



Naming Performativity on Twitter: Antiracist Feminist Counterpublics in Brazil

A performatividade do nomear no Twitter: contrapúblicos digitais antirracistas e feministas no Brasil

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Abstract: This article examines naming as a discursive performance deployed by antiracist feminists in Brazil. I analyze tweets referencing the names of three Black Brazilian women intellectuals: Marielle Franco, Lélia González and Djamila Ribeiro, seeking to unearth the way in which their names help to build counterpublic spaces of resistance involving notions of citizenship, belonging and democracy. Using platform studies and Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis as a theoretical frame, I perform different operations of computational textual analysis to map most frequent users referenced and hashtags used, as well as most relevant topics. I conclude that naming grants a powerful role in building counterpublics' identities, helping to constitute alternative intellectual traditions in Brazil. Linking a social media post with a name to a collective mobilization serves to establish and maintain cultural identity, combining ephemerality with a continuing legacy.

Keywords: counterpublics; antiracism; feminism; Twitter; Digital Studies

Resumo: O artigo examina o nomear como performance discursiva desenvolvida pelo feminismo antirracista no Brasil. Analiso tuites referenciando o nome de três intelectuais mulheres negras: Marielle Franco, Lélia González e Djamila Ribeiro, apontando para o modo como seus nomes ajudam a construir espaços contrapúblicos de resistência, incorporando noções de cidadania, pertencimento e democracia. Usando como marco teórico os Estudos de Plataformas e a Análise Crítica Tecnocultural do Discurso, o trabalho desenvolve diferentes operações de análise textual computacional, mapeando usuários mais referenciados e hashtags mais utilizados, assim como tópicos mais relevantes. Como conclusão, argumento que nomear possui um papel fundamental na construção das identidades dos contrapúblicos, ajudando a constituir tradições intelectuais alternativas no Brasil. Associar um post das redes sociais com um nome

e uma mobilização coletiva contribui para estabelecer e manter identidades culturais, combinando o caráter efêmero com um legado permanente.

Palavras-chave: contrapúblico; antirracismo; feminismo; Twitter; Estudos Digitais

Introduction: Naming and building Feminist Antiracist Counterpublics

This article examines Twitter as a contentious public space in which naming has functioned as a discursive performance deployed by antiracist feminists in Brazil. Although much attention has been given to the use of hashtags by Latin American feminist counterpublics online (FUENTES, 2019; FRIEDMAN, 2018; MENDEZ, 2020), less studies have focused on their articulation with antiracist movements (MENDEZ, 2020; RIBEIRO, 2018), and to their use of other performative strategies, and particularly naming. In this paper, I argue that name listing, name repetition and citation work, among antiracist Brazilian feminists, in a profoundly performative way, as it opens up counterpublic spaces of resistance: repeating names, citing, accumulating names, are ways in which users acknowledge their place in a feminist antiracist cultural tradition, strengthen their sense of citizenship and belonging, create contentious lineages that put women of Color in the center, and establish alliances with intersectional feminists in the United States and other areas of the Global South. Naming, as an identity-maintenance technique (CLARK, 2015), creates collective identities, unites feminist and antiracist subjects and participants inside and outside social movements, academics and activists, theorists and publics. Naming creates alternative pedagogies that not only seek to disseminate knowledge about Women of Color,¹ human rights activists, academics, theorists, writers, but offer role models, references, inspiration, create memorials for the deceased and celebrate the actions of new and future generations. I use the term “naming performativity” to refer to the iterative, citational strategy of

¹ Although this article is focused on three Black female intellectuals, it is part of a wider project called Digital Observatory of Latin American Women, which includes an exploration of the digital practices on Black, Indigenous and Latina intellectual women and LGBTQIA+ People of Color. This is the reason why, when making general statements, I use the term “People of Color”, a label that was created by African Americans, but which has evolved into an identity that politically mobilizes nonwhites toward common goals (PÉREZ, 2020). I particularly prefer the term Women and LGBTQIA+ People of Color because it implies viewing the experience of Black, Latinas and Indigenous women and LGBTQIA+ People of Color from many nationalities and origins in Latin America under a broader category, without flattening differences.

creating lineages, canons, memorials, shaping publics through names, and establishing counter-pedagogies online. Naming serves to identify these traditions and dignifies oppressed individuals.

I analyze tweets referencing the names of three Brazilian Women intellectuals of Color that are central for feminist, decolonial, antiracist, and LGBTQIA+ theory and activism: Marielle Franco, Lélia González and Djamila Ribeiro. I seek to examine the way in which their names work as articulators of forms of resistance to the platform's algorithmic infrastructure, building alternative public spaces involving notions of citizenship, belonging and democracy. The strategy of naming these (and other related) intellectual figures questions the masculine gendering of internet-based technology as the province of Anglo-Saxon white men, and open spaces from the Global South, particularly Latin America, to create counterpublics. My main objective is to observe the construction of feminist antiracist intellectual canons in social networks considered as contentious public spaces, in a continent historically dominated by white masculine lettered figures. I study references and citations of these Brazilian women of Color on Twitter, their transnational circulation, other intellectual figures referenced, the appearance and relevance of hashtags, the users that are most frequently referenced and the different topics they mobilized in social networks. This way, I intend to show how naming is central for feminist antiracist movements, founding alternative public digital spaces of belonging, establishing and strengthening cultural identities, intellectual and cultural canons online, involving notions of citizenship, belonging and democracy.

I use platform studies and Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis, as well as textual analysis tools, linguistic computation and topic modelling to unravel the meanings and performances created and catalyzed by references to these intellectual women of Color online, looking at the profile of the online communities that name them. Central to this work is a consideration of Twitter as a contentious public space, even if it is not physical and does not fulfil the technocultural expectation of facilitating productive information exchanges and egalitarian digital social interactions. Twitter is, however, a digital public space of discursive interaction in which people congregate around shared or contrasting interests and issues, as participants reflect, refine, reject and reproduce social knowledge that is also informed by their offline experiences. It is a place for different communities to develop collective definitions,

circulating shared collective values and identities. They are symptomatic of a wider social phenomenon, as they contribute to the formation of counterpublics, creating counter-discourses, reframing hegemonic messages, as their messages travel outside of enclave spaces to challenge dominant meanings both in the online and offline public space. (KUO, 2018; FRASER, 1990)

The concept of counterpublics, coined by feminist theorist Nancy Fraser (1990), is central to reflect on the way in which Brazilian feminist and antiracist movements build their identities, create communities dispersed in time and space and contest mainstream beliefs to give visibility to racial and gender justice issues to unaware publics (FRIEDMAN, 2017). Naming, for Brazilian feminist and antiracist publics, functions as a technocultural discourse (BROCK, 2012) that unites those seeking for alternative references, giving information on authors to read and figures to admire. They work as anchors of historical and cultural traditions that have only very recently been incorporated in academia, and are still absent in many cultural and educational spheres and levels. Naming enables movements to organize around shared models and references, exploiting variability, transnational multiplicity and a-synchronicity, as names vary and differ from post to post, from user to user, as well as in different contexts and according to different strategies and aims (BONILLA; ROSA, 2015; FUENTES, 2019). These women's trajectories also vary in time and space, as each intervened in different historical periods through diverse forms of collective activism.

Naming helps feminist and antiracist activists find each other, find information of interest about authors, books and references from different ethno-racial traditions, geolocation and historical frames, follow users, find connections between authors and lines of thought, and establish alliances. Name contiguity, repetition and recombination produces additional knowledge and lineages, drawing connections between racism, sexism and imperialism, in different historical contexts, from different national and transnational areas, from the Global North and South. Names transmit affect, argumentation, belonging and dissensus. Like hashtags, naming implies "participating in" a conversation, a discussion, a campaign (BONILLA; ROSA, 2015; FUENTES, 2019; CLARK, 2015). However, differently from hashtags, lists of names present a relatively stable character, creating a more prolonged, slower digital rhythmic structure, that is crucial for creating identities and sustaining long-term

communities and actions (FREELON; MCILWAIN; CLARK, 2016). This way, naming grants a powerful role in building these counterpublics' identities, helping to constitute alternative Latin American intellectual traditions. At the same time, naming is contextually situated and dependent on collective mobilizations. Linking a social media post with a name or a list of names to a collective mobilization serves to establish and maintain cultural identity, adding to a digital memory process, combining ephemerality with a continuing legacy.

This article is divided in three parts. The first one is a theoretical introduction to platform studies and Critical Technocultural Analysis, zooming on their consideration of Twitter as a public space. It also introduces postcolonial studies in the digital humanities as a theoretical and methodological perspective that focuses on an intersectional antiracist feminist perspective from the South. The second part includes a brief profile of Twitter use in Brazil and an introduction to each of the authors considered, as well as a methodology section on data collection and processing techniques. In the third part, I perform a critical technocultural discourse analysis on the tweets mentioning Brazilian Women intellectuals of Color on Twitter. In Tweets extracted between July and November 2020, I analyze the most frequent hashtags, most referenced usernames and most relevant topics. After cleaning the Tweets collected, I use textual analysis tools, such as hashtags and user recognition, and implement a technique for topic modelling. In the last part, I advance conclusions and elaborate on the technocultural aspects of feminist and antiracist counterpublics.

Platform Studies and a Postcolonial Perspective to Antiracist Feminist Counterpublics from the South

Digital humanities and what has been called “distant reading” examine great systems of cultural production and a big volume of empirical data using computational cultural criticism and abstract patterns to analyze cultural meaning (MORETTI, 2017; LEE; MARTIN, 2015). However, digital humanities as a field has privileged a methodological approach to computational methods, without considering race, gender and geopolitics. In this paper, I propose a postcolonial, intersectional perspective that considers geopolitical, cultural, gender and racial

inequalities between North and South, between different publics and the way they use different platforms, including Twitter (RISAM, 2018).

An epistemology from the South helps me in examining platforms idealized in the North, such as Twitter, which follows user patterns in English, to deconstruct hierarchies between North and South, focusing on users that are native Portuguese speakers and their discursive practices (MILAN *et al.*, 2019). A postcolonial perspective allows me to overcome the epistemological limitations created by colonialism and to criticize ethnocentrism in the humanities, historically shaped by an imperial episteme (CONNEL, 2007; GO, 2016). I intend to think about the unequal distribution of technologies and knowledges, and how alternative discursive practices are produced in the global peripheries, by supposedly dependent cultures and economies that have been shaped by colonialism. (CONNEL, 2007)

My focus is on the way in which marginalized communities of users intervene in a white Anglo-Saxon public space creating counterpublics in which performances of more diverse identities can take place (BROCK, 2020). I study how feminist antiracist users in Brazil engage with naming and name listing on Twitter not only to communicate information, but most crucially to enact powerfully performative meanings, giving visibility to feminist antiracist intellectuals, highlighting the actions and theories of women of color, disputing intellectual traditions, and intervening in debates over citizenship and democracy.

As platform studies have pointed out, platforms are shaped by powerful economic and political regimes, despite the pretended neutrality that Twitter, Facebook and Youtube seek to underscore, presenting themselves as mere facilitators of information and services (VAN DIJCK, 2013; VAN DIJCK *et al.*, 2018, D'ANDRÉA, 2020). Platforms have geopolitical, social, racial, and gendered architectures and hierarchies, through which users and servers carry their actions and modes of distribution (VAN DIJCK *et al.*, 2018, D'ANDRÉA, 2020). As a powerful infrastructure for online communication and social interaction, Twitter is far from a neutral atmosphere of interaction and public content communication (BROCK, 2012; VAN DIJCK, 2013). Critical Technocultural Discourse Analyses (CTDA) point to a media field that is dominated by pro-corporate, technocratic ideologies, that privilege the masculine over the feminine, White over Black, English over Spanish and Portuguese, North over South (BROCK, 2012 E 2020;

RISAM, 2018). Twitter represents the primacy of English and the United States; it is racialized as much as it is driven by global inequalities. For digital communities in the Global South and particularly in Latin America, technologies tend to reproduce ethnocentric, deficit-based cultural stereotypes of backwardness, passivity, lack of technological proficiency and digital literacy, pointing to global, cultural and linguistic hierarchies. (BROCK, 2020; RISAM, 2018)

Platform studies have highlighted how digital corporations co-opted the rhetoric of the world wide web as a public space and used them to exploit online activities for commercial purpose and monetary gains. According to this view, “there is no public space carved out in the infrastructural core of platform society” (VAN DIJCK *et al.*, 2018, p. 134). The lack of a noncommercial, public space, developed by nonprofit collectives, has resulted in a platform society dominated by market forces and technocratic solutions (VAN DIJCK *et al.*, 2018). However, critical technocultural analyses avoid technological determinism, and consider platform users and affordances as mutually constitutive, as users deploy practices that take advantage of their possibilities and limitations and go beyond. Digital platforms are, in fact, spaces of dispute that do not preclude the possibility of contestation.

While I propose to consider Twitter as a digital public space,² studies should avoid developing a digital version of Jürgen Habermas’ utopian vision of a universal public sphere, free from the effect of societal inequalities and in which every individual would have equal standing, participation and access (HABERMAS, 2006). Instead of considering digital platforms as universal means for free expression and disinterested debate, the public digital space should be regarded as constituted by conflict, in which norms, meanings and actions are contested. Theorist Nancy Fraser, in her critique of the habermasian ideal, has argued that instead of a single overarching public sphere, a proliferation of a multiplicity of publics should be considered, in an arrangement that accommodates contestation and the enactment,

² At the same time, it is important to ponder that the text-based structure of Twitter tends to exclude illiterate and semi-illiterate users, which explains why, in Brazil, many prefer to use predominantly image-driven platforms, such as Instagram and Facebook (DATAREPORTAL, 2020). The evidence of rampant digital exclusion, as a byproduct of the persistence and deepening of social inequalities, points to the tensions and complexities of any consideration of the digital public sphere in Brazil.

construction and reconstruction of subaltern identities through discursive interaction (FRASER, 1990). The emergence and proliferation of subaltern counterpublics, within an exclusionary public sphere, while not completely detached from a more comprehensive public space, imply the possibility of collective empowerment, working as spaces of withdrawal and regroupment (FRASER, 1990; FRIEDMAN, 2017). Studies on racial justice hashtag activism focused on English and the United States have highlighted the emergence of online counterpublics that criticise the exclusionary character of first world white feminism, and its unawareness of western privileges (KUO, 2018; FLORINI, 2013; CLARK, 2015; FREELON, MCILWAIN; CLARK, 2016). These studies have underscored the contentious character of digital spaces, as sites of struggle over racial and gendered meanings, and in which Women of Color can include themselves in digital technologies as protagonists (KUO, 2018; FLORINI, 2013; CLARK, 2015; BONILLA; ROSA, 2015). These counterpublics form alternative public spaces in which performances of diverse ethnic, racial and gendered identities can take place. Twitter makes these satellites public spheres possible, as its format, sociality and material characteristics promote the public discursive actions of a public sphere. (BROCK, 2020)

In Latin America, since colonial times, intellectual canons have been exclusionary spaces par excellence, from which the discursive practices of Blacks, indigenous, women and popular classes have been systematically omitted: the “lettered city” only gradually expanded throughout the 19th and 20th century, incorporating middle-class readers and writers, partially democratizing the access to culture and to the lettered world, but continuing to marginalize those populations, as well as their linguistic and cultural productions (RAMA, 1981; MOLLOY, 2006). Latin American feminist and antiracist counterpublics have historically confronted their marginalization and dependence by building counter-civil societies in which they were able to develop and share their strategies for social change (FRIEDMAN, 2017; CARNEIRO, 2019; GONZÁLEZ, 2019). Since the 19th century, for instance, educated women have used print culture to circulate emancipatory ideas of women’s civic participation and intervention in public life (through journals, literary salons, and suffrage organizations), putting women at the heart of popular education and social change (MASIELLO, 1992). Black feminist thought in Brazil has been a pioneer in highlighting the interrelated nature of

gender, race and class. Black feminists as Sueli Carneiro and Lélia González have highlighted the importance of recuperating the experience of Black and Indigenous women, historically subjected to racial, sexual and linguistic violence and abuse since colonial times, as structural to understand national and transnational hierarchies and hegemonic identities in Latin America. (CARNEIRO, 2019; GONZÁLEZ, 2019; PACHAMAMA, 2019; GRAÚNA, 2011)

Naming, in this cultural context, becomes a strategy for Latin American antiracist feminists to contest a White, western, masculine intellectual canon, calling attention to the history of colonialism, through a race, gender, and social-justice informed approach. They seek to rethink canons and global digital spaces from the Portuguese-speaking Global South, from the perspective of Women of Color, pointing to their invisible history of oppression, diaspora and colonialism, and building a vocabulary and a syntax to name the position they want to occupy. Naming serves to form, impulse and mobilize counterpublics, revealing the contentious nature of Twitter as a public digital space, in which battles on politics, language, culture and society are waged. The interactions in which publics engage, as individual and collective actors, to mobilize these traditions and produce alternative public spaces, alter the social epistemology in which they operate, change how they interact and transform their experience and sense of the world. Naming shows an awareness of how Brazilian Women of Color are vulnerable to misrepresentation by mainstream media, systematically sexualized and objectified. Thus, instead of objects to be used, submitted or exploited, they appear as powerful role models to be emulated. This way, naming functions as a catalyst of more diverse, plural and inclusive definitions of citizenship.

A Critical Methodological Approach to the Digital Space of Twitter in Brazil and Brazilians on Twitter

Brazil is the region in the developed world with more internet users. Most of them access the web exclusively from a mobile phone (40%), although the presence of computers in Brazilian domestic environments has expanded in the last year, as has the combination of computer and mobile phone, to a 58% (COMITÊ GESTOR DE INTERNET NO BRASIL, 2021). At the same time, the power of platforms has only grown. Brazil is the country with most Twitter users in Latin America,

and fourth in world usage, with 15.7 million users (DATAREPORTAL, 2020). Twitter is the 6th most used social media platform in the country, with mostly affluent users, and 83% who access from a mobile phone. (DATAREPORTAL, 2020)

A systematic look at Twitter's trending topics and most retweeted hashtags in Brazil shows that they are dominated by digital influencers and automated profiles built by supporters of the far-right Brazilian president, frequently attacking and opposing Women of Color. Recent research has shown that social media in Brazil is a site of racist and sexist discourses on Black women and that online hate speech creates an echo-chamber effect in the cyberspace, amplifying the reverberation of racist discourses in the online environment. (TRINDADE, 2020)

In the municipal elections that were held in November 15 and 29 2020, there was a record number of women and People of Color candidates (TARCIZIO, 2020). In the period before and after the election, there was also record number of attacks against Women of Color in politics. A report made by the Marielle Franco Institute revealed that Black women candidates, elected officials and other public political activists point to digital violence as the predominant type of violence they have suffered (INSTITUTO MARIELLE FRANCO, 2020). Despite the rampant racism and sexism, during the last decade, a group of intellectual Women of Color have gained popularity through Twitter and other social media, as symbols of antiracist, anti-police violence and LGBTQIA+ agendas. That has been the case of Marielle Franco, Djamila Ribeiro and Lélia González, which are the focus of this analysis.

The data collection was made in the period between the 25th of July 2020, a date devoted to celebrating Black women in Latin America and the Caribbean, and the municipal election, held in November 2020. During these months, daily extractions were made of Tweets with references to the three authors (another important date that was contemplated within this data was Black conscience day, the 20th of November). This was a particularly significant context in which definitions of democracy and citizenship were under dispute. I utilized quantitative and qualitative research methods implemented in the Software Wolfram Mathematica, which is a high-level computational language, at the same time as a software for textual analysis and processing, that allows a wide range of operations and research methods with different types of texts and in different formats (WOLFRAM, 2021). Following ethical guidelines and best research

practices suggested in previous studies exploring Twitter data, the study safeguarded users' privacy, did not disclose personal identification, such as usernames or aliases, and required authorization when citing tweets. (BERGIS; SUMMERS; MITCHELL, 2018; CLARK, 2015)

The extraction of tweets that mentioned the three authors during this period resulted in 228.441 tweets that reference Marielle Franco, 27.027 that reference Lélia González, and 30.236 that reference Djamila Ribeiro. The selection of these three authors responded to different, but equally relevant, questions. In the case of Marielle Franco (1979-2018), she was a Black feminist activist, politician and outspoken critic of police brutality, who was particularly active on Twitter and the news of her assassination was followed by a true uproar on Twitter, with 567 thousand mentions and the creation of the now popular hashtag #MariellePresente and #QuemMandouMatarMarielle (#MarielleisPresent and #WhoKilledMarielle). Djamila Ribeiro (1979-), on the other hand, is a Black feminist activist, author, journalist and editor. She has published three books and is the editor of a publishing house focused on antiracism and feminism. In August 2020, together with a number of anti-racist and Black Women's organizations, Ribeiro presented a legal accusation against Twitter in the Federal Public Ministry, denouncing the platform for "economically exploiting racism and misogyny", giving prominence and profiting from attacks on Black women, exploiting racism and sexism for advertisement. (BERGAMO, 2020)

Lélia González (1935-1994) was a Brazilian theorist, politician, professor, anthropologist and human rights activist, who was one of the founders of the Movimento Negro Unificado (Black Unified Movement) in Brazil. González wrote many essays and books, and was a pioneer of intersectionality studies, coining the term *Amefricanidade*, which is central for decolonial, intersectional, feminist and antiracist theories and activism in Latin America (GONZÁLEZ, 2019). In her essay "The Political-Cultural Category of *Amefricanity*", originally published in 1988, she advances a postcolonial perspective on race and proposes the concept of *Amefricanity* (*Amefricanidade*) as a breakage of territorial, linguistic, and ideological boundaries, a way of conveying the idea of an Afro-centered culture, and of unity in a shared diasporic history. It is a broader, encompassing concept, that includes Black and Brown peoples from North, South and Central America and the Caribbean. (GONZÁLEZ, 2019)

Within the tweets extracted, I mapped the most frequent languages within the tweets that mention these authors, which revealed their transnational circulation. I then created a function that quantifies the use of @ (which identifies users), to identify the accounts that are more frequently mentioned and retweeted within the multilingual corpus of tweets. Another step was developing a function that quantifies the use of # (hashtags), to see which hashtags were more popular during this period. Through @ and RT, Twitter allows citation, interpellation, posting and reposting of messages, which reveal different kind of social and cultural interactions in the platform. Through #, Twitter organizes tweets in trending topics, creating channels that connect communities of users interested in the same matters. I created tables with the most frequent users and hashtags mentioned in connection with each of the three authors. Finally, I performed a technique for topic modelling on tweets in Portuguese, which extracts the most relevant topics in each corpus of tweets under analysis. The technique used was matrix factorization, particularly NonNegative Matrix Factorization, and in this case Probabilistic Latent Analysis. I used a package created for Wolfram Mathematica (ANTONOV, 2013), which allows for topic extraction from a collection of documents. I manually selected the 5 most relevant topics from the 10 topics generated for each author and labelled them according to one of the words with highest score in each topic. With the selected topics and their labels, I generated several graphs.³

Using these methodologies for textual analysis, I look at the way in which Marielle Franco, Djamila Ribeiro and Lélia González have been key figures on Twitter of the formation of feminist, antiracist counterpublics. For these publics, the practice of naming female intellectuals of color has been key for the enactment, construction and reconstruction of their collective identities, catalyzing a polyphony of subaltern voices. Naming these antiracist women helps occupying and reclaiming dominant controlled digital public spaces, such as Twitter, while strategically employing protest rhetoric to argue against stereotypes and to build alternative public spaces. I study the specific strategies that users put to work to oppose algorithmic violence, resist the hegemonic Twitter use and advance their agendas.

³ For more bibliography on this and other techniques for topic modelling with Tweets, see Steinskog, Therkelsen and Gambäck (2017); Wang, Liu and Yalou (2016).

Tweeting and Naming: What’s in a Name?

Firstly, it is important to note that the three authors differ in their transnational circulation: while Marielle Franco circulated in 24 languages during this period, Djamila Ribeiro circulated in 7 languages and Lélia Gonzalez in 13. I show the ten most frequent languages of Tweets on these intellectuals in Table 1. Among the 10 most important languages are Portuguese, Spanish, English, French and Italian, but also languages from other regions of the Global South and non-hegemonic cultures, such as Catalan, Estonian, Romanian, Haitian Creole and Hungarian. Marielle Franco is the intellectual figure that has circulated most frequently in English, with 8,400 tweets that reference her, followed by Lélia González, with 268 and Djamila Ribeiro, 117.

Table 1 – Most frequent language in Tweets about Marielle Franco, Djamila Ribeiro and Lélia González.

Marielle Franco Tweets		Djamila Ribeiro Tweets		Lélia González Tweets	
Portuguese	204 389	Portuguese	29 944	Portuguese	22 314
Spanish	11 973	English	117	Romanian	3943
English	8476	Spanish	84	English	268
French	2059	Undefined	43	Spanish	163
Italian	510	French	35	Hungarian	146
Undefined	413	Romanian	10	Undefined	92
German	191	Catalan	2	Finnish	61
Catalan	108	Tagalog	1	Tagalog	12
Estonian	89			French	8
Finnish	64			Haitian Creole	7

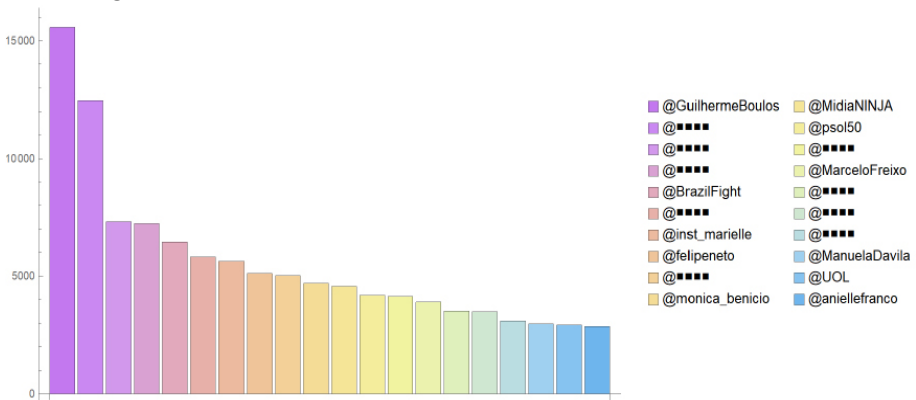
Source: The Author and Wolfram Mathematica

Marielle Franco: The Politics of Naming LGBTQIA+ People of Color; Naming in Hashtags

One of the most important themes in the corpus of tweets on Marielle Franco is elections. Figure 1 shows the most referenced users on tweets on Marielle Franco. In the top twenty, there are male as well

as female users, a majority of which are political candidates, critics of the present government, but also journalists, digital influencers, artists, ONGs, political parties, alternative media, and some of Franco’s relatives and friends. Many women of color politicians appear among the 20 most referenced users, which is indicative of Franco’s heritage in Brazilian politics. This includes her widow, who was elected as a councilwoman, and her sister, as well as Black women House representatives, a candidate for mayor and others.

Figure 1 – Most referenced users in Tweets on Marielle Franco.



Source: The Author and Wolfram Mathematica.

Naming Marielle Franco, on Twitter, is associated with critiquing police violence, particularly in favelas, also with opposition to the president Jair Bolsonaro, with antiracist movements, human rights, and feminist activism. The elections figure very prominently on tweets on her, as well as juridical investigations on her assassination, including possible charges against the president.

In addition to users, names of LGBTQIA+ and female politicians of Color appear in this corpus: senators, members of the House of Representatives of the State of Rio de Janeiro and of Federal congress, her friends and family members that have gained popularity in politics. During the months before election, her name was mobilized to promote Women and Trans People of Color candidates, gathering 182 names in what the Marielle Franco Institute, an ONG run by Anielle Franco, called “Agenda Marielle Franco”, as seen in this tweet:

48 hours of Marielle Franco Agenda and we already have 182 candidates from 18 political parties. Black, Indigenous, quilombolas, trans, Lesbians, bisexual, White, cis, heterosexual from the whole country. More than 1700 participants signed up. And you, if you talk so much about Marielle, why don't you sign up to participate?⁴

This initiative gathered support from candidates which supported LGBTQIA+ rights, antiracism and opposition to police violence. The tweet directly invites those who name and admire Franco's legacy to support antiracist and feminist movements more concretely.

Another tweet connects the name of Franco with antiracist personalities around the world, including a photograph:

The aim of this production is to tell a little more about the trajectory of people that had a great impact in the world. Among them, Nina Simone, Muhammad Ali, Angela Davis, Marielle Franco, Nelson Mandela, Malcom X, Martin Luther King.

This tweet highlights how naming can serve to establish alliances between antiracist figures in the United States, Africa and Brazil. Another tweet connects her name with central figures in the struggle for peasant, indigenous and Black people rights in Latin and Central America, connecting her with their cause. Another tweet, sent by the first Black trans person elected as a councilwoman in the city of Sao Paulo, also performed name listing of different Women of Color in Brazil, to commemorate the 25th of July:

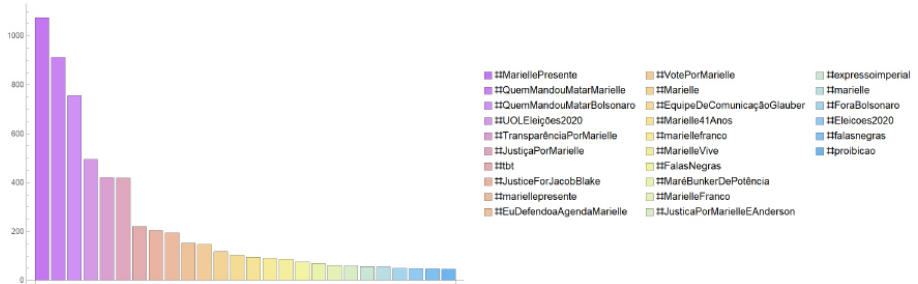
For Aqualtune, Dandara, Xica Manicongo, Tereza de Benguela, Zeferina, Luíza Mahin, Antonieta de Barros, Theodosina Ribeiro, Lélia Gonzalez, Beatriz Nascimento, Luiza Bairros e Marielle Franco. For us, for all of us, for a Good Living!

Lists intend to give visibility to the legacy of Women of Color since colonial times, naming freed slaves, quilombola leaders, women academics, politicians, theorists and philosophers, administrative officials and activists in Brazil and Africa. The past heritage and history of Brazilian Women of Color since colonial times is mobilized on Twitter to

⁴ All translations are mine.

appears is that of Bolsonaro, the Brazilian president, in tweets that highlight the investigations on his supposed involvement in her assassination.

Figure 3 – Most frequent hashtags in tweets on Marielle Franco



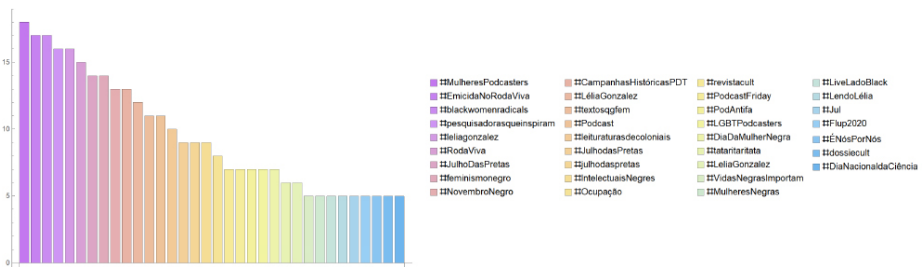
Source: The Author and Wolfram Mathematica.

In the graphic with the most frequent hashtags for Marielle Franco (figure 3), it is possible to trace a dispute that articulates names and hashtag activism. The most frequent hashtags denounce her assassination (*#QuemmandouMatarMarielle*, *#JustiçaporMarielle*, *#MarielleVive* and *#MariellePresente*) (*#WhoKilledMarielle*, *#JusticeforMarielle*, *#MarielleLives* and *#MarielleisHere*). The third in popularity, however, is *#QuemMandouMatarBolsonaro* (*#WhoSenttoKillBolsonaro*), created by Bolsonaro supporters as a sort of parody and resignification of the previous one, pointing to the supposed attempt to assassinate the Brazilian president in 2018. It is a dispute over hashtag use, and naming is in the center of this dispute. The polysemy of the word *mandou*, that means to order as well as to execute an order, is thus used to mean two radically different things that are conflated by Bolsonaro supporters: the act of killing, in the case of Franco, and the act of plotting to kill someone, in the supposed attempt to assassinate Bolsonaro in 2018. This way, Bolsonaro's supporters emulated a hugely popular hashtag, used to criticize him, and reoriented it for their own purposes. However, Franco's supporters also cite and reuse the hashtags to criticize the veracity of Bolsonaro's assassination attempt. This way, names and hashtags with huge popularity are combined, pointing to the profoundly contentious nature of hashtag and naming performativity on Twitter as a digital space: ideologically opposed hashtags placed in contiguity, associated by their phonetic similarity, show a rhythm of argument and counterargument as they are used to wage a battle that is central for Brazilian politics and culture.

Lélia González. Women of Color in Theory and Activism. Naming Amefricanidade online

Figure 4 shows the most frequent hashtags in Tweets on Lélia González, many of which refer to TVshows, podcasts, journals and magazines that celebrate and situate González’s legacy as an intellectual, a theorist and an activist. She was widely mentioned in July, in connection with Black Latin American and Caribbean Women day, such as #DiadaMulherNegra, #JulhodasPretas (#DayofBlackWoman #JulyofBlacks), as well as in November, in connection with activities related to Black Conscience Month. She was mentioned on tweets in French and English as an emblem of Black feminism, as well as of decolonial studies, with #leiturasdecoloniais (#decolonialreadings), and #blackwomenradicals, #IntelectuaisNegres.

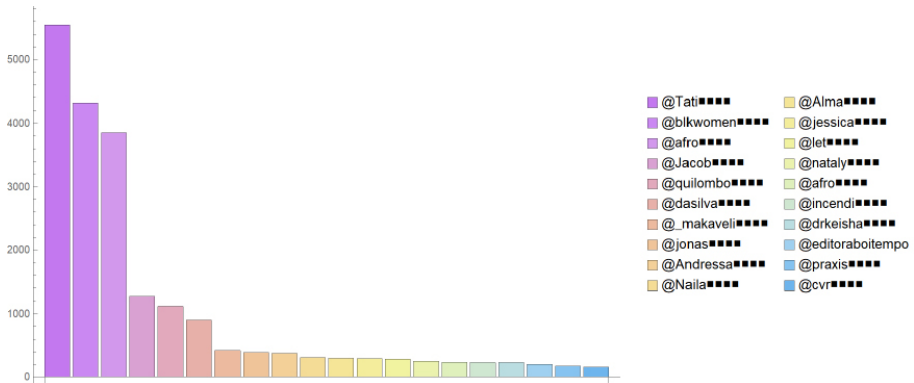
Figure 4 – Most frequent hashtags in tweets on Lélia González. Source: The Author and Wolfram Mathematica.



Source: The Author and Wolfram Mathematica.

The most referenced users in the tweets on Lélia González (figure 5) show a majority of Women of Color, followed by men. There are Black women Organizations, alternative media, organizations mostly on the left, Black cultural movements, Black Women candidates, a publishing house, activists and digital influencers.

Figure 5 – Most referenced users on tweets on Lélia González.



Source: The Author and Wolfram Mathematica.

In tweets on Lélia González, both her theory and activism on decolonial Black feminism acquire a fundamental role. The use of name listing, repetition and citation point to a Black feminist decolonial tradition that connects antiracist and feminist intellectuals from Brazil, the Caribbean, Africa and the United States. Names are repeated, cited, accumulated, in Tweets that trace counter-pedagogies and intellectual lineages that position Women of Color, and People of Color in general, in the center. The practice of name performativity places Lélia González as a central theorist and activist, founder of an intellectual tradition and pioneer of a feminism of Color from the South.

An example is the following thread:

Steps that come from afar and that do not walk alone. Angela Davis, Eliana Alves Cruz, Lia de Itamaracá, Clementina de Jesus, Elza Soares, Joana Felix, Nina Simone, Luiza Mahin, Laudelina de Campos Melo, Conceição Evaristo, Beatriz Nascimento, Maria Felipa, Erica Malunguinho, Lélia Gonzalez, Mãe Stella de Oxóssi +, Marielle Franco, Tia Ciata, Flávia Oliveira, Jurema Werneck, Zezé Motta, Sueli Carneiro, bell hooks, Marilza Barbosa, Dona Ivone Lara, Djamila Ribeiro, Antonieta de Barros, Carolina Maria de Jesus, Ruth de Souza, Dandara, Tereza de Beguela, Maya Angelou and Lúcia Xavier.

Next to a piece of art, which presents women of Color from different historical periods. With more than 30 names of Women of Color

that trace an intellectual tradition and a lineage, the list includes women from Brazil, predominantly, but also from the United States and Africa, including singers, intellectuals, activists, writers and politicians. Other tweets are structured as enumerations, inviting people to read Black Brazilian authors and to listen to Black Brazilian musicians: “Read Carolina Maria de Jesus, Read Sueli Carneiro, Read Machado de Assis, Read Lélia González”. Tweets express admiration for Brazilian Women of Color, their thought, intellectual production and legacy.

Another tweet in this trend is:

International Black Latin American and Caribbean Women’s Day.
Viva Teresa de Benguela, Dandara, Luíza de Mahin, Carolina Maria de Jesus, Lélia Gonzalez, Beatriz Nascimento, Sueli Carneiro, Jurema Werneck, Conceição Evaristo. And my lady Mother.

This tweet lists names by Black women in Brazil, writers, human rights activists, quilombola leaders, together with the users’ mother. She traces an alternative lineage that includes herself (and her mother) in an alternative canon of Latin American and Caribbean Women of Color. Identity and citizenship are reconstructed and redefined, both at the collective and at the subjective level.

Figure 6 – Topic modelling for tweets on Lélia González.



Source: The Author and Wolfram Mathematica

In the Topic Modelling for Lélia Gonzalez (figure 6), she appears as an intellectual figure with an enduring legacy for thinking about feminism, antiracism and postcolonial studies. The topic Amefricanidade points to this key concept in her thought. Amefricanidade and Amefrica Ladina are terms that highlight the importance of diasporic experiences, as human trafficking and slavery, and of African and Indigenous languages and cultures, to understand the formation and persistence of national and transnational identities in the Americas.

Other Black Women intellectuals as well as political figures appear, as well as mentions of her books. A topic highlights her central place in Black feminist thought, as a philosopher, a writer, an anthropologist, an activist and a theorist. The topic Black Intellectuals positions her in a tradition of Black intellectual thinkers, together with literary figures, activists and politicians, academics, singers and celebrities. The topic Intellectual highlights her teachings and theoretical legacy for many

academic fields, such as history, politics, anthropology, communication and philosophy. She appears as a figure that articulates activism and academia, research, politics and theory, in a fluid manner.

Djamila Ribeiro: New Black Feminist Theory and Polemics

In tweets on Djamila Ribeiro, Black feminism and antiracism are also fundamental. In this case, tweets are shaped by her participation in mainstream media, particularly her appearances in famous Brazilian TV Shows, and her articles in some of the most important newspapers in the country, *Folha de São Paulo* as well as in the magazine *Elle Brazil*. In addition to that, tweets highlight her role as an author of *Companhia das Letras*, one of the most prestigious publishing houses in Brazil, and as an editor of several collections dedicated to Black feminism. Many tweets mention the titles of her books, which have become bestsellers, as well as the books and collections she has edited.

In this corpus, name listing points to a global tradition of Black feminists that includes Black women in the Global North and South, such as bell hooks, Angela Davis, Grada Kilomba, Audre Lorde and others. Title listing is also very important, as users seek to stimulate readers to read feminist Black authors, by enumerating the titles and affirming “read Black authors”, sometimes including advertising links to Amazon. Other users mention Ribeiro as part of an alternative theoretical canon in lists that include European and North American philosophers together with African authors, such as Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, and Achille Mbembe. Tweets connect her to other women writers, artists and philosophers, such as Simone de Beauvoir, bell hooks, Djamila Ribeiro, Frida Kahlo, and Margaret Atwood. Others lists include Black journalists and authors to celebrate the presence of People of Color in mainstream media.

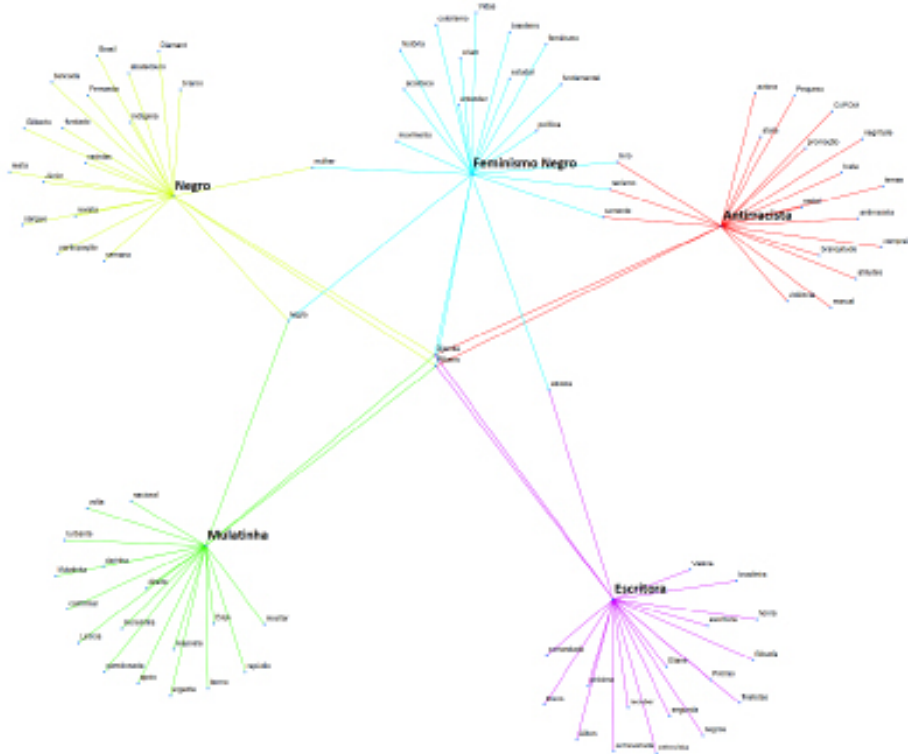
Tweets on Djamila Ribeiro, while establishing stronger connections to different spheres of the cultural and communication industry (be it television, print media, or the literary market), also seek to create counter-pedagogies and to establish alliances between feminist and antiracist readers and counterpublics, united by shared cultural references in the Global North and South. In the name and titles lists, Ribeiro is positioned and repositioned in different alternative canons: that of feminism, antiracism, Black Brazilian celebrities, Global critical

theory and philosophy. Among the three cases under study, this is the one more connected to the global North and less exclusively to Brazilian references, which, however, do appear.

In the topic modeling for tweets on Djamila Ribeiro (figure 6), topics such as “Black”, “Antiracist” and “Black Feminism” point to her denouncement of the legacy of racism and colonialism in Brazilian society, and her intellectual contribution to Black Feminism in Brazil.

Another topic, “*Mulatinha*” points to a polemic in which she was involved, when she used several terms to disqualify a Woman of Color in an interview in a widely popular TV Show. This polemic occupies a considerable quantity of tweets in this corpus, which question Ribeiro’s prestige and visibility and condemn her words, arguing that she is using racially charged terms to disqualify another woman.

Figure 6 – Topic Modelling for Tweets on Djamila Ribeiro.



Source: The Author and Wolfram Mathematica

Conclusions

Name performativity, combined with images, hashtags, and user references, are discursive strategies deployed by feminist and antiracist users on Twitter in Brazil, through which they enact, construct and reconstruct their collective identities. This way, these subaltern counterpublics occupy and reclaim controlled, exclusionary public digital spaces as Twitter to argue against stereotypes, build alternative public spaces and congregate heterogeneous collectives bound by cultural and historical common heritages and values. This kind of community empowerment articulates communities dispersed in space and time, contests dominant mainstream beliefs, and gives visibility to racial and gender justice issues to unaware publics.

I studied three cases of intellectual Women of Color incessantly named, cited and referenced on Twitter, each of which relates to slightly different topics, publics and counterpublics. Marielle Franco is the predecessor of a new generation of LGBTQIA+ People of Color participating in Brazilian politics today. Articulated with hashtag use, Franco points to a dispute over naming, in which the power of memorializing as a performance is evident.

Lélia González is the central figure and founder of Black feminist and decolonial theory in Brazil, and as such, she is named as a theoretical reference, in relation to theories and theorists in the South and North. These practices subvert geopolitical and academic hierarchies and propose new theoretical and intellectual canons. Djamila Ribeiro, as a theorist as well, is the central figure of a young generation of intellectuals that are active in new digital media as well as in more traditional media, who are successful in denouncing to racism and sexism in Brazil. Naming her and listing her together with other intellectuals, theorists, and activists around the world and throughout different historical periods has positioned her in a central place, subverting global as well as racial and gender hierarchies.

Instead of objectified, here Women of Color become the center of a conversation that aims at creating alternative cultural models and references for counterpublics online. Naming establishes a rhythm and a cadence that seeks to mobilize counterpublics, incorporating new generations by adding and subtracting names, incorporating Women of Color present and alive today to historical global canons. Instead of victims with

limited technological proficiency, naming shows how Brazilian activists use Twitter to intervene in cultural and intellectual canons and lineages in Latin America, recreating them in alternative, critical ways. There is a long-term shared temporality in naming, across different historical periods and geographical locations. Naming affirms these counterpublics by emphasizing collective identity and belonging, giving prominence to new definitions of citizenship and new possibilities for democracy.

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