



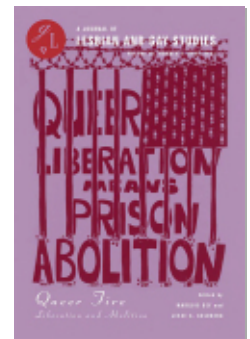
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NOTES ON THE (IM)POSSIBILITIES OF AN ANTI-COLONIAL QUEER ABOLITION OF THE (CARCERAL) WORLD

Alexandre Martins and Caia Maria Coelho

This world must be abolished. Anti-colonial, queer abolition is a project of ending the world as we know it (Silva 2007), structured through the categories of race, gender, sexuality, and class. From our Ladin Amefrican¹ formation, we reflect on the relationships and implications between queer movements, anti-colonial struggles, and abolitionist horizons.

World is here understood as a set of collectivities organized according to the colonial interests of imperialist societies (for example, in the division of South America between Europeans in the Treaty of Madrid). In this sense, this world is a colonial symbol of difference and hierarchy between man and his others (Wynter 2003). Since its beginning, the racial order (Silva 2007) has spread violence and punishment and imposed normative genders and sexualities, the only ones thought possible in this world. Rather than tackling the sense of collectivity in itself, we aim to dismantle the organization of collectivities as thought by colonialism. Abolishing the world means, therefore, reclaiming other meanings of collectivity.

Departing from this history of intertwined relationships between carceral, racial, sexual, and gender norms, we present, in the first section, the limits of the safety promised by the law and the criminal justice “cystem.”² In an analysis of contemporary LGBT strategies in Brazil, in the second section we critique a trend in LGBT politics that aligns itself with carcerality. In the third section, we argue for an anti-colonial, queer abolition of the (carceral) world as a set of practices and imaginaries beyond punishment, raciality, sexuality, and gender. We

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speculate toward other ways of making the world as a sharp critique of carceral LGBT politics. As building the end of carcerality and of the world as we know it requires imagining beyond the limits of this world's possibilities, in the last section we reflect on the production of other forms of life and politics beyond (colonial) humanity.

Brazilian Queers and the Penal System: A Genealogy

The limit is the (modern) World.

—Castiel Vitorino Brasileiro, *Ancestralidade Sodomita*

Espiritualidade Travesti

The limiting of possibilities of ways of living via restrictive taxonomies of these categories has been an essential function of colonialism from its beginning. Sexual colonization became possible through a kind of violent translation or, in Édouard Glissant's ([1990] 2010) terms, the reduction of the opacity of Indigenous peoples to Western globalizing transparency. In other words, when the density of a certain reality suffers a subtraction of its own matter, it becomes accessible. For example, the opacity of the *tibiras* Tupinambás in Brazil and the *kyrypy-meno* Guayaki in Paraguay was reduced to transparency; the *tibiras* and the *kyrypy-meno* were translated by Jesuit chroniclers and missionaries as sinful and diabolic sodomites and addicts and as such compulsorily introduced to colonial society. To dominate and exploit those lives, it was necessary, paradoxically, to make them possible to be understood within the Church's and European laws. Meanwhile, Indigenous peoples were forcibly incorporated, and, as they were redefined in unequal power relations, their self-enunciating opportunities were restricted.

On these Abya Yala lands invaded by the same colonizers who later named them Brazil, criminalization and punishment practices along the lines of gender, race, class, and sex (in embryonic form) landed with the Portuguese caravels. Since the first years of colonization, Jesuit missionaries sought to regulate Indigenous collectivity, evangelizing the Native peoples and teaching European values and paradigms against "nudity, polygamy, weddings between relatives, lust, sodomy" (Fernandes 2017: 79–80).

As anti-colonial feminism has shown, the imposition of a world structured through the mandates of (European) man and his norms of masculinity and femininity has led to the subjugation and annihilation of other relationships, sexual practices, and experiences that here existed (Wynter 2003; Lugones 2008; Rojas 2017). These violent processes were not only cultural, but brutally physical as

well. In *Existe Índio gay?* (2017), Estevão Rafael Fernandes reports, through Pietro Martire d'Anghiera's work "Decades of New World," the incident when, in 1513 Panama, the Spanish nobleman Casco Núñez de Balboa killed the brother of the Quaraca leader and forty of their companions for being "dressed as women."

The colonial process framed Native and Black peoples in general and their own constructions in particular as subhuman, irrational, savage, and, ultimately, as queer to the colonial world. It would be, thus, negligent to tell the stories of Brazilian queer struggles apart from a history of (im)possibilities imposed by a colonial world and its gendered, sexualized, racialized, and carceral forms.³ As Pedro Paulo Gomes Pereira (2019: 409) writes on the convergences of queer and decolonial analytics, "Queer bodies are constituted according to colonial difference. There is no way to separate abject bodies and dissident sexuality from geographic location, from language, from history, and from culture." Therefore, it is not possible to separate queer bodies from the project of destroying the forms of life of Indigenous and Black people in Latin America. Precisely when this world came into being, the other worlds ended, and the resistance and reimagining of other horizons were ignited.

In the colonial period (1500–1822), the violent process of colonization and "heterosexualization" far exceeded the purview of the Portuguese criminal law condemning to fire those whose practices could be framed as sodomy (Rojas 2017). However, sodomy—"highly sinful and heretical acts, offenses that encapsulated a host of nonprocreative sexual practices condemned by the Catholic Church" (Aidoo 2018: 31)—is a category particularly relevant to our exposure of colonial promises made by judicial institutions, represented by the Holy Inquisition for centuries. The real extension and enforcement of these anti-sodomy laws were always produced by gender, race, class, and sexual positions. Analyzing "confessions and denunciations" of enslaved men raped by their landlords, Lamonte Aidoo (2018: 33) states that "many slaves were aware of the severity of sin and thought that their confession might provide some sort of protection for themselves or punishment for their masters, but most were mistaken." Notwithstanding the low credibility of their narratives, victims of sexual violence relied on Christian dogma to seek punishment of the rapists by legal means, believing in the severity of the sin and that their report could also bring protection for themselves. However, "in the case of the rape of a male slave by his master, the sin accrued to the victim rather than the perpetrator" (36).

The Inquisition decreed that every Catholic had the obligation to report crimes against the Church. This created an atmosphere of distrust that permeated many areas of life in the colony, including sodomy practices, stimulating much

espionage and many reports (Aidoo 2018). Furthermore, a farmer accused of sodomy could lose one-third of his farm to his accuser. Sodomy laws also inaugurated tense historical relations between families and sinners/criminal sodomites, especially when sodomy was associated with *lèse-majesté*, which condemned descendants of several generations to infamy and banishment from public office.

In addition to sodomy laws, multiple forms of extermination of other possibilities of subjectivity and relationships that flourished in the Americas (Perra 2014) were daily reproduced. Diffuse practices of policing gender and sex encompassed many informal and privatized ways of punishing dissident practices. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the Portuguese crown published a set of laws called the “Directory of Indians,” which created sexually segregated schools, instituted the use of Portuguese, and prohibited nudity, leisure/loitering, and collective housing. This represented, above all, the forceful imposition of European values over Indigenous life and the incorporation of Native peoples into colonial society, transforming the “barbarians” into “vassals” and the collective into individuals through interventions on the conditions of private life (Fernandes 2017). Through these forms of control, not only sex was regulated but also marriage, race, work, kinship, and education. Given this reality, the maintenance of the colonial system must be thought of as linked to the control of sexualities (Fernandes 2016).

Since Brazilian independence (1822) and the implementation of its first penal code (1830)—which was influenced by legal processes from revolutionary France—sodomy practices have been decriminalized. Some of the lives that, until the eighteenth century were “defined” by the law and the Church as “sodomites,” started to be addressed as “homosexuals” during the nineteenth century, a period under the strong influence of growing European scientism. The world would speak of homosexuality as a social pathology and investigate its causes, symptoms, and possibilities of treatment and cure without ceasing to consider it a sin or a crime within the criminal justice system. To Aidoo (2018: 161), that “period of scientific discourse shows the convergence of national, racial, and sexual anxieties that attempted to create a hierarchy of sexualities (as they did with race), with heterosexuality, particularly white male heterosexuality, being the only possible and real sexuality.”

Since then, although gender and sexual dissident practices have never been formally criminalized again, anti-queer punishment has been enacted through the articulation of multiple tactics outside the sodomy statutes. Notably, poor and Black queers, travestis,⁴ and gender-nonconforming people have been the main targets of the pathologization and criminalization of Brazilian sexual and gender dissidents. In the words of João Silvério Trevisan ([1986] 2000: 56):

There are no anti-homosexual laws in Brazil, either in the Constitution or in the Penal Code. . . . But, when they want to put their best foot forward, the police make raids and the diverse representatives of the order humiliate homosexuals, more constantly than we think, in public and private places. Indirect reasons (“indecent assault,” “vagrancy,” or “drug use”) are created to trigger repression that is due to the basic authoritarianism of the Brazilian social organization and one of its most genuine reflexes: sexism.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, among the multiple changes in Brazilian society, the “scientific” shift in all aspects of life would provide new “justifications for the actions of the civilization of the Indians” (Fernandes 2017: 133, 134), which included torture and arrests, the militarization of Indigenous villages, and the creation of prisons to discipline Indigenous peoples (147–48). As for the Amerindian population, Brazil was the last Western territory to officially abolish slavery (in 1888) but since then has kept and updated many forms of its afterlives. This process was ideologically justified by the “racial exceptionalism” discourse, disproved by the reality hidden under the myth of “racial democracy” (Aidoo 2018: 27). The people in “Brazilian” lands were racially complex because of forced Indigenous assimilation and the rape of enslaved women by their white lords, but racial complexity was narrated to the world as proof of equality and of the absence of racism in Brazil. Thus racism by denial operates (Gonzalez 1988).

The construction of this territory as a nation took place continuously as a white *heteronación* (Curiel 2013) where the *ciscolonial* (vergueiro 2019) world and its violence have been maintained throughout the ongoing genocide of Native peoples and multiple forms of subordination of Black people. Up to this day, the others of the white supremacist, cis-heteronormative nation have been targets of persecution and punishment for their gender and sexual practices.

The scientific shift, essential to the emergence of notions of homosexuality (in the nineteenth century) and transsexuality (in the twentieth century), displaced former practices of punishment of queer bodies. Psychoanalysis, psychiatry, and criminology, then, started to play important roles in controlling and punishing sexual dissidents. Homosexuality and transsexuality, supposed mental diseases, were “treated” in asylums where the method of cure by torture involved shock treatment and induced comas—practices that reduced these bodies to exploitable territories. Some psychoanalytic notions crystalized by European science, especially regarding sexual difference, continue to be spread around the world in clinical practice, so much so that—even in the twenty-first century—“in the dominant medical and psychological discourse, the trans body” can be considered “a colony . . . A place

of immense wealth and culture that surpassed the imagination of the Empire. A place of extraction and annihilation of life” (Preciado 2020: 46–47).

To understand the relationship between queer bodies and the criminal system in the twentieth century, we must consider the military regime in Brazil, which ruled between 1964 and 1985. The dictatorship reinforced anti-queer discourses of a virile *heteronación*, defense of the “family,” and “morals and good customs,” as well as criminalized those framed as subversive—such as communists, homosexuals, or other “degenerated” subjects. In the armed forces, practices of “pederasty” became a crime in the 1969 Military Penal Code (until a 2015 Supreme Court decision ruled it unconstitutional).

In 1968 during the military regime, Queen Elizabeth II from the United Kingdom visited São Paulo. To “better receive Her Majesty,” its mayor ordered the social cleansing of travestis and homosexuals from the center of the city, including murder, arrest, and other forms of police violence. During the next decades, even after redemocratization, similar initiatives were used to persecute gender and sexual dissidents, especially travestis, across the country. Mainstream newspapers reported on the dangerousness of the travestis (Ocanha 2014), and the police arrested them for merely walking in public places.

In the 1970s public spaces of homosexual sociability expanded in large urban centers like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. While these homosexual networks were being consolidated, they faced harsh military repression. This was the basis for the emergence of Brazilian homosexual activism in 1978 in São Paulo with the founding of the Somos Homosexual Affirmation Group’s newspaper, *Lampião da esquina* *Lamp in the Corner*, and in the next years the Lesbian-Feminist Action Group. A decade later in 1992, to fight against police repression and the AIDS epidemic, travestis who had already acted on other fronts (like sex work social movements and feminist spaces) founded the Associação de Travestis e Liberados, or Astral Travestis and Liberateds Association, the first political group of non-cis people in the country.

Even among lesbian and gay cis people repressed by the police under the military dictatorship, there was a desire to be integrated into society and protected by the law. Therefore, many of them sought to differentiate themselves from travestis. Interestingly enough, João Antônio Mascarenhas, founder of *Lampião de esquina* and the Triângulo Rosa Group Pink Triangle, tried to distance the “good” homosexuals from the “criminal” travestis by lobbying (unsuccessfully) for the inclusion of the term *sexual orientation* in the constitutional article prohibiting discrimination by “origin, race, color, and age” that would be enacted in 1988. In his speech at the National Constituent Assembly, aware of the selectiveness of that

institution that punishes only some social groups seen as dangerous and/or abnormal, Mascarenhas argued that some should be accorded protection under the law. “There is, according to him, ‘the common homosexual and the travesti, that are in many cases prostitutes and end up getting involved with petty theft or drugs.’ The image predominantly attributed to the homosexual actually corresponded to the travesti and this approximation would disturb the organized movement” (Câmara 2002: 57).

The denial of Mascarenhas’s plea to include the term *sexual orientation* in the constitution’s antidiscrimination article, as well as his strategy of differentiating homosexuals from travestis to accomplish such ambition, demonstrate some of the limits in pursuing promises of protection under the law—both on the part of legislative institutions and the hegemonic LGBT movement. Who are those to be protected by law? What are the limits of protection and juridical punishment within gender, sexual, class, and racial norms?

LGBT phobia, racism, and the criminal justice system are part of the same paradigms presented by the colonial world as possible. These paradigms, which by definition impose habits, identities, and ways of thinking and reacting (Latour 2013), also establish the solution to the colonial world’s problems by limiting the possibilities of life within this world. In a critique of these possibilities, we move toward “an altered state of perception, another imaginary, that would disorient us from the givens of the political present” (Butler 2021).

Queer Penalties and Carceral LGBT Activisms

Neoliberal, contemporary, hegemonic, Brazilian LGBT activisms have been articulating punitive and carceral instruments to counter violence and produce justice by criminalizing and punishing the other. Relying on the politics of the possibilities of this colonial political game, most LGBT activists keep betting on the criminal justice system as a form of protection even in a conjuncture of an ascending Far Right movement and an openly white supremacist and cis-heterosexist government. In this section, we aim at delineating the reliance on safety promises of penal institutions as a feature of both Bolsonaro politics and much of the Left. Before arguing so, we present a brief history of carcerality in Brazilian LGBT politics.

In 1980 when more than seven hundred travestis and homosexuals were detained in one night, the first queer protest against police raids occurred in downtown São Paulo. To counter the regular association between homosexuality and criminality, and in deep articulation with other antiauthoritarian movements such as Black liberation, the “homosexual” movement made as its top priority the strug-

gles against police violence and queer and trans imprisonment. A lesbian rebellion at Ferro's Bar in São Paulo in 1983 became known as the Brazilian Stonewall. In the "First Homosexual Conference" ("Encontro Brasileiro de homossexuais"), the end of prisons was up for debate during discussions of incarcerated homosexuals. Reforms were explicitly associated with the end of prisons in the long run.

Since those first years, much has changed in Brazilian LGBT movements.⁵ We briefly categorize two faces of the relationships enacted between the LGBT movement and the criminal system: (1) critiques of the cis-heterosexism of the punishment system and (2) claims for the penal system to repress LGBT phobia.

The hegemonic LGBT movement's struggles for de facto decriminalization of queer people progressively became partially reforming ones. From the 1980s to the beginning of the 2000s, there was frequent criticism of LGBT phobia among the police, with a focus on tactics to change and limit criminal laws such as those of "morals and good customs." In the 2000s the tone of critics toward the penal system changed. At the "LGBT National Conferences" ("Encontros Nacionais"), the violence of the penal system would be pointed out only by trans and travesti discourses on the ongoing construction of travestis and sex workers as criminals (Martins 2020). The horizons of anti-queer violence struggles have been hegemomically reduced to partial reforms of the penal system through measures such as human rights training for police officers and the creation of LGBT prison cells.

Critiques of penal system violence were displaced at the same time as the rise of mass incarceration in Brazil from the mid-1990s. The ongoing criminalization of trans and gender-nonconforming people, in particular Black and poor travestis, has been an important feature of the contemporary expansion of state violence. Not only would the police continue to be "the great perpetrator of crimes. . . against our [travestis and trans] communities" (vergueiro 2015: 149), but also the Brazilian judiciary would maintain the discourse of travestis as "people affected/prompted to crime," since they would inherently occupy a place of abjection, as one could apprehend from contemporary judicial sentences (Serra 2018).

The hegemonic LGBT movement has been largely engaged in the expansion and legitimization of the criminal justice system by calling for the criminalization of violence against LGBT people. Between 1980 and 1986, the first attempts to criminalize discrimination by sexual orientation were made by a group of white middle-class gay leaders, but not until 1999 would a bill be proposed for the criminalization of homophobia. In the mid-2000s, the enunciation of homophobic and transphobic practices as crimes became a central strategy in hegemonic LGBT activism. Henceforth, crime frameworks would take root in Brazilian

LGBT politics, as if it were impossible to counter violence without criminal law (Martins 2020).

The criminalization strategy remained central to these movements while the Far Right expanded in Brazil. In 2019, in the first semester of the Bolsonaro government, homotransphobia was criminalized by the Supreme Court. This was supported by many activists who, up until then, had remained critical toward it and refused the false promise of protection and universal punishment, despite being dismissed as “unrealistic” (as they had the impossible as a horizon: penal abolitionism). This change in position was later justified by the feeling of being trapped between supporting the expansion of the penal code and the possibility of endorsing the conservative idea that queer lives were not worthy of protection. With fewer critics of criminalization remaining, support for the prison project widened among the Left.

The demands for penal system reform and the criminalization of LGBT phobia have both been ways of fighting anti-queer violence enacted by hegemonic (carceral) activisms. In this strategy, the decriminalization of queer people would be made possible precisely by the criminalization of LGBT phobia—penal agents engaging in anti-queer practices would be punished by the criminal system. Thus, this strategy relied on “the tools of the lord [which] will never bring down the big house” (Lorde 1984: 112).

LGBT phobia is a political, social, scientific, and religious issue. It is relevant to consider that it is not, ontologically, a crime. It was criminalized. Obviously, every crime has gone through a process of criminalization, but this is soon forgotten, as the solution to violence is outsourced to the law, and “crime” becomes a synonym for “problem.” Narrowly defining LGBT phobia as “crime,” which restricts possibilities for defining it along multiple other axes, thus obstructs the chances of understanding and overcoming it.

Indeed, most LGBT phobia is not directly punishable by the penal system, as shown by Jair Bolsonaro’s politics. The president operates largely through a cis-heterosexism by denial, one that is no less violent than that punishable by law. Bolsonaro’s politics operates largely through practices not directly punishable by the penal system, but no less violent, as cis-heterosexism by negation. During the 2018 presidential election campaign, multiple leftist social movements characterized Bolsonaro as an openly homophobic, transphobic, and racist politician. He had stated, for example, that his children would never marry a Black woman, nor would they be queer because, in his words, they would have been “well raised.” Nonetheless, Bolsonaro claimed he was not racist or homophobic, arguing he had

no prejudices and touting the open support of a group of white cis gay men and lesbians, as well as a group of Black and Native conservatives.

Since 2018 a public dispute has taken place between leftist LGBT activists and the president's gay and lesbian supporters, who deny not only Bolsonaro's violent politics but also LGBT phobia as a central feature of Brazilian society. Both sides converge, though, in that both bet on penal ways to bring justice and counter all forms of violence. One episode is exemplary of such similarity.

On December 15, 2019, in Rio de Janeiro, one of Bolsonaro's publicly lesbian supporters, Karol Eller, was publicly assaulted at a restaurant, an incident immediately reported by her as lesbophobia. Nonetheless, until then, she herself, along with other LGBT Bolsonaro supporters, had been accusing other gay, lesbians, and travestis of "playing the victim" when they exhibited homophobic attitudes. On December 17, Senator Eduardo Bolsonaro (2019), one of the president's sons, tweeted about the episode. He offered his solidarity to Eller's family and addressed the LGBT left by stating: "For the right-wing, the aggressor would have a harsh prison sentence. Do the leftists support such a measure?"

Senator Bolsonaro's statement disregarded that hegemonic leftist LGBT politics has been centered on carceral ways of responding to violence. It is exactly through a punitive logic that the hegemonic LGBT movement from 1999 to 2019 articulated a massive campaign to criminalize LGBT phobia. True to form, then, hegemonic LGBT activists replied to that tweet by stating that Eller should criminally prosecute those who attacked her. They also remembered that such an option was a possibility opened by the criminalization of homotransphobia, which was claimed as a (pyrrhic) victory of the leftist LGBT movement.

Despite their fundamental antagonism toward each other, Bolsonaro's supporters and a large part of his leftist opponents centered the same solution to that episode: rely on the penal system and its promises. This discursive game is played every time an episode of anti-queer violence becomes public, and presents itself as the only possible answer to violence. In such events, both in leftist carceral positions and conservative perspectives, it becomes impossible to show solidarity with the ones who were harmed without calling for severe punishment. As a result of carcerality's hegemony, contemporary queer solidarity has largely been reduced to requesting more jails and police, as if this were the only feasible and normal possibility.

The political rationale permeating hegemonic queer political struggles is based on the production of the criminal and victim as binary figures, a logic that claims the centrality of criminal law to call "us" the victims and that claims the right of the criminal law. These struggles over what the law says about queer peo-

ple (Spade 2015) and the enforcement of criminal law over homophobic individuals fall short in several ways.

First, disputes over the criminalization of queers in the Brazilian legal system limit the scope of the overall debate on LGBT rights, as this criminalization occurs mostly outside formal law. Cis-heterosexism is allowed to operate in Brazilian society and in its systems mainly through simple denial of its existence. Therefore, this violence cannot possibly be handled by the incarceration of a group of openly LGBT-phobic individuals.

Second, not only are these strategies ineffective at countering the foundational anti-queer, anti-Black, and anti-Native violence of this world, but by highlighting victimization, they have pinkwashed the colonial world. Brazil's murderous institutions, which have long been punishing and controlling Black, Native, and poor people, as well as queer dissidents, are now also desired by LGBT activists as a "solution" to violence.

Normative anti-queer violence is the foundation of this world, not its exception. In demanding the carceral as a remedy to this violence, these movements have limited themselves to an indisposition or inability to imagine and build paths of fighting LGBT phobia that would not reinforce racist and cis-heteronormative institutions.

Against the Carceral Ways: Toward an Anti-colonial Queer Abolitionism

The here and now is a prison house. We must strive, in the face of the here and now's totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel a *then* and *there*. . . . We must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds.

—José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*

As we have shown, sexuality and gender have been a matter of prison and police in Brazilian history—both when queers have been persecuted by these institutions and when the LGBT movement has relied on them for "protection." Carceral activists, by supporting a violent anti-queer and anti-trans system to fight violence and counter LGBT phobia, have tied their desire for integration to the punitive terms defining what is normal in this world.

Abolitionist queer voices, most notably trans, travesti, and queer of color ones, have largely refused those paths and kept enunciating the end of prisons and police as a fundamental queer struggle; but so far, they have not been able to mobilize a large public debate among LGBT activists in Brazil. They have called

for the abolition of both the penal system and gender and sexuality norms, and, above all, of the world in which these social relations are made possible. In this section, we seek to connect the voices of those who rejected carceral queer politics to theoretical reflections on the potentialities of intertwined queer, anti-colonial, and abolitionist struggles.

Dissident activists have publicly criticized the carceral paths chosen by the hegemonic LGBT movement in Brazil, which opted for the criminalization of homotransphobia as its main demand in the mid-2000s (Martins 2020). The politics of crime and criminalization was framed as a way of strengthening the carceral state. In their discourse, the target of the criminal system would continue being the same—Black youth from the poorest neighborhoods, including queer and trans people, who have been systematically punished and killed by a police force from which the hegemonic movement demands protection. By denying the neoliberal, carceral, and normalizing ways of hegemonic LGBT movements, these LGBT activists have kept alive the fire of queer anti-carceral and anti-policing struggles of the 1970s and 1980s.

From the global South, it is evident that anti-normalization struggles cannot be tied exclusively to sexual and gender issues, as they are linked at their core to all the dissidents of this world. In the face of ongoing colonial violence, a radical queer politics addresses all those whose practices and imaginaries have been persecuted as abnormal—like the cosmovisions and lives of Native and Black peoples. When we look at Latin American prisons, these “abnormals” are precisely the main targets of contemporary mass incarceration (Segato 2007). As the others of this world, certainly, the incarcerated masses must be read as queer, as suggested by Cathy J. Cohen (1997).

Although sexuality, gender, and raciality are inextricably imbricated in the (re)production of this world, these structures are not equivalent, nor can they be subsumed to one another—therefore, LGBT phobia is not a type of racism but a system imbricated in the racial reproduction of this world. Those structures have produced both the “normal” and the queer ones. Long before the global North brought institutional queer theory and queer politics to Latin America, centuries of resistance against the colonial world and its racialized, gendered, and sexualized ways of living have taken place against the normal, even if the queers in the south of the world had other names, colors, and practices (Perra 2014).

Anti-colonial queer struggles refuse the promises of this world and do not aim to be included in the colonial, rational, and tolerant promises of the human—as inclusion in this world’s (carceral) possibilities only reproduces deadly ways of living for most queers in these lands. They aim at a transformation beyond

the limits of justice structured by raciality, coloniality, and its logic of obliteration (Silva 2007).

Prisons and police are structured by cisgender and heterosexual norms, capitalism, raciality, and coloniality (Spade 2015; Segato 2007). At the same time, as we have shown, they are at the center of the violent social reproduction of this world. For both reasons, anti-colonial queer struggles refuse the punitive logics of those institutions and are fundamentally abolitionist. They aim at abolishing not only punishment but also the racist, gendered, and sexual reproduction of this colonial world.

Just as Angela Davis (2011) has argued how these colonial cis-heteronormative constructs—race, gender, and sexuality—structure prisons, it is time to also point at sexuality, race, and gender as, in themselves, forms of policing, punishment, and, ultimately, as prisons. As gendered and sexualized subjects, we are continuously being policed around fantasies of coherence and continuity of our genders and sexualities; and multiple (im)possible gender and sexual practices, identities, and processes of subjectivation are controlled by punishment practices.

The punitive enforcement of gender and sexual norms goes along with the reification of sexual and gender identities. Both establish boundaries and reinforce desires of policing them. Queer abolitionist struggles, therefore, are at odds with not only carceral strategies but also the celebration and normalization of neoliberal sexual and gender identities.

If we take in a more literal sense José Estéban Muñoz's metaphor (2009: 1) that "the here and now is a prison house," we could take the colonial, racist, and cis-heteronormative present of this world as a prison in a double sense. On the one side, literal cages constrict the lives of Black, Native, and poor people, and on the other, gender, race, and sexuality as cages establish collective limits to life's possibilities. Abolishing all prisons and police that surround us and subject us implies, then, not only imploding actual cages but also destroying the metaphorical ones.

As "queerness is essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on the potentiality for another world" (Muñoz 2009: 1), queer abolition points to other potentialities beyond this colonial, carceral present. Therefore, going beyond our prison house implies radical transformation of the ways through which we think about collectivities, about ourselves, our present time, and our futurity. At its core, it requires, at least, (1) the construction of freedom for those who have been for centuries violated by the colonial criminal system; (2) the strengthening of solidarity and mutual aid networks for all the ones harmed by the production and reproduction of racial, gendered, and sexual norms; and,

(3) a queer refusal of desires of incarceration, punishment, and policing as far as they are the normalized effects of this world.

An anti-colonial, queer abolitionism aims at abolishing a society in which prisons are possible and at founding a new society (Moten 2018). Abolition is, mostly, a negation of the possibilities of this world, its promises, and its possibilities. A negation of humanity as the only way of life—a bet on monstrosity. It is a bet on queer world(s) in which all these prisons are not possible: cisnormativity, heteronormativity, raciality, capitalism, and coloniality.

Moreover, abolition is the refusal to reproduce the foundational violence that sustains this world in which queer subjects are not meant to be protected but to be persecuted and punished. Abolition is a negation enacted precisely by those who are obliterated in this world. It might well be an affirmation of the potentiality of queer lives and worlds beyond the ruins of this one.

Beyond the (Im)possibilities of the (Carceral) World: An Ethics of Incommensurability

The impossible world is the one that exists beyond the horizon of our present thinking—it is neither the horizon of terrible war, nor the ideal of a perfect peace. It is the open-ended struggle required to preserve our bonds against all that in the world which bears the potential to tear them apart.

—Judith Butler, *The Force of Nonviolence*

Queer abolitionisms are opposed to the political game of the “possibles” played by carceral LGBT politics. As a refusal of the ongoing pinkwashing of colonial institutions and their promises, anti-colonial queer abolitionisms are disruptive of the times and places of this world built on violence and punishment. In the game of the possibilities of this world, there is neither queer nor abolition futurity—there are only different ways of perpetuating coloniality, raciality, gender, and sexuality. Abolitionist practices point toward other political games and collective horizons, both as a promise of a liberatory queer future and as a process that takes the abolition of this world and all its foundational violence as an urgent task that cannot be postponed.

To refuse prisons and police, as well as punitive and carceral logics, requires that “we abandon the victim position—even though the state, the police, the white and the cisgender man have historically shown their inability to abandon the perpetrator position” (Mombaca 2021: 79). Leaving the victim and criminal

positions is also abandoning the safety promises produced by the colonial world, available only to those who are completely human—not the queer, the Black, the Native, or the monsters of this world.

Our only possibilities may lie precisely at the practices and lives this world so fervently tries to make impossible—notably, trans and gender-nonconforming lives (Spade 2015). The impossibilities of this world demand the right to be neither a man nor a woman, but a monster. Argentinian travesti Susy Shock (2011) faces the normal, its possibilities and impossibilities, and declares monstrosity as a possible way of living. In her poems, being a monster emerges as a way of refusing to be seen as normal and as human by this world who built man in such a narrow, colonial form.

A queer monster abolitionism, thus, is much more than refusing criminal law to deal with violence for knowing it only brings more harm; it is the refusal of gender and sexuality as the world has known them and allowed them to be known. To be a monster may be read, then, as a refusal of gender and sexual integration possibilities. The condition of the monster, instead of the condition of man or woman, is “like a foot that moves towards nothingness, pointing the way to another world. . . . The monster is the one . . . whose face, body and practices cannot yet be considered true in a system of hegemonic power and knowledge” (Preciado 2020: 44). Monstrosity is, therefore, the key to other meanings of collectivities and (im) possible worlds.

The refusal of carceral and colonial “possibilities” and the betting on impossibilities are only a first step toward a politics of anti-colonial abolition. Beyond refusal, it is commonly asked how an abolitionist, anti-colonial world would look. Such a question implicitly tries to foreclose the construction of other worlds. At the core of decolonial and abolition struggles, there is a comprehension that “we will find out the answers as we get there” (Tuck and Yang 2012: 35). It is through the process of abolition that we will be able to create answers that the carceral and the settler colonialism make impossible to imagine. The formulation of new solutions by abolitionism, decolonization, and queer liberation is possible only through an “ethic of incommensurability” that refuses reconciliation with colonial normality, fundamentally an anti-normality ethics. As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang write:

What will happen after abolition? What will be the consequences of decolonization for the settler? Incommensurability acknowledges that these questions need not, and perhaps cannot, be answered in order for decolonization to exist as a framework. We want to say, first, that decolonization is not obliged to answer those questions—decolonization is not accountable to

settlers, or settler futurity. . . . The Native futures, the lives to be lived once the settler nation is gone—these are the unwritten possibilities made possible by an ethic of incommensurability. (35–36)

Anti-colonial Native futures, Black futures, and queer futures may come into being only by the incommensurability of these futurities to this present prison house. When queer abolitionists envision a world without prisons, racism, capitalism, cis-heterosexism, “we are talking about a world that doesn’t currently exist. But collectively dreaming up one means we can begin building it into existence” (Imari-sha 2015).

Imagining other futures is central to the construction of possibilities beyond this world. Other collective futures have long been imagined in the lives and communities of both Native and Black peoples in this Latin America, and all the queer ones in the eyes of this world who continue to envisage other futures beyond this *heteronación*.

Through a collective production of practices and imaginations that point at other futures, it becomes possible to not only refuse and dream but also actively build a collective process of redistribution of violence (Mombaça 2021). For this process to take place, on one hand, it requires the naming of the world’s norms, the production of self-defense, and self-care (79–81). On the other hand, it demands an ethic that conceives justice not as fixed and universal but “mutant, contextual and provisional [and] that accepts that there is no safe answer to conflicts and questions as paradoxical, complex, and improbable as the ones we deal with” (81). Such a justice is the great impossibility of this world.

Essays like this and other collective practices are only a part of a long continuum of multiple sparks of those collective projects that since the imposition of this world and its punishments in Abya Yala have been challenging and confronting its limits and (im)possibilities. These resistances and refusals of integration in this world continue to point out how the colonial project and its fantasies of total violence permanently fail to impose the possibilities of this world as the only ones to exist.

In the anti-colonial and abolitionist battles to end this world, the paths to be taken emerge precisely in the impossibilities of the (carceral) world. After all, its possibilities have never protected us. Collective abolition practices have long been barricades where we produce instruments for these ongoing battles and where we may imagine a world in the ashes of this one.

The end of this world flashes in the horizons of anti-colonial, queer abolition struggles. By refusing the colonial, carceral possibilities, abolitionist practices

may be sparks of other worlds to come after this one is set on fire. Igniting abolitionist flames and multiplying them is an urgent task, for it may take us toward those worlds and those answers made impossible by this colonial present. In the South and the North of the world, our non-postponable collective responsibility is to keep these fires going—until this world, this prison house, burns, and from its ashes futurities of queer abolition may thrive.

Notes

1. Rather than Latin America, we use Ladin Amefrica/América Ladina as a way of proposing “a new and creative look to focus Brazilian historical-cultural formation” in which our ascendancy, more amerindian and amefrican than latin, points at an “African America whose latinity, by its own inexistence, had its *t* changed by the *d*” (Gonzalez 1988: 69).
2. From vergueiro (2015: 15), we apply *cystem* as a reference to systems that produce “epistemic hierarchies in which . . . non cisgendered perspectives are excluded, minimized or silenced. The term ‘cystem’ . . . aims at emphasizing the structural and institutional character—‘cystemic’—of cis+sexists perspectives, beyond the individualizing paradigm of the transphobia concept.”
3. We understand colonialism not as a “political and economic domination that ended with the independence of the colonies, but a more broadened process, whose effect transcends the imposition of an administrative structure based on a colony-metropolis relation. The intention is to raise awareness to the fissure process caused by this relation of colonial dominance—the colonial wound” (Fernandes 2017). In this decolonial sense, the colonization of bodies, subjectivities, and political imaginations far exceed the colonial period—the current world as we know it is a colonial and racial one (Silva 2007).
4. In Brazil and other Ladin Amefrican countries, the feminine identity *travesti* went through many collective disputes regarding its meaning. They were treated as inherently criminal since the 1970s by the media and the criminal justice cystem; neglected by the public health cystem, while transexual women began having access to it for specific matters; denied the option to serve time in women’s prisons by the Supreme Court, while transexual women first had such a concession; seen as sinners by conservative Christian sectors; and were targets for violent senses of humor. However, they appropriated this stigmatized identity, claimed the multiple meanings, and publicly pointed out what was the real basis of the motivation for rigorous distinction from transsexuality: racism and classist stratification. The meanings behind the difference became more diffuse as they conquered certain spaces, proving they were never ontological. See Berkins 2007; IACHR and OSRESCER 2020.
5. In the Brazilian LGBT movement there are multiple trends, strategies and political

practices, which may be analytically conceived of as two major trends. On one side is the more institutionalized, egalitarian sexual politics characterized as hegemonic; it focused mainly on legal rights and identity politics. On the other side, there is a minor trend of openly transgressive cultural politics, less institutionalized and overtly critical of the limits of identity politics and heteronormative horizons. Since the first years of the Brazilian gay movement, this difference has taken many forms, and in recent years the influence of queer theories and politics in the second, minor trend has become notable (Colling 2011). Nevertheless, both trends are self-referred and socially recognized as the “LGBT movement.” To differentiate their strategies, we signal these trends as hegemonic and minor from this point on.

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