping with the main demands of the baby and mother as well as maintaining the bond with the women they accompany.

Over the years, the profession has gained more space and recognition, with more adequate training available, including free courses, such as the one run by the Oswaldo Cruz|Fiocruz Foundation, where Laura works as a preceptor. In fact, in Laura's opinion, free training is essential to open doors for people who wouldn't be able to afford a doula course, allowing more women to train in this profession.

On the other hand, there is still resistance, as is the case in São Gonçalo, where it is still difficult for doulas to enter public maternity hospitals. Although there has been a law since 2016 allowing doulas to enter, it was only in 2021 that they managed to enter a maternity hospital in São Gonçalo for the first time. In her analysis, the resistance is partly due to the fact that doulas inform pregnant women about their rights and this information is seen as a threat.

She says that having doulas at maternity hospitals was achieved through a lot of struggle, and not through peaceful debat.

“It is crucial to ensure that all women, regardless of their financial situation, have access to the support of a doula, but unfortunately the service is still seen as a luxury item.”

It was with this sensitivity and determination that Laura created Gaia, a non-profit civil society organization currently in the process of being formalized. It began organically and unpretentiously, as she puts it, with discussions under a tree near an old garbage dump in São Gonçalo. In these circles, where she talked about topics such as obstetric violence and menstrual education, she has welcomed more than 60 women. There were times when she wondered if this work would make a difference in the lives of the women she welcomed, but when many of them returned to share their experiences of childbirth and how they felt strengthened by the guidance and information they had received, and spoke of their desire to continue the meetings, she realized that she was on the right track. Thus, she understands that the impact on these women's lives was real.

It was exactly at this time that Laura took a public policy course at Casa Fluminense, which allowed her to take another step forward in caring for women: **“And then I met Paola, a lawyer who also has a project in São Gonçalo. I told her about my dissatisfaction with all the bad things that were happening in São Gonçalo, with the pain of seeing people being killed, people being raped... So I proposed that we make a booklet and the first one we produced dealt with issues that are relevant to women's dignity, such as menstrual issues, obstetric violence and domestic violence.”**

The launch of the booklet was a milestone, which had great repercussions and opened the door to new calls for funding for conversation circles and the production of new information materials, such as the booklet “Da Menarca à Gestaçao” (From Menarche to Pregnancy), which talks about menstrual education and sexual and reproductive rights. Regarding this booklet, Laura remembers being invited to present her work in Argentina by the organization La Poderosa, and the opportunity she had to show it to the Minister of Human Rights and Citizenship, Silvio Almeida. **“I remember the day I handed it to him shaking all over. He was so attentive, he opened it and went through it page by page. Then I thought with emotion: my God, he's reading my booklet. His evaluation came quickly and motivated me to keep going: If I were you, I'd present it to the Ministry of Women's Affairs, because it's very good material and easy to access.”**

Back in Brazil, encouraged by the Minister's opinion, Laura and her team decided to fight to get a physical space for Gaia, in collaboration with other projects focused primarily on gender-based violence. Soon, however, when she realized that many other issues were interconnected - such as the lack of water, basic sanitation and adequate transport - she saw that she had to expand Gaia's scope of action to include climate justice, rights to basic sanitation, and integral health, seeking to guarantee a minimum of dignity for these women. Her statement explains her decision simply: **“These issues directly affect women's mental health and quality of life. At a mental health workshop, many women cried when talking about the lack of water in their homes. The situation was so serious that they had to fetch water from hoses that ran through an old garbage dump, with the water coming out in drips. This reality profoundly affects their lives, making it difficult even to have a healthy pregnancy.”**

The success of Gaia's sustainability plan relies on calls for proposals to fund its projects. However, this approach often faces challenges because the needs identified by Laura and her team, which could bring improvements to the territory, don't always align with the funding options available through these calls. Nevertheless, Laura has some great examples of achievements: such as the agroforestry project implemented at Gaia's headquarters, which began with an agroforestry course that helps combat food insecurity in the community, who can then access the products. In addition, Gaia has been able to carry out research and produce a monitoring report with socio-economic and socio-environmental data on the families living at the back of the old dump, with the aim of denouncing the situation and proposing changes.

Laura is extremely intense and lively when talking about her activities, goals and expectations. But she admits that she often feels tired from giving so much of herself. During these periods, her team takes care of her, which has been a great learning experience for her. She has been learning how to delegate tasks and take care of herself. She would love to expand Gaia, set up other units in different places so that more people can benefit from this space of welcome and empowerment.

In Laura's view caring is :

“ *Movement, something that makes things happen.* **”**

She understands care through a holistic approach, in which everyone takes care of everyone, not just within a family, but in the whole community.



CLICK HERE
to watch the
video interview.

Lorena Froz



"Maré is not just the place where I was born. **Maré is a part of me, we are one."** This statement illustrates the sentiment that runs throughout the words of Lorena Froz, a young and determined 22-year-old environmental educator.

Lorena was born in Belém|PA, but her parents and family are from Santa Helena, a town in the countryside of Maranhão. When she was six months old, her parents decided to move to Rio de Janeiro in search of better educational opportunities and a different life. Lorena's godmother, who already lived in Rio, offered her house in the Nova Holanda favela so that they could settle down. At the time, the family was large and often gathered around the bar that her uncle, her godmother's husband, owned on one of the busiest streets in the community. The memories of family gatherings, collaborative barbecues and socializing with everyone on the street are remarkable for Lorena.

Her father, who was a soccer player in Maranhão and didn't have a profession, started selling açai when he arrived in Rio. Perhaps that's why one of Lorena's fondest memories is of spending time with him at the stall as a child, watching the midday news on a small television while eating açai together.

During her childhood, Lorena was a homely child who always preferred to stay at home rather than play in the streets. Now a Candomblecist, she grew up in the Catholic Church and attended a private school in the favela, linked to Colégio Santa Mônica, where she studied until the fifth grade. The school offered scholarships to children who excelled, allowing them to continue their studies up to the university entrance exam. Her mother had always dreamed of her studying at this school. When she finished elementary school, Lorena excelled and continued her studies until the first year of secondary school, when she went to Colégio Pedro II. Despite having a scholarship at the private school, all the costs of books were very high and impossible for her father, who worked hard as a motorcycle taxi driver in the community, to pay for them.

Lorena emphasizes how much her participation in Redes' projects influenced her education in general, and inspired her interest in the environment. She says that initially her passion for the environment came from feeling frustrated by how what she was learning in school didn't match up with what she was seeing in her own community.

Lorena was accepted at Pedro II after the reclassification stage, opting for the Environment technical course, inspired by her passion for biology. She was also inspired by the memory of her great-grandmother, whom she had the opportunity to visit as a child in rural Maranhão, where she felt a special connection with nature and the rural environment. Also her mother loved plants. However, the beginning of the course was frustrating, as the classes on environmental impacts presented very different issues to those she experienced in Maré, such as the lack of

basic sanitation and the accumulation of garbage. This dissatisfaction motivated her to seek more information, participating in the political and social activities and discussions promoted by Redes de Desenvolvimento da Maré, an organization close to her home. Lorena emphasizes how much her participation in Redes' projects influenced her education in general, and inspired her interest in the environment. She says that initially her passion for the environment came from feeling frustrated by how what she was learning in school didn't match up with what she was seeing in her own community.

At this time, the "Ecomaré" sanitation project began to take shape in the community, generating increasingly present discussions on environmental issues. Drawn in by the topics being discussed, Lorena immersed herself in Ecomaré and

other environmental initiatives within Redes, which helped her give body and direction to her indignation. At the same time, she attended Luta pela Paz, an organization in Maré where she practiced judo and Muay Thai, while at Redes she was learning how to structure the issues that mobilized her and turn them into concrete actions.

After graduating from Pedro II, Lorena had the opportunity to start an internship in the environmental department at Petrobras, but quickly realized that the corporate environment was not for her. She decided to focus on the Third Sector, which brings her more satisfaction. Shortly after making this decision, she met the coordinator of a preparatory course she had taken years before and, realizing that there was a gap in the area of environmental education, suggested the creation of this course. The coordinator, who was interested, encouraged her to develop the project, and so Lorena began working as an environmental educator.

“When I realized that I had no food to eat, no good water to drink and no air to breathe [...] I understood that all of this was related to environmental issues.”

In 2020, with the Covid-19 pandemic, Lorena faced the challenge of continuing her work away from the classroom. At the same time, she sees growing misinformation about the causes of the pandemic, which worries her. This restlessness drives her to create “Faveleira”, an environmental education project with the aim of talking about the environment in a way that is accessible and relevant to everyone, especially the people of Maré.

“When I realized that I had no food to eat, no good water to drink and no air to breathe [...] I understood that all of this was related to environmental issues.”

“So I created Faveleira to talk about it, especially because I couldn't bear to see people discussing it from another point of view, from a UN-Maré point of view. And no, I don't want to talk about the UN now, let the UN sort out its own issues, which are very important elsewhere... What I want to talk about now is Maré, so that at some point Maré can reach the UN. That was my point of view: to start from what was happening in our community until we reached the macro, to go from the micro to the macro and not the other way around. This led me to question things, to think about climate, the environment and education.”

Faveleira was born as a social media platform, mainly on Instagram, where Lorena publishes videos and informative content. Her intention is to simplify complex information about the environment, connecting these issues with the reality of the people who live in the favelas. Lorena wants to demystify the idea that environmental problems are the responsibility of the people living in the communities, when, in fact, these problems are structural and related to a lack of basic sanitation, access to healthy food and ineffective public policies.

As the pandemic subsided, Lorena began to be invited to lectures and face-to-face projects, broadening Faveleira's reach. Her work has led her to participate in the drafting of the "Maré Sanitation Charter", in partnership with Casa Fluminense, and the "Maré Climate Rights Charter", with the support of the Climate Reality Project and Data Labe, and the "Cocozap" project, focused on basic sanitation in Maré.

Divided between digital content and in-person participation in events and local impact projects, Lorena is joined by her husband Luan, an expert in programming and data analysis, and her friend Bia, a photographer who documents events. Together, they use data from Maré's population census and other studies to analyze the climate and health issues affecting the community. **"Luan took the data from the Maré Population Census, which was conducted in partnership with Redes in 2016 and focused on sanitation, and we cross-referenced it with some other data that focused on health. As a result, we were able to take a panoramic look at this data to understand what it means for us in terms of health and the climate in Maré. What do they mean about people? To try to find the answers, Luan took each of these graphs, each of these figures, checked them meticulously and created a dashboard to present at Labic (UFRJ's Citizen Innovation Laboratory), talking about and understanding this data."**

Among the many issues Lorena raises, one of the main ones is the racial, social and economic impact within the favelas. She notes, for example, that Nova Holanda, where the majority of people declare themselves black or brown, faces more severe problems with basic sanitation and the presence of an open-air garbage dump, compared to the neighboring favela, Parque União, which is more structured, based on allotments. These contrasts lead her to question the reasons behind the disparities between the different communities in Maré and to reflect on how they are deeply rooted in social, cultural, political and environmental dynamics.

With Faveleira, Lorena seeks to question and provoke reflection on living conditions in Maré and the impact of environmental issues on peripheral communities. She

emphasizes that she doesn't present ready-made answers, but many questions that challenge people to think critically about the environment in which they live and the policies that affect their lives. And she is very pleased to say that the content produced by Faveleira, especially the explanatory videos and social media posts, has become an accessible and understandable source of information for many people who can't find answers elsewhere.

In addition to Faveleira, Lorena works at Ação da Cidadania, where she works with local leaders in several different regions of Rio de Janeiro, such as the West Zone, Ilha, Maré, Manguinhos, Grande Méier and Grande Tijuca, with a focus on food security. She also works at Petfive in the sustainability sector. A multidisciplinary artist, Lorena also finds time to paint pictures. Currently finishing her degree in Environmental Management, when asked about her dreams and prospects, she expresses the desire for her art, which she does out of passion, to gain more visibility, allowing her to support herself financially. Tirelessly, she dreams of transforming Faveleira into a structured research platform on the environmental memory of the Maré territory, becoming an extension project with a greater focus on research and education, and also that Maré will no longer be the target of police operations, a painful reality that directly affects her community and her family.

Lorena didn't see herself as a carer, but the invitation to take part in this study on caring made her reflect and realize that her work, whether at Faveleira or in other activities, is deeply linked to caring - for Maré and for the people who live there. Maré is not just the place where he grew up, but an essential part of his identity, so much so that he feels the pain and violence that affects the community as if it were his own, and precisely for this reason, his work has a perspective of zeal and preservation of the memory and environment that make up that territory.

"I knew Maré with a huge green field, which crossed almost all the favelas; which had rabbits, ducks, horses, parakeets, birds all around; which is no longer the case today. So, I think that the care for me is to say: can this be any different? Are we going to look after it differently? Are we going to think about it differently?"

In her opinion, her religiosity is a crucial source of strength and resilience to continue her activism. At many moments, when she feels she can't take it anymore, she finds comfort and renewal by seeking spiritual support in the candomblé hut. It is in this space that she reconnects with the motives and purpose of what she does, and she highlights the importance of her orisha, Ossain, the father of all leaves, the one who knows the secrets of the plants that are used as medicines. For her, it is significant to be the daughter of an entity that represents nature and healing, because candomblé, in essence, celebrates the great natural forces. Each element of nature has a body, a name and a meaning, and this vision reinforces her commitment to the environmental cause.

Reflecting on the changes that have taken place in her life, Lorena says that activism has helped her mature, learning to articulate her ideas and express her concerns in a constructive way, bringing not only problems but also solutions to discussions.

“This process has taught her to think critically and to look at others with more empathy, understanding that problems are complex and not limited to a single person or entity. She learned to listen to the pain of others, recognizing that everyone has their own struggles and that unity is essential to face challenges. As well as believing in the importance of the collective, that there is no point in achieving a victory if you have to celebrate it alone. For Lorena, caring means looking after others, thinking of others, listening, living collectively.”

“The future is many and will result from different arrangements, according to our degree of consciousness, between the realm of possibility and the realm of will.”

Milton Santos
Brazilian geographer and writer



CLICK HERE
to watch the
video interview.

Lourdes Brazil



It was from a small urban fragment of Atlantic Forest that she glimpsed a forest. It was by planting, mobilizing children to work together to plant that Lourdes Brazil restored the vegetation cover of a patch of Atlantic Forest and created an island of freshness in São Gonçalo, in the Água Mineral district. It is there that she created the Gênese Environmental Education Center with the mission of educating for sustainability.

Lourdes Brazil likes to present herself as a 68-year-old black woman, descended from a lineage of “brave and powerful” women who didn’t accept the role that society reserved for them, and therefore resisted and fought bravely. She believes that her strength and courage come from the women in her family, especially her grandmothers and mother, who taught her a lot.

Her maternal grandmother fought against domestic violence in the 60s. Her paternal grandmother, who lived in the interior of Campos, left her husband behind on the farm where they lived in the 1930s and, with nine children in her embrace, went off to find a new life. Working relationships on the farm were still permeated by violence and a lack of workers' rights, as if they were still under slavery. Her grandmother couldn't stand living like that any longer.

These two women met in Vila Isabel, a neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro, and became one family with the union of their sons Darcy dos Santos and Aldacy Brazil, Lourdes' parents. After a lifetime of working in jobs traditionally reserved for black women, such as maid, nanny and laundress, Aldacy set up her own business as a seamstress and pattern maker. In 1985, she went back to school and at the age of 70 graduated with a law degree, fulfilling her lifelong dream of going to university. It was in the company of these strong women that Lourdes Brazil learned from an early age not to conform to the social and territorial position reserved for black women.

When Lourdes was one year old, her parents moved to Engenheiro Pedreira, today the neighborhood of Japeri. At 7, when she started school, she says she was very impressed by the difference between the "pretty and scented" teachers and the women she lived with. After much thought as to why this difference existed, she concluded that "they were pretty and smelled good because they studied", and that this was what she wanted to do most: study.

She finished primary school at the age of 11. It took a lot of determination to tell her family that she wanted to continue her studies. At the time, finishing primary school was "more than enough" for a poor girl, because her family would expect her to work. "In the context in which I lived, many people were illiterate or had only three or four years of schooling. Education wasn't for everyone." But determined, she persevered and got what she wanted. Her academic life began and never stopped.

During her childhood, she often accompanied her mother Aldacy and her aunts who worked as maids in houses in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro, coming and going by train and streetcar from Japeri to Copacabana, Botafogo and Ipanema. Lourdes' curious eyes and questioning mind couldn't help but notice the inequalities between the territories. She says she used to ask indignantly: why do I live in an ugly, faraway city? Why are there no such beautiful things in my city? Why do we not have libraries, theaters, museums? Why isn't my city as bright or clean as Rio's South Zone? She noticed that in the hustle and bustle of life, people didn't

She noticed that in the hustle and bustle of life, people didn't stop to think about the impact of these daily inequalities and violence on the lives of poorer people and, above all, black women. She grew up with the goal of leaving her city, feeling that she couldn't develop there, feeling oppressed.

stop to think about the impact of these daily inequalities and violence on the lives of poorer people and, above all, black women. She grew up with the goal of leaving her city, feeling that she couldn't develop there, feeling oppressed. Why was there so much oppression? Now she understands that feeling of being left behind as violence: her right to live in the city has been violated.

In 1978, when she studied economics at the Fluminense Federal University (UFF), Lourdes Brazil realized that she was one of the only women and the only black student. Racism was too violent and, when she went on vacation after her first year, she thought she would never return again. She felt that her colleagues thought she didn't belong there. She says she wasn't heard or even seen. But in the face of the harsh reality of Japeri's youth, with so many murders and exterminations, she decided not to give up on the college.

Thus, she says, she returned as a black woman, confident to face misogyny and racism, when classes resumed in March 1979. Starting from resisting and not conforming, Lourdes Brazil went on to pursue her academic career, specializing in Environmental Planning, obtaining a Master's Degree and a PhD in Social Ecology at the UFRJ. As a researcher and environmental educator, she has dedicated her life to research and extension projects that seek to respond to her concerns, always working on the question of the city as an object of study: "what can I do to improve the territories". In her own words, she is so uncomfortable with the lack of a guarantee of the right to the city that she has "pain in her liver".

Lourdes Brazil participates in many talks and events, especially for women, with the aim of raising awareness and mobilizing people on issues of violence, inequality, the right to the city, environmental education, racism and women's rights, among others. She draws attention to the importance of talking about violence in a broad, intersectional way: physical, psychological, sexual, emotional, property, moral and,

in particular, paying attention to territorial violence. She thinks it's important to explain that when she says she feels oppressed in her city, it's because the impact of territorial violence, which occurs at the hands of the state, prevents people from having access to their basic rights: health, education, safe and decent work, security, transportation. She understands that everyday violence deepens inequalities. That is why this is one of her areas of concern.

One of the books that Lourdes Brazil has written - entitled "All that was left behind and all that will come ahead" - deals with the concrete and symbolic losses that the black population, especially black women, suffered when they were evicted from revitalized urban areas during the Brazilian urbanization process. She has also written "Environmental Education Activities in Early Childhood Education", written with Maria Lindalva Fernandes, and "Urban Fragments of the Atlantic Forest".

Today, Lourdes Brazil spends most of her time among ingás, jatobás, ipês, paus-brasil, jaboticabas, guavas, camboatás and many other species of the Atlantic Forest. This was a project she had been dreaming of since 1986, when, together with her husband, she decided to buy a plot of land in the Água Mineral neighborhood in São Gonçalo. She had fallen in love with the quaresmeiras trees and the stream that ran through the land. And, even though many people said she was going crazy buying a plot of land in a place that at the time was known for a lot of violence. It was there that she began to plant her dream.

After the "United Nations Conference on Environment and Development," known as "ECO-92" in the city of Rio de Janeiro, and the dialogues around sustainable development, **Lourdes Brazil had the idea of creating an Environmental Education Center on the site** - the Genesis Center, interspersed with a 60,000 m² patch of Atlantic Forest, watercourses and springs.

When she and her husband arrived, the area was degraded due to the extraction

of sand, wood for charcoal and frequent fires. There was also hunting of small animals and the felling of trees for buildings. Today, the scene is one of a rich ecosystem full of life and color, which, with great care, has been strengthened by the restoration of the soil's vegetation cover and is thus helping nature to recover in a way that is still instinctive. Most of the seeds for the trees planted were collected in parks, streets and gardens, and some were bought. More recently, the Center has been able to count on the work of biologist Samira Oliveira and other researchers in the field.

Lourdes Brazil provides care for its territory and the environment. Nature responds by providing ecosystem services to the community, such as coping with climate extremes, as the Genesis Centre area has a noticeable temperature difference compared to its surroundings.

The Genesis Center is a socio-environmental impact enterprise with the mission of educating for sustainability. It welcomes many groups of schoolchildren, especially from state schools, companies and religious institutions, but very soon it will also be open to anyone interested in getting to know the space. In the midst of nature, visitors are stimulated and introduced to environmental education. A walk through the Center is a true sensory experience: everyone can smell the scent of the forest, touch the different textures of the different trunks and leaves, taste the fruit, listen to the songs and "conversations" of the animals that live there. Everything has been carefully thought out to welcome visitors to the different gardens, nurseries, ponds and the headquarters, called the Visitor's House. In one of the spaces, a very large sign reads: Care for the planet.

Lourdes Brazil provides care for its territory and the environment. Nature responds by providing ecosystem services to the community, such as coping with climate extremes, as the Genesis Centre area has a noticeable temperature difference compared to its surroundings. It's significantly cooler, which is why people talk about an 'island of freshness' or the development of a local microclimate. The increase in biodiversity and the vegetation cover on the hillside help to prevent landslides and, as Lourdes Brazil likes to say, contribute to community empowerment. Today, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood can say that they have an Atlantic Forest, which is becoming a reference and an example for other neighbourhoods to use as a strategy to mitigate and adapt to climate change. According to her, the residents say: **"There's Pau Brasil, there are plants, there are flowers, there are seeds!"**. **Lourdes Brazil adds that "caring for trees is afforestation and afforestation is a matter of public health."**

Always active and restless, Lourdes Brazil has attracted groups of researchers to carry out their studies at the Genesis Centre, has established a partnership with the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro - UFRJ and works with the National Autonomous University of Mexico - UNAM, the University of Veracruzana and a Colombian foundation. The community is invited to interact and integrate with the activities. Lourdes Brazil takes every opportunity to share stories and memories of the neighbourhood and São Gonçalo.

The “Construindo Caminhos para a Sustentabilidade” (Building Paths to Sustainability) project won the UN-HABITAT Award for Good Sustainability Practices, as well as being awarded by UFF in 2009 and by Petrobras. In addition, it was ranked among the 90 best sustainability practices in 2010 by UN-HABITAT INTERNATIONAL and selected by UNESCO to be presented in Bonn, Germany, at the First Conference on Education for Sustainability in 2010. Another achievement for the Genesis Center was two awards for the “Recuperação da Cobertura Vegetal” (Recovery of Vegetation Cover) project, which won 3rd place in the Linketrim competition in Australia and 2nd place in the Imensità prize in São Paulo in 2023.

Lourdes Brazil cares about the territory, about the Atlantic Forest, about every tree that is planted, about every creature that inhabits the fragment of forest that it belongs to. She also cares that we have a regenerative future and that we have the right to the city. In partnership with universities, she hopes to create the Atlantic Forest University in the near future.

“Where does care come from?
It started with commitment.
I’ve never accepted inequalities,
differences between territories, violence
and environmental racism because I’ve
always been an involved person.
The question: “What can I do to
improve the territories?” has always
permeated my field of study.”

“The Caregiver and the
one being cared for become
one in a dynamic system.
And that is radical.”

Lisa Gunn

Wife, mother, daughter, granddaughter,
manager of a civil society organization.
She is the executive director of Animal
Protection Worldwide in Brazil.

Luciana Petersen

Luciana Petersen is 27 years old and she was born in Santa Isabel, a small town in the countryside of São Paulo. She currently works as a journalist and communications coordinator for ISER (Institute for the Study of Religion), as well as being part of the New Evangelical Narratives movement, which seeks to redefine what it means to be evangelical and Christian in Brazil. She is the leader of the Oásis community, a faith community in Rio de Janeiro, where people come together to discuss and explore new spiritualities and take care of each other.

Luciana was born into a deeply religious environment, with a father who was a pastor and a mother who was a music minister, both of whom were always immersed in caring activities within the church. From an early age, she took part in community activities, accompanying her parents on visits to the sick and lonely, imprinting on her worldview an understanding of care as an integral part of life. Cautious of the importance of care, she says that **“Religion and the church have always been places to meet people, to walk with people, to live a more communal and less isolated life.”** She grew up with her two older brothers, influencing her culturally, especially in terms of music and reading.



As a child, Luciana was fascinated by the digital world, making the most of computers and the internet, as well as nurturing a great love of music, something she learned at home and at music school. Her family, originally from Espírito Santo, spent their summers in Guarapari, where she enjoyed the company of her grandparents and cousins, always in a welcoming community atmosphere.

Throughout her life, Luciana moved several times. After living in Santa Isabel and Taubaté, in São Paulo, she spent eight years in Minas Gerais, where she studied Journalism at the Federal University of São João del-Rei (UFSJ), after starting her academic training in Civil Engineering. The switch was justified because she quickly realized that her true passion lay in telling stories and connecting with people, which led her to journalism.

A year ago, she moved to Rio de Janeiro, looking to expand her horizons and find new opportunities in work and life. In Rio, she found a community of friends who have become her support network and have been exploring the city and its complexities. Despite the chaos and intensity, she feels connected to the city and the people she has met, transforming what could have been a lonely experience into a rich and meaningful community life.

Her identification with the evangelical Christian faith has always been very strong, but since she was a teenager, she began to question certain discourses and practices within the church that she considered sexist, racist and prejudiced. Encouraged to question and transform society according to the principles of justice and equality she learned in her faith, she became an activist within the church, seeking change. However, this critical stance was not always well received, leading her to distance herself from some religious institutions and meet people with similar views, mainly through the internet.

Encouraged to question and transform society according to the principles of justice and equality, that she learned in her faith, she became an activist within the church, seeking change.

These connections resulted in the creation of new faith communities, such as the New Evangelical Narratives movement and the Oasis community, which offer a safe space for honest and transformative discussions about spirituality and social justice.

The New Evangelical Narratives movement began in 2021 motivated by the dissatisfaction of many evangelicals with the direction religion was taking, especially with the strengthening of religious fundamentalism and the association of evangelicals with the far right in Brazil. For those who didn't identify with these conservative currents - women, black people and people identified as LGBTQPN+, among others - the experience of being in church became suffocating and excluding. To deal with this context, Luciana and other leaders, activists and influencers got together to discuss how evangelical youth could contribute to making these experiences fairer and more inclusive.

The initial meeting brought together around 80 people and gave rise to various ideas and content, with the mission of continuing the work of telling new stories and creating other ways of being Christian in Brazil. Although Luciana didn't conceive the movement, she soon became actively involved, helping to build the communication strategy for New Evangelical Narratives. The movement, which is mostly active in digital spaces, develops innovative ideas of justice and freedom, reaching people who often feel disconnected or excluded by traditional forms of religion.

“It was a little in this spirit that we started the Oasis community. It actually came about as some events, which were the Novas vigils. We called it spirituality for injured people.”

Luciana believes that the internet is a powerful tool for connecting people and creating communities. During the pandemic, she formed an online community on WhatsApp with other LGBTQPN+ women who were isolated and frustrated.

Together, they started holding online services, offering mutual support and creating a kind of virtual church. However, she realized that, despite the effectiveness of online, meeting in person was necessary, and so the Oasis community was born, which began as a series of events and evolved into a community of faith that meets regularly in Rio de Janeiro.

The Oasis community, led by Luciana and her friend Matheus Machado, is a welcoming and caring space where people can explore their spirituality and find support.

Although she initially resisted the title of pastor, due to the weight and negative connotations associated with it, she has accepted this role as she realizes she can redefine its meaning. She sees herself as someone who cares, who welcomes, who seeks to rescue and support those who feel lost or excluded.

Luciana sees care as a key feature of the pastoral office and she cites the biblical metaphor of the shepherd who leaves his 99 sheep to search for the lost one, looking after it until it is safe. She also understands care as a vocation in life, something she already practices, regardless of titles or institutions, transcending religion and reaching out to everyone around her, regardless of their faith. She recognizes that this path she has chosen is challenging, especially within the evangelical world, which often dictates rigid and exclusionary norms. In breaking with these standards, Luciana says she faces resistance and even hostility, and is often the target of attacks and criticism. However, she sees her fight for justice and

inclusion as the deepest expression of her faith, and believes that the church should be a welcoming place, not a place of exclusion.

Despite her hardships, Luciana finds strength in the community that supports her, both online and in person. Recently, an article about her in Marie Claire magazine generated a wave of negative comments, but also mobilized friends and allies who defended her. For Luciana, knowing that she can count on this network is fundamental to continuing her journey in the search for a redefinition of what it means to be a Christian and a pastor in contemporary Brazil.

She recognises that, although she puts a lot of her time and energy into looking after the community, it's important to have personal self-care practices, such as therapy and finding a balance between her activism and her mental health. She also points out the importance of slowing down and taking care of yourself, especially when activism can be so exhausting.

She makes a point of mentioning those who have inspired her throughout her life, such as Martin Luther King, Bel Hooks, Sojourner Truth and Pastor Lutero Negro, who founded the first black Protestant church in Brazil. These figures of resistance and social justice are references for Luciana, who sees them as examples of how the church can be a space for resilience and transformation.

Luciana highlights the partnerships and links that support the projects she is part of. This is the case with the support of the Open Society, which has been crucial for holding events and conferences, such as those held in São Paulo and Recife, where diverse topics - gender, race and environmental issues - were discussed. She emphasizes that networking and working together with other people and organizations is essential to achieving significant results.

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One of the most memorable moments for Luciana was the New Conference, held in Recife. She recalls with emotion the reunion of three black pastors who hadn't seen each other for years, and the symbolism of two trans people serving supper, one of the most important rituals in Christianity. For Luciana, this moment enfolds everything she and her community believe in: inclusion, welcome and justice.

Although the challenges are many, such as the lack of resources and time, she remains driven to reach out to people who have been hurt by religion, offering them a new chance to continue their faith journey in a space that truly embraces them.

For Luciana, caring is about being present, listening, welcoming, walking and discovering together, even if the answers aren't clear. Convinced, she says:

“I think it's more about the journey than the arrival. Care is in the process.”

“Caring is transversal. Can caring be learned? Yes, through sociability and the need to survive. It's a complex and transversal process, not the same for all instances (macro or micro policies), governments, people, groups and their ways of life: peasants, blacks, LGBTQIA+, women, indigenous...”

Cinthia Mendonça
Artist and manager



CLICK HERE
to watch the
video interview.

Lucimar Ferreira



One beautiful evening, Lucimar had a dream about young people involved in drug trafficking, in which she offered them an alternative to leaving that tough life behind them through sports. And for a long time, she couldn't forget those images.

During a trip to Magé with the church group, she felt a “calling” and decided to leave São João de Meriti to start a social project in Magé for children and teenagers from the Piedade neighborhood. She was just beginning to build her network of care in the region, linking sports with fishing, culture, memory, and traditional communities.

Lucimar introduces herself as a 48-year-old fighting woman, a “solo” mother to Luan and Thainara, a grandmother to Theo, and a kickboxing black belt. She is passionate about the local area, particularly Piedade, Canal, and Barbuda, and is always on the move, working as a community leader on several different projects.

She says it all started when she decided to offer kickboxing classes on the pier facing the Guanabara Bay. Her idea took off and caught the attention of the community. Happy with the interest and demand from children and adults, Lucimar managed to negotiate the use of an area for the classes on a plot of land with a swimming pool and a small clubhouse, which was exactly what she needed to offer sports classes and workshops in the school day.

Her dream seemed to be coming true and she officially started the “Luthando pela Vida” project. Lucimar explains that the choice of name is related to her life of struggle, to her children’s names (Lu+Tha) and to the families in the surrounding area that she has come to know and admire, families who fight for dignity every day.

A year after the project was launched, the owner of the land decided to sell the area he had given up, but Lucimar refused to give up. She sought help locally, negotiated and managed to get a cash donation to put towards the purchase of the project’s headquarters, planning to pay off the remaining amount in several installments. It seemed that everything was settled. However, how would she pay these installments and also sustain the project’s activities?

To supplement her family income and keep the project going, in 2014 Lucimar joined her husband in the Guanabara Bay to go fishing. She learned ancestral artisanal fishing techniques used by the native caiçaras who lived there. Artisanal fishing is mainly characterized by family labor and small boats that fish closer to the shore.

Her eyes sparkle when she picks up a model and explains what corral fishing is, a trap that uses a concept of entrapment, in which the fish cannot get out once it has entered.

Lucimar ended up becoming deeply involved in the fishing world and, the more she got to know the fishermen and heard their stories, the more committed she became. Many artisanal fishermen live in a precarious economic situation, with little schooling and facing problems storing, processing, and selling their fish and crabs.

At this point, she realized that many of the elderly fishermen could retire, but didn’t know how, and that many of them in their 60s were unaware of a benefit called Seguro Defeso, available during the fish reproduction period, when fishing is not allowed. Increasingly aware, it was alongside the fishermen that Lucimar began to ensure that their rights were respected.

She also noticed that there were few women fishermen and that the few that existed depended on their husbands’ boats or third parties to carry out their trade, in other words, they had no autonomy and made little profit from the sale of fish and crabs. Determined to take care of Magé’s traditional fishing community, Lucimar read, studied, got to know other fishermen’s associations, identified the needs of the local population and, in 2016, founded the Luthando pela Vida Sport Fishermen’s Association. Today, the association has more than 360 members (fishermen, shellfish gatherers, and crabbers), 60 of whom are women. Most of the members are from Magé, but there are also fishermen from Rio de Janeiro, Duque de Caxias, Itaboraí, and other municipalities around Guanabara Bay.

During this time, Lucimar took every opportunity to learn more about fishing and the environment. She has been part of the Meros do Brasil project, which monitors this species in the Guanabara Bay, and the PEA BG Project, a mitigation project that seeks to strengthen artisanal fishing, both in partnership with Petrobras. She has also taken environmental management courses and received a small investment from the O Boticário Foundation.

Lucimar says that the fishing situation has changed a lot in the last eight years, with an impressive reduction in the quantity of fish because the Bay is so silted up, driving fish and shellfish away from the region. Siltation is the process that makes the bay increasingly shallow due to the deposition of sediment and urban waste, affecting the circulation of water at the bottom of

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the bay. Without water exchange, dead zones begin to appear, which makes the fight to clean up the Guanabara Bay increasingly urgent.

How many people depend on the bay to survive? She explains that, ten years ago, fishermen earned an average of BRL 6,000 a month from sales, but today they work hard to earn between BRL 600 and BRL 800 a month, which has impoverished this population and made them more socially vulnerable.

To tackle this scenario, she seeks to create an area at the association's headquarters to process fish, adding value to the products and selling them as fillets, hamburgers, nuggets, and fish croquettes. Lucimar also wants to mobilize more fisherwomen and shellfish gatherers to become protagonists, seeking to emancipate them, not least because most of them are already heads of households.

From intention, she turned to practice by deciding to take a boatbuilding course with some fisherwomen so that they would be able to start building their boats. Currently, they are looking for partnerships to buy and build their own work tools.

Lucimar believes that to improve local development, it is necessary to get involved in public policies. So she got together with the community and launched a "Manifesto Letter", which was delivered to the City Hall for the Fisheries Department. As part of the struggle, they also want to open the Casa do Pescador (Fisherman's House), a place where public services for fishermen will be concentrated.

The other end of the network that she is building is related to culture, memory, and the possibility of generating local income, and alternative as well as complementary practices to fishing. Lucimar has been discovering Magé's rich history, which includes native populations, a port that brought in and out enslaved people and the riches of the colony, the railroad, among other stories that she is now beginning to tell through Community-Based Tourism activities. This approach combines income generation for the local population with an appreciation of the territory and ancestry. She's also on the Municipal Culture Council, where she helps shape public policies that celebrate local culture and make sure the voices of fishermen are heard.

Lucimar is proud to say she has also become a Community-Based Tourism Guide. One of the activities she offers tourists is a kayak and wooden boat trip through

the mangroves, where she explains the importance of mangroves for the ecosystem and the preservation of this biome. As part of the project, called "Remando no Manguezal" (Paddling in the Mangrove), there are tours that include environmental education and stories that value native and black culture, always ending with a tour of the pier, where there is a bust of Maria Congo. She is keen to point out that people with disabilities do not pay for the tour and are always welcome.

Community-based tourism is a practice that defends cultures, traditional ways of life, and territories. It is an example of local development based on the values of the territories, with the aim of the autonomy of the inhabitants. In this tourism model, the surrounding communities are involved in the creative process of proposing activities and carrying out and benefiting from the results of tourism activities.

Lucimar believes that valuing local memory has an extremely positive effect on the self-esteem of the inhabitants. It can encourage them to take better care of their environment and get involved in issues important to their communities.

"I am working to keep the culture and tradition of fishing alive so that women can have their financial autonomy. We can do this by taking care of our territory, our culture, and the environment."

It's an income alternative for women, mothers, heads of households, of all ages, to engage in income-generating activities in their communities. Who wouldn't want to work close to home? Without having to "suffer" two or three hours commuting between Baixada Fluminense and Rio, and being able to closely monitor their children's daily lives. People who are better informed and who take pride in their territories will create healthier and more regenerative spaces

Lucimar is currently studying physical education and taking an environmental management course. She is very active and takes every opportunity to learn more, especially as she wants to improve her work in the community. She is a multi-talented artist. She also makes bio-jewellery from fish scales and participates in fairs to sell her art and promote the potential of her community.

The story of how she started her new social bio-jewellery business is one that Lucimar is keen to share. One day, while shopping, she fell in love with an earring made of fish scales, but when she saw the price she almost fainted.

She left the shop thinking: Every day she throws the scales of the fish she catches in the bin. She shared her concern with her daughter and together they thought of inviting an artisan to give classes to local women, fishermen or not, to develop a line of bio-jewellery. She managed to find a few people, but as they lived far away, it would have been too expensive to bring them to Magé. Without giving up her idea, with the encouragement of her daughter and her skills as an artisan, she decided to try her hand at making some earrings. She spent the early hours of the morning working on six earrings and “voilà”: A new project was born! The next day she sold all six pieces.

Bio-jewellery is a sustainable fashion accessory made from organic ingredients taken from nature with no or minimal impact. These pieces are handmade and made from organic elements taken from nature without any aggression. Lucimar admits that selling the six pieces the next day was “a bit of luck”, as it’s still not easy to sell handmade and sustainable pieces. But it’s also a “sign” to keep going because she believes it’s a growing market. She keeps inventing.

As our partner Charles Siqueira often says, the caregiver is a connector, facilitating dialogues as well as partnerships. That is exactly what Lucimar does: she speaks up and gets people moving on behalf of her territory and the fishing community. She says that caring for others is her top priority and that she wouldn’t be able to do anything else because caring is what keeps her going.

“*I’m proud to show people this side of the Guanabara Bay, which is clean and full of stories. People come here and can’t believe the beauty and power of this place. I want everyone to come and see it so that we can take better care of our territories.*”

“Caring goes against the system; it’s decolonial. Even though they are encouraged to care only for ‘their own’, caregivers decide to care for others or for the environment.”

Julio Ledo
Specialist in Sair Para Ver

Mãe Flávia



Flávia da Silva Pinto, 49 years old, is an Umbanda priestess and spiritual leader of the Casa do Perdão, a spiritual centre located in Seropédica, Rio de Janeiro. As a matriarch of Umbanda, an Afro-Brazilian religious sect, she is known as Mãe de Santo (mother of saint), or more precisely Mãe Flávia. Born in Vila Vintém, in Padre Miguel, she has a degree in sociology, a master's degree in political sociology and has been the coordinator of religious diversity for Rio de Janeiro City Hall, as well as the winner of the National Human Rights Award (2011). But studying and achieving so much required her to be determined, resilient and always listen to intuition.

She was the daughter of a couple who, despite facing violence, always put love first. She was a child when she saw them murdered. Her father was a drug dealer and was killed, while her mother was a victim of femicide, murdered by her stepfather. She was just ten and her brother was only three years old when they spent three days at home with their dead mum. They were too young to grasp what was going on.

As a survivor of such painful tragedies, Mãe Flávia believes that these experiences of suffering prepared her to understand her purpose in the world. Unlike many people who face violence and end up succumbing to drugs, madness, addiction or depression, she found the strength in her African ancestry to move on. She sees her ancestry as a guiding philosophy in her life, which gives her strength and resilience.

Her immense desire to know her history led her to discover that she is a Yoruba woman. The discovery led her to make her initiation in Nigerian territory and, a few years later, she proved, through DNA, that she comes from Africa. “When I learned that I came from the womb of Africa, I was able to understand that I am an African in diaspora. So getting here means knowing that one of my ancestors was trafficked and that place of my ancestry is taken up again the moment I make a pact with this faith.”

Two events in her history were important for Mãe Flávia to understand her role in the world. The first was when, at the age of five, she was discussing political and social issues with her grandfather: “I clearly remember that a lot of information came to me at that moment. You know a popular saying: Ah, when did I become a person? So that was when I had an understanding of myself. There, I understood that I’m on planet Earth, that I’ve been reborn, that my name is now Flávia and where I was.”

The second event occurred when her mother was murdered: “I looked up at the sky and started talking to a star. And that star went on to tell me everything that had happened. No one had to tell me that my mother was dead. That made me understand that I wasn’t supposed to stop living at the age of ten.

“When I learned that I came from the womb of Africa, I was able to understand that I am an African in diaspora. So getting here means knowing that one of my ancestors was trafficked and that place of my ancestry is taken up again the moment I make a pact with this faith.”

There, in the conversation with that star, I was told almost everything I’m still living today. Of course, it wasn’t very clear, but it allowed me to understand that it was a situation I was going through in order to learn to be strong and overcome it.”

Mãe Flávia sees herself as a caregiver. A responsibility that she takes on with her ancestry and destiny, and which has the mission of transforming lives in a spiritual and material way. Unlike the role that patriarchy has imposed on women, she is proud to belong to an African religious tradition in which women have authority and play the role of matriarchs. She cares for both men and women, because she believes that caring for a man is also caring for a woman. And she is emphatic when talking about the importance of taking care of oneself, citing Yoruba and indigenous philosophies:

“Those who are not well with themselves cannot help others. We always have to make sure that body, mind and spirit are in balance, because an unhappy or sick person cannot bring happiness or health to others.”

Casa do Perdão (House of Forgiveness) was founded 25 years ago, and it is there that she welcomes and cares for the people who come to her. It’s important to clarify that the Casa do Perdão is a Terreiro, a temple or place of worship where followers gather to practice their rituals in Umbanda. When we say ‘Terreiro’ we’re talking about the space of the House of Forgiveness. There, she uses her knowledge of African ancestral medicine with herbs and rituals because she believes that, while capitalist society preaches that healing is only possible with the use of drugs from the pharmaceutical industry, she can resignify healing with ancestral values, recovering knowledge stolen during 400 years of enslavement. She explains that “this health practice that I believe in involves a lot of reading, constant study, a permanent search for knowledge, tireless practice. In addition, I have been to Africa three times. I have visited three countries to receive my initiation and to recover this knowledge from my ancestors”.

At the Terreiro, Mãe Flávia also takes care of women who have endured domestic abuse, or who are going through financial hardships or underwent unsafe abortions, and men who are victims of unstructured family situations. Within the Terreiro, they find a new meaning and function, whether it's caring for herbs, preparing healing baths or practicing other care actions that help people heal and understand a new form of social organization and philosophy of life:

“An important action is for people to line the bed they are going to lie on in the Amaci - from the word ‘soften’, ‘make receptive’. This is a ritual consisting of the use of plant blood from herbs that refresh the head, a kind of initiation and strengthening that Umbanda practitioners, beginners or not, go through in Umbanda Terreiros; in the Obi - an African fruit consecrated as an offering to give balance to the Orí (head); and in the BORI - a ritual of African religions in which each person's Ori is worshipped through prayers, songs and offerings to strengthen the head; or in a “feitura” ritual, in which food is offered.”

In addition to spirituality, Mãe Flávia coordinates social projects at the Terreiro, such as sewing, tutoring and capoeira, when she can get the funds, and she is categorical in her report about her commitment to distributing food staples and fighting hunger. She sees hunger as a brutal form of violence. She is currently able to help 30 families, but there are times when she can only give to ten.

What is important to her is that in 25 years she has never stopped distributing food. She also does important work in two women's prison units: Talavera Bruce and Santo Expedito. According to the National Department of Prison Administration, her Terreiro is the only one to represent Afro-religiosities within the prison system. As a priestess, she offers a type of care that inmates don't find in other religions, bringing comfort and dignity through the delivery of personal hygiene items (pads, shampoos and clothes) and conversations for emotional support, an attention that extends to homosexual women and transgender men. In this welcoming work, she makes a point of not preaching religious conversion, but says that many women come to her when they leave prison, and some become

filhas de santo (daughters of the saint). Filhas de Santo are people who are followers of the religion and support the work of the Mãe de Santo and the activities in the Terreiro.

Mãe Flávia acknowledges the limits of so many fronts and challenges, but says she is never discouraged because she is cheerful and optimistic. She claims that this is the result of her deep connection with nature and its sacred forces. Her belief, which she has turned into a true profession of faith, is that her love for God, for creation and for African deities gives her the strength to face any difficulty. Her speech is a strong appeal for everyone to take care of nature, as it is an essential part of ourselves, and its destruction results in imbalances and illnesses:

“That is why we have to take care of and revere nature, which is everywhere. We have to look to ancestral teachings to care for the world and for people. It's not just a question of religiosity, it's a philosophy of life”.

Mãe Flávia believes that caring for others is an act of love. She loves so much that she has love left over to give. She also says that love heals her and keeps her strong in the face of adversity. Her conviction is that humanity has lost a lot by treating women as submissive. Always very intuitive, Mãe Flávia reminds us that female intuition is a great power that has been repressed for centuries, and encourages women to listen to their ancestors, connect with their roots and express themselves freely. She talks about powerful female figures in African cosmology, such as: Oíá (in Yoruba, Oyá), also called Iansã, is a deity of fire, but also related to the element of air, governing lightning and transformations; Oxum, orisha mistress of rivers, waterfalls, gold, golden and yellow colors, fertility and love; and Iemanjá, deity of the seas, the mother of the orishas. Mãe Flávia explains that the cult of Iemanjá comes from the Yoruba, who associated her with rivers, fertility and motherhood.

And she sees Oiá as an inspiration for renewal and hope, wishing all women to awaken their inner power and make a difference for generations to come.

Mãe Flávia has published two books: “Umbanda Preta: raízes africanas e indígenas” and “Save the Matriarchy: buffalo woman handbook”.

As a writer, in her podcast “Mãe Flavia Pod” and in many other studies, she speaks about: Religious racism, intolerance towards religions of African origin and issues related to matriarchy, ritual practices and ancestry.

As Babá (Mãe de Santo) of Casa do Perdão|Seropédica, sociologist and master’s student in Political Sociology Mãe Flavia is a spiritual guide and leader with many fronts of care: fighting hunger, spiritual care and donations of personal hygiene items in two women’s prisons, care for her saintly children and care in combating religious intolerance. In her podcast she discusses topics such as matriarchy, religious racism, ritualistic practices and ancestry, among others. She emphasizes the relationship between religions of African origin and nature and its sacred forces, stating that it is necessary to care for and revere nature, which is everywhere, and looking to ancestral teachings to care for the world and for people. She believes that this is not just a matter of religiosity, it is a philosophy of life. Taking care of yourself in order to take care of others. In her view, caring is love.

Mãe Flávia’s vision for the future is for everyone to have enough food, for health to be more than just a matter of buying medicines, and for there to be more respect for traditional religions and indigenous peoples.

“When people understand that we are fighting for social justice, for equality and equity, there is no reason not to be a feminist.”

Djamila Ribeiro
Philosopher, black feminist
and Brazilian writer



CLICK HERE
to watch the
video interview.

Mãe Itamara



Mãe Itamara is the granddaughter of a famous prayer woman, who was a healer in Nova Iguaçu. She is a social worker with a master's degree from Federal University of Rio de Janeiro - UFRJ and a researcher at LABMENS - Laboratório de Memórias, territórios e ocupações (Laboratory of Memories, Territories and Occupations). From her grandmother she inherited the legacy of praying and a Candomblé Terreiro, place of worship where followers gather to practice their rituals, to take care of as the priestess. Candomblé is an Afro-Brazilian religion.

Born into a matriarchal family that has always been very close-knit, especially in order to be able to face the violence endured by the terreiros in Baixada Fluminense, she says that the Terreiro, called Angola Casa do Bengue Ngola Djanga Ria Mutakalambo, is now over 30 years old. There she prays for everyone who comes and asks to be cared for and embraced.

Itamara de Oliveira dos Santos, who is 43 and was initiated into candomblé when she was just 13, says that she feels extremely proud to have inherited a legacy of care from her grandmother. In the terreiro, the doors are always open to anyone who wishes to enter with respect. As the matriarch of Candomblé, she is known as Mãe de Santo (Mother of the Saint), or more precisely Mãe Itamara. With four siblings, she says she was always spoiled by her grandmother and mother. Her grandparents helped her parents raise all their grandchildren.

Married with three children, Mãe Itamara says she learned to pray and bless from her grandmother, Mãe Silvia Costa de Oliveira. She had prayers for many different needs and passed on her ancestral knowledge. In addition to being a prayer and a healer, her grandmother was also a great herbalist, who knew how to recognize many herbs and use them to prepare solutions, infusions and baths.

As a Mãe de Santo, Mãe Itamara explains that she analyses what the person needs when they come to her for prayers, blessings and healing baths. Everything is carefully prepared in order to take care of people who are hurt, who are suffering and who are often full of resentment. In her opinion, the most important thing is to establish a relationship of trust with those who seek her in need of care. She usually prepares sun baths, moon baths and herbal baths and, together with her Filhos de Santo (Sons of a Saint), she bathes and prays for three days in a row. Filhos de Santo are people who are followers of the religion and support the work of the Mãe de Santo and the activities in the Terreiro.

“The terreiro is a place where care is constantly being produced. People come to the terreiro, not just those who want to be initiated into candomblé. People come to let off steam, to talk, to ask for a hug. I’m here as a mother’s place. And it’s not just a place where you can go with confidence, knowing that you won’t be judged.”

Mãe Itamara says she receives many women who just want a hug, to feel welcome and to be listened to. On average, she sees around 50-60 people a month, but during the Covid-19 pandemic, demand exploded because people were forced to stay at home and live together. There has been a significant increase in domestic violence in the region (and throughout Brazil, according to research data).

“*Over the centuries, the violent investment in the extermination of the black population and their cultural and religious practices has kept black lives in continuous threat and fear; however, the practices of existence and intelligent resistance, supported by ancestral wisdom, have also crossed the centuries, and are perpetuated today, calling for a broad reflection on the place of production and maintenance of life.*”

In the terreiro, care is taken collectively and the resources for maintaining the site are the result of collaboration, with everyone helping as much as they can. Mãe Itamara emphasises that her Filhos de Santo (Sons of the Saint) come together and do everything together, supporting each other, and that there are always people to look after the terreiro. For them, care must also extend beyond the walls of the terreiro, so they donate food and meals to the homeless in the area and to anyone else who is in need.

At LABMENS - Laboratory of Memories, Territories and Occupations - Mãe Itamara researches the violence and destruction of the terreiros of Nova Iguaçu and Duque de Caxias. She says that her mother always encouraged her to go back to school and dedicate herself to research, even after she had children. Through the hands of Professor Geraldo Bastos, also one of the caregivers, she says that she gathered the courage and willingness to embrace a few more years of study, seeking to get a Master’s Degree in Community Psychosociology and Social Ecology at the Institute of Psychology of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro/ UFRJ. Her dissertation was entitled “Papo De Terreiro: Resistance to Religious Intolerance and Racism by Candomblé Houses in Nova Iguaçu, Baixada Fluminense Region, RJ (2022)”.

Resistance strategies are adopted individually and communally, encompassing struggles in the field of politics and denunciations, but also the silent maintenance of cults and even the suspension of public activities, with the persistence of individual practices of devotion and faith.

The research - based on narratives from the people of terreiros in the municipality of Nova Iguaçu - seeks to identify and analyse the experiences of religious intolerance and racism, as well as the resistance strategies of priests who work in areas dominated by paramilitary forces and neo-Pentecostal extremists. As a priestess in the same religious field and in the same geopolitical area of Baixada Fluminense, Mãe Itamara sought to reflect on and identify how the people of the terreiro have been resisting the constant violation of the right to freedom of worship today.

“Resistance strategies are adopted individually and communally, encompassing struggles in the field of politics and denunciations, but also the silent maintenance of cults and even the suspension of public activities, with the persistence of individual practices of devotion and faith. Over the centuries, the violent investment in the extermination of the black population and their cultural and religious practices has kept black lives in continuous threat and fear; however, the practices of existence and intelligent resistance, supported by ancestral wisdom, have also crossed the centuries, and are perpetuated today, calling for a broad reflection on the place of production and maintenance of life.”*

Unfortunately, Mãe Itamara says that acts of religious racism are recurrent and almost daily. She told us in our interview and in her dissertation that she was at the terreiro’s gate saying goodbye to someone when two children, a girl and a boy, started arguing because they couldn’t pass on the “macumba” sidewalk. She says she watched as one dragged the other back and forth until the boy said: “We’re not going to pass the Macumba’s pavement because my mother won’t let us!” At the moment she saw the scene, she said she laughed, but soon afterwards she felt sad as she reflected on the scene, because racism comes from home, is taught and, in the case of the two children, was perpetuated by a mother who could have educated them for freedom and diversity.

Visibly saddened, she says that during her dissertation research, she visited many terreiros in Nova Iguaçu and Duque de Caxias, attended public hearings on violence against religions of African origin, and often saw the walls of the terreiros being torn down and graffitied with phrases such as “Jesus lives here now, the devil is no longer here”. The phrase refers to practitioners of religions of African origin who they believe are demonic.

Many traditional terreiros in Baixada Fluminense, even with elderly matriarchs, have not been spared the violence of religious extremists and criminals. Just as many religious leaders, feeling cornered, left the region out of fear. Experiencing these acts of intolerance makes it very difficult to rebuild, not only because of the financial issue caused by a lack of resources, but also because the victims don’t have the emotional strength to start over and face the constant threats. It takes a lot of mental health to get through all this and not go mad. Resist and Re-exist.

Just as serious as the attacks is the fact that victims of religious intolerance are unable to call the police when they suffer violence. Mãe Itamara explains that this happens because in certain neighborhoods and regions of Rio de Janeiro, especially in Baixada Fluminense, residents cannot ask the police to come in and investigate, at the risk of retaliation from militias or drug traffickers.

In her case, Mother Itamara says that, even at the risk of violence, she doesn’t give up reporting it. And she says:

“*Someone has to say what is happening or there will never be any change. We can’t remain silent. I make sure that everyone can enjoy the right to practice their religion, whatever it may be.***”**

*Excerpt taken from the Abstract of Mother Itamara’s Master’s dissertation. We felt it was important to use her own words to explain the research she carried out.

As a social worker, Mãe Itamara works with children and teenagers in a shopping mall in Rio de Janeiro's West Zone. She says that many of them skip school, turn to prostitution, steal and that, unfortunately, there is a high incidence of sexual abuse and self-mutilation, which often take place inside the mall. It was because of this that the mall's management felt it was essential to open this service. She also works on a public project where she acts as a mediator between the Military Police and the community.

“My way of caring is associated with active listening. People need to be heard, above all. There are people who have no one to tell, no one who can sit with them and listen. That's why care is important as a healing process. When bonds of trust are created, people begin to feel stronger and more powerful to face their challenges, and healing takes place.”

As well as being a caregiver, she says she feels very cared for because she has a family that is very close, supportive and welcoming. Based on her experience at home, Mãe Itamara recommends that we have to be more affectionate towards each other. We need to look at each other with respect, have dialog and listen.

She says very clearly and firmly that she has never thought of giving up, even in the face of many difficulties and violence. She also says that what she tries to do is walk away when she's feeling tired and down.

Mãe Itamara is not only a Mãe de Santo, a praying woman, a healer and a social worker whose essence is caring, but also a voice for others to continue their caring journeys.

“*Family is my place of rebalancing. I take time away from my activities and stay with my family. I take care of myself when I'm with my family.”*

“*Caring is presence. It is revolutionary because it takes time. It requires presence. It is about taking care of your memory, of those who came before you. The world did not start with Facebook. Caring forces us to slow down, to stop, to look at others. Caring is tinkering with the time machine.”*

Heraldo HB
Cultural animator and filmmaker

Marcos and Raquel

Who dares to care about the residents of the Fim do Mundo community? Marcos, Raquel and their two children are a family that can't accept the situation of total abandonment, violence and social injustice in the Fim do Mundo (End of the World) community. They are volunteers, organizers of activities and donations for the residents of Fim do Mundo. They fight for the food security of the families who live there and for them to have the opportunity to build a better life.



Marcos Antônio Francisco Mariano, 54 years old, is a social worker, nursing assistant, artist and passionate about culture. When he was less than a year old, he was abandoned along with his one-and-a-half-year-old brother, who was put up for adoption, while Marcos was raised in a boarding school - FEEM - and never saw his brother again. When he was 17, he met his mother again and went to live with her for a while, but he explains that “it didn’t work out”. Life went by and one of the things he wanted most was to start a family. A few years later, he decided to move to Morro da Lagartixa, in Costa Barros, when everything changed when he met a girl called Raquel. At the age of 23, he decided to go back to high school. He then took a course to become a care assistant so he could start working and pay for a degree in social work.

She also says that she went through many difficult situations in her childhood, apart from her mother’s illness: running with a can of water on her head, running from gunshots, running to avoid being hit by a train, running to avoid seeing or being a dead person. Run, run, run. So she had to have a lot of resilience in order to be a survivor.

Raquel Mariano, 43, was born and raised in Morro da Lagartixa with four other siblings. Her father, a greengrocer, did some other jobs to supplement his income, since her mother, who had epilepsy, was a frail woman who, over time, found her mobility increasingly compromised. Both were functionally illiterate and had few opportunities to study, but they always did everything they could not to let their five children go hungry. In order to look after their mother, Raquel and her siblings had to take turns, so it wasn’t always possible for them to continue their studies.

“I started school late, but that didn’t stop me from graduating. I completed high school, several courses and I still intend to go to university,” says Raquel.

At the age of 12, Raquel met Marcos through her older brother when Marcos had just moved to Morro da Lagartixa. Raquel fondly remembers that, when he saw that her family was simpler, Marcos used the money he had received from a redundancy payment to do extra shopping and deliver it to her house.

And so, between childhood games, flirting, banana and Juquinha candies, the two fell in love and never let go. Together for 32 years, they married very young and at the age of 16, Raquel became pregnant, but lost her first baby. Shortly afterwards, she became pregnant again. Vinícius was born to the couple’s delight. Four years

later, their second son, Augusto, was born to complete the quartet. Marcos, who finished his nursing degree after Vinícius was born, soon found a job and life began to improve. For years, Marcos worked as a carer for the elderly, while Raquel opted to quit her job to keep a close eye on her children’s growth. She was very much afraid that they would get involved with drugs. She dedicated her time to looking after the house and her family, working as a freelance saleswoman selling underwear and beauty products. In a course for mothers at her children’s nursery, Raquel learned how to make handicrafts, which would have an impact on her life story a few years later.

She managed to look after her mother until she died with the help of Marcos and the boys. Emotionally, she says that her husband had a beautiful relationship with her parents and that he treated them as if they were his own. Raquel’s father is still alive and has rebuilt his life with a new partner.

With her voice breaking up, Raquel says that she tried to keep the boys busy as much as possible so that they had extracurricular activities, such as sports, language courses and music, and didn’t run the risk of turning to illegal activities.

“I didn’t want them to go through what I went through, not being able to go anywhere because of the violence, wanting a yoghurt and not being able to give it to them. My father sometimes had to cook on a wood stove because gas was so expensive. But he did everything he could to make sure we didn’t go hungry. Marcos and I ran a lot to be able to provide good opportunities for our children.”

Raquel is a black mother forged from the struggle. A proud mother of her children. The eldest, Vinícius, 28, is a musician, plays the saxophone and is a graphic designer. The youngest, Augusto, has made a career in the military and is studying for competitive exams. Both are well on their way, making all their parents' efforts worthwhile. **"Today my boys reward us by working, studying, not smoking and not using drugs. They both take part in volunteer activities at the Fim do Mundo and love helping others,"** says Raquel proudly.

Marcos, who ended up becoming an artist and craftsman, worked as an assistant to a very successful artist, and has developed and executed countless sets for soap operas, films and theaters. He proudly talks about some of the projects carried out at PROJAC. His closeness to culture, designing sets and decorating events led him to develop other skills, and he even worked as a cultural coordinator in Nova Iguaçu. Raquel participates in many projects with her craft skills. When her mother died, she was able to take some time off to look after herself and resume her professional life.

More than ten years ago, Marcos and Raquel started doing voluntary and "missionary" work together, as Raquel likes to say, in the Fim do Mundo community, which is at the crossroads of three other communities. Marcos asks them to draw a triangle and, from the drawing, he gives them directions: at the top is the community of Quitanda; on the right is Chapadão; on the left is Morro da Lagartixa; and between them is Fim do Mundo.

Caught in the middle, between the different factions of drug traffickers, the neglect of the authorities and the "I don't care" attitude of society, is the community of Fim do Mundo. Marcos explains that it is very difficult to reach the community because of access and violence. He and Raquel don't know exactly how many people live there. About eight years ago, when they carried out a survey, they counted around 650 families, with 550 children. Today, they believe there must be around a thousand families and 800 children.

In the Fim do Mundo community, there is no political leadership, no active NGOs, no social projects and certainly no public authorities. Just as there are no public policies, the community has no brickwork, no running water, no basic sanitation, no security, no food, and almost 90% of the houses were built with leftover building materials.

Marcos says: **"I'd like to set up a cultural center in the community so that the children can have leisure time, movies, theater, music, in short, a breather. Because there's so much poverty".**

He says that there are children who have never picked up a book and who are starting school at the age of 12, which makes him indignant. After saying that he can't see this situation as something normal, he speaks with sadness about the deep level of poverty and food insecurity in the community. From this pain, the family began to promote recreational afternoons with the children; give tutoring classes, which eventually became literacy, music and sports; take children to events and cultural institutions; collect and distribute donations; develop a child sponsorship program at Christmas; and distribute soup every 15 days. They have also managed to generate paid work for women in the community, involving some of them in preparing part of the sets they build.

With a twinkle in his eye, Marcos says that he has already managed to take the children from Fim do Mundo to see a play in Leblon. He says there are no words to describe their experience. Thrilled, he says it was incredible to see the children in cultural spaces.

“*Culture transforms lives. It opens you up to another world of possibilities. Culture has transformed my life.***”**

As in hundreds of other communities where there is a lack of everything, there is a lot of drug use in Fim do Mundo. Marco believes that this is because people need to numb themselves to escape from reality, frustrations and the sadness of seeing everything so bad around them.

But even though they feel that there is no other way out and no prospect of a way out, Marcos and Raquel disagree and are wholeheartedly committed to finding ways out. And this dedication to caring has a reason that goes back to Marcos' own experience: when he was young, he got involved with drugs, became very ill, but was cared for by a man and healed.

“ I like caring because I was cared for when I needed it. I like to see the smiles on people's faces. I feel very fulfilled when I can take care of someone. It's a moment of real personal satisfaction. I try to impact lives and those lives can impact others.”

Marcos says he is aware that his power of support is limited, both by resources and lack of time, but that he always dreams of the possibility of a social organization entering the Fim do Mundo community and transforming it, from the inside out. In this constant struggle, most of the time against windmills, he recounts that three times, with great sacrifice, they built a space for children to have access to books, toys, musical instruments, as well as a kitchen set up to make food for the population. Unfortunately, he says, the space has been destroyed three times by “superior forces”.

Resilient as they are, they won't give up. They believe in equal access to rights and that the culture of care is transformative.

The build-destroy episode:

Site 1

They had registered a social organization under the name Grupo Gênesis. They found a location near an almond tree. A little wooden house where they kept books, toys and musical instruments. After a while, they “asked” to move somewhere else.

Site 2

They built a little wooden house in the middle of the community. They made an effort to get new donations and set up a cozy place for the families. After a while, they “negotiated” to move to a new location.

Site 3

It was a small shack that was transformed with a lot of care and effort. It had a library and an area where people could make handicrafts generated from Marcos' professional activities to produce scenery, generating income for a group of women, musical instruments and toys. The space, which was very simple, even included a full kitchen to make food for the community, which he prepared himself.

After some time, everything was “taken over”. The person who protected their work was murdered. Then came another, who also “disappeared”, then another and another. Until the last person to take over the “piece” decided to destroy part of the space four years ago. What was left was donated to families in the community. This time, the family was very disappointed, Raquel was depressed, saddened and says it was very difficult to get up. Her feeling was of a certain ingratitude because she believed that the residents should have fought to defend the space and held everything in their arms. Marcos says that when they talk about this pain as a family, they all say that they would have liked to have seen the residents defend the space strongly, but that they understand that these people have no voice, no strength, and that they need to be cared for.

Even though it was a very difficult decision, the family gave up on having a new space, but they didn't stop working. Resilient, they continue to organize music activities, tutoring classes, making donations of food baskets and promoting interactions with the community on festive dates such as Mother's Day, Father's Day, the Cold Campaign and Christmas. Without being able to use the mini-kitchen anymore, they are no longer able to keep up the regularity of making soups. Sometimes they make the soup at home and take it by car. However, driving there is not an easy task, especially as it requires a lot of negotiation and caution.

On the other hand, they both say that it's not all darkness, and that there is a bright side too. Such as when a young man all dressed up and with a huge smile on his face approached Marcos, calling him "teacher" and telling him that he had managed to finish his studies, as Marcos had encouraged him, and was now working in a bank. The boy thanked Marcos for having cared about him and for everything he had done not only for him, but for the whole community.

Raquel comments that she sees changes in the lives of many people who have managed to take advantage of the opportunities offered to them, using the gaps in care that life has given them to build resilience. This is how the couple always receives good news about someone doing a nursing course, another working in the market, another managing to continue with their studies.

Determined, they both say that, as long as there is love, they will never give up caring, whether for one person or a larger group, because no one is anything alone and everyone is just passing through life. Their belief is that each person should leave a reference for someone and be persevering, not giving up in the face of setbacks because they are part of life.

Oh, here's Raquel's secret:
She thinks it's possible to make a new idea work so that they can build a new headquarters in the Fim do Mundo community. But she didn't tell Marcos yet, because she knows that if she did, he would want to dirty himself the next day. It seems there is more to come...

"A lot of small people, in small places, making small things, can change the world."

Eduardo Galeano
Uruguayan journalist and writer

Maria Chocolate



"A menina do vestido amarelo"
(The girl in the yellow dress) is the first book written by Maria Chocolate. A book that recounts her childhood and the power of black girls and women or, as the synopsis says, a book that transforms pain into resistance. A true portrait of Maria do Carmo da Silva Miranda's journey.

Maria, who was born in Bom Jesus do Galho|MG, was still very young when her family moved to Saracuruna, Duque de Caxias|RJ, and lived in various relatives' houses until she finally managed to build a stucco house in the same neighborhood where she still lives today. The family says that Maria was 4 years old at the time, but she isn't sure of the exact date of her birth, and she is still trying to find this out to this day. The eldest of nine siblings, Maria had to take care of the housework from an early age.

But that didn't make her bitter or sad. She tells us, always with joy, of the admiration she feels for her mother's skills - "an excellent laundress, cook and ironer", in her words. She tells us about how much she misses the backyards where the family raised animals and cultivated a vegetable garden, and her grandmother, who used to make her dresses so that they could attend mass and catechesis together at the Nossa Senhora do Rosário church. It was at this time that she earned the affectionate nickname Maria Chocolate from the catechists to differentiate her from the many Marias and Mários in the group, even though chocolate was something Maria didn't even know what it tasted like.

As a black, peripheral woman, her life was marked by prejudice, poverty and scarcity. A kind of predestination from which she tried to escape with the support of books and people who welcomed her and made her become a strong and empowered woman who learned to fight for respect, equality and inclusion.

Her education began in a makeshift school in Dona Nilva's backyard and she was only able to enter formal school when she was older.

And it was in that backyard that her passion for books began, eternal companions that marked different stages of her career, transporting her to other worlds, being her refuge and stimulating her imagination to glimpse another life. There, one of the first books she read marked her forever: *Memoirs of a Broomstick*, by Orígenes Lessa.

At the age of 13, Maria began teaching as a popular educator in MOBRAL, an adult literacy program. She didn't think the traditional teaching methods were effective and wanted to find a better way to educate students.

She dreamed of changing the educational system. "I wanted to change, I

wanted to be a different teacher," she says.

"I remember that reading changed me. It seemed that I became a broomstick, I traveled on trucks, trains, carts, on people's backs..."

Determined, she talked to people from the church and got permission to use a space to teach, where she set up a class with 60 students, basically made up of grandmothers and mothers, allowing them to bring their children and grandchildren to the classes, as they had no one to leave them with.

This welcoming attitude led Maria to become more involved with social movements, including ones for women and for landless groups, among others that she got to know through church meetings. Over the years, she started going to places where they talked about culture and helping vulnerable people, like the Programa Ação da Cidadania (Citizenship Action Program). She also took part in the food donation and distribution campaign in her community.

In 2006, working in a CIEP [Integrated Public Education Center] and with a strong presence in social and cultural movements in her region, Maria started showing signs of tiredness and malaise, which affected her health and required rest. With the realization that she needed to slow down and fight against her physical and emotional limitations, Maria fell into depression, which forced her to withdraw from her community activities. She remembers that period with great fondness, and how vital her husband Celso and her son Walber were to her recovery. They provided her with a great deal of care and support as she recovered and grew stronger again.

During this period, some young women - Priscila, Rafaela, Rosana, Lady

"The grandmothers had grandchildren to look after and the mothers had their children, which nobody accepted. Then I looked at the circle, looked at each of them and told them that there was no problem, that they could bring the children because we're going to study and, on Friday, we'll have a collective coffee."

and Ketteley - would visit her regularly. At first, they watched television together, watching “Sessão da Tarde”, but gradually they started bringing her books. These moments of reading and conversation revitalized Maria, who gradually started to improve, doing small household chores and interacting more actively. Over time, she felt motivated to do more. She called in the children from the neighborhood and started decorating the walls and transforming the space into a place for socializing and, above all, reading. There, the children helped with the organization and experienced the activities they planned together. Mothers and other women from the neighborhood were also invited to take part in the reading circles.

Thanks to donations like a bookcase, rug, and books brought by her friend Shirley, as well as her brother-in-law’s tarpaulin, which her husband used at a community event, Maria was able to create a dedicated space for reading, socializing, and engaging in cultural activities. The place, which has become a meeting point and a place of transformation for many children and young people in the community, has had various names, such as Literary Balcony, Literary Carpet and Literary Canvas.

Her entry into the C&A Institute’s Prazer de Ler (Pleasure to Read) program was a huge driver for the initiative, and this would later lead her to participate in the creation of what would become the Duque de Caxias Community Libraries Network - Weaving a Reading Network, the National Community Libraries Network and, more recently, the Embalo de Saracuruna (BRADUC) community carnival block.

These are all projects that Maria recounts with great pride because they have taken her, and still take her, to many other places, events and meetings. As was the case when she took that first plane trip to

Belo Horizonte, she was recognised and embraced by Frei Betto at a seminar. As a result, she was granted the right to be quoted by him in public. A memory that makes her very emotional and grateful. Or when, during the COVID period, she was invited to be part of the “Quando você menos espera” feature on the television show Caldeirão do Huck, in which she was awarded funds to renovate the library, and was given several books and products to distribute to her community. As for her “travels”, she says with great enthusiasm:

Over the years, Maria has actively participated in different initiatives to promote and encourage reading and culture at the Rio de Janeiro Department of Culture and Creative Economy, occupying the chair of Books and Literature, and at the Duque de Caxias Municipal Council of Culture, in the chair of Literature, Library and Reading Rooms, as well as the Municipal Council for the Defense of the Rights of Black People and the Promotion of Racial and Ethnic Equality. It is also important to highlight her participation in discussions on municipal, state and national reading plans.

So much commitment led to the creation of the Chocobim Community Cultural Center [a combination of her surname and that of her son] - a living space where Maria develops cultural activities and provides food support that serves several families, many of whom are socially vulnerability, and children with disabilities - and the MANNs Community Library [Mulheres Amorasas Necessitadas de Navegar em Sonhos], an acronym formed by the initials of the names of the women who inspired, strengthened, encouraged and supported Maria Chocolate on her journey, as she makes a point of telling and valuing: “Maria do Urias, a multiplier who shared what she had with those who needed it; Apolônia, a loving midwife, whose love in her chest was contagious; Nelcina, my mother, who had many needs for love and affection; Nilvalda - who told stories and recited verses and poetry that used to take us to the clouds; and Selma, who made us dream and travel with her readings.”

“ I have the best college in the world, which is this pile of books that you are seeing, and which, as well as making me travel within the stories that each book tells, have really made me travel, not only to get to know some places in Brazil, such as Porto Alegre, Pará, the Amazon, Salvador, Fortaleza and Recife, but also Bogotá, in Colombia.”

Today, Maria dreams of returning to her degree in Social Work, which she had to stop in the third term, to continue with her projects, the books she wants to write and the conversation circles she has organized: “I believe in my dreams” with young people talking about their dreams, their aspirations; and “Today is Maria’s day”, a name inspired by the children who, every time they pass in front of the library, ask: “Is today Maria’s day?”.

There, she encourages women and mothers to open up about their challenges, highlighting the value in listening to these voices and creating a space where everyone feels heard and valued.

In this sense, she believes that community libraries have contributed to the expansion of reading and access to books that represent and reflect, without prejudice, on diversity in its most varied dimensions and themes: religious, cultural, social and gender, and are even partners with school libraries.

And speaking of prejudice, Maria shares a personal story of when she was young and was criticized for wearing a yellow dress that, according to people, didn't match her skin. This experience marked her deeply, because of the prejudice and disrespect she expresses in her first book "The Girl in the Yellow Dress", a manifestation and message about acceptance and resistance. Among the many people who inspire her, Conceição Evaristo immediately comes to mind when she says: "They agreed to kill us. But we agreed not to die", which reflects on the sense of struggle against racism that we must fight in our daily lives, in the different spheres of life: social, political, educational and cultural.

In a simple and natural manner, she compares the word "care" to the word "love", which are extremely strong and essential values throughout her life.

Caring means treating others as if she was taking care of herself, of her own happiness, because the sadness or joy of others affects her directly. This act of caring is not only physical, but also emotional. It's about being there, feeling empathy and genuinely caring about the other.

"They agreed to kill us, but we agreed not to die."

Conceição Evaristo
Linguist and writer
Afro-Brazilian



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video interview.

Maria Helena



M

aria Helena is a nurse who has worked in the Unified Health System (Sistema Único de Saúde - SUS) for 43 years, coordinating the Rocinha health unit. It takes a lot of breath to keep up with the number of connections she makes between health, culture, education, poetry, music and theater, especially because she has an intersecting and holistic view of healthcare, thinking about the well-being of the population.

Maria Helena was born and raised in Rocinha, a community between the South and West Zones of Rio de Janeiro. Full of enthusiasm, she tells us that she has lived there for 67 years. Her father, who was Portuguese and came straight from Portugal to Rocinha, asked her not to take him away when he became ill and was close to leaving. That way, he could die in his home in Rocinha, as he wished.

Her mother, who had Alzheimer's disease for the last 12 years of her life, was cared for with great affection and dedication by Maria Helena and her four children. She points out that her mother, who was the nucleus of everything for the family, enjoyed an excellent quality of life, even with her illness. Emotionally, she says that every day when she passed by her mother's room to go to the bathroom, she would say "good morning!". Until one day, she didn't say it anymore. Maria Helena still misses her mother very much and gets teary-eyed when she talks about caring practices with her parents.

Maria Helena is proud to say that she has been a nurse for 43 years in the Unified Health System (SUS). She recalls that when she was in the third year in school, which today is equivalent to the senior year of high school, she had a lecture with a nurse that made her decide which profession she would follow.

"I was a student at Colégio Estadual André Maurois in Gávea. When I was a senior in high school, taking the science-oriented syllabus, as back then, we had science, normal or classical syllabi. I went to a lecture at the Miguel Couto Hospital, where there were various professionals and one health professional was a nurse. She really touched me when she talked about caring for others, what it means to take care of others, what it means to be attentive, what it means to be treated well. Her words felt perfect to me and I said: this is the career I want to follow because it embraces everything and everyone. I want to deal with people, with animals, I want to deal with everything, I want to deal with life. And I want to deal with life until the end of it. Today, the issue of palliative care is very much on the rise, how to deal with all this care."

This excerpt from Maria Helena's speech sums up her identity well: a nurse who takes care of everything and everyone, she can't just look at the patient themselves. Her care is broad, integrated, intersected and interrelated, as we can see in the following paragraphs.

An officer at a healthcare unit in Rocinha, the Centro Municipal de Saúde/CMS Dr. Albert Sabin, she has held other positions over the years. Still with trepidation, she remembers that, at the time of the Covid-19 pandemic, she was working in the Coordination of Programmatic Area 2.1, and that it was a very hard and exhausting period.

"I think caring involves a lot of qualities. It's about understanding yourself as a person. It's about understanding where you are as a person, whether it's in your family or in your work environment or with your friends. It's a small thing that goes beyond that. Caring requires you to belong. You have to feel that you belong in that space, in that moment, in that role."

Her vision of the health sector is based on intersections with many other sectors. She cites the example of waste management in Rocinha, where they are involving the Public Prosecutor's Office so that they can take action and remove the waste from the community, but she believes that a definitive solution is needed, one that allows them to really work on recycling, reusing and treating the waste. As it is impossible to discuss healthcare without discussing the situation of garbage scattered on the streets, accumulated by the lack of public services, the lack of suitable disposal sites, the lack of recycling processes and the need for environmental education for residents. Obviously, all of this has a direct impact on the health of the local population because it brings insects and rats and can cause typhoid fever, cholera, amoebiasis, dysentery, giardiasis, ascariasis, leishmaniasis, yellow fever, dengue fever, malaria and leptospirosis, among others.

Involved in all the discussions about waste that put pressure on public policies and services and mobilize the whole community, Maria Helena wonders how intersectionality can be understood by the public authorities, by each of us and, in particular, by the residents: how do politicians, public agents and residents interpret all this?

"I believe that we need to mobilize for action using the word care: taking care of the places in which we live, improving them so that we have a better standard of living. Because there is a relationship between care and belonging. People need to feel that by taking a little care of their surroundings, of nature and of people, they can improve living conditions for everyone. Care is such a broad word that the dictionary is too short for me."

On the other hand, she says that in order to change behavior it is necessary to consider the culture and the situation of where you are working. In the web of healthcare, Maria Helena weaves actions in relation to Rocinha's internal streets, lighting, housing conditions, deforestation and reforestation, cultural spaces, valuing memory and the time dedicated to culture, the quality of education, family relationships and much more. Because she only sees sense in taking care of health when she considers it holistically.

When we asked Maria Helena what she takes care of or for whom, she was very clear: “I take care of a lot of things. I take care of people, I take care of animals, I take care of garbage, I take care of the streets, because, as well as complaining, I keep writing that you can’t stop there, that you have to clean the streets. I look after my family, I look after my friends. I take care of my family, I take care of my friends. I’m crazy and actively involved in taking care of our forest because we are here in the hem of the Tijuca Forest. I don’t know if I have any arms left to take part in things. And I go looking for things and say: I put all this together and say that this is the healthcare bag. If I don’t do this, I’m not working with healthcare.”

Maria Helena develops and/or is involved in several projects. The Torre Verde project, developed in one of the schools, teaches the whole process of planting vegetables and the produce harvested is taken home by the children as a way of supporting food security. A collection point for used oil to make soap has also been set up in the community. She also mentions the Ecological Park, a project coordinated with Severino, who sees care through art and poetry and makes joint efforts to look after the park.

“We have to start looking at it. Not with a hard look, but with the look of care.”

One of her dreams, which she has been thinking about since the 1980s, is the Sankofa Museum, also discussed in the interview with its officer and caretaker, Antônio Firmino. Maria Helena, who is a co-founder, remembers the first discussions about the museum with Celso Saraiva and Zé Luís and that, for a long time, the museum remained inside the health unit. She praises Firmino highly, says he is very well prepared, is getting a master’s degree and is very well connected with other organizations, such as the Pontifical Catholic

University/PUC-Rio and the International Centre for Studies and Research on Childhood/CIESPI, among others. In Maria Helena’s view, the relationship between the museum and health is direct: “The museum is healthcare. And the idea is that the museum links healthcare, education and culture.”

According to her, a lot has been done and a lot remains to be done, such as the cultural projects that need to be revived, especially so that they mobilize residents through interaction strategies, such as the Casa de Cultura, which used to be a Ponto de Cultura (Culture Point), and the Biblioteca Parque (Park Library).

In her holistic view of healthcare, Maria Helena reflects on the housing issue, the dream of owning one’s own home and the disorganized growth of cities. She is very concerned about the impact of climate change on Rocinha’s over-densified soil and comments: “What is happening in Rocinha is a very large amount of disorganized growth. As it has already occupied the entire horizontal line, it can no longer grow horizontally. Rocinha is a valley and if you have vertical growth with huge buildings on a small layer of land, even more so in this high part, it will come down.”

Her main concern is that the negative results of unsustainable growth will affect the health of citizens and, consequently, the healthcare system, in a vicious cycle of neglect. The complexity of the situation demands a lot of work from the healthcare sector, and from all other sectors. “We have to start looking at it. Not with a hard look, but with the look of care.”

The healthcare unit she coordinates has partnerships with the association, movements, schools, nurseries and music schools. She sits on the boards of these educational and cultural organizations. She believes that this network of relationships is key for collective care.

While reinforcing the importance of knowledge of the territory for those who work with healthcare, she asks herself:

“How am I going to work with healthcare if we don’t recognize the territory? If I don’t know the territory I’m in? If I don’t identify with it, how am I going to work here? “If I don’t know the people in the bar, the people in the warehouse, if I don’t know all of this? To take care of people, we must have a very broad relationship. That’s the only way to take care of people.”

The building where the healthcare unit operates caught fire months ago, which was very distressing for Maria Helena. The accident happened because of a short-circuit in the pharmacy's storeroom area caused by the air-conditioning that has to be turned on in order to cool the drugs. She says that since the unit can't stop working, the fire occurred on May 23rd and on the 25th the unit was already working. **"We didn't stop, we created the necessary conditions and started working, because of our responsibility, our care for others."**

But who can handle so much care? From this question, she saw the need to look at the mental health of her team, which now has individual and collective Ayurvedic care. But then, always restless, she says that this is too little for the amount of stress and demand that arises, and that more work needs to be done on mental health, treatment and prevention.

When asked how she feels about caring, Maria Helena humbly says that she doesn't feel that she is doing anything special, that this is her mission and that she is doing what she has to do as part of her caring role. She says she was meant to care for others and will always do so to the best of her ability. And as for the limits of those she cares for, she pauses, lowers her head, touches her hair and says: **"I think I'd like to learn that. Actually, I don't know how to work with boundaries, I haven't learned yet"**.

We've reached this impasse again: who looks after whom? How do we teach the caregiver self-care? When is it time to stop?

In an outburst, Maria Helena says:

“So that's what care is for me, I put everything in this bag that's health care. There's no way around it. The field I have chosen to work in is very broad. I often say that everyone closes the door and we keep it open.”

“Caring is an affective and affectionate relationship. The carer is a connecting agent who promotes conversations.”

Charles Siqueira
A caregiver for favelas and their people

Marilza Barbosa



Marilza Barbosa Floriano is 57 years old and has been living in Bairro Pantanal, the second largest district of Duque de Caxias | RJ, since she was six months old. Her family moved to the neighborhood after being made homeless by a flood. There, they built a shack on Morro do Sossego, where they were taken in by the neighbors, marking the beginning of a history of caring in her life.

Her childhood was difficult. As her mother was an alcoholic, she endured domestic abuse and, as the only girl among four siblings, took on a large part of the household responsibilities. Disgruntled, she sought alternatives to improve her life and that of her siblings. At the age of 15, she started working as a maid, seeing it as an opportunity to help her family.

With the money she earned, she tried to provide a better life for her siblings and mother. There were always many hardships, but to this day she remembers with emotion the happy times she had when she took her siblings to the movies, to church or to the Caxias Fair. Marilza says she loved being able to provide her family with these little pleasures. She spent 40 years working hard as a maid and it was in the houses where she worked.

“ in the little room, a book would help pass the time because I would spend 15 days in a house without being able to leave.”

When her mother passed away in 1990, she found herself having to take on even more responsibilities. Shortly afterwards, when she became pregnant with her first son, Felipe, she had to give up her formal job to look after him, but was taken in by one of the managers at the company where she worked. The manager offered her a job as a day laborer, allowing her to take her son with her. Determined, she soon went back to school, completing primary and secondary education.

The desire to continue her studies was always there, until one day, after returning from a cleaning job, Marilza saw a billboard advertising a promotion to study Social Work in a private University. This spurred her on to invest in herself, return to her studies, take the exam, pass and finish university with the support of her employers, who printed materials and made her timetable more flexible so she could attend classes. During the course, Marilza began to understand public policies and social movements, which led her to do her thesis on supporting alcoholic women, like her mother, who suffer from discrimination and a lack of support. She graduated in 2013 and continued working as a cleaner, however, now she had more knowledge and skills, and was able to guide the residents of her community. **“The social work school was the foundation of my life and gave me a critical eye to see that it wasn’t just me and my family who were going through so many hardships. In my community, we, the poor, black and peripheral population, struggle every day to survive.”**

In 2016, when a family member was arrested, Marilza sought help and was welcomed by Rede de Comunidades e Movimentos Contra a Violência (Network of Communities and Movements Against Violence), where she took part in a course for human rights multipliers and immediately identified with this new activity.

A year later, she was invited to join the Frente Estadual pelo Desencarceramento (a group representing Rio de Janeiro’s state for Decarceration). She participated in public hearings and got to know Rede de Mães e Familiares Vítimas de Violência da Baixada Fluminense (Baixada Fluminense Network of Mothers and Families of Victims of Violence), created after a massacre on March 31, 2005, which resulted in the execution of 29 people. At the invitation of the Grita Baixada Forum, Marilza became a territory coordinator, promoting the documentary “Our Dead Have a Voice”, produced by Quiprocó Filmes.

“The social work school was the foundation of my life and gave me a critical eye to see that it wasn’t just me and my family who were going through so many hardships.”

She explains that the film deals with **“the stories of mothers experiencing the pain of having a child executed or who has been missing, exactly as I do in my territory. Those silenced mothers... I was able to show the documentary in my neighborhood for the community entrance exam, take it to church, to the university where I studied, to Colégio Pedro II, to the terreiros... It was an incredible experience because every time I showed the documentary, several people gave their stories. And that’s how I made a quiet, frightened housemaid, crying in the corner, become chatty and talk about her reality.”**

One of the biggest challenges Marilza identifies is the difficulty of commuting from her neighborhood in Baixada Fluminense to participate in activities and events that often take place in the center of Rio de Janeiro. She criticizes the fact that everything is far away for those who live on the periphery and that they always have to rely on fares to be able to engage in these struggles.

During the pandemic, she was invited by the NGO Criola to take part in a mapping exercise on the difficulties faced by self-employed women, domestic workers and informal workers in her neighborhood, allowing her to get to know her own territory better, exploring alleys and lanes that she had never explored before The mapping revealed

the women's needs for emergency aid and led to the distribution of basic food baskets and hygiene kits. This work deepened Marilza's sense of belonging in her community and made her aware of the reality, which was also hers, of the daily violence in that place, not only because of the lack of resources, but also because of the precarious infrastructure, such as the lack of accessibility for people with reduced mobility. She then began to photograph the conditions in the neighborhood and decided to create a specific social network to show these realities, which had a good impact.

Still during the pandemic, together with Rede de Mães e Familiares Vítimas de Violência da Baixada Fluminense (Baixada Fluminense Network of Mothers and Families of Victims of Violence), Marilza submitted a project for a call for proposals focused on tackling racism at the grassroots level, with the idea of holding roundtables and workshops in different territories, including Duque de Caxias and Morro do Sossego. Approved, the project's actions took place at the Women's Recovery Center because it was a suitable space at the time of COVID.

Hence Marilza started working on a new front, based on agroecology, on community gardens: the Quintais Produtivos (Productive Backyards), which help her strengthen community ties and promote the recovery of traditional knowledge, such as the use

of medicinal herbs, becoming, once again, a multiplier. Thanks to this new knowledge, people are transforming their backyards into productive spaces and encouraging others in their community to do the same. The project is wrapped up, but the women have gained a lot from the way they were able to express themselves and promote their own well-being. They've kept up with planting, exchanging and helping each other.

“I suggested the project to make the interaction between the countryside and the favela. As I had already been to the Terra Prometida settlement and had seen the work of those women, who drew me in and allowed me to present my work, I asked for a grant so that the women from the settlement could take part in the Productive Backyard workshop.”

Marilza speaks with emotion about how her involvement with human rights and agroecology brought about a profound personal change, saying that she went through a healing process, something she had never experienced before. Caring for the environment and adopting agroecology made her understand that she doesn't need much to live well. She also realized that this new way of looking at life is also a way of fighting for human rights, since the right to healthy food and a more balanced life are essential for everyone.

She points out that her life used to be marked by excessive responsibilities, which made her ill, but that now she has learned to share responsibilities, relying on the support network around her, which allows her to continue caring, but without sacrificing herself. She understands that caring is an expression of love, an act that must be carried out with dedication, but also with balance. She recalls that, at one point, excessive care led her to mental exhaustion, but today, by understanding the importance of taking care of herself, she manages to maintain a balance between her responsibilities and her well-being.

Always emotional, she says she finds peace and satisfaction in caring for plants and reaping the rewards of collective work, a process that is a constant source of well-being and a way of feeling part of her territory.

With great satisfaction and pride, Marilza shares the opportunity to participate in the Climate Conference (COP) in Dubai, invited by Amnesty International with the project “Black Voices for the Climate”, nominated as a result of her work in Morro do Sossego. It was a life-changing experience for Marilza, who never imagined that her work in the community would take her so far. She says she took the opportunity to denounce the lack of investment in public policies to improve living conditions in her community, especially in relation to the climate challenges they face.

Having created the Quintais Produtivos (Productive Backyards) at the top of Morro do Sossego is a source of great joy for Marilza. A place once marked by pain and violence now blooms with life, plants and flowers, symbolizing renewal and hope as it becomes a place of care and welcome for the women of the community, many of whom face personal challenges such as the loss of children or domestic violence.

Today, she is proud to be a guardian of seeds, especially okra, which was presented to her by Mirian Firmino, from the Terra Prometida settlement, and which symbolizes her own rebirth. Marilza sees the okra flower as a representation of her own journey of transformation and healing, a journey that now inspires and strengthens other women in her community.

“We are guardians of the seed, as I learned from the women in the settlement. I learned the importance of guarding the seed, of planting, replanting and guarding. I’m the guardian of the okra seed, because I love it and it germinates for four days, and every time the okra flower opens, it represents me, you know, it’s Marilza being reborn again.”



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em vídeo.



Ninho Vidigal

Ninho Willian de Paula comes from Vidigal. In fact, he identifies himself and is better known as Ninho Vidigal, because the territory where he lives gives him identity and strength, to the point where he considers it his safe haven. It is in Vidigal that Ninho has experienced his greatest joys, as well as his greatest sorrows, as he himself says. That's why, in order to talk about his past, present and future, from the perspective of care, the starting point is always the territory.

An articulator of projects and debates on public policies that can benefit the population of his territory - whether linked to culture, sports, healthcare or education, he is a passionate curator of Vidigal's memory and identity, and makes a point of spreading this knowledge to the world.

His testimony explains his deep bond with the neighborhood: “I learned to read and write in Vidigal and grew up like all the children in the neighbourhood, going to school in the morning and to a social project in the afternoon. The year 1989 is a milestone in my life, because that’s when I joined Nós do Morro.

In a conversation about care with Luciana Bezerra, a director at the organization Nós do Morro, she made a direct correlation between caregivers and their territories. She believes that:

“*That “a caregiver is someone who protects their territories. They are the offspring of the place. They usually go against the idea of progress imposed by the system and fight for improvements. The “crias” (cria is a local slang term for people who were born and raised in the community) take care of and change their territories.”*

From this testimony, it’s possible to understand that Ninho is experiencing exactly what he learned at Nós do Morro: taking care of and transforming his community. At the age of 44, he says that he learned his literacy in the ghettos and that there isn’t a ghetto or an alley that he doesn’t know in Vidigal. This truth is reflected in his speech, in which he inserts historical references, showing knowledge and respect for the memory of his territory.

At Nós do Morro, Ninho became an expert in capoeira and travelled the world with the theatre company in 2008-2009 on a cultural exchange. Travelling through England, Russia and France, he acquired knowledge that now forms the basis for his activities as a capoeira teacher and tour guide, “who speaks English”, as he points out.

His passion is to mobilize groups of children and teenagers with whom he has the opportunity to share and multiply learning, not just in Vidigal, but in other corners of Rio and the world. Smiling, he says that he wasn’t a top actor, but he was a great artist. The Company made room for his capoeirista moves, which gave him the incredible experience of performing with the Royal Shakespeare Company in London. This experience was crucial for him to understand the power of his

“*It all started when I heard the sound of an instrument and went to see what it was. It was a berimbau. I immediately wanted to take a capoeira class, but there we had to do the whole circuit, theatre, ballet, cinema, and that was where I was forged in the performing arts and body movement. And that’s where I went out into the world.”*

movement and decide to study Physical Education. Today, one of the activities he enjoys the most is teaching gymnastics to a group of 30 elderly women and men from the slum, a job he does voluntarily and says he won’t give up.

Ninho praises the social projects carried out in Vidigal because they offer real opportunities to the inhabitants and help to combat inequalities, contributing to social change and the movements fighting for development and local improvements.

He often says: “Vidigal is my wellspring”. Today he devotes himself to researching the present and the past, memory and identity. Together with Professor Bárbara Nascimento, another local caretaker, he has started a project to rescue, value and disseminate the history of Vidigal. They have collected and systematised the stories and memories as part of a larger dream: to build the Vidigal House of Memory, inspired by the Vidigal Museum of Memory.

Ninho says that another fundamental struggle is against gentrification projects that don’t involve and listen to the community. For him, the projects are usually extremely disrespectful to the local residents, who are usually the most vulnerable. And he recalls that, before him, there were many movements of Vidigal residents who resisted displacement, and it is because of them that the favela is still there today, in the South Zone of Rio de Janeiro.

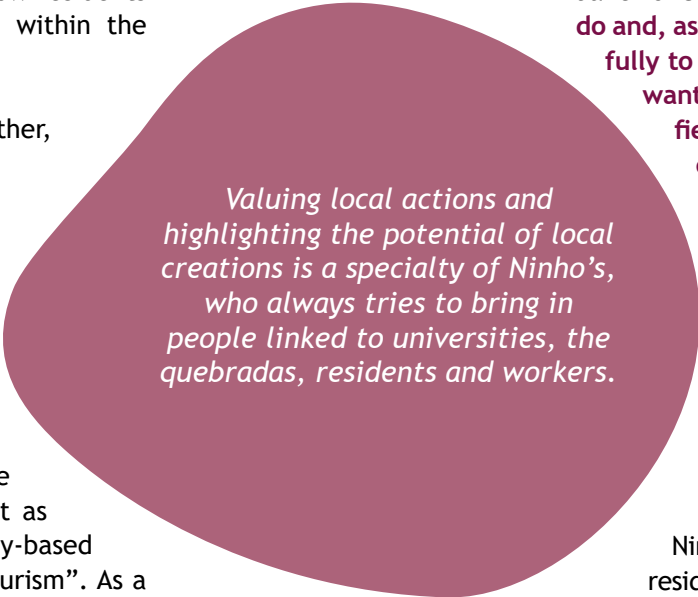
Calling himself a kind of “watchman” and articulator of possibilities, Ninho says that, through his hands, many meetings take place as part of his determination to bring people together to discuss improvements for the community in the areas of holistic healthcare, education, entrepreneurship, leisure and employment, among others. On his slab, “Laje do Ninho”, events and many debates are held to discuss public policies. Two examples are the “Stop Killing Us” women’s collective and the “Black Women” collective. These meetings are also held in partnership with relevant social organizations on both the local and national scene, such as CUFA (Central Única das Favelas), Observatório das Favelas and Jongo da Serrinha.

Laje do Ninho is also a space for cultural events such as “POLITILAJE: Sarau Político Cultural”, which has been taking place since 2018, and seeks to discuss public policies, debate culture, politics and allow residents to enjoy art, especially that produced within the community.

The idea is to have a group thinking together, discussing and holding conversations at the same time as the participants recite poetry. Yes, the group has a starting point, but it doesn’t have an end point because the journey and the trajectory are more important.

During the Olympics and the World Cup in Brazil, Ninho took a course to become a tour guide, which is now one of the activities he does professionally, but not as a conventional guide, but as a community-based tour guide, which he calls “resistance tourism”. As a local “cria”, he tells the stories of the people who built Vidigal, goes through the most important places in the community in detail and knows “from the inside out” what needs to be presented to the world. In this activity, he works in partnership with travel agencies and with friends who refer him by word of mouth and, to improve himself even more, he went back to taking English classes at Cultura Inglesa.

His achievements and accomplishments are many, but unequivocally, being chosen by the community to be a Guardianship Councilor (Conselheiro Tutelar) is one of the experiences that moves him the most and fills him with enthusiasm: **“My community entrusted me with this role of looking after the rights of our children and teenagers. I was elected in 2021 to this very important four-year mandate. I took office in 2022 and until 2026 I will strive to fulfill this role with a lot of dedication and study. That’s why I take advantage of meetings with other councillors to exchange knowledge and practices that can be implemented to protect our children and teenagers”.**



Valuing local actions and highlighting the potential of local creations is a specialty of Ninho’s, who always tries to bring in people linked to universities, the quebradas, residents and workers.

It was also in 2022 that Ninho realized a great dream: he passed the ENEM for a public university and is studying Social Sciences at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro/UFRJ. **“I’m doing the subjects little by little. There are so many things to do and, as I need to generate an income, there’s little time left to dedicate myself fully to the Faculty, but I’m always moving forward, never giving up because I want to qualify more and more, to sophisticate and give new meaning to my fieldwork and to produce intellectually. I no longer want to be the object of other people’s work. Now we are the ones who will tell our story, analyze and produce intellectual content about ourselves.”**

On the other hand, while 2022 presented Ninho with many emotions and many achievements, it was also the year that marked a great loss: that of his beloved father. Still teary-eyed, he says that he misses him terribly, that he was an incredible man and a great example. But then he smiles when he says that in the same year that he lost his father, he received his greatest gift: the birth of his son Nicolas.

Ninho considers himself a “subversive and libertarian” leader. He wants the residents to be autonomous, to have the freedom to be and live as they wish. He speaks of his great concern about the religious fundamentalism that is growing among the community and says he fears for traditional cultural manifestations and those of Afro-Brazilian origin. Quoting Caetano, he says that you have to be attentive and strong.

When the Circular: Cuidadores do Mundo’s team got in touch with Ninho, he was very direct and said that he was a caregiver, but that he wasn’t doing as much as he did years ago, and that he didn’t even know if he would ever do that many activities again. We found this quite interesting and said that we wanted to hear from him anyway, that his views on care were very important to share. Concerned, he asked if he would have to present a project or an activity report because he didn’t have time to do it. But when we said no and that our work was based on a network of trust and oral history, Ninho immediately let out a smile of relief. He then explained his initial reaction by saying that he was tired of responding to calls for proposals, of chasing funding, often for little money that it didn’t even pay for the effort of writing the project or the report, and that he was grateful that we trusted his story.

Ninho has never stopped caring. He takes a capoeira step back, breathes and returns to the “roda”. Ninho is Vidigal. Vidigal is Ninho. He is from Vidigal. There’s no better caretaker for the territory than someone who came from it. Ninho shapes history. Ninho transforms his territory.

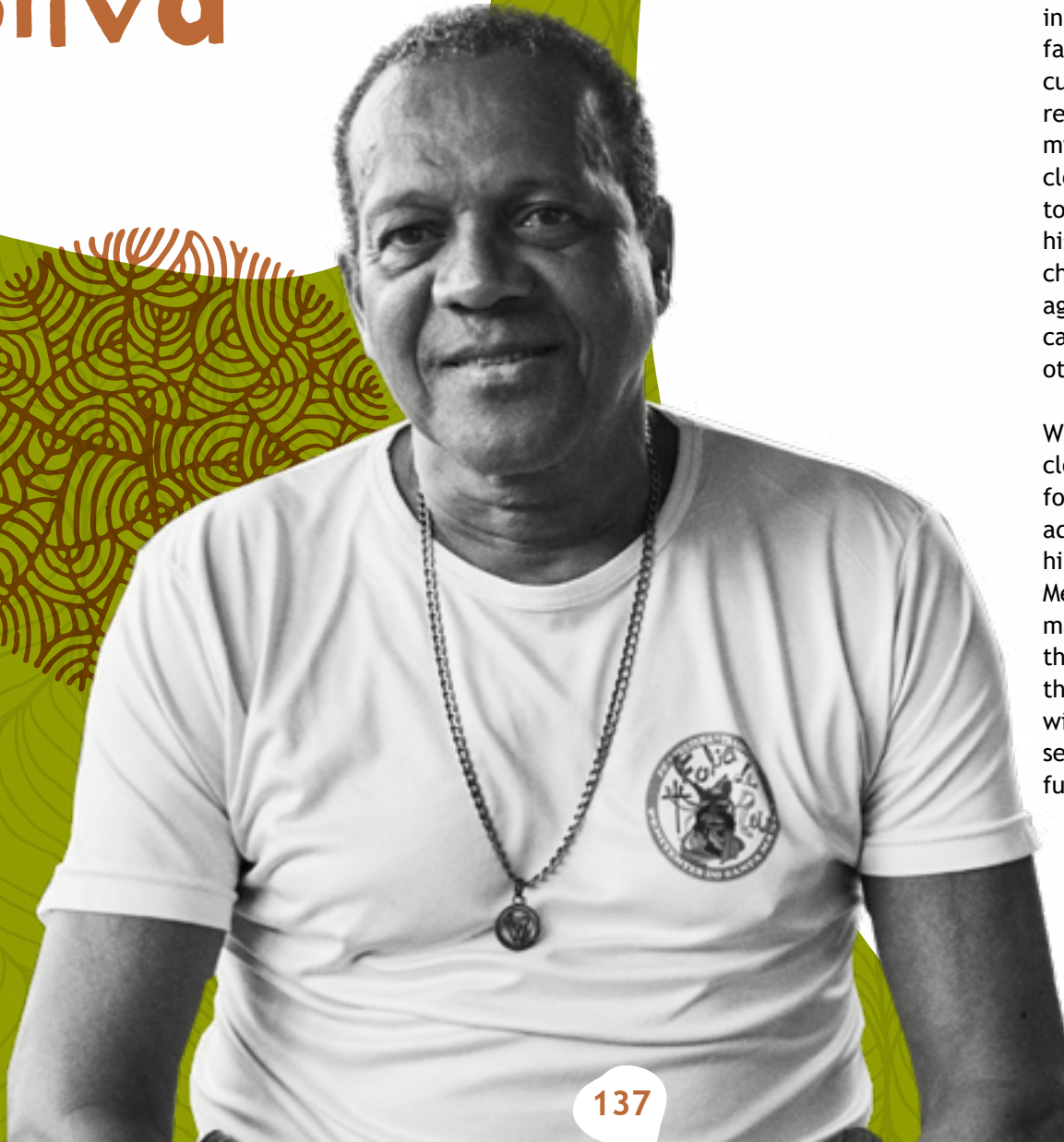
This initial context of the interview with Ninho makes us look at his situation to reflect on the role of the caregiver: does he need to do-do-do all the time? What is the limit of care? Does the caregiver need to be exhausted to say that they care?

“*In a caring relationship, sometimes you need to take a few steps back. Understand who needs to be cared for with zeal and attention and, if necessary, the carer needs to stop, take a step back and reframe their practice.*”

“Stories matter. Many stories matter. The stories were used to plunder and slander, but can also be used to empower and humanize.”

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
Nigerian feminist and writer

Ronaldo Silva



I don't know what it would be like to live without the Folia de Reis. This is how 65-year-old Ronaldo Silva begins his story. He comes from Santa Marta, a favela located in the Botafogo | RJ neighborhood. From a family linked to the tradition of popular culture for several generations, Ronaldo recalls, when he was very young, "I'd open my father's closet and see all those festive clothes hanging up and his hat, which really touched me." Hidden away, he would put on his uncle's clown costume, attracted by the character he had proudly taken on since the age of five, organizing his own Folias with cans on the hill, entertaining and leading other children in impromptu celebrations.

When he was nine, the parade lacked a clown, an opportunity he had been waiting for and embraced with fervor as he quickly adapted one of his uncle's costumes for himself. After a test with his father, then Mestre Folião, Ronaldo was approved, marking the beginning of his commitment to the Folia, which he has maintained for more than five decades. This early involvement with the tradition not only gave him a deep sense of identity, but also prepared him for future roles in the Folia de Reis.

For Ronaldo, the Folia de Reis is not just a cultural event or an expression of faith, but also the fabric of his life and the legacy of his family.

The Folia was led by his father, Mestre Diniz, who was president and Mestre Folião until his death in 2009. Other Mestres included figures such as Mestre Luiz, Mestre Dodô and Mestre Joãozinho. After his father's death, his brother, Riquinho, took over the leadership until Covid-19 took him away, passing the baton to Ronaldo, who retired his role as clown to become Mestre Folião.

Since then, Ronaldo has been the leader of the Folia de Reis Penitentes do Santa Marta, despite feeling that he was born to be a clown. The transition wasn't easy, as he had to adjust his way of participating and leading, adapting to the role of being responsible for the continuity of the Folia's narratives and songs.

Ronaldo often compares his actions to those of his father, remembering how he decorated the hats and prepared the costumes. Inspired by these memories, he focuses on every detail of the costumes and props, ensuring that everything is perfect for the parades and performances. **"The Folia de Reis de Cristo is a cultural manifestation of a religious nature, in which we announce and celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, under the vision of the journey of the three wise men from the East. That's the story I tell: the three wise men were warned by a guiding star, which we make into our flag, which has our point of faith stamped on it, which is beautiful because we are stamping the birth of Jesus", says Ronaldo with emotion.**

His family has always been deeply involved in this tradition. His mother, head of the pastorinhas, was a leader in the singing, while several uncles played roles as revelers and clowns. Currently, his son Júnior and grandson Vítor are being groomed to follow in his footsteps, preserving the tradition so dear to Ronaldo's family. His father, as well as being a Mestre, was a respected musician and was part of the Trio Guanabarino. One of his brothers, Itamar, an important community leader, is a benchmark for action and fighting for the rights of favela residents.

For Ronaldo, the Folia de Reis is not just a cultural event or an expression of faith, but also the fabric of his life and the legacy of his family. He sees himself as a guardian of this tradition, charged with passing on this precious cultural heritage to future generations, keeping the history and spirit of Folia de Reis alive.

And that's how he feels: a caretaker, working to ensure that the Folia has a constant presence in the life of the community. And that's exactly why the activities take place beyond the traditional parade period, from December 25 to January 20. During this period, the Folia travels through communities such as Rocinha, Campo Grande, Cidade de Deus and others, to share and celebrate the Annunciation of the birth of Jesus Christ. A form of resistance, preservation and renewal. To keep the Folia alive, Ronaldo has set up a little school, the aim of which he tells us in his own determined way: **"... to get the children involved in this practice, trying to prepare a master, who may be my grandson, because I want to continue it."** This year, he managed to make an innovation, inserting Catirina as the first female clown in the tradition to symbolize a significant step towards female empowerment within the community.

With the constant challenge of keeping the Folia relevant and attractive to younger generations, Ronaldo recognizes that religious influences and drug trafficking groups in the area are a reality. So, he emphasizes the importance of the school and the activities it carries out throughout the year, such as barbecues and outings, as well as presentations at cultural events, as a practical way of keeping the community connected with this manifestation of popular culture.

Training a new Mestre Folião is another challenge, as learning prophecy is no simple task. Many want to play the role of the clown, able to beat out the rhythm, but few have the ability to speak or create verses, essential for a Mestre Folião, who must also innovate and maintain the rich narrative tradition. Ronaldo already had the basis of this knowledge, inherited from his father, but he recognizes the difficulties of guaranteeing the quality and depth of the mestre's role. And this, according to him, makes it super important to invest in preparing his son and grandchildren to take on this role, like that of a clown, which transcends mere performance and involves freedom of expression by allowing them to assume any form or character they wish. This flexibility, presence and interaction with the audience are values that Ronaldo learned from his experiences in theater workshops.

He would love to have a specific place, like a museum, where kids could be drawn in by the history, the decorated hats, uniforms and instruments - just as he was drawn in as a child. A place accessible to anyone who wants to learn or simply enjoy this tradition. Currently, the activities take place at his mother's house, as well as the storage of the costumes and props, which limits public access.

In managing the Folia, Ronaldo is not alone, as he has formed a board of directors to share the responsibilities with a foreman, a clown master, and other members dedicated to organization and promotion.

When he talks about caring, Ronaldo highlights the recognition he gets from the community, especially the children, where he is seen as a reference of integrity and dedication. This makes him feel strengthened in his commitment to maintaining a tradition of popular culture that is also, at the same time, a family legacy.

Throughout his journey, Ronaldo says he has learned to be a leader, a quality he never thought he would possess. He stresses that his ability to lead was built naturally through his activities as Mestre Folião.

Despite the cultural changes that have made some narratives inappropriate, such as the sexist and prejudiced verses he learned in his youth, Ronaldo reflects that he needs to be aware and revise his repertoire to be more inclusive and respectful, a reflection of his personal evolution and commitment to contemporary values.

As he himself says: **“The Folia is in my head, it's within me”**

“ *I understand relationships in everyday life. You have to be a welcoming person. That's how we can show leadership. When people say I was born to be a leader, I'm aware that I never wanted to be a leader. But I understand that this is because of the way I deal with people. I think that's it.* ”

“The future is ancestral.”

Ailton Krenak
Indigenous leader, environmentalist,
Philosopher, poet and writer



CLIQUE AQUI
para assistir
à entrevista
em vídeo.

SOME FINDINGS FROM INTERVIEWS WITH 30 CARERS:

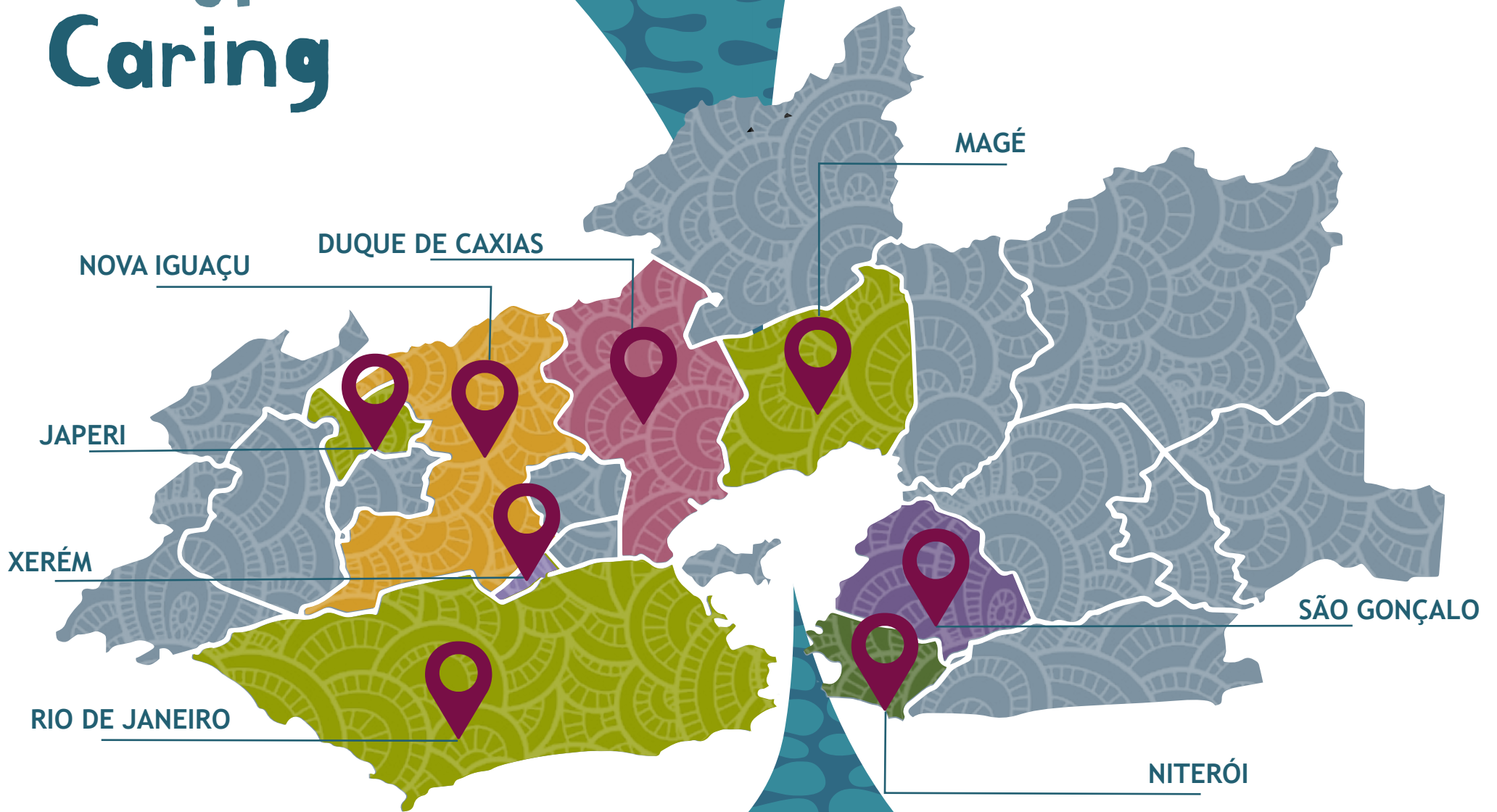
- 16 use cultural activities as a form of care: including dancing, music, literature, and cooking.
- 11 claims to care for the environment: including agroecology, reforestation and protection of the soil cover, environmental education, and traditional techniques.
- 13 work with a focus on integral health and well-being: mental, spiritual, and physical health, embracing birth and death.
- 7 include solidarity economy practices and income generation: community-based tourism, handicrafts, and local products.
- 2 Indigenous descendants, 1 Quilombola community, 2 Terreiro houses, 1 rural settlement: collective experiences.
- 5 report that they are using inclusive practices: neurodiversity, PCD, LGBTQIAPN+.
- 17 use community articulation and conversation (+ mobilisation of children and young people) to support the care process.
- 18 articulate with public policy and have political interaction to safeguard the rights of people in their care.
- 21 use “listening circles” and “welcoming” as a practice of care.
- 13 say they provide care for people facing hunger or food insecurity, including food baskets, meal donations, communal meals, and productive backyards.
- 21 against racism and discrimination and 18 as feminists seeking women’s emancipation.

- 19 fight against violence (in a variety of ways): concrete actions and articulations, denunciations, information.
- 6 are digital activists.

The role of Care in our society:

- Care as a contribution to access to rights and public policies.
- Care as a collective experience.
- Care as a way of being in relation with the world and with the territory.
- Care as connection and articulation.
- Care as a powerful tool for regaining affection and relationships.
- Care as a circle of listening, welcoming and belonging.
- Caring as understanding and living in a territory.
- Care as personal development, paying attention to one’s limits and possibilities.
- Care as increasing a group’s capacity for collective action.
- Care as a way to ensure food security, or simply to provide food.
- Care as a service to society.
- Care as a relationship from a regenerative perspective.
- Care as a political act of resistance and opposition.
- Care as a hug.

Map of Caring



Interviews: Content Analysis

WHAT CONVERGES?
WHAT REPEATS ITSELF?
WHAT PARALLELS CAN WE DRAW?

We used content analysis, a qualitative research method, to identify words, themes, activities, and intentions common to the 30 carers. To do this, we carefully studied their speeches, documents sent to us, social media posts, among others.

Then, where necessary, we added 'umbrella' words that were broader than a particular activity. Even if they weren't explicit in their language, they were evident in their actions, and they cut across the different territories and fields in which the carers work. In order to explore more deeply the complexities and interconnections that exist in the singularity of each carer's actions, a number of possible interpretations and cross-references can be made.

We want to look at the singularity without losing sight of the 'whole'. One as part of a whole.

Adilson de Almeida

- Quilombo - quilombola
- Actions to combat and adapt to climate change
- Agroecology - organic farming
- Ancestry
- Articulation with public policies
- Traditional communities
- Communication to educate - against racism, the environment
- Local Development
- Community dialogue
- Human rights - land
- Educator - trainer
- Socio-environmental Education
- Herbalist
- Spirituality
- Philosophy of life
- Hunger - food insecurity
- Strengthening territories
- Griô - oral history
- Men who cook
- Political interaction - Councils
- Collective interest
- Memories, history and visibility of the Afro-Brazilian and indigenous population.
- Mobilization of children
- Mobilization of volunteers
- A sense of belonging to the territory
- Reforestation - environmental protection
- Responsibility to the legacy
- Family tradition
- Territory appreciation
- Collective experience
- Community tourism

Alexandre Silva

- Compassionate Community
- Palliative and preventive care
- Integral and Integrative Healthcare
- Articulation with the community and others
- Articulation with public policies
- Communication to educate about palliative care
- Community dialogue
- Human rights - health, dignified death
- Educator - trainer
- Hunger - food insecurity
- Collective interest
- Mobilization of volunteers
- Research - university
- Inclusive practices
- Mental health protection

Ana Olívia Cardoso

- Yoga in the Favela
- Integral and Integrative Healthcare
- Articulation with the community and others
- Articulation with public policies
- Self-care
- Preventive care
- Human rights - health
- Educator - trainer
- Women's emancipation
- Philosophy of life
- Mental health protection
- Territory appreciation
- Mobilization of volunteers

Andrea Apolonia

- Anti-ableism
- Articulation with public policies
- Digital activism
- Communication to educate - against prejudice
- Human rights - Anti-ableism and neurodiversity
- Denunciation and advocacy
- Mothers' groups
- Mental health protection
- Support network
- Listening and welcoming circle
- Integral and Integrative Healthcare

Antônio Carlos Firmino

- Ancestry
- Traditional communities
- Communication to educate - history, against racism
- Popular culture
- Culture as a tool of transformation
- Community dialogue
- Human Rights - culture, memory
- Educator - trainer
- Strengthening territories
- Memories, history and visibility of the Afro-Brazilian and indigenous population.
- Collective interest
- Mobilization of Children
- Mobilizing young people
- Territory appreciation
- A sense of belonging to the territory

Anápuàka

- Communication to educate - racism, discrimination, valuing indigenous cultures
- Ethnomedia
- Human rights - the right to land
- Family tradition
- Responsibility for legacy
- Pain and violence
- Articulation with public policies
- Collective living
- Men who cook
- Ancestry
- Memories, history and visibility of the Afro-Brazilian and indigenous population.

Ariadne

- Mental Health Protection
- Integral and Integrative Health
- Fight for the humanization of mental institutions
- Articulation with the community and others
- Articulation with public policies
- Communication to educate - against prejudice
- Preventive care
- Culture as a tool of transformation
- Popular culture
- Pain and violence
- Community dialogue
- Human rights - health, culture
- Educator - trainer
- Mobilizing volunteers
- Research - university
- Inclusive practices (Pcd, LGBTQIAPN+)
- Recovery
- Support network
- Territory appreciation
- Suburbs appreciation

Bia and Shirley

- Solidarity Economy
- Actions to combat and adapt to climate change
- Agroecology - SAF
- Income generation
- Hunger - food insecurity
- Communication to educate, to combat racism
- Herbalist
- Human rights - land
- Pain and violence
- Collective experience
- Territory appreciation
- Strengthening territories
- Local development
- Socio-environmental education
- Political education
- Political articulation
- Basic Ecclesial Communities
- Women's emancipation
- Reforestation - environmental protection
- Ancestry

Eliene Vieira

- Fight against incarceration
- Mothers' groups
- Articulation with public policies
- Fighting violence - torture, arbitrary imprisonment
- Denunciation and advocacy
- Human rights - life, liberty, defense
- Pain and violence
- Political interaction - Councils
- Listening and welcoming circle

Flávia Souza

- Ancestry
- Self-care
- Communication to educate - anti-racism, culture
- Popular culture - Jongo
- Culture as a tool of transformation
- Fighting urban violence and racism
- Human rights - culture
- Educator - trainer
- Memories, history, and visibility of the Afro-Brazilian and indigenous population.
- Mobilization of Children
- Mobilization of Youth
- Mental health protection
- A sense of belonging to the territory
- Responsibility for the legacy
- Listening and welcoming circle
- Integral and Integrative Healthcare
- Family tradition
- Suburbs appreciation

Flávio and Massari

- Community libraries - encouraging reading
- Film clubs
- Communication to educate
- Popular culture - diversity
- Culture as a tool of transformation
- Local development
- Community dialogue
- Human rights - culture
- Educator - trainer
- Strengthening territories
- Income generation
- Mobilization of Children
- Mobilization of Youth
- A sense of belonging to the territory
- Memories, History, and visibility of the Afro-Brazilian and indigenous population.
- Territory appreciation
- Suburbs appreciation

Fleury Johnson

- Integral and Integrative Health
- Black Population
- Ancestry
- Digital Activism
- Combating Medical Violence
- Communication to educate - against racism, discrimination,
- Palliative care - preventive
- Educator - trainer
- Confronting Racism - Daily, Institutional, Environmental
- Spirituality
- Research - university
- Mental Health Protection
- Listening and welcoming circle

Geraldo Bastos

- Herbalist
- Ancestry
- Fighting Violence - religion
- Communication to educate - against racism, discrimination, religious racism
- Popular culture
- Pain and violence
- Confronting Racism - Daily, Institutional, Environmental
- Writing
- Spirituality
- Philosophy of Life
- Research - university
- Basic Ecclesial Communities
- University preparation course
- Chanters and Healers
- Memories, History, and visibility of the Afro-Brazilian and indigenous population.
- Listening and welcoming circle
- Responsibility over the legacy
- Family tradition

Gilza Rosa

- Solidarity Economy
- Income generation
- Pragmatism
- Territory appreciation
- Strengthening territories
- Local development
- Political interaction - Councils
- Articulation with public policies
- Articulation with the communi-ty
- Community dialogue
- Collective interest
- Female empowerment
- Belonging to the territory
- Urban mobility

Johary, Shirley and Davlyn

- Shelter
- Fighting Violence - against the LGBTQIAPN+ community
- Communication to educate - against racism, discrimination, sexual discrimination, violence
- Denunciation and advocacy
- Human Rights - life, housing, health
- Pain and Violence
- Emancipation of the LGBTQIAPN+ community
- Confronting Racism - Daily, Institutional, Environmental
- Hunger - food insecurity
- Political interaction - Councils
- Inclusive practice
- Mental health protection
- Support network
- Listening and welcoming circle
- Integral and Integrative Healthcare
- Collective experience

Joyce Santos

- Women in technology
- Ancestry
- Digital activism
- Self-care
- Fighting Violence - exclusion from the job market
- Communication to educate - against racism, discrimination and sexism
- Human Rights - access to technology, the job market, information
- Educator - trainer
- Women's emancipation
- Confronting Racism - Daily, Institutional, Environmental
- Political interaction - Councils
- Mental health protection
- Listening and welcoming circle

Jurema

- Culinary culture
- Ancestry
- Action to combat and adapt to climate change
- Agroecology - organic farming
- Traditional communities (indigenous)
- Hunger - food security
- Human Rights - food
- Income generation
- Memories, history and visibility of the Afro-Brazilian and indigenous population
- Sense of belonging to the territory
- Reforestation - environmental protection
- Territory appreciation

Laura Torres

- Combating obstetric violence
- Doula Research - university
- Feminism - patriarchy
- Political education
- Communicating to educate - sex education
- Articulation with public policy
- Political interaction - Councils
- Integral and Integrative Healthcare
- Listening and welcoming circle
- Human rights - health
- Self-care
- Educator - trainer
- Shelter
- Agroecology
- Hunger - food insecurity
- Strengthening territories
- Women's emancipation
- Ancestry
- Actions to combat and adapt to climate change
- Reforestation - environmental protection
- Mothers' groups
- Urban mobility

Lorena Froz

- Communication to educate, to fight racism, inequalities
- Climate change
- Socio-environmental education
- Adapting content to reality - language
- Research
- Pain and violence
- Spirituality
- Political education
- Territory appreciation
- Hunger - food insecurity
- Integral and Integrative Healthcare
- Digital activism
- Actions to combat and adapt to climate change
- Articulation with the community
- Black women for the climate
- Strengthening territories

Lourdes Brazil

- Action to combat and adapt to climate change
- Ancestry
- Communication to educate - against racism, climate change, deforestation
- Local development
- Human Rights - environmental, urban
- Educator - trainer
- Socio-environmental education
- Confronting Racism - Daily, Institutional, Environmental
- Writing
- Political interaction - Councils
- Volunteer mobilization
- Black Women for Climate
- Research - university
- Reforestation - environmental protection
- Territory appreciation

Luciana Petersen

- Communication to educate, to fight racism, discrimination
- Digital activism
- Spirituality
- Political education
- Listening and welcoming circle
- Welcoming and celebrating the LGBTQIAPN+ community
- Mental health protection
- Mobilization of Youth
- Inclusive practices (LGBTQIAPN+)
- Human rights - religiosity

Lucimar Ferreira

- Action to combat and adapt to climate change
- Articulation with public policies
- Articulation with the community and others
- Traditional communities (fishermen)
- Communication to educate
- Fishermen's rights
- Encouraging reading
- Culture as a tool of transformation
- Local development
- Community dialogue
- Human rights - food
- Solidarity Economy
- Educator - trainer
- Women's empowerment
- Strengthening territories
- Income generation
- Community tourism
- Mobilization of Children
- Mobilization of youth
- Reforestation - environmental protection
- Memories, history and visibility of the Afro-Brazilian and indigenous population.
- Territory appreciation

Mãe Flavia Pinto

- Philosophy of life
- Spirituality
- Pain and Violence
- Hunger - food insecurity
- Communication to educate, to combat racism
- Confronting racism
- Feminism - patriarchy
- Self-care
- Articulation with public policy
- Writer
- Research - university
- Human rights - religiosity; dignity in prison
- Collective experience
- Listening and welcoming circle
- Mental health protection
- Women's emancipation
- Ancestry

Mãe Itamara

- Prayers and Healers
- Ancestry
- Self-care
- Fighting Violence - religious, racism
- Communication to educate - against racism, discrimination, religious racism
- Human rights - religion
- Pain and violence
- Hunger - food security
- Confronting Racism - Daily, Institutional, Environmental
- Herbalist
- Spirituality
- Life philosophy
- Memories, history, and visibility of the Afro-Brazilian and indigenous population.
- Research - university
- Listening and welcoming circle
- Responsibility over the legacy
- Family tradition
- Collective living

Marcos and Raquel

- Mobilization of volunteers
- Articulation with the community and others
- Community libraries - Encouraging reading
- Fighting urban violence
- Hunger - food insecurity
- Local development
- Community dialogue
- Human Rights - housing, food, education, health
- Pain and violence
- Confronting Racism - Daily, Institutional, Environmental
- Strengthening Territories
- Men who cook
- Mobilization of Children
- Mobilizing volunteers
- Listening and welcoming circle

Maria Chocolate

- Writer
- Community libraries
- Hunger - food insecurity
- Human Rights - Literature
- Sorority
- Feminism - patriarchy
- Inclusive practices
- Anti-ableism
- Pain and violence
- Confronting racism
- Strengthening territories
- Mobilization of Children
- Basic Ecclesial Communities
- Articulation with the community

Maria Helena Carvalho

- Articulation with the community and others
- Articulation with public policies
- Local Development
- Community dialogue
- Human Rights - health, culture
- Educator - trainer
- Socio-environmental Education
- Strengthening territories
- Oral history
- Political interaction - Councils
- Memories, history and visibility of the Afro-Brazilian and indigenous population.
- Research - university
- Sense of belonging to the territory
- Reforestation - environmental protection
- Listening and welcoming circle
- Integral and Health Integrative
- Territory appreciation

Marilza Floriano

- Strengthening the territory
- Valuing the territory
- Listening and welcoming
- Pain and violence
- Community articulation and others
- Articulation with public policies
- Action to combat and adapt to climate change
- Black women for the climate
- Hunger - food insecurity
- Strengthening mothers (violence and torture by the state)
- Incarceration
- Agroecology
- Mental health protection
- Women's emancipation
- Mothers' groups
- Reforestation - environmental protection

Ninho

- Articulation with the community and others
- Combating Violence - urban, racism
- Hunger - food insecurity
- Culture as a tool of transformation
- Local Development
- Community dialogue
- Human Rights - culture, child protection
- Educator - trainer
- Confronting Racism - Daily, Institutional, Environmental
- Strengthening Territories
- Political interaction - Councils
- Sense of belonging to the territory
- Memories, history and visibility of the Afro-Brazilian and indigenous population.
- Mobilization of children
- Mobilization of youth
- Listening and welcoming circle
- Territory appreciation

Ronaldo Silva

- Memories, history and visibility of the Afro-Brazilian and indigenous population.
- Folia de Reis
- Popular culture
- Family tradition
- Responsibility for the legacy
- Valuation of the territory
- Adapting and updating to reality
- Articulation with the community
- Mobilization of children
- Ancestry
- Oral history
- Urban mobility

Caring Conectors

Maria José Gouvêa

Art Educator, Pedagogue, Specialist in Children's Education, and Master in Contemporary History - Cultural Assets and Social Projects. She has teaching experience in the fields of education and culture, in training and specialisation courses at the State Department of Education|RJ, PUC Rio, and UERJ. She has worked as a consultant in the design and implementation of socio-cultural projects for NGOs, local authorities, Canal Futura, and the firms Flaksman, Pinni e Vergara Arquitetura e Arte. She has participated in editorial projects on culture, art education, and memory. She was a fellow of the Courants programme at the Maisons des Cultures du Monde in Paris. She has participated in project evaluation committees for calls for proposals from the Ministries of Culture, Sesc, Sesi, NGOs, and foundations. Since 2010, she has been a reviewer for the Ministry of Culture in the field of humanities-FBN. For more than 30 years, she worked at Sesc Rio de Janeiro as an art educator, coordinator of literature and cultural projects, and as a cultural manager throughout the state of Rio de Janeiro. In recent years she has worked on socio-cultural projects with a focus on the integration of artistic languages, memory, oral history, and the study of care.

Marina Vieira

Curator, creative producer and cultural activist. She uses her experience with different Brazilian and Latin American actors to expand the articulation and realisation of collaborative and intercultural projects. She is a partner in Mil e Uma Imagens Comunicação and the creator of festivals such as Tangolomango - Festival of Cultural Diversity - 20 editions in Brazil and Latin America; Criei, Tive Como! - Multimedia Festival of Free Culture - two editions in Porto Alegre and Circuito Favela Criativa, cultural marathons in seven territories in Rio de Janeiro, with the participation of 2,500 artists from 53 communities. She has been a member of project evaluation committees for calls for proposals from cultural departments, the Ministry of Culture and foundations. She was Cultural Diversity Coordinator for the Rio de Janeiro Department of Culture. She is a journalist (UFF) with postgraduate degrees in Marketing (PUC-Rio), Social Responsibility and the Third Sector (Economics - UFRJ) and a specialisation in Cultural Policies (Observatoire de Politiques Culturelles/France). She is currently focused on finding ways in which culture can contribute as a mobilising agent for the most pressing socio-environmental issues, developing "socio-cultural-environmental" studies and projects.

Raquel Diniz

She is Blessed's mother, heiress of a matriarchal family from the northeast and a family that cherishes its memories. Born in the mountains of Petrópolis, today she has the opportunity to help regenerate a sacred land in the countryside of Rio. For 23 years she has been involved in the research, management, and promotion of socio-environmental and cultural programmes. She has always said that she works for sustainable development, but she has questioned the concept of the word "development". According to Nêgo Bispo, development involves letting go and disconnecting. And she has done the opposite: she has worked to engage, reconnect, and regenerate. Raquel is anti-racist and supports movements that dismantle processes of inequality and oppression. She is fascinated by learning new things and different worldviews, community philanthropy, and the strength of traditional and marginalised communities. She has a Masters in Inequalities and Social Sciences from the London School of Economics. She has a degree in Law, an MBA in Social Responsibility and the Third Sector from UFRJ, and a specialisation in Local Development from the International Labour Organisation (ILO-UN). She has recently been researching the work of carers around the world.

Acknowledgments

We did not get here alone. This e-book is the result of a broad, collective study. To make it happen, we first had affectionate and enlightening conversations that opened up our perspectives on thinking about care: Carla Carvalho, Cinthia Mendonça, Charles Siqueira, Denise Silva, Graciela Selamein, Guto Gutierrez, Heraldo HB, Isabel Pereira, Júlio Lêdo, Leandro Santana, Lisa Gunn and Luciana Bezerra.

These conversations led us to look for people and institutions that could point us in the direction of people and collectives involved in practices of care:

Beá Meira; BrazilFoundation - Bruno de Souza Faria; Casa dos Conselhos de Petrópolis - Tiago Ezequiel; Casa Fluminense - Luize Sampaio e Paola Lima; Circo Crescer e Viver - Junior Perim e Faby Soares; Cineclube Mate com Angú - Heraldo HB; Claudiney Ferreira; Cristiane Costa; Daniele Ramalho; Diálogos Suburbanos - Teresa Guilhon; Espaço Gaia - Laura Torres; Fazenda Recreio - Josiane dos Santos e Ivonilde Santana; Flup - Julio Ludemir; LABMENS / UFRJ - Geraldo Bastos; Programa de Pós-Doutorado do PACC (Programa Avançado de Cultura Contemporânea) - UFRJ - Ilana Strozenberg; Instituto EVA - Maria Rita Vilela; ISER (Instituto de Estudos da Religião) - Isabel Pereira; Leonardo Oliveira; Nós do Morro - Luciana Bezerra; Numa Ciro; Oi Futuro - Victor Almeida; Olhar Compartilhado - Júlio Lêdo; Ramon Nunes Mello; Rosilene Milotti; Secretaria Municipal de Cultura de Japeri - Jorge Braga Junior; Secretaria Municipal de Cultura do Rio de Janeiro / Coordenadoria de Territórios e Diversidade Cultural - Cintia Monsorez e Bárbara Azeo; Universidade das Quebradas - Rosângela Gomes; Verônica Nascimento; PAZ sem fronteiras - Patrícia Munçone; Via Integrativa - Fabiana Gaspar Gomes


And we reached out to the carers who shared their lives and journeys with us. We were delighted with how much we learned from each of them.

We have also counted on the generosity of Regina Novaes, Karen Worcman and Ernesto Piccolo, and on the partnership of Nós da Comunicação, which has been with us every step of the way. We are especially grateful for the enthusiasm of Jaíra Reis, Paulo Clemen and André Bürger. We would like to thank all of you for what we will take with us into our lives and for the continuity of our work.

Carers Profile





Adelina da Silva D'Oria - Jurema Adelina says she recognises herself by the name her friends gave her when she was a child - Cabocla Jurema. The daughter of indigenous parents, she was born and raised in Japeri, where she still lives today at the age of 70. She has been planting and harvesting cassava since she was six years old. She makes a living from cassava. She makes mayonnaise, ice cream, pastries, cakes, juices, kibbeh, coconut, all from cassava. She has developed a cassava-based cement to make floors. She ensures that the culture of growing and eating cassava is preserved and passed on from generation to generation.

 21 96834-4618 (WhatsApp)



Adilson de Almeida lives in a declared Remnant Quilombo Community in Jacarepaguá | RJ. He was born and raised in the Camorim Quilombo. Today he is the guardian of this land and of the quilombola families. He is also responsible for defending their rights and the ancestral culture of the Bantu people who have settled in the quilombo since 1614. He ensures that his community resists the constant threats of violence against the black population.

 @quilombocamorim@acquile

 @acquilerj



Alexandre Silva is a nurse, professor at UFSJ/MG and specialist in palliative care. In 2019, he launched the Favela Compassiva project in the favelas of Rocinha and Vidigal, the first compassionate community in Brazil to support patients and their families facing life-threatening illnesses. The work is done in partnership with the community, which is mobilised, trained and supported by multidisciplinary teams. The community becomes the caregiver for people who need active listening, support and compassion above all else.

 @favelacompassiva


 @profalexsilva


 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_biFEZgRYd0



Ana Beatriz de Carvalho [Bia] has lived in settlements since she was three years old. Today she lives with her husband and daughter in the Terra Prometida|Xerém settlement. As an agroecology and food security activist, she fights for healthy food for all. As an agroecological farmer, land educator, member of the Municipal Forum for Women's Rights of Duque de Caxias and former MST leader, Bia sees the territory as the production of care.


Shirley de Oliveira Santos arrived at the Terra Prometida Xerém settlement in 2018, when a new perspective on life presented itself and she fully embraced it: caring for nature in order to “care for the fullness of life”, for the knowledge of the ancestors. Shirley dedicates her life to the cultivation of herbs and herbal medicines.


 @coletivo.terra
Documentary ‘1 Ano and 1 dia’ (One year, One Day) portrays the celebration of the inhabitants of settlement 17th of May, in Baixada Fluminense, after 366 days of occupying the land, which legally guaranteed them the possession of the land. Directed by: Cacau Amaral, João Xavier, Rafael Costa.

 www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvjSUJz83BY



Ana Olívia is Portuguese. She was living in Spain when she decided to move to Rio de Janeiro, specifically to Parada de Lucas, to teach Spanish in a social project. She started teaching yoga in Redes da Maré, and in 2015 founded the Yoga Institute in Maré to promote a culture of peace and offer an integrative health system to the residents. She holds training sessions and classes, integrating local knowledge such as herbalists, doulas and massagers. Ana Olívia cares for the body, soul and well-being of the people of Maré.

 <https://www.yoganamare.com.br/>

 @yoganamare




Anápuàka Tupinambá Anapuaka Muniz Tupinambá Hã Hã Hae, of Tupinambá origin, was born and spent part of his childhood in the Favela Nova Divinéia|SP. He is the creator of Rádio Yandê and the concept of Indigenous Ethnomedia, based on the cultural process of indigenous peoples, their languages, cultural appropriation, and the construction of reflective thinking about indigenous communication. For Anapuaka, care is “taking care of oneself and others”.


 @anapuakatupinamba

 radioyande/



Andrea Apolonia is Rafa's mother. Out of the loneliness of being the mother of a child with a rare disease called Angelman Syndrome, she found a connection with other atypical mothers. Through a WhatsApp group, she and other mothers created Juntos, a support network with more than 300 registered families who support and care for each other. They mobilise, articulate, protest, denounce, push for legislation and educate society for a future with no ableistim.


 @junto_grupo

 <https://vimeo.com/91668119>

 rarediseasyday.org




Antonio Carlos Firmino was born in Miguel Pereira, in the Conrado neighbourhood. He has lived in Rocinha for more than 30 years, is a geographer, has a Master's degree in Social Memory and works on several fronts. At the Sankofa Museum - Memory and History of the Rocinha Favela - he is co-founder and one of the coordinators of the museum, which offers virtual access to information, exhibitions and publications. Caring for Firmino is related to the name of the museum SANKOFA, an Adinkra from Ghana|Ivory Coast, represented by a mythical African bird with its head back and its feet forward, whose meaning translates as "If I want to build the present, the future, I must look at the past".

 [museu_sankofa_da_rocinha](https://www.instagram.com/museu_sankofa_da_rocinha)

 @remusrj




Ariadne Mendes is a psychologist, health worker, general coordinator and co-founder of Bloco Carnavalesco Loucura Suburbana. Deconstructing walls and building affective relationships are her specialities. It was as part of the process of deconstructing the asylum model at the Nise da Silveira Municipal Institute that Loucura Suburbana was born in 2001, the first mental health culture point in Rio de Janeiro. Ariadne and her team ensure that culture is incorporated into mental health services, ensuring that each person has a voice, freedom and autonomy.

 @loucurasuburbana

 <https://www.loucurasuburbana.org/>








Johary, Shirley and Davlyn founded Casa Dulce Seixas in Nova Iguaçu to host LGBTQIAPN+ people who live on the streets, are socially vulnerable or face food insecurity. It is the only one in Baixada Fluminense. They seek partnerships with health, social and cultural networks to protect the LGBTQIAPN+ population and guarantee their rights. Shirley is Casa's President, Johari is Vice-President and Davlyn is a trans woman, psychologist, poet and responsible for Casa's financial management and projects.

 @casadulceseixas





Eliene Vieira fights against imprisonment. She is a member of movements of mothers and families whose children have been killed and tortured by the state. It's a struggle born out of an event in her personal life when her son was shot, tortured, and arbitrarily detained by the Military Police of Rio de Janeiro. She has taken it to a collective level, as in the National Network of Mothers and Families of Victims of State Terrorism. As a popular legal promoter, she supports mothers all over Brazil. She is also an expert in the State Mechanism for the Prevention and Fight against Torture, a public body linked to ALERJ and the result of UN guidelines. Eliene cares about mothers, families, and their violated rights.

-  @eliene_1011
-  @mecanismoriodejaneiro
-  <https://www.mecanismorj.com.br>
-  @desencarcerabr
-  @desencarcerabr









Flávia Souza comes from the Hip Hop movement and is a Jongo dancer. A multi-artist, cultural producer, choreographer, cast coach and dance graduate from UFRJ, she developed a body dynamics methodology called MOVIMENCURE to support the healing process of people with mental illnesses and founded the Afolaje Group in 2011. Flávia ensures that Afro-Brazilian culture is celebrated and experienced. And she cares for the mental health of women and the black population through the power of body movement.

-  @grupo_afrolaje
-  @tempestuosa_depressagem





Flávio Lima and Massari Simões are a married couple, he is a geography teacher and she is a physical education teacher. Both passionate about suburban culture, they founded CASARTI - the Casa do Artista Independente in the Vista Alegre neighbourhood. It's a cultural centre and film club with doors open to the community. Together they take care of the immaterial art of Rio's suburbs, recovering memories and celebrating the lives of peripheral artists. They fight against injustices in the music production chain by taking care of independent artists.

-  @Casarticultura
-  @Flaviolima3697
-  @Flávio-Lima
-  @Massari-Simões
-  @Casarti
-  @casarticasadoartistaindepe6397




Fleury Johnson dreamed of becoming a doctor from the age of four. He also wanted to experience life outside Togo, his home country. He put these two desires together and came to study medicine at the UFRJ. He specialises in clinical medicine and the health of the black population. He proposes care as a welcoming way to treat and "touch" black people, respecting their integrity and spirituality.

-  @drfleuryjohnson
-  @institutodis



Geraldo Bastos is the great-grandson and son of a herbalist and grandson of a chanter. He became a herbalist, has a Masters in Psychosociology in Communities and Social Ecology and a PhD from the UFRJ. He is also a researcher at LABMENS - Laboratory of Memories, Territories and Occupations. He was the founder of several pre-university courses in the Baixada and coordinates the Quilombo Kilombá Pre-Vestibular Course Project. Through his studies and the dissemination of Afro-Brazilian ancestral wealth and wisdom, he is a guardian of spirituality, the intangible and the enchanting.

 @geraldobastospsi




Gilza Rosa lives in Japeri and was a housekeeper for a long time. One day she decided to look for new ways and took a course on the solidarity economy. She fell in love with the subject and her new life as a craftswoman and organiser for women in her community. She participates in civil society movements related to women's empowerment and the fight for public policies to ensure a better quality of life in her field.


 @artesaosjaperi



Joyce Santos left her home town of Campinas to go to university in Rio de Janeiro, fulfilling the dream of her family, who hadn't yet been able to afford higher education. She started studying literature and ended up studying library science. During the COVID-19 pandemic, she participated in the activities of PretaLab, a link between black and indigenous women, focusing on technology and the market. Today, she is the manager of training cycles at PretaLab and an activist for the democratisation of access to technology.


 @olabiorg

 @pretalab_

 <https://hibridos.cc/po/rituals/a-barquinha>




Laura Ramos Torres was born and lives in Jardim Catarina | São Gonçalo. She is a Doula, researcher and director of Espaço Gaia, a civil society organisation in Complexo do Salgueiro | São Gonçalo that welcomes, supports, informs and accompanies pregnant women. A project that has expanded through a holistic approach that includes sanitation, mobility and food security. Laura believes that care is "movement - a holistic view".

 <https://www.instagram.com/gaia.espaco/>




Lorena Froz dos Santos was born in Santa Helena, in rural Maranhão, but has lived in the Nova Holanda | RJ favela since she was a child. She grew up loving her community and its people. She became an environmental educator and, with a commitment to sharing contextualised information about environmental issues in the reality of the favela, she created Faveleira, a digital project that produces information about the environment and quality of life. For her, caring means taking care of others, thinking of others, listening, and living as a collective.


 @_faveleira

 @lorenafroz_



Lourdes Brazil envisioned a forest from a fragment of the Atlantic Forest. By planting and restoring the soil, she created an island of freshness in São Gonçalo, in the Água Mineral neighbourhood. She has a master's degree in economics and a doctorate in social ecology. She founded the Genesis Centre for Socio-Environmental Education, where she regenerated fragments of the Atlantic Forest, facilitating the development of a local microclimate, an example of adaptation to climate change. She is a writer, poet and carer of her territory.


 <https://www.centrogenesis.com.br/>

 [centroeducacaoambientalgenesis](#)

 [@genesis_centro](#)




Luciana Petersen was born in Santa Isabel, in rural São Paulo. She is a journalist. Coming from an evangelical family, religion has always been present in her life. She now lives in Rio de Janeiro. During the pandemic, what she had already been thinking (and feeling) became even clearer: the church doesn't welcome everyone equally. She found other people with the same feelings and need to be welcomed and listened to on social media, and created a "spiritual community for people who were hurting": Novas Narrativas Evangélicas. Luciana is the spiritual leader of the Oasis community, practicing Christian religiosity in the way she believes: without prejudice, an activist for human rights, for social justice.


 [@novasnarrativasevanglicas](#)

 [@oasis_rj](#)



Lucimar Ferreira founded the Luthando pela Vida project in Magé, which offers sports workshops and other activities during the school day, as well as literacy classes for adults. To supplement her family's income and support the project, she became an artisanal fisherman and a local leader who looks after the traditional fishing community. In 2016, she founded the Associação de Pescadores Desportivos Luthando pela Vida. She is a community-based tourism guide, artisan, and environmental activist.

 [@projeto.luthandopelavida](#)

 [@remando_manguezal](#)





Marcos Antônio Francisco Mariano is a social worker, nursing assistant, and artist, and **Raquel Mariano** is an artisan. Both are volunteers who organise activities and donations for the inhabitants of the Comunidade do Fim do Mundo, in Costa Barros|RJ. They fight for food security for the families who live there in a situation of total abandonment, violence and social injustice. Three times they have built a space where children can have access to books, toys, musical instruments, and a kitchen to prepare food for the population, but three times the space has been destroyed. They don't give up because they believe in equal access to rights and that a culture of care is transformative.

 [@Grupo-Genesis](#)





Mãe Flávia Pinto - Flávia da Silva Pinto was born in Vila Vintém, in Padre Miguel | RJ. She is an Umbanda priestess and spiritual leader of the Casa do Perdão, a spiritual center located in Seropédica, Rio de Janeiro. A sociologist, Masters student in Political Sociology and writer, she is a spiritual guide and leader with many fronts of care. In her podcast, she discusses topics such as matriarchy, religious racism, ritual practices and ancestry, emphasizing the relationship between religions of African origin and nature and its sacred forces. “It’s not just about religiosity, it’s about a philosophy of life,” she says with conviction. Taking care of yourself to take care of others. Mãe Flavia believes that caring is love.

 @maeflaviapinto
 @casadoperdao



Mãe Itamará - Itamará Oliveira dos Santos inherited her grandmother’s legacy of wisdom as a prayer and a terreiro to care for as a Mãe de Santo. Her Candomblé Angola terreiro, Casa do Bengue Ngola Djanga Ria Mutakalambo, was founded in 1964 in Nova Iguaçu | RJ. There she prays for everyone who comes to her and asks to be cared for and embraced. She is a social worker with a Master’s degree from the UFRJ and a researcher at LABMENS - Laboratório de Memórias, Territórios e Ocupações (Laboratory of Memories, Territories, and Occupations), where she studies the violence and devastation of the terreiros of Nova Iguaçu and Duque de Caxias.

 @itamaradeoliveira.oliveira
 @raiz_mutakalambo




Maria Helena Carvalho born in Rocinha, is a qualified nurse and has been working in the SUS for 44 years. As coordinator of the Community Health Unit, she takes a holistic view of health care and participates in initiatives that discuss and propose solutions for garbage, roads, forest conservation, housing, vulnerability to climate change, animal care, culture and leisure. She is co-founder of the Sankofa Museum, which preserves the memory of Rocinha. Maria Helena looks after her territory in an integral and interdependent way.




Maria do Carmo Miranda (Maria Chocolate) was born in Bom Jesus do Galho | MG. When she was very young, she moved to Saracuruna, Duque de Caxias | RJ, where she still lives today. Books have always been her companions and have marked the different stages of her hard life. To share the love and transformative power of books, she created MANNs [Mulheres Amorasas Necessitam de Navegar em Sonhos], a community library named after the initials of the important women in her life, a way she found to honour them. The library is part of a community centre [CHOCOBIM] where cultural activities for children and young people take place. On the subject of caring, she says: “Anyone who has ever been hungry knows the importance of caring.

 <https://www.editorapanoplia.com.br/autora-mariachocolate>


 @bc_manns

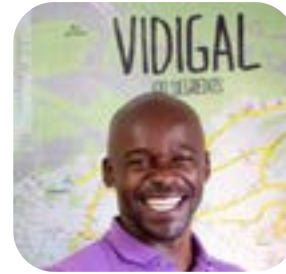


Marilza Barbosa Floriano lives in Morro do Sossego, Duque de Caxias|RJ. She worked as a domestic worker for 25 years until an event in her life awakened her to the struggle for human rights. With a degree in social work, she went on to develop a political and activist perspective, creating a network of powerful women working in the fields of health and agroecology, from which the Quintais Produtivos emerged. These are women who take care of the land, planting, cultivating herbs, making the land in their area productive and fighting collectively for their rights.


 @espacoagroecologico2023

 Nossos Mortos têm voz
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsVFbAtgl1M>

 www.facebook.com/share/s29AhLxGgoP523QN/?mibextid=LQQJ4d




Ninho Willian de Paula comes from Vidigal|RJ and is a “cria” of the Nós do Morro Cultural Group. He acts as an articulator for projects and debates on public policies for the benefit of the population in his area and as a facilitator for meetings to promote local development. Elected by the community as a Guardianship Councillor and working as a community tourist guide, Ninho is a carer of Vidigal’s memory and identity.

 @ninhovidigal



Ronaldo Silva, born in Morro Dona Marta|Botafogo|RJ, knows no other life than the one immersed in the Folia de Reis Penitentes do Santa Marta. A clown since the age of 9, he inherited his trade from his brother, who in turn inherited it from his father, Mestre Diniz. Ronaldo sees himself as the guardian of this family tradition and tries to pass on the teachings to the new generations of his family and community, with responsibility and respect for memory and culture.

 @penitentesstm

 @FoliaDeReisDoSantaMarta

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1. Ação social - Rio de Janeiro (RJ)
2. Comunidade - Aspectos sociais 3. Cuidadores -
Rio de Janeiro (RJ) 4. Diversidade 5. Relatos de
experiências I. Gouvêa, Maria José. II. Vieira,
Marina. III. Diniz, Raquel.

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Índices para catálogo sistemático:

1. Circular : Cuidadores do Mundo : Rio de Janeiro :
Estado : Bem-estar social 362.04250981531

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