# THE RACIALITY-ETHNICITY DEVICE AND THE PRODUCTION OF A RACIALLY INERT SUBJECT IN THE CONTEXT OF BRAZILIAN ETHNIC-RACIAL RELATIONS

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**ABSTRACT**

INTRODUCTION: Pain, violence, suffering, torture. These were fundamental elements for the slavery model – which was used in Brazil for so many years – to be introduced and maintained, both in the colonial period (1500-1822) and during the Empire (1822-1889). In "The treatment of the living: formation of Brazil in the South Atlantic" (2000), Luiz Felipe Alencastro reports the arrival in Brazil of Father Pero Rodrigues (recognized as one of the best experts in the analysis of enslaved bodies), who at the behest of King Felipe II "formulates the paranoia of the colonizer. For him, the racial war leads the landlord to use violence as the engine of the economy, ratifying the relationship of domination and exploitation imposed on slaves" (ALENCASTRO, 2000, p. 68), since, through it, it would be possible to contain revolts and contestations.

**Keywords:** Raciality and Ethnicity. Racially inert subject. Ethnic-Racial Relations in Brazil.

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# INTRODUCTION

> Yesterday Sierra Leone,
>  War, lion hunting,
> Sleep slept for nothing
> Under the tents of spaciousness!
> Today... the black basement, deep,
> Infected, tight, filthy,
> Having the plague as a jaguar...
>  And sleep always cut off
> For the snatching of a deceased,
> And the thud of a body into the sea...
> (...)
> There is a people that the flag borrows
> To cover so much infamy and cowardice...
> And let it turn into that party
> In an impure mantle of cold bacchante...
> Oh my god! Oh my god! but what a flag is this,
> How impudent in the crow's nest?
> Silence. Muse... Cry, and cry so much
> May the pavilion be washed in your tears...
> Auriverde tassel of my land,
> That the breeze of Brazil kisses and shakes,
> (CASTRO ALVES, Antônio Frederico de. The Slave Ship, 1883)

Pain, violence, suffering, torture. These were fundamental elements for the slavery model – which was used in Brazil for so many years – to be introduced and maintained, both in the colonial period (1500-1822) and during the Empire (1822-1889). In "The treatment of the living: formation of Brazil in the South Atlantic" (2000), Luiz Felipe Alencastro reports the arrival in Brazil of Father Pero Rodrigues (recognized as one of the best experts in the analysis of enslaved bodies), who at the behest of King Felipe II "formulates the paranoia of the colonizer. For him, the racial war leads the landlord to use violence as the engine of the economy, ratifying the relationship of domination and exploitation imposed on slaves" (ALENCASTRO, 2000, p. 68), since, through it, it would be possible to contain revolts and contestations.

The episode reported by Alencastro is included here because it brings important reflections to the debate on ethnic-racial relations that we propose, especially when compared to the poem "O Navio Negreiro" (1883), by Castro Alves, which begins this text. What the abolitionist poet brings us, tells us about life in Africa, about freedom, about the vision of those enslaved, who, when captured, start to have their lives transformed into a series of trials and suffering. If in Sierra Leone "Sleep [was] slept for nothing" (CASTRO ALVES, 1883/2015, n.d.), "Today... [in] the black, deep basement" (CASTRO ALVES, 1883/2015, n.d.), sleep is now "always cut off / By the snatch of a deceased / And the thud of a body to the sea..." (CASTRO ALVES, 1883/2015, s/n). On the other hand, when we

become aware of Alencastro's account, we can perceive the vision of the colonizers who, responsible for inflicting so much suffering, still held those whom they subjugated responsible for the treatment they gave them, since, being "endowed with an insurrectional consanguinity" (ALENCASTRO, 2000, p. 68), the use of violence was justified as a measure to maintain order in the Portuguese territories. Another element can also be perceived in Alencastro's text, as a line of flight (DELEUZE, 1996) that mobilizes and creates other possibilities. If, on the one hand, we see the use of physical and symbolic violence by the "slave masters", on the other hand, we can see that even though shackles could bind enslaved bodies, resistance was always present. Therefore, there was no "power relationship without resistance, without escape or escape" (FOUCAULT, 1995, p. 248), there were countless "escapes, revolts, murders [of slave masters], abortions caused by black pregnant women, suicides" (SILVEIRA; GODOI, 2018, p. 120).

Resistance, taken as "an element of the functioning of power and a source of perpetual disorder" (RABINOW; DREYFUS, 1995, p. 162), authorized, on the one hand, that power be entangled in the social body through precise practices such as, for example, the indigenist policy, which was weakened by the guidelines of Father Pero Rodrigues, and was modified, giving rise to a new guideline, in which "'tame Indians', herded in the settlements, began to be fixed along the settlement areas to stop the escape of blacks and prevent the emergence of mocambos" (ALENCASTRO, 2000, p. 68) and, on the other hand, the possibility of breaking with power, which in the final act of suicide, for example, stated: I will not be "governed *in this way*, therefore, in the name of these principles, in view of such objectives and by means of such procedures, not in this way, not for this, not by them" (FOUCAULT, 1978, p. 15).

And so the years follow... sixteenth centuries... XIX... XXI... and the problem of ethnic-racial relations in Brazil has been acquiring new clothes without, however, modifying its core: the asymmetry of the relations between those who are read and read socially as white people and those who are read and read as non-white people[3]. Even today, there are countless episodes of racism that we experience, we see reported in newspapers and social networks and we carry in our memory. How can we forget Evaldo Rosa dos Santos, who had his car shot at in a police operation by rifle shots, on a Sunday morning, on his

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[3] In this article, we have chosen to use the terms "white" and "non-white" as a way of reinforcing the functioning of the *raciality-ethnicity device* that will be described in this text.

way to a "baby shower" and Luciano Macedo, who died trying to help Evaldo's family[4]? Or erase from the memory that the life of João Alberto Silveira Freitas was taken by two security guards of a supermarket, who raped him with kicks and kicks to death by asphyxiation, on the eve of the day we celebrate "Black Consciousness Day"[5]? Even today, it is shocking that these and so many other lives were taken, based on a single point in common: the color of their skin.

In an analysis of the Atlas of Violence 2021[6], the first sentence of the chapter dedicated to dealing with violence against black people in 2019 states that "the intense concentration of a racial bias among violent deaths that occurred in Brazil was not a novelty or even a recent phenomenon" (CERQUEIRA ET AL., 2021, p. 49), also reporting that the phenomenon has occurred at least since the 1980s, "when homicide rates began to grow in the country" (CERQUEIRA ET AL., 2021, p. 49), with the youngest portion of the black population being the most murdered in the country since then (CERQUEIRA ET AL., 2021). From there, another question arises: if there is nothing new and if this is not a recent phenomenon, why is it possible that it continues to exist and present such blatant data[7]?

There can be many answers to this and other questions about ethnic-racial relations in Brazil. However, the hypothesis presented in this article is that there is a *raciality-ethnicity device* that has been operating in Brazil since the arrival of the Portuguese in America and operates to maintain the asymmetry in the power-knowledge relations that involve ethnic-racial relations. We argue that the ethnic-racial violence described in these pages is used as one of the practices for the functioning of this device, but not the only or the main one, because in the entanglements that the *raciality-ethnicity device* traces, one of the main characteristics is precisely to hide, to act in such a way that its presence is not noticed or questioned. We understand that in Castro Alves' slave ship or in the documents analyzed by Alencastro, violence seems to be the most used procedure in ethnic-racial relations at the time, leaving no room for other ways of relating to the other. However, it

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[4]Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/cotidiano/2019/04/militares-do-exercito-matam-musico-em-abordagem-na-zona-oeste-do-rio.shtml>. Last accessed on: May 02, 2020.

[5] Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/rs/rio-grande-do-sul/noticia/2020/11/20/homem-negro-e-espancado-ate-a-morte-em-supermercado-do-grupo-carrefour-em-porto-alegre.ghtml>

[6] The Atlas of Violence 2021 is a survey carried out by the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA), by the Brazilian Forum on Public Security in partnership with the Jones dos Santos Neves Institute (IJSN), which uses the crossing of data from the Mortality Information System (SIM) and the Notifiable Diseases Information System (Sinan) of the Ministry of Health to build the document (CERQUEIRA ET AL, 2021)

[7] The report also points out, for example, that, in 2019, black people accounted for 77% of homicide victims in the country, and the chance of a black person being killed is 2.6 times greater than a non-black person (CERQUEIRA ET AL., 2021, p.49)

seems clear to us that such a procedure could not completely accomplish its objective, since not all enslaved people remained captive or obedient to their executioners. In this sense, we bring in this article, two moments that we consider important to understand the nuances of these relationships. Thus, in the first topic, we will demonstrate how the raciality device was constituted within the slave universe, remodeling itself over the centuries in order to maintain itself governing bodies and behaviors, and in the second topic, we will present elements that made possible the emergence of the *raciality-ethnicity device*, outlining possibilities for its current functioning.

## EMERGENCE OF THE *RACIALITY-ETHNICITY DEVICE* IN BRAZILIAN POWER-KNOWLEDGE RELATIONS*:* FROM MICHEL FOUCAULT TO SUELI CARNEIRO

In "History of Sexuality 1: The Will to Know" (1976), Foucault tells us that one of the emblems of our society is "that of the sex that speaks. Of the sex that can be surprised and questioned and that, contracted and fickle at the same time, responds uninterruptedly. [Of sex that] It was, one day, captured by a certain mechanism, quite fey to the point of becoming invisible" (FOUCAULT, 2019, p. 85), demonstrating how sex was scrutinized by a field of rationality that, taking bodies as a whole, was able to produce a "*Logic of sex*" (FOUCAULT, 2019, p. 86) as a universal key to "knowing who we are" (FOUCAULT, 2019, p. 86)  2019, p. 86). From this excerpt, we seek to do the exercise of replacing the term "sex" with the terms "race and ethnicity" and what we realize in the end, safeguarding the due proportions, is that just like sex, race and ethnicity are also captured by a mechanism similar to what Foucault tells us. Two concepts that, often intersected with other issues, such as the issue of social class, are made invisible in social functioning, but that constitute our daily life being uninterruptedly interrogated and questioned incessantly as well. Like sex, they are also taken by a device, which sometimes places them under strong scrutiny and sometimes makes them invisible, in order to maintain the asymmetry of power-knowledge relations between those who consider themselves white and those who, based on this reference, come to be read as non-white.

The device is defined by Foucault as "a decidedly heterogeneous set that encompasses discourses, institutions, architectural organizations, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements (...) In short, what is said and what is not said" (FOUCAULT, 2016, p. 364) set in motion by a network of relationships, in order to "respond to an urgency" (FOUCAULT, 2016, p. 365) that emerges in a "certain historical

moment" (FOUCAULT, 2016, p. 365). In addition to this "strategic function" (FOUCAULT, 2016, p. 365), another fundamental characteristic, pointed out by Foucault, is that the device goes through a process of perpetual *strategic fulfillment*" (FOUCAULT, 2016, p. 365), that is, in the face of the urgency that arises, the device, as a material operator of power (REVEL, 2005), needs to adapt, reformulate itself, produce remodeling capable of containing the contingencies and questions that are made of it.

However, to the extent that their elements intersect, question each other, to the extent that the device itself comes into contact with other devices, the instabilities produced in the contact make it possible for "[a]ny device [to] have, its regime of light, [and that, by] the way in which it falls, it vanishes, diffuses itself by distributing the visible and the invisible,  [makes] the object that does not exist without it be born or disappeared" (DELEUZE, 1996, n.n.). Thus, if there are in this mechanism "lines of sedimentation (...), there are also lines of 'fissure', of 'fracture'" (DELEUZE, 1996, n.n.), because, as Foucault tells us, "where there is power there is resistance" (FOUCAULT, 2019, p. 104). In this way, the device "while exposing a set of power relations, is not a place, but a 'non-place': it is a place only for mutations" (DELEUZE, 2019, p. 86), as it has a series of practices and mechanisms that, when intersecting in power-knowledge relations, can produce constant "changes of position, modifications of functions" (FOUCAULT,  2016, p. 364) causing both imbalances in its structure, as well as forms of accommodation and relocation of this device socially.

Like a machine "to make the subject that emerges from it see and to make speak" (DELEUZE, 1996, n.n.), the device "is always inscribed in a game of power, but is always, however, linked to one or more configurations of knowledge that are born from it, but that also condition it" (FOUCAULT, 2016, p. 367).[8] From the "relationship between individuals as living beings and the historical element" (AGAMBEN, 2005, p. 11), it needs to institute concrete practices in order to produce a specific configuration between knowledge and power for the immanence of its desired subject (WEINMANN, 2006). Since "the subject does not 'exist': he is what we make of him" (SILVA, 1998, p. 10), the exercise of power needs to "operate[r] on the field of possibility where the behavior of active subjects is inscribed" (FOUCAULT, 1995, p. 243), it needs to "'conduct conducts' and order probability

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[8] From this premise, we understand that knowledge and power always intersect, from the most intimate relationships to those that occur in the highest political spheres of our society. Therefore, in this article, we have chosen to always use the term "power-knowledge relationship" as a way of marking this position in relation to what is discussed here.

(...) structuring the eventual field of action of others" (FOUCAULT, 1995, p. 244) in order to arouse the acceptance of those inserted in it.

However, if, on the one hand, the heterogeneity of the elements that constitute a device makes it possible for it to carry out the most diverse displacements in order to govern the conduct of the entire population, on the other hand, it is through this same heterogeneity that the constitution of new subjectivities becomes possible, since, through the encounters, shocks and clashes that permeate the elements of the device, it becomes possible to "constitute other ways of life" (PARAÍSO, 2010, p. 588). For this to occur, "anything that can acquire authority: injunctions, advice, techniques, small habits of thought and emotion, a series of routines of norms of a human being" (ROSE, 2001, p. 50), can become an agent for other modes of subjectivation to be carried out. Seen, then, as "a political investment of the body" (GONÇALVES, 2010, p. 107), there is in the device a "mutant becoming" (DELEUZE, 2019, p. 88) that mobilizes forces and constitutes practices for the conformity of bodies, but which also produces fissures in its own composition and allows various modes of subjectivation to be possible.

Therefore, in order for the relations of power-knowledge to function in a device, it is essential that the individuals involved in them be "'free subjects', as 'free'"[9] (FOUCAULT, 1995, p. 244), because only in this condition is it possible to act and react to a field of possibilities posed. For Foucault, for example, "slavery is not a relationship of power, because man is chained (it is then a physical relationship of coercion)" (FOUCAULT, 1995, p. 244), restricted in his actions. What occurs there is, therefore, a relationship of violence that transforms the enslaved subject into an object and, therefore, is justified, since it acts, "on things; it forces, it subdues, it breaks, it destroys; (...) and if it encounters resistance, the only choice is to try to reduce it" (FOUCAULT, 1995, p. 243). In this sense, it is also possible to affirm that, without the process of subjectivation, the device would not function as an operator of the government of conducts, being only "a mere exercise of violence" (AGAMBEN, 2005, p. 14).

Violence that transformed slave ships into stages for pain, making the quarterdecks "a Dantesque dream [...] / That from the lucerne reddens the brightness / In blood to bathe / Tinkle of irons... crack of a whip..." (CASTRO ALVES, 1883/2015, s/n); that remains for

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[9] Foucault also adds: "by this we mean individual or collective subjects who have before them a field of possibilities where different behaviors, different reactions and different modes of behavior can happen" (FOUCAULT, 1995, p. 244)

the centuries of our history, but that reinvents itself, that marks bodies and that constitutes, in the end, the ultimate resource of the *raciality-ethnicity device* in an attempt to contain the resistances that emerge from it, when no other form of government works. Violence experienced and reported daily; violence that is not limited only to the years of kidnapping and enslavement of African peoples, but that affects the physical body of people who are read as black and is not restricted to the flesh, but also affects all spheres of life by promoting cultural whitening, by imposing an aesthetics of whiteness, by transforming religions into folklore,  by stimulating the whitening of race (NASCIMENTO, 2016), by seeking to disavow and make invisible ways of life seen as inadequate by the *raciality-ethnicity device*.

In this process, there is in the production of this inadequacy a "will to inherence", an attempt to naturalize what was constructed "piece by piece from figures that were foreign to it" (FOUCAULT, 2016, p. 58). In this regard, Achille Mbembe argues that the creation of the "black noun" (MBEMBE, 2018, p. 55) enabled the formation of an "objectified existence" (MBEMBE, 2018, p. 29) of African peoples, thus constituting an identity over those whose skin has more melanin, which makes them prisoners of a vicious circle in which, through the gaze of those who declare themselves white,  the figure of the black being is created (MBEMBE, 2020). This figure is essentialized, fixed, created by white men for white men (CARNEIRO, 2005; MBEMBE, 2020). In this game, the black-form is created and it is expected that those for whom it is intended correspond to the imaginary created by the whites.

And so, in favor of identity, enclosures multiply (MBEMBE, 2020), because the "threat of blacks taking the place of whites" (GUIMARÃES, 2003, p. 102) seems real and even authorized and disseminated in the legal field when, for example, affirmative action policies are put into effect and blacks start to access places previously frequented mostly by those who consider themselves white[10] . The problem that arises, according to Mbembe, is that, at the same time that this identity is created externally, those for whom it is intended become objects of fear for those who created it, "not because of what [they] did

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[10] In this regard, see: "Ten reasons to be against racial quotas". Available at: < https://exame.com/blog/instituto-millenium/dez-motivos-para-ser-contra-as-cotas-raciais/>. Accessed on 15 Jan. 2022; and "Racism of blacks against whites gains strength with identitarianism". Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima/2022/01/racismo-de-negros-contra-brancos-ganha-forca-com-identitarismo.shtml>. Accessed on 15 Jan. 2022

to them, nor because of what [they] did to [them] and what [they] think we could do [them] in return" (MBEMBE, 2020, p. 135).

But "where the soul intends to unify, where the Self invents for itself an identity or a coherence" (FOUCAULT, 2016, p.62), we can also find the "discord between things, [...] the nonsense" (FOUCAULT, 2016, p. 59) that creates and makes the power-knowledge relations that constitute the *raciality-ethnicity device* function. History teaches us, then, to "laugh at the solemnities of origin" (FOUCAULT, 2016, p. 59), to seek "in a good historical method, the meticulous and unconfessable smallness of these fabrications" (FOUCAULT, 2013, p. 25) because "the body: surface of inscription of events" (FOUCAULT, 2016, p. 65), produced in power-knowledge relations, is "formed by a series of regimes that construct it; it is torn apart by rhythms of work, rest and celebration; he is intoxicated by poisons – food or values, eating habits and moral laws simultaneously; it creates resistances" (FOUCAULT, 2016, p. 72). We are then guided by an "effective history" (FOUCAULT, 2016, p. 72), not to find a primary origin, but to seek in historical events, elements that can help in understanding the functioning of the *raciality-ethnicity device*.

In the production of this device, the racial dimension becomes central to the extent that, through it, a truth about bodies has been shaped in Brazilian society since the beginning of colonization. The black body is produced within the *device of raciality-ethnicity*, not as a racial reference to be reached, but so that the white man can say what he is not (FOUCAULT, 1978): he is not violent, he is not ugly, he is not bad, he is not poor... because he is not black (FANON, 2008; MBEMBE, 2018). What he does not realize is that, in the process of production of the black subject, he also becomes "in many ways, a fantasy of the European imagination that the West has striven to naturalize and universalize" (MBEMBE, 2018, p. 88) that through this process forms a "duality between positive and negative, with the color of the [white] skin as the identifying factor of the normal" (CARNEIRO, 2005, p. 42). However, if for Carneiro, the production of the Other needs to be in terms of inferiority, in a Foucaultian analysis, it is possible to affirm that, even if the power-knowledge relations produced by this device demonstrate a strong asymmetry in the exercise of power, the black subject and the white subject must be understood as complementary forces that intersect,  they question and produce each other, even if the latter is produced precisely in the denial of its existence as a racialized subject, as the singer-songwriter Emicida reminds us in his song Ismália (2019) when he says "It is

the disunity of blacks with the shrewd vision / Of those who have everything, except color, where color matters too much".

The emergence of the raciality device in Brazil, according to Carneiro, occurred during the colonization process, when this production of the Other as inferior becomes an important economic instrument (CARNEIRO, 2005) for the construction of a society in a land condemned to "civilization".[11] At that time, the search for precious metals, the desire for expansion of the Portuguese National State (in order to consolidate its sovereignty) and the contribution of the Catholic Church – which, in the midst of denunciations of simony and Nicolaitanism, sought to consolidate the support of its devotees and manage to raise as many as possible in order to demonstrate its strength in the face of any contestation –, found on Brazilian soil fertile ground for the consolidation of a power device that transformed their "human status (...)[in] synonym of whiteness" (CARNEIRO, 2005, p. 43).

However, if European thought has produced a "black reason",[12] when enslaved Africans discover themselves black, the power game that is installed causes the device of raciality to shift, which needs to operate a new strategic fulfillment. Between escapes, revolts and all kinds of resistance, new knowledge about blacks begins to emerge to try to account for the instabilities produced in the device of raciality. Thus, the encounter between the bases of colonialism in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the scientism proposed by the Enlightenment in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the "affirmation of the bourgeoisie as a hegemonic class" (CARNEIRO, 2005, p. 42) allowed the remodeling of the device of raciality from the eighteenth century onwards.[13]  2015, p. 95) – that is, the possibility, even if remote, that an enslaved person would no longer be the property of

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[11] In "Critique of Black Reason" (2018), Achille Mbembe is surgical in detailing the civilizing mission destined for the white man. He tells us that between those who claimed that black people were like animals that "'isolated and unsociable, who in their hatred fight each other to the death', [who] slaughter and destroy themselves" (MBEMBE, 2018, p. 30) and those who "were more charitable, admitted that such creatures were not entirely devoid of humanity" (MBEMBE, 2018, p. 30), there was the possibility of helping and protecting them through the "colonial enterprise,  a fundamentally 'civilizing' and 'humanitarian' work, whose corollary of violence was if not moral" (MBEMBE, 2018, p.31). By using the term civilization in quotation marks, we intend, therefore, to demarcate how in the discursive field the civilizing mission was disguised as charity, but on the other hand, in order to function, it exploited raw materials, labor and, when contested, used violence as a way to maintain its domination.

[12] According to Mbembe (2018), "black reason consists, therefore, of a set of voices, utterances and discourses, of knowledge, comments and nonsense, whose object is things or people 'of African origin' and what is claimed to be their name and their truth (their attributes and qualities, their destiny and their meanings as an empirical segment of the world" (MBEMBE,  2018, p. 60)

[13] In this regard, see more in: PAIVA, Eduardo França. For the fair value and for the love of God: manumission in Minas Gerais. In: PAIVA, Eduardo Paiva. **Slavery and cultural universe in the Colony: Minas Gerais, 1716-1789**. Belo Horizonte: Editora UFMG, 2001.

another – makes the theological argument[14], previously used to justify the enslavement of Africans by other nations, begin to be problematized and questioned. In a scenario of contestation of one of the main elements that made up the device of raciality, the emergence of racial theories in the nineteenth century plays an important role in the strategic fulfillment of the device in question. As Kabengele Munanga states, a new paradigm was established in this period, since "there was a shift from a type of explanation in which God and free will constitute the central axis of the division of human history, to a new type, in which Biology [...] is erected in racial determinism and becomes the key to human history" (MUNANGA, 2003, n.n.). Anchored in a "scientific rationality", by transforming external and phenotypic attributes into elements for the definition of the morality of peoples (SCHWARCZ, 2012), social Darwinists were able to transform their models into "effective instruments for judging peoples and cultures based on deterministic criteria" (SCHWARCZ, 2012, p. 20), in an attempt to "'naturalize' differences and make political and historical issues 'unquestionable' data of biology itself" (SCHWARCZ, 2012). 2012, p. 20).

If, at first, its main objective was the production of a racialized subject – that is, "non-white" – capable of being transformed into an instrument of extraction and exploitation authorized to whom, through commercial transactions, it belonged, from the nineteenth century, when the argument of an inferiority prophesied in the biblical text no longer holds water, the device of raciality undergoes a new recalibration in order to guarantee its rule over the population that here Lived. To this end, it outlines as a new objective to produce a racialized subject through scientific knowledge and no longer through religion. An enormous production of knowledge, discourses and utterances is intended for this racialized subject, in order to "scientifically" prove the incompatibility between whites and non-whites coexisting on equal levels in an aristocratic society such as the Brazilian one (SCHWARCZ, 2001).

Between displacements and accommodations, the raciality device remained in operation during the following years, benefiting, mainly, from the various representations of the black subject (CARNEIRO, 2005), based on the power-knowledge relations that enabled the racialization of all those who were considered non-white. Thus, if during the

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[14] In addition to the profits obtained by the Church through the slave trade, the theological argument based on "Sacred Scripture" speaks of a curse cast by Noah on his son Ham and all his descendants, which at that time is conveniently interpreted as being the peoples of African origin. See: Bible, Book of Genesis, chapter 9, verses 20-27.

nineteenth century, biology was operationalized to justify a hierarchy considered "natural" between societies and human populations, after the Second World War (1939-1945), a desire to erase the concept flourished in scientific circles, as a measure considered important, both to prevent the barbarism committed by the Nazi State from becoming possible again,  as an attempt to seek solutions capable of putting an end to racism (SCHWARCZ, 2001, 2012; GUIMARÃES, 2008, 2011).

In this sense, from the 1940s onwards, especially in the scientific-biological field, it was understood that "the construction based on physiognomic traits, phenotype or genotype, is something that does not have the slightest scientific support" (GUIMARÃES, 2008, p. 65) and, therefore, the "banishment of the term race from the scientific, political and social vocabulary" became completely justifiable (GUIMARÃES,  2011, p. 265), in the social, political and economic fields, this first attempt to reverse the effects caused by the concept of race is not lasting. Again, fulfilling its strategic function, the gap left by the strength of the concept of "race" is filled by the concept of "ethnicity", which brought with it a less corporeal conception and introduced a more cultural issue. However, if on the one hand, there were "free subjects" producing tireless efforts to overcome the racial conception, on the other hand, there were also "free subjects" who acted so that the notion of race would not be erased.

Among the possible uses of one and/or another concept, the game of power-knowledge relations put into operation the production of discourses and knowledge in order to produce a certain truth about this new racialized subject produced in the intersections of the device. The term race then returns to the current language, being reinserted, even, in the research carried out by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) in the 1990s (GUIMARÃES, 2011), demonstrating the plasticity of the racial device. Antônio Sérgio Alfredo Guimarães states in his research that "the term [race] had not completely disappeared, going through more of a submersion than a disappearance" (GUIMARÃES, 2011, p.266) both for more "bureaucratic" reasons – such as the replacement of the term race by color or ethnicity, although both conceptually referred to the meaning of race (GUIMARÃES, 2011) – and, mainly,  through "a political strategy [used by social movements] to include, not to exclude, to claim and not to subject" (GUIMARÃES, 2011, p. 266). Race, as a social classifier, then comes to be understood as an effect of the most diverse discourses (GUIMARÃES, 2008), serving as a marker both in anti-racist

movements and in those that operate with the objective of perpetuating racism (GUIMARÃES, 2011).

According to the researcher, this resumption of the use of the term race, far from being a spontaneous movement, emerged in the discursive field again, because it provided "strategic advantages" (GUIMARÃES, 2011, p. 266) to those who insisted on its use, since the notion of race would refer "immediately to a history of oppression, dehumanization and opprobrium to which conquered peoples were subjected" (GUIMARÃES, 2011, p. 266). Likewise, the use of the term ethnicity served different interests, since, understood as "a set of individuals who, historically or mythologically, have a common ancestor; they have a common language, the same religion or worldview; the same culture and live geographically in the same territory" (MUNANGA, 2003, n.n.), made it possible, to a large extent, for the discourse on oppression and violence to be softened, to the extent that it generalized the conflicts produced by power-knowledge relations, reducing the focus of what was lived directly in the flesh of those considered non-white.

In this encounter between race and ethnicity for the production of a truth about the racialized subject, we understand that the raciality device proposed by Carneiro (2005) brings enormous contributions to the understanding of ethnic-racial relations in the Brazilian scenario, but does not reach its full power, to the extent that power-knowledge relations produced by this encounter can be lost in the terrain of discursiveness. Therefore, it comes to be taken here as inspiration to construct what we understand to be the *device of raciality-ethnicity*, but – perhaps because we are also endowed with an "insurrectional consanguinity" (ALENCASTRO, 2000, p. 68) – we separate ourselves from it to continue following other lines traced by and in the device.

## THE CONSTITUTION OF THE *DEVICE OF RACIALITY-AND ETHNICITY* IN THE BRAZILIAN RELATIONS OF POWER-KNOWLEDGE

The problem of ethnic-racial relations has increasingly taken over the agendas of academic debate and the screens of televisions, tablets and smartphones. Generally, under the sign of violence, we see people socially read as white feeling uncomfortable when invited to talk or hear about race and ethnicity. The uncertainty of a full and final conceptualization of the two terms also leads to a series of misunderstandings about their meanings. However, if the polysemy brought by the concepts of race and ethnicity can sometimes frighten and cloud a possible understanding, on the other hand, this same

polysemy allows us to create, invent, produce other ways of life and problematize the sayings that circulate in our society about the relations that are constituted by them.

When the device of raciality questions us, we can see possibilities of thinking about how the conception of race conforms our own reality to our horizon. However, if the elements of a device are heterogeneous and, if, for this same reason, the intersections that occur in these encounters bring so much power to our power-knowledge relations, it is not possible for us to abandon the concept of ethnicity, since lives are also lost and many others produced by it. We understand that race and ethnicity constitute a fundamental duality of our relations, not because they function in a binarism that names positivities and negativities, but because they merge, complement each other and feed each other, and it is not possible, in Brazil, for them to be treated separately. Therefore, we are gradually distancing ourselves from the device of raciality to find in its fissures and mutations, what we call the *device of raciality-ethnicity*, not only to promote a lexical change, but, mainly, because we believe that there is in its constitution and in its way of governing conducts, other elements of investigation, another look at the issue of current ethnic-racial relations. In this sense, this device does not intend to abandon the historicity of the concept of race, but is not restricted to the marks of the body, taking the cultural issue as an important pillar of our relationships; he understands the concepts of raciality and ethnicity as complementary forces and, therefore, places them united by a hyphen, as if he wanted to tell us: "you cannot separate us; we walk together" and; it seeks to capture and fix race and ethnicity in its entanglements of power, but does not deny that they not only speak to us (FOUCAULT, 2019), but shout for our attention, and it is not possible to ignore them or even immobilize them, no matter what efforts may be made.

From this conception and understanding that "social practices can come to engender domains of knowledge that not only make new objects appear (...), but also give birth to totally new forms of subjects" (FOUCAULT, 2013, p. 18), it becomes possible to identify the emergence of the *raciality-ethnicity device* in the 1930s, when a radical change in the way the issue of miscegenation began to be treated in the country. Guided by racial theories widely disseminated in Europe in the nineteenth century, "Brazil had long been understood as a 'racial laboratory'" (SCHWARCZ, 2001, p. 25), leaving no room for doubt that it was a miscegenated country. Previously treated as a factor of race degeneration, miscegenation began to be understood, especially from the beginning of the Getúlio Vargas government (1930), as a solution for the construction of a nationalist project and "anti-

racialism [then became] one of the founding ideologies of this nation" (GUIMARÃES, 2003, p. 100), constituting an important practice for the *raciality-ethnicity* devicewas effectively put into practice in Brazilian society.

Lilia Moritz Schwarz (2001) states that "imbued with an encouraging perspective, authors such as Gilberto Freyre and Donald Pierson, associated with the cultural policy of the Estado Novo, will draw an unusual version of the same nation" (SCHWARCZ, 2001, p. 27) justified by the notion that we would be a multicultural society and, therefore, we would all bear the marks of miscegenation (SCHWARCZ, 2001). Seen as "synonymous with tolerance" (SCHWARCZ, 2001, p. 28), the idea of miscegenation "allowed for the naturalization of social, political and cultural differences" (SCHWARCZ, 2001, p. 26). However, if in the theoretical field, there seemed to be a true "racial democracy" in Brazil,[15] in everyday relations racial inequalities and racist practices continued to be present in the lives of those identified as non-white.

In this way, we see Brazil becoming a "model of racial coexistence" (SCHWARCZ, 2001, p. 32) and attracting the interest of several countries in an attempt to understand, not only how it would have been possible to have become "a neutral case in the manifestation of racial prejudice" (SCHWARCZ, 2001, p. 33), but also to use it as a model to be followed by "nations,  whose relations were less 'democratic'" (SCHWARCZ, 2001, p. 33). While various elements were being mobilized to consolidate this practice and, consequently, the *raciality-ethnicity device*, other discursive fields were formed in an attempt to contain this idyllic idea that hovered over Brazil. Thus, research, academic discussions and conferences began to question the presence of a racial democracy in Brazil, denouncing the existence of racial prejudice among Brazilians, even though, at that time, they were identified and treated as individual and isolated cases (GUIMARÃES, 2011; SCHWARCZ, 2012).

The concept of ethnicity then began to be mobilized more strongly among academic, political and legal circles, but it was only from the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s that the notion of race based on biological criteria began to be effectively questioned (MUNANGA, 2003) and "'under the cover of race' considerations of a cultural order were introduced,  to the extent that beliefs and values were associated with the notion"

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[15] "Racial democracy" would be a state in which there would be full legal, political, and social equality among individuals, regardless of their race. (FREYRE, 1933; FERNANDES, 1965; BASTIDES and FERNANDES, 2013; RIBEIRO, 2014)

(SCHWARCZ, 2012, p. 33). The concept is then no longer considered as something natural and begins to be problematized as a "negative attitude towards certain groups" (SCHWARCS, 2012, p. 33).

However, if, on the one hand, this racism of "scientific" origin begins to be problematized, on the other hand, forms derived from its procedures begin to gain strength in the most diverse environments, affecting women, the LGBTQ+ community, the poor, gypsies, and many others, without ever ceasing to affect the black population, based on the conceptions of ethnicity to perpetuate itself. At this point, we see the emergence of an important practice of the *raciality-ethnicity device*: "the becoming-black of the world" (MBEMBE, 2018, p. 20).

In this practice, the objectification of the subject occurs through what Foucault called "divisive practices" (FOUCAULT in DREYFUS, RABINOW, 1995, p. 231), that is, the division of the subject into his own "interior and in relation to others" (FOUCAULT in DREYFUS, RABINOW, 1995, p. 231). In this sense, the "becoming-black of the world" would take place through a "racism by analogy or metaphorization, resulting from the biologization of a set of individuals belonging to the same social category" (MUNANGA, 2003, n.n.). In this regard, Achille Mbembe (2018) states that we see "for the first time in human history, the noun black no longer refers only to the condition attributed to peoples of African origin during the time of the first capitalism" (MBEMBE, 2018, p. 19-20) to be conferred on all those groups and individuals who are seen as liable to suffer "predations of all kinds [and/or] destitution of any possibility of self-determination" (MBEMBE, 2018, p. 20).

When aspects such as religion and culture begin to be instrumentalized in the relations of power-knowledge, adding to the racial character another element of confrontation, we see the *device of raciality-ethnicity* achieve one of its main objectives: the production of continuous practices of racialization *of the Other* – here understood as all those considered non-white – in order to maintain the asymmetry of these established power-knowledge relations in our society since the colonial period. It is worth noting that, as Guimarães (2016) states, "when one racializes another, one is at the same time racializing oneself" (GUIMARÃES, 2016, p. 165), after all, when saying about the other, when classifying him/her, when hierarchizing his/her existence, the one who names him/her, also says about him/herself, in an attempt to distance or get closer to the figure he/she analyzes. However, the reciprocity in question does not work that way. Constituted

to maintain the asymmetry of power-knowledge relations, the *raciality-ethnicity device* as a concrete operator of power, uses a series of practices so that when an individual is racialized, the counterpart of racialization, it does not receive prominence in these operations of power, since those who read themselves and are read as white do not understand themselves as racialized subjects.

We can identify as another practice at work in the *raciality-ethnicity device,* what Lourenço Cardoso (2017) conceptualizes in the theoretical field as "whiteness". Understood by the author as "an ideological construct, in which white people see themselves and classify non-whites from their point of view" (CARDOSO, 2017, p. 27), whiteness would be a "racially marked identity, [which] the white individual is given the [exclusive] power to evidence or not" (CARDOSO, 2017, p. 30) according to his own interest. In this scenario, it is possible to understand that the silencing of white raciality operates intentionally, taking advantage of the fissures that can be produced in the device to maintain itself exercising more power within the power-knowledge relations involved in ethnic-racial relations.

Racism appears, in this context, as another fundamental practice of the *raciality-ethnicity device*, because, as a "fundamental mechanism of power" (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 214), it is when it is inserted in the discourse of power that "a way of lagging, within the population, some groups in relation to others" (FOUCALT, 2014, p. 214) becomes possible. It becomes useful to the government of individuals and populations, because, according to Foucault, "racism will allow me to establish, between my life and the death of the other, a relationship that is not a military and warlike relationship of confrontation, but a relationship of the biological type" (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 215), which through evolutionism not only transcribes "in biological terms, the political discourse" (FOUCAULT, 2010, p. 216) how, through its scientific character, it begins to organize all relations (FOUCAULT, 2010). However, Foucault points out that the specificity of modern racism consists in the fact that it "is not linked to mentalities, ideologies, lies of power. It is linked to the technique of power, to a technology of power" (FOUCAULT, 2010, p.217) in which "the old sovereign right, the modern mechanisms of biopower and the discourse of race war are combined" (CASTRO, 2018, p. 108). In *the raciality-ethnicity device*, racism works, then, for the production and maintenance of asymmetries in power-knowledge relations and, to this end, it operates in various ways, shaping individuals and groups around ethnic-racial relations.

By depriving race of the scientific character conferred by it, instead of minimizing asymmetrical power relations between black and white people, what really happened is that this "cultural" race made it possible for other forms of racism to be established within the *device of raciality-ethnicity*. In this sense, Munanga (2003) argues that "the difficult thing is to annihilate fictitious races that surround our collective representations and imaginaries" (MUNANGA, 2003, n.d.), because, while "classical racism feeds on the notion of race, new racism feeds on the notion of ethnicity defined as a cultural group, a category that constitutes a lexical that is more acceptable than race" (MUNANGA, 2003, n.n.). Racism, as a practice of the *raciality-ethnicity device* , then allows whites and non-whites to understand their roles within Brazilian society and, in case of questioning, authorizes the use of violence as previously discussed.

But a device has a goal!

In the "economy of power" (FOUCAULT, 2008) the expenses that involve the constitution and maintenance of a device demand effort, commitment, strategy. Thus, the machinery articulated and put into operation in the *raciality-ethnicity device* intends to produce, not just any subject, but a subject who is capable of operating the practices made available to him, enabling the full functioning of the device. It is in this context, then, that we see the emergence of the *racially inert subject*, desired, but preferably not so desirous of understanding the gears that put the device in operation. To better understand and outline its characteristics, in the next topic we will present elements and techniques used for the production of this subject and possibilities for its action in the world.

## A SUBJECT FOR THE *RACIALITY-ETHNICITY DEVICE*: THE PRODUCTION OF THE *RACIALLY INERT SUBJECT* IN THE ENTANGLEMENTS OF POWER-KNOWLEDGE RELATIONS

The practices previously presented operate and blend together to allow the device to remain hidden but fully functioning. In these bonds that are formed between heterogeneous elements, the discourses "structure the functioning program of an institution or even mask a practice that remains mute or secondary in society" (SARGENTINI, 2015, p. 23). Thus, they produce and are produced so that the existence of the *raciality-ethnicity device* is not perceived and, consequently, questioned.

The device emerges, therefore, from the "network of discourses that sustain it" (SARGENTINI, 2015, p. 26) and which is formed by "regimes of truth, from which it is

inscribed in the social (...) promotes a separation between the true and the false" (FERNANDES, 2012, p. 68) and produces continuous practices of racialization of the other, to the extent that it allows the distinction between whites and non-whites in a perpetual game of light and shadow, which evokes (or not) white racial identity, to the extent that bringing it to the fore means advantages and/or privileges to those who belong to it.

Through them, we find the subject desired by the *device of raciality-ethnicity* under "historical and social determinations" (FERNANDES, 2012, p. 77) that conform to make the *racially inert subject appear*. Inserted in the machinery of power, this subject operates as one of the cogs that sets the device in motion and keeps it. However, there is in this subject a specificity that makes it necessary to have a constant rotation and cadences, because in this subject the principle of inertia needs to enter the economy of power so that the device does not collapse.

From this conception, we use the first law of Newtonian mechanics that says "[t]he whole body continues in its state of rest or uniform movement in a straight line, unless it is forced to change that state by forces imprinted on it" (NEWTON, 2016, p. 52) to delineate how the *racially inert subject* produces its existence in *the raciality-ethnicity* device from three possibilities: "at rest" or apathetically; "in uniform rectilinear motion" or in a cordial manner and; "by imprinted forces", that is, by resistance.

We then use *apathy*, inspired by the Stoic concept as a state in which there is "indifference to everything that happens" (AMORIM, 2018, p. 62), but diverging from it in the sense that in *the raciality-ethnicity device*, it is not a spiritual state to be achieved, but an operationalized technique to maintain stability in the functioning of the device. When inserted in ethnic-racial relations of power-knowledge, apathy produces in the *racially inert subject* a lack of knowledge about any point concerning the theme of ethnic-racial relations, but, taking precautions, it ensures that, even if ethnic-racial relations begin to be questioned, they are thought of as a problem that does not concern them, that belongs to others, more specifically to the State, that it has every responsibility to solve the problem and that, by not doing so, it becomes "criminalized unilaterally (...) [becoming] the origin of all evil and all corruption" (SOUZA, 2021, p. 241).

Transformed into a structure responsible for all social ills, the State also begins to exercise and manufacture "structural racism" which, defined by Sílvio Almeida in the book of the same name, which is the thesis that racism is a rule and not an exception in our relationships, that it permeates all spheres of human life, from the individual to the large

institutions, being much more rooted in the bowels of power than it may seem (ALMEIDA, 2018). In this regard, Jessé Souza (2021) also warns us about the risks of the indiscriminate use of such an expression, since, for Souza, "the mere reference to an indeterminate and empty 'structure' of content" (SOUZA, 2021, p. 46), would depoliticize the debate on racism (SOUZA, 2021), distancing it from everyday life, now being thought of as something impossible to be modified,  because it aims at "the main enemy" (FOUCAULT, 1995, p. 234), which seen as inaccessible, does not inspire any action in favor of modifying the device.

However, being in a "uniform rectilinear movement", the *racially inert subject* can act so that nothing changes. Thus, he uses cordiality, described by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, in the book "Raízes do Brasil" (1936). According to the author, "the cordial man" (HOLANDA, 2014), would bring with him "hospitality, generosity, virtues so praised by the foreigners who visit us, [which] represent, in fact, a defined trait of the Brazilian character, to the extent, at least, that the ancestral influence of the patterns of human coexistence remains active and fruitful" (HOLANDA, 2014, p. 176), which would make the subject of the *raciality-ethnicity* device was incapable of producing any attitude that could intentionally hurt the other people in his life. Souza contests this perspective, stating that "with his theory of the 'cordial' Brazilian people and the criminalization of the State" (SOUZA, 2021, p. 243), Holanda would have produced a multiculturalist thesis (SOUZA, 2021), which meets the ideals of those who exercise more power within the *device of raciality-ethnicity*, since it is based on a "false moralism of selective corruption" (SOUZA, 2021, p.243); a false moralism that allows at the same time that the *racially inert subject* "expresses and covers up the reproduction of privileges" (SOUZA, 2021, p. 245) of those who see and are seen as white. By analogy to the Newtonian principle, it is possible for us to understand that the operationalization of cordiality in ethnic-racial relations of power-knowledge aims to keep the "speed" of the device always the same, allowing us to have the sensation of movement, that displacements and fissures are being created, when in reality, we remain in a state of inertia.

We then return to the concepts "borrowed" from Newtonian physics for our analysis. In a very simplified way, according to what we know as the "Law of Action and Reaction" (also called Newton's 3rd Law), for each of our actions, there will always be a reaction (NEWTON, 2012). From this idea, we see the third and last possibility of action presented to the *racially inert subject appear,* which refers to the "imprinted forces" and resistance.

To do so, we also use the 2nd Law of Newtonian theory (also known as the Fundamental Principle of Dynamics), which states that when a force is applied to an object in uniform rectilinear motion, it ceases to have a constant velocity and starts to have variations in its state (NEWTON, 2012). Since this "imprinted force" is directly proportional to the acceleration of the object, we will take the Newtonian acceleration by analogy and call it resistance (in the Foucaultian sense) to help us understand how dynamics affect the *racially inert subject*. In a reformulation of the previous statement, it is possible to affirm that when resistance to the *raciality-ethnicity device* arises, it is forced to leave inertia and, thus, it becomes possible to see, for example, the emergence of social movements, which fight so that what we understand today as the privileges of white people can be transformed into a right of all, that is, modifying the legal apparatus whether in daily life, accessing places previously symbolically forbidden to non-whites, denouncing the racism they suffer, problematizing traditional and alternative media, etc. However, as the actions take place, it is also possible to see an intensification in relation to the reaction to these movements, culminating, many times, in the numerous cases of violence and death against the population socially read as black in our country.

In order for the machinery of the *raciality-ethnicity device* to remain in operation as a relation of power-knowledge, it is crucial, then, that two elements are present, according to Foucault: "that the other (the one on whom it is exercised) be recognized and maintained to the end as a subject of action; and that a whole field of possible responses, reactions, effects, inventions is opened up in the face of the power relationship" (FOUCAULT in DREYFUS, RABINOW, 1995, p. 243), otherwise, what is established is a "relationship of violence (...) [which, acting on bodies] forces, bends, breaks, destroys" (FOUCAULT in DREYFUS, RABINOW, 1995, p.243). With this in mind, Foucault also states that "there is no power relationship without resistance, without escape or escape, without eventual return" (FOUCAULT in DREYFUS, RABINOW, 1995, p.248), and therefore resistance is an inherent and necessary element in the power-knowledge relations of the *raciality-ethnicity device*, since it is through it that fractures and fissures are made possible for its constant process of accommodation and relocation.

It is, therefore, when the force of resistance reaches the *racially inert subject* that we can see its final act as a product of the machinery of power involved in ethnic-racial relations. Through his exposure to the asymmetries of these relations, the *racially inert subject* is able to mobilize all the practices mentioned above in order to maintain the

inequality of these relations, using, if he deems necessary, even physical violence and the extermination of the *racialized subject* or even detaching himself from all of them and producing another way of life for himself.

## "FREEDOM IS A CONSTANT STRUGGLE": SOME CONSIDERATIONS

The *raciality-ethnicity device* allows us, after all, to perceive how "knowledge [about race and ethnicity and their relations] was (...) invented" (FOUCAULT, 2013, p25). It demonstrates that there is no *subject a priori* and that its constitution is neither fixed nor endless, but that it takes place in the "very interior of history" (FOUCAULT, 2013, p. 20), since the device itself is formed by heterogeneous elements that meet to respond to a historical urgency (FOUCAULT, 2016:2019), whether they come together or not, questioning themselves, making temporary alliances, etc.

In the *raciality-ethnicity device,* it is possible to perceive that, even in the capture of race and ethnicity in their entanglements of power-knowledge, the *racially inert constituted subject* also brings as its own characteristic, the possibility of mutation, even if, in the face of this possibility, the device operates in order to promote a strategic fulfillment left by the fissures of resistance.

It is important to emphasize that "between the relationship of power and the strategy of struggle, there is reciprocal attraction, indefinite chaining and perpetual inversion" (FOUCAULT in DREYFUS, RABINOW, 1995, p. 248). Therefore, if nothing in the *raciality-ethnicity device* is fixed or immutable, it becomes possible to "promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this type of individuality that has been imposed on us for several centuries" (FOUCAULT in DREYFUS, RABINOW, 1995, p.240).

Although the *racially inert subject* is the final product expected by the machinery of the *raciality-ethnicity device*, there is no materiality of power that is capable of annulling or preventing relocations. As the device "is not the thing in itself, but an effect that its functioning can achieve" (FERNANDES, 2012, p. 68), during the production of its subject there is also the presence of escape, resistance, the production of other ways of life, reminding us that after all "freedom is [and always will be] a constant struggle" (DAVIS, 2018).

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