Carving out our spaces:

Experiences of Black Brazilian women resisting technology-facilitated gender-based violence

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FIRN is a network of researchers, activists and practitioners from Global South countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America. FIRN focuses on the making of a feminist internet, seeing this as critical to bringing about transformation in gendered structures of power that exist online and offline and to capture fully the fluidity of these spaces and our experiences with them. Members of the network undertake data-driven research that provides substantial evidence to drive change in policy and law, and in the discourse around internet rights.

Instituto Minas Programam
Founded in 2015, Instituto Minas Programam is a feminist organisation from São Paulo exploring issues of tech and society through an anti-racist perspective. Learn more at https://minasprogramam.com/

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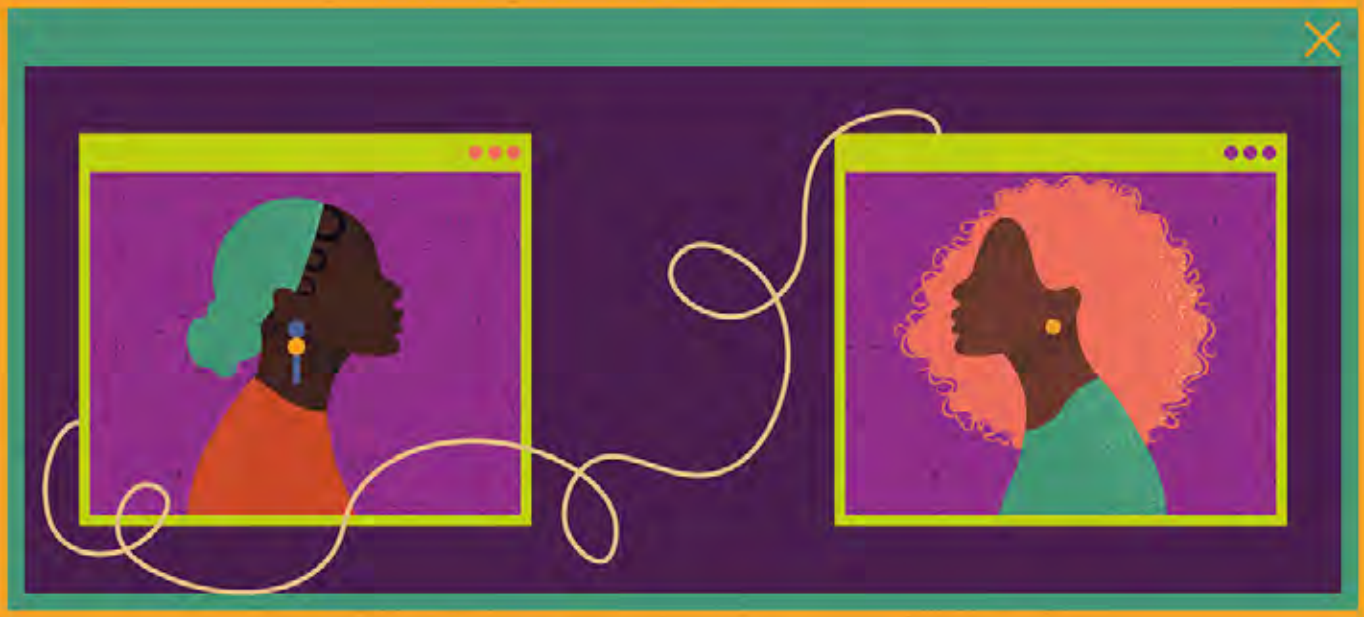

Introduction

This report focuses on tech-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) and misogynoir against Black[1] Brazilian women. Based on research conducted by Instituto Minas Programam between April 2024 and March 2025, the findings expose some of the ways mainstream digital technologies are embedded with racism, sexism and misogynoir and show how Black Brazilian women have been carving out their/our own online spaces, building strategies for resistance, connection and possibility.

The decade preceding this publication was marked by a growing, robust presence of Black Brazilian women organising and writing online through blogs, social media pages, online groups and networks. A time marked by Black Brazilian women's successful introduction of vocabularies to online publics, as well as dissemination of Black feminist thought to broader audiences and reaching Brazil's cultural and political agenda.

Simultaneously, it was a decade marked by the occurrence of TFGBV and misogynoir against Black Brazilian women. Every so often, a few of these cases, especially when they involved well-known individuals, would come to light. **This report seeks to illustrate something Black Brazilian women have been denouncing for years: how pervasive these phenomena are, whether we are thinking of well-known, public figures or anonymous, everyday women.**

Our analysis of TFGBV against Black Brazilian women is informed by the recognition of various forms of TFGBV as expressions of systemic gender-based violence,[2] linked to broader patterns of misogyny and violence against various gender diverse groups. **When looking to the Brazilian context more specifically, this report positions TFGBV and misogynoir against Black Brazilian women as phenomena that are to be understood as a continuation of broader violent expressions of racism, sexism and ableism that are prevalent in Brazilian society.**

1. In this report, we use "Black" with a capital "B" to recognise Black women as a political and cultural group with a shared history and collective identity shaped by experiences of racialisation. Capitalising "Black" aligns with conventions adopted by scholars, journalists and institutions committed to racial justice.
2. APC. (2017, November). *Online gender-based violence: A submission from the Association for Progressive Communications to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.* Association for Progressive Communications. https://www.apc.org/sites/default/files/APCSubmission_UNSR_VAW_GBV_0_0.pdf

In other words, in a country where Black women are the demographic group most impacted by gender-based violence,[3] TFGBV also permeates the experiences of many Black women in Brazil.[4] Let us turn to some existing research to exemplify this: Trindade's work on the construction and dissemination of racist discourses on social networks reveals that Black women who have varying degrees of social mobility, aged 20 to 35, represent 81% of victims of racist speech on social media in Brazil. Trindade proposes that hate speech against Black Brazilian women on social media platforms seeks to consolidate power structures in the country and that the posts, "jokes" and attacks targeting Black Brazilian women attempt at portraying Black women as the "other", whether as "invaders"; as "delinquent" or criminals; or as "uncultured" – especially when Black Brazilian women access (or appear to be accessing) positions of relatively higher social status.[5] Trindade argues the existence of Black Brazilian women who are socially ascending – and posting about it – destabilises the imaginary hierarchy maintained since colonial times and preferred by white supremacy logic in the country. The author concludes that these "transgressions" made by Black Brazilian women are met with what he defines as hate speech via violent posts and tweets that reproduce misogynoir, carrying gendered and racially charged content and that "users who engage in this practice are playing the role of vectors for the transmission of deep-rooted and naturalised colonial racist ideologies, and thereby reinforcing their perpetuation in Brazilian society."[6] **As we will see throughout this report, misogynoir and TFGBV are often used against Black Brazilian women who destabilise or disrupt Brazilian society's expectations of them.**

Over the past few years, research has shown that Black women account for 60% of the cases of racism and racial insults on social networks in Brazil.[7] Research by Instituto Marielle Franco has found that 78% of Black Brazilian women running in municipal elections in 2020 had suffered some form of "virtual violence", with both misogyny and racism being defining features of the attacks.[8] Another study covering the 2020 elections reaches a similar conclusion, demonstrating how political violence in Brazil can be linked to racism, ageism and LGBT-phobia.[9]

3. Bueno, S., Martins, J., Brandão, J., Sobral, I., & Lagreca, A. (2023). *VISÍVEL E INVISÍVEL: a Vitimização de Mulheres no Brasil.* Fórum Brasileiro de Segurança Pública. https://forumseguranca.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/visiveleinvisivel-2023-sumario-executivo.pdf
4. Trindade, L. V. P. (2018). Social Media in Brazil: Distilling Racism Against Black Women. *Social Science Space.* https://www.socialsciencespace.com/2018/08/social-media-in-brazil-distilling-racism-against-black-women/
5. Trindade, L. V. P. (2019). *Discurso de Ódio Nas Redes Sociais.* Editora Jandaíra.
6. Ibid.
7. Nicory, D., Guanabara, D., & Assumpção, V**.** (2023). *RACISMO E INJÚRIA RACIAL PRATICADOS NAS REDES SOCIAIS - Relatório do Observatório das Condenações Judiciais em 2a Instância até o ano de 2022.* Faculdade Baiana de Direito, Jusbrasil, UNDP. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pEpXmyy4g-J147-I1IrmRYe1NYERxB0W/
8. This study by Instituto Marielle Franco, concludes that out of that group, "20.72% received sexist and/or misogynistic comments and/or messages on their social networks, by email or messaging applications, 18% received racist comments and/or messages on their social networks, by email or messaging apps, 17% participated in a virtual meeting that was hacked, 13% had their virtual campaign meeting hacked, 10% were victims of attacks with sexist content during a live and 8% were victims of racist content during a live. Regarding their attackers, 46% are unidentified individuals or groups." Instituto Marielle Franco. (2020). *Violência Política Contra Mulheres Negras.* https://www.violenciapolitica.org/
9. Revista AzMina & InternetLab. (2021). *MonitorA: relatório sobre violência política online em páginas e perfis de candidatas(os) nas eleições municipais de 2020.* https://www.internetlab.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/5P_Relatorio_MonitorA-PT.pdf

This report aims to expand our understanding of how TFGBV impacts Black Brazilian women. The findings presented are based on qualitative research focusing on the experiences of Black Brazilian women who experienced TFGBV and who are writers, politicians, technologists, students, community organisers, artists and journalists. This project also sought to demonstrate Black Brazilian women's stories of resistance, connection and possibility, despite TFGBV and misogynoir.

In the first chapter, we explore how Black Brazilian women have been "carving out" their/our own spaces online and within digital technologies. We share how in spite of mainstream digital technologies being often embedded with racism, sexism and misogynoir, Black Brazilian women are finding chasms and carving out their own spaces for relationship-building and knowledge exchange, collective- and self-expression, engagement with Black feminist discourse and activism, and influencing cultural and political agendas across the country.

The second chapter offers a closer look at how online spaces are embedded with racism, sexism and misogynoir in Brazil and how that impacts the experiences of Black Brazilian women online. We bring stories of writers, activists and politicians whose public writing, organising, and political engagement online have been met with attempts to delegitimise and intimidate via TFGBV, as well as those of Black women working in science and tech, who face attacks as they step into professional roles and/or digital spaces. We also discuss the consequences of TFGBV and misogynoir, sharing how they have impacted Black Brazilian women's freedom of expression, leading to silencing, self-censoring and limitations of online behaviour; generate long-lasting psychological and emotional consequences; and, at times, become obstacles to women's professional careers and engagement with activism.

In the third and final chapter, we turn to Black Brazilian women's resistance, connection and possibility despite TFGBV and misogynoir. We share highlights from conversations with research participants regarding the ways they are refusing to be silenced by TFGBV and misogynoir, how they have continued to "carve out" their own spaces, engaged with digital care practices, and fostered community and connection with other Black Brazilian women.

Before diving into the chapters, we invite readers to engage with the following sections of this introduction for an account of the theoretical frameworks that inform our approach to this research, as well as an overview of the methodology employed during this research project. As we will see in subsequent sections, our research on TFGBV and misogynoir against Black women in Brazil is heavily informed by Black feminist thought, and the methodology seeks to honour the complexity of participants' experiences and grapple with differentiated relationships with technology.

Black feminist thought: A theoretical framework to examine TFGBV

We need theoretical models that help us better understand the ways that technological practices are intersectionally racialized and gendered. We need to shed light on what is happening with our digital media and the internet, and denaturalize the idea that these "tools" are apolitical or without consequence.[10]

Black feminist thought allows for examination of phenomena related to digital technologies by "seeing how race, gender, class, power, sexuality, and other socially constructed categories interact with one another in a matrix of relations that create conditions of inequality or oppression."[11] In offering useful ways of understanding how both race and gender are constructed via historical, social, political and economic processes;[12] Black feminist thought grants a powerful lens through which to analyse Black women's relationship with technology.[13]

In our research, we turn to Black feminist thought as a critical theoretical framework with which to analyse the experiences of Black women in Brazil with TFGBV, and look to Black Brazilian feminist thought specifically as an essential lens for the realities of Black women in the country, as it provides a critical framework through which to analyse, understand (and fight against) gender-based violence in ways that recognise this violence disproportionately affects Black Brazilian women.[14]

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10. Noble, S. U. (2016, 19 July). A Future for Intersectional Black Feminist Technology Studies. The Scholar & Feminist Online. https://sfonline.barnard.edu/safiya-umoja-noble-a-future-for-intersectional-black-feminist-technology-studies/
11. Ibid.
12. Collins, P. H. (2008). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment.* Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Black-Feminist-Thought-Knowledge-Consciousness-and-the-Politics-of-Empowerment/HillCollins/p/book/9780415964722; hooks, b. (2015). *Black Looks: Race and Representation.* 2nd Edition. Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Black-Looks-Race-and-Representation/hooks/p/book/9781138821552
13. Noble, S. U. (2016). Op cit.; Noble, S. U., & Tynes, B.M. (2016). *The Intersectional Internet.* https://www.peterlang.com/document/1109657; Bailey, M., & Trudy. (2018). On Misogynoir: Citation, Erasure, and Plagiarism. *Feminist Media Studies, 18*(4): 762–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1447395; Noble, S. U. (2018). *Algorithms of Oppression.* NYU Press. https://nyupress.org/9781479837243/algorithms-of-oppression/; Benjamin, R. (2019). *Race After Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code.* Polity. https://www.wiley.com/en-us/Race+After+Technology%3A+Abolitionist+Tools+for+the+New+Jim+Code-p-9781509526437; Steele, C. K. (2021). *Digital Black Feminism.* NYU Press. https://nyupress.org/9781479808380/digital-black-feminism
14. Gonzalez, L. (1983). Racismo e sexismo na cultura brasileira. In L. A. M. Silva et al. (Eds.), *Movimentos sociais urbanos, minorias étnicas e outros estudos.* Ciências Sociais Hoje, 2, Brasília, ANPOCS, 223-44.; Gonzalez, L. (1988). A categoria político-cultural de Amefricanidade. *Tempo Brasileiro,* n° 92/93, 69-81. https://web.archive.org/web/20230218030724/https:/negrasoulblog.files.wordpress.com/2016/04/a-categoria-polc3adtico-cultural-de-amefricanidade-lelia-gonzales1; Carneiro, S. (2011). Enegrecer o Feminismo: A Situação Da Mulher Negra Na América Latina a Partir de Uma Perspectiva de Gênero. *Observatório Brasil da Igualdade de Gênero, 2*(4), 76-81. https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/5509702/mod_resource/content/0/14-Artigo-Enegrecer-o-feminismo-a-situa%C3%A7%C3%A3o-da-mulher-negra-na-Am%C3%A9rica-Latina-a-partir-de-uma-perspectiva-de-g%C3%AAnero.pdf; Lima, D. C. (2020). #Conectadas: O Feminismo Negro nas Redes Sociais. Master's thesis, Federal University of ABC. https://ayalaboratorio.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/lima-dulcilei-da-conceicao-conectadas.-o-feminismo-negro-nas-redes-sociais-1.pdf; Rodrigues, C., & Freitas, V. C. (2021, 3 March). Ativismo Feminista Negro no Brasil: do movimento de mulheres negras ao feminismo interseccional. *Revista Brasileira de Ciência Política.* https://doi.org/10.1590/0103-3352.2021.34.238917

As a starting point, we recognise that technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) cannot be analysed in isolation from the structures of race, class, gender and coloniality that shape the lives of Black Brazilian women.

Gonzalez, when analysing racism and sexism in Brazilian culture, explains that the accepted place for Black women in this society is that of domestic worker, servant or prostitute and demonstrates how the existence of Black women who dare to express themselves generates in this society an embarrassment, a reaction, a backlash.[15] It is in this context that TFGBV takes place in Brazil and, as we will see throughout this report, those imaginaries about the place Black women occupy in Brazilian society are mobilised in many of the stories and incidents covered in this research.

TFGBV AND MISOGYNOIR

To support our analysis of TFGBV against Black Brazilian women, we employ the concept of misogynoir. Coined by Bailey and Trudy, the term refers to the ways in which racist and misogynistic representations in our culture and in digital spaces contribute to shaping society's ideas and perceptions of Black women, creating an "inseparable fusion of toxicity."[16]

This "fusion of toxicity" can show up in many ways. Whether it's via search engines that work in ways that dehumanise Black women and girls;[17] whether it's systems built by tech companies to produce "the New Jim Code";[18] whether it's racial and gender bias in facial recognition software and training datasets;[19] surveillance technologies that are part of a long history of harm towards Black people;[20] or political violence directed at Black women who are politicians.[21] This injustice can also emerge in the ways gender, race and disability biases are built into many of the technologies present in our society. Broussard posits that these biases are not "glitches" or accidental flaws, but rather structural elements of how these technologies are created and evidence of the "technochauvinism" embedded in AI and machine learning products.[22]

Misogynoir is also a defining feature of the treatment given to Black women's intellectual contributions, generally, but also in the realm of digital technologies. D'Ignazio, Turner and Wood point out that "Black women [who] have been producing leading scholarship that challenges the dominant narratives of the

15. Gonzalez, L. (1983). Op. cit.
16. Bailey, M. & Trudy. (2018). Op. cit.; Bailey, M. (2021) *Misogynoir Transformed: Black Women's Digital Resistance.* Vol. 18. NYU Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv27ftv0s
17. Noble, S. U. (2018). Op. cit.
18. Benjamin, R. (2019). Op. cit.
19. Buolamwini, J., & Gebru, T. (2018). Gender Shades: Intersectional Accuracy Disparities in Commercial Gender Classification. Proceedings of the 1st Conference on Fairness, Accountability and Transparency, 77–91. https://proceedings.mlr.press/v81/buolamwini18a.html
20. Browne, S. (2015). *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness.* Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822375302
21. Instituto Marielle Franco. (2020). Violência Política Contra Mulheres Negras. https://www.violenciapolitica.org/
22. Broussard, M. (2024). *More than a Glitch.* MIT Press. https://mitpress.mit.edu/9780262548328/more-than-a-glitch/

AI and Tech industry: namely that technology is ahistorical, 'evolved', 'neutral' and 'rational' beyond the human quibbles of issues like gender, class, and race" have been silenced, shamed and erased. The authors describe various examples of institutions and individuals that have used the tactics of disbelief, dismissal, gaslighting, discrediting, revisionism and erasure against Black women and their intellectual contributions related to digital technologies.[23]

On social media platforms specifically, misogynoir can take many forms, including general demonstrations of racist and sexist views towards Black women posted across social media and/or direct, targeted attacks towards individual Black women, including a range of behaviours which can be classified as TFGBV. Many described how TFGBV and misogynoir are present in Black women's experiences online.[24]

In 2018, Amnesty International published a study showing Black women were disproportionately targeted by online abuse against women. Analysing 288,000 tweets sent to 778 women politicians and journalists in the UK and USA in 2017, the research found that Black women were 84% more likely than white women to be mentioned in abusive or problematic tweets.[25] In 2023, the UK-based organisation Glitch published research on misogynoir in online spaces. Their report analysed almost one million text-based messages from five different social media platforms and concluded that "misogynoir, and misogyny more generally, were prevalent across all five social media platforms studied." They found significantly more "highly toxic posts" about Black women than white women and suggest this is evidence of how "hateful tropes continue to be used to silence and harm Black women."[26]

In Brazil, misogynoir and TFGBV also permeate the experiences of Black women. As we have mentioned earlier in this introduction, with Black women who have varying degrees of social mobility, aged 20 to 35, represent 81% of victims of racist speech on social media in Brazil[27] and account for 60% of the cases of racism and racial insults on social networks judged in Brazilian courts.[28]

As we will explore throughout this report, instances of TFGBV and misogynoir against Black Brazilian women also mobilise stereotypes, insults and attacks that echo socially constructed racist, sexist tropes that have historically been instrumentalised against Black Brazilian women.

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23. D'Ignazio, C., Turner, K., & Wood, D. (2021). *The Abuse and Misogynoir Playbook.* MIT Media Lab. https://www.media.mit.edu/publications/abuse-and-misogynoir-playbook/
24. Bailey, M., & Trudy. (2018). Op. cit.; Gray, K. L. (2020). *Intersectional Tech: Black Users in Digital Gaming.* Louisiana State University Press. https://lsupress.org/9780807174555/intersectional-tech/; Bailey, M. (2021). *Misogynoir Transformed: Black Women's Digital Resistance.* Vol. 18. NYU Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv27ftv0s; Sobande, F. (2020). *The Digital Lives of Black Women in Britain.* Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46679-4
25. Amnesty International. (2018, 18 December). Crowdsourced Twitter study reveals shocking scale of online abuse against women. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/press-release/2018/12/crowdsourced-twitter-study-reveals-shocking-scale-of-online-abuse-against-women/
26. Oliveira, G., & Slupska, J. (2023). The Digital Misogynoir Report: Ending the Dehumanising of Black Women on Social Media. *Glitch UK.* https://glitchcharity.co.uk/our-work/research-digital-misogynoir-report
27. Trindade, L.V.P. (2018). Op. cit.
28. Nicory, D., Guanabara, D., & Assumpção, V. (2023). Op.cit.

COMMUNITY AND RESISTANCE THROUGH/WITH DIGITAL TECH

In addition to looking at the experiences of TFGBV, this report also explores how Black Brazilian women have been using digital technologies to create spaces for connection and community. In doing so, we are inspired by thinkers who have used Black Feminist Thought to analyse Black women's engagement with technologies and the internet. Stemming from the fact that Black feminist thought is the result of "oppositional knowledges" produced by Black women,[29] in her analysis of digital Black feminism in the US, Steele argues that "Black women fashioned notions of self and community both despite and because of the oppressive forces they endured" and that this practice remains present in Black women's engagement with digital technologies.[30]

It is through "complicated allegiances" that Black women across the diaspora engage with digital technologies in innovative, creative ways – even when these technologies may not have been created to support Black women's resistance.[31] To Rayvon Fouché, the practice of "vernacular technological creativity" consists in the "redeployments, reconception, and recreation" of existing technology, in ways that are strategic, politically motivated and culturally embedded.[32] In that sense, to Steele, digital Black feminism demonstrates how "the tools of digital technology do not belong exclusively to the 'master'":

> Regardless of the intention of specific technologies to subjugate, Black women have long found chasms within which to undermine the logic of this system of oppression and craft space to survive and thrive.[33]

Bailey offers another useful concept to refer to the ways Black women are reimagining the world and engaging in various forms of digital resistance, in spite of the pervasive misogynoir present in culture and digital spaces: the notion of "digital alchemy." For Bailey, digital alchemy can be defensive (responding or reacting to representations and/or instances of misogynoir, for example through hashtags or campaigns) or generative (arising and moving more independently, based on the desire to create new forms of representation for Black women, such as web series created to portray the lives of Black women).[34]

In conducting this research, we too invoke a history of Black Brazilian women "finding chasms" within systems of oppression and appropriating existing technologies (digital and analogue).

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29. Collins, P. H. (2008). Op. cit..
30. Steele, C. K. (2021). *Digital Black Feminism.* NYU Press. https://nyupress.org/9781479808380/digital-black-feminism
31. Ibid.
32. Fouché, R. (2006). The Wretched of the Gulf: Racism, Technological Dramas, and Black Politics of Technology. *The Black Scholar, 36*(4), 7–12. https://doi.org/10.1080/00064246.2006.11413365
33. Steele, C. K. (2021). Op. cit.
34. Bailey, M. (2021). *Misogynoir Transformed: Black Women's Digital Resistance.* Vol. 18. NYU Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv27ftv0s

One example is Taís de Sant'Anna Machado's analysis of the history of Black Brazilian women's labour as cooks and chefs, in which she brings to light how these culinary professionals have historically sought out (and continue to do so) loopholes within the oppressive context in which they exist and build spaces for themselves within gastronomy. Looking at the 18th and 19th centuries in Brazil, Machado explains how despite Black Brazilian women's lives being permeated by forced labour as well as exhausting, unhealthy and violent working conditions, Black women implemented what she calls "technologies of survival," by creating strategies to "construct and preserve a self-definition," challenging the inhuman treatment to which they were subjected to; exercising their subjectivity; creating community spaces for exchange and affection; and "move around in a society that made their survival impossible."[35]

The legacy of these "technologies of survival" lives on in the practices of contemporary Brazilian Black feminists who engage in their own forms of "digital alchemy." Authors like Lima, Oliveira, Barros, Gomes, Nunes and Santiago and others illuminate how Black Brazilian women have engaged in the practice of knowledge production and appropriating existing technologies, demonstrating how the internet has been a space for Black women to build community and collective action, in the blogosphere,[36] as well as in social media platforms.[37]

Though the history of Black women's engagement with digital technologies and their active role in shaping technoculture in Brazil is often overlooked, Black women in Brazil have been pioneers in using digital technologies to support organising. For instance, Sueli Carneiro, founder of Instituto Geledés, reminds us that the institution was the first civil society organisation in the country to have a website and online presence back in 1997.[38]

Analysing the complexity of Black women's movements in Brazil, Thiane Neves Barros highlights ways Black women have, over the course of the country's history, found strategies to use forms of communication (including digital ones) to build their movements:

> Before, this circulation took place in newspapers, newsletters, pirate radio stations, assemblies, congresses, articles and books. In the last 15-20 years, with the potentializing of the internet, this communication

35. Machado, T. (2022). *Um Pé na Cozinha: um olhar sócio-histórico para o trabalho de cozinheiras negras no Brasil.* Fósforo Editora. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/395984387_Machado_T_S_2022_Um_pe_na_cozinha_um_olhar_socio-historico_para_o_trabalho_de_cozinheiras_negras_no_Brasil_Fosforo_400_p
36. Lima, D. C. (2020). Op. cit.
37. Lima, D. C., & Oliveira, T. (2021). Negras in tech: Apropriação de tecnologias por mulheres negras como estratégias de resistência. *Cadernos Pagu.* https://www.periodicos.capes.gov.br/index.php/acervo/buscador.html?task=detalhes&id=W3124120190
38. Carneiro, S. (2020, 10 July). Podcast Tecnopolítica. *Tecnopolítica #50: Tecnologia e Racismo.* https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbsuDny0uLY

> has become more robust and among the various fronts for constructing and reconstructing these narratives, the Black feminist women's movement has also become more visible.[39]

In Barros' consideration of the history of digital Black feminism in Brazil, she shows the ways Black women have found "chasms" within digital technologies. She argues that though "racism is a determining factor in technologies, the movements made by Black [Brazilian] cyberactivists based on Black feminist thinking have been about not silencing, creating safe spaces, taking action."[40] She concludes:

> Black digital feminism has empowered networks, communication technologies and Black women's quest for autonomy, it has created the possibilities of doing, of using the internet to strengthen work, to show oneself, to present oneself as a professional, an artist, an intellectual in online spaces.

Analysing how Black Brazilian women have appropriated tech as strategies for resistance, Lima and Oliveira observed that Black Brazilian women "appropriate online tools to form communities, propagate collective purposes related to learning and appropriation of technology, disseminate relevant information, as well as connect and establish relationships around other topics of social life [...] and thus develop their spaces of visibility and resistance."[41]

In Brazil, Black women have used digital technologies for "circulation of worldviews other than the hegemonic ones, discursive interaction and the development of communities," which has also been documented.[42] According to Lima and Oliveira, "Black [Brazilian] women come together to develop strategies to escape the stigmas and marginalisation resulting from social disparities." Through websites, blogs, social media pages and profiles, Black Brazilian women have "reached many people by disseminating and valuing information and knowledge about the history and achievements of black women."[43]

In reflecting critically about the impact of their work in online communities of Black Brazilian women, authors like Gomes, Nunes and Santiago write that, though the internet is a hostile environment, Black women boldly gather and produce knowledge in dialogue with each other:

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39. Barros, T. N. (2021). Estamos em marcha! Escrevivendo, agindo e quebrando códigos. *Comunidades, Algoritmos e Ativismos Digitais: olhares afrodiaspóricos.* In Silva, T. (Ed.), *Comunidades, Algoritmos e Ativismos Digitais: Olhares Afrodiaspóricos.* LiteraRUA. http://literarua.commercesuite.com.br/livro/olhares-afrodiasporicos
40. Ibid.
41. Lima, D. C., & Oliveira, T. (2021). Op. cit.
42. Ibid.
43. Santana, B., & de Almeida, M. A. (2017). Mulheres negras e o comum: Memória, redes sociais e táticas cotidianas. *Revista Brasileira de Biblioteconomia e Documentação, 13,* 57–61.

> Despite all the narrative that has been created around the internet, about it being a free territory and that we could talk to people on the other side of the world, the truth is that it has always been a hostile territory and those who had a voice were cisheteronormative, white and rich men.[44]

Lastly, this research is also informed by the thinking of Black feminists who have explored the theme of expressions of joy as a strategy for resistance and community building within a context of misogynoir. Lu and Steele, for instance, demonstrate how joy is a mode of resistance particularly applicable to Black users in digital spaces, enabling "Black people especially to cultivate networks of support and solidarity across time and space."[45] Macias, for example, describes Black women's use of social media to combat misogynoir, investigating the "formation of community" through social media, demonstrating how social media helps Black women in the US and the UK "connect to others, specifically other Black women," forming "kinship" that "transcends boundaries."[46] In the Brazilian context, Lima has described the deepening of "self-knowledge, self-care, self-esteem, a sense of hospitality/welcoming and coping with loneliness" as strategies that are part of Black feminist communities online.[47]

As we will see in the final chapter of this report, the theme of community and friendship is a common thread in our research: when Black Brazilian women face TFGBV, it is often with other Black women that they find the friendship, community and support they need.

FINAL REFLECTIONS ON THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research and perspectives reviewed here help us understand a crucial reality: TFGBV against Black women represent another facet of Brazil's deeper patterns of racism and sexism, which now also play out in digital spaces. Black feminist thinkers, including Brazilian scholars, show us that these online experiences are connected to centuries-old structures that have consistently devalued and targeted Black women.

At the same time, this theoretical framework reminds us of a powerful history of Black Brazilian women who have always found ways to resist and build community, even within systems designed to exclude us. This understanding shapes our research approach; we aim to document not only the violence but also how we resist, support one another and transform digital spaces for our purposes.

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44. Gomes, V. R., Nunes, C., & Santiago, L. (2023). Do Pretuguês Tecnológico à Blogagem Coletiva: A reconstrução de um caminhar tecnológico diante da virtualização da vida. In T. Silva & T. N. Barros (Eds.), *Griots e Tecnologias Digitais.* LiteraRUA. http://literarua.commercesuite.com.br/livros/griots-brasileiros-e-tecnologias-digitais
45. Lu, J. H., & Steele, C. K. (2019, 12 May). 'Joy is resistance': cross-platform resilience and (re)invention of Black oral culture online. *Information, Communication & Society, 22*(6), 823–37. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2019.1575449.
46. Macias, K. (2015). Tweeting Away Our Blues: An Interpretative Phenomenological Approach to Exploring Black Women's Use of Social Media to Combat Misogynoir. Doctoral dissertation, Nova Southeastern University. https://nsuworks.nova.edu/shss_dcar_etd/25
47. Lima, D. C. (2020). Op. cit.

This framework guides our central questions: how do Black Brazilian women experience, respond to, and resist TFGBV and misogynoir? And what can these responses teach us about the limits and possibilities of digital technologies? By focusing on both the challenges and the resistance, this report aims to present a complete picture that recognises Black women as powerful agents of change, not just victims of technology.

Methodology

This report is based on research conducted by Instituto Minas Programam between April 2024 and March 2025. Our methodology relies on qualitative data collection methods, including semi-structured interviews with Black Brazilian women who experienced TFGBV, group gatherings with research participants, and critical observation of participants' online presence. The methodological choices described in this chapter are heavily informed by Black feminist thought, which has served both as an inspiration for our research design and as the primary theoretical lens for data analysis, providing a framework that allows us to understand how race, gender, class and power shape the experiences of Black women on the internet.

The following sections include a note on our positionality as researchers and our approach to power dynamics within the research process, followed by descriptions of the methods employed throughout the project.

A note on our positionality and research design: Writing in first person, refusing monolithic narratives and acknowledging power dynamics

Our role as researchers in this project is informed by our individual and combined lived-experiences as Black Brazilian women, from and based in São Paulo, and who have had varying degrees of involvement with social justice organising and working within formal civil society organisations. We are in many ways, inherently connected to our research. In our research practice, we recognise that objectivity is not possible, that all knowledge is situated and constructed from specific social perspectives,[48] and that when writing about Black Brazilian women, it has been important to us not to research and write as if we – the researchers – are disconnected from "the subject matter." For that reason, in this research report we write about our findings using first-person plural pronouns ("we" and "ours") and third-person plural pronouns ("they" and "them") interchangeably.

48. Harding, S. (1991). *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?: Thinking from Women's Lives.* Cornell University Press. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt1hhfnmg

In this work, we have also tried to reject universalising narratives about our research participants specifically and about Black Brazilian women more broadly. Black Brazilian women are an enormous, diverse group and working on this project we insist on not making universalising claims about Black Brazilian women's experiences with online misogynoir and TFGBV. Our qualitative approach to this research is one that seeks to honour the complexity of participants' experiences and grapple with differentiated relationships with technology – influenced by factors such as class, age, geographical origin, history of online engagement and more. The data we gather here, thus, highlights the various ways in which online misogynoir and TFGBV impact Black Brazilian women's lives and the multitude of choices and strategies made in how to deal with these impacts.

We have tried to relay the stories and insights generously shared with us without proposing a generalistic interpretation for the ways Black Brazilian women experience online misogynoir and TFGBV and the diverse, dynamic ways we/they build possibilities despite online misogynoir and TFGBV. We have tried to be cognisant of the fact that our experiences with TFGBV can and do share similarities (whether we are thinking of root causes, how incidents play out, or their impact, etc.) without ever being identical. In sum, our approach to researching TFGBV against Black Brazilian women refuses homogenising narratives.

Our research approach acknowledges the power dynamics that may be embedded in research. Our methodology is informed by our efforts to not position ourselves as "the voices" behind the findings we gathered. Instead, we have tried to highlight the collective nature of our investigation and honour the women who contributed to this work as our intellectual peers whose analysis of the structural issues that exist as a backdrop to TFGBV inform our interpretations, our approach and our writing. In the following sections, which detail our methodology, we describe measures we employed in an effort to mitigate these power dynamics.

SEMI-STRUCTURED, IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

We have conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 12 Black Brazilian women who had experienced some form of TFGBV.

Selection of research participants was carried out through intentional sampling, focusing on Black Brazilian women engaged with social justice organising, social movements, and political and/or digital activism. A virtual survey outlining the research objectives was disseminated on our organisational communications channels (Instituto Minas Programam's website and social media), combined with an intentional outreach strategy in online groups which we are members of and which are composed of Black women who are active in social justice organising.

We invited survey respondents to be interviewed based on their declared interest in participating in the project as well as on a mix of factors including geographic location, engagement with social movements and/or political organising, and experiences with TFGBV.[49]

Prior to conducting interviews, our team informed participants of research objectives and our intended use of their data. All participants signed informed consent forms.

In an effort to compensate participants for their time and insights, we have offered them compensation for the interviews and provided stipends for mental health services after interviews. We find that interview compensation and mental health services stipends might not completely erase the power asymmetries, but represent some steps towards acknowledging their intellectual contribution and minimising the extractive nature of research.

The list below offers a short description of research participants. They are writers, politicians, technologists, students, community organisers and journalists who have responded to our invitation to join this research project. We have collectively decided with participants against publishing their real names. Participants expressed that anonymity conferred on them the ability to speak more freely about the issues they were facing or had faced, without risking potentially harmful personal exposure.[50]

Interviewees[51]	Age	State	Description
Interviewee 1 – Lúcia	39	São Paulo	Technologist
Interviewee 2 – Cláudia	36	São Paulo	Technologist and student
Interviewee 3 – Maria	30	Piauí	Practitioner in civil society organisations and member of political or social movements
Interviewee 4 – Flávia	37	Pará	University student and member of political or social movements
Interviewee 5 – Ana	35	São Paulo	Practitioner in civil society organisations and member of political or social movements

49. It is worth mentioning that many survey respondents had not experienced TFGBV directly, they completed the form out of interest in the research theme more broadly.
50. Only the interviewers had access to the audio recordings and transcripts of the interviews. All participants signed an informed consent form that clarified their rights regarding image and voice, including the possibility of requesting the complete deletion of all materials at any time. Additionally, decisions about data presentation were made collaboratively with participants throughout the research process to prioritise their safety and privacy. For instance, when discussing certain digital artefacts, the research team and participants collectively decided against including direct linksor reproducing content in its entirety. These decisions emerged from careful deliberations about potential risks to participant safety, platform policies, and the ephemeral nature of digital content, while ensuring that participants maintained control over how their contributions were represented in the final research.
51. Interviewees' names have been replaced to support anonymisation.

Interviewees[51]	Age	State	Description
Interviewee 6 – Bianca	26	Rio de Janeiro	Practitioner in civil society organisations and member of political or social movements
Interviewee 7 – Letícia	24	Rio de Janeiro	University student and member of political or social movements
Interviewee 8 – Michelle	34	Minas Gerais	Politician and community organiser
Interviewee 9 – Joana	29	São Paulo	Politician and community organiser
Interviewee 10 – Mariane	27	Minas Gerais	Make-up artist and community organiser
Interviewee 11 – Mariane	50[52]	Distrito Federal	Teacher (and former university professor)
Interviewee 12 – Mariane	72	Distrito Federal	Retired librarian of governmental institutions

Our semi-structured interviews focused on three themes:

- Community, affection and connections: participants' use of the internet and social media to build communities, express affection and establish connections.
- Participants' experiences with TFGBV: participants' experiences and perceptions of online misogynoir, their responses and strategies to resist.
- "The Worlds We Want": participants' visions for a more inclusive and just use of digital technologies, looking into Black Brazilian women continue to create, resist and mobilise networks.

Inspired by trauma-informed research practices, interview questions sought to avoid unnecessary exploration of trauma, informed by the notion of not "over-prob[ing] just because we could."[53] We thus limited the number of questions focused on the incidents and opted to not explore excessive details about the attacks; we avoided asking participants to repeat themselves unnecessarily; we did not include screenshots of attacks and posts or content details in this research report.

52. In this case, the participant's exact age was not recorded. However, she is a woman estimated to be in her 50s, based on contextual information shared during the interview.
53. Chayn. (2024, 31 July). How Can We Make Quantitative Research More Trauma-Informed? *Medium.* https://chayn.medium.com/how-can-we-make-quantitative-research-more-trauma-informed-8f43167378f6

Once interviews were concluded, transcriptions of interview recordings were submitted to thematic analysis, which focused on five main categories:

- Description of participants' backgrounds, political identities and forms of engagement with digital technologies.
- Examining elements that compose interviewees online presence, considering their use of social media to mobilise and express themselves.
- Context in which TFGBV occurs, including the circumstances surrounding incidents and the factors that amplify this violence.
- Consequences of TFGBV, examining the emotional and psychological impacts on participants, as well as their reactions and protection strategies.
- Ways Black women creatively use digital technologies to resist TFGBV, including a discussion on how they envision a more just digital future.

GROUP GATHERINGS WITH RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS: A PRACTICE INFORMED BY "SISTER CIRCLE" METHODOLOGY

Throughout this project, we hosted three group gatherings with research participants. This method was employed to serve a few purposes: to facilitate spaces for connection and conversations about TFGBV among Black Brazilian women; create opportunities for participants to comment, expand and disagree with our analysis, recognising the intellectual contribution participants bring to our research; and to honour our commitment to being transparent and accountable.

Our approach to these group gatherings – the facilitation, structure and intention – takes inspiration from the "Sister Circle" methodology. Created by Latoya Sherrica Johnson, Sister Circles are "group discussions or conversations among Black women arranged by a researcher to examine a specific set of topics and/or experiences," to gain an "understanding of a specific issue, topic, or phenomena impacting Black women from the perspective of Black women themselves."[54]

We included sister-circle-inspired group gatherings in our research design for a number of reasons: the emphasis on group conversations not being focus groups hosted just to extract stories, but rather a method for facilitating supportive dialogue and knowledge exchange;[55] the recognition of "researcher as participant" of the group dialogue, someone who shares their own life experiences,[56] who is "obtaining knowledge" and also "contributing knowledge

54. Johnson, L. S. (2015). *Using sista circles to examine the professional experience of contemporary Black women teachers in schools: A collective story about school culture and support.* University of Georgia. https://esploro.libs.uga.edu/esploro/outputs/doctoral/Using-sista-circles-to-examine-the/9949334542502959
55. Ibid.
56. Lacy, M. (2019, 25 April). Sista Circle Methodology. *Medium.* https://medium.com/@Marvette/sista-circle-methodology-fb37b62657bc

when appropriate";[57] the possibility of researchers not being seen as the sole experts in the room, but rather have space for all, including participants, to be seen as "contributors to this research";[58] and it being a methodology with "built-in space for emotions," to have stories shared and have them "understood without doubt."[59]

Our group gatherings were held online, with the support of video-conferencing platforms to allow for participation of research participants from various Brazilian cities.

- **The first two group gatherings were held after our team had concluded interviews with research participants.** About two thirds of research participants joined the gatherings in which we shared our early findings with the group, invited them to share their thoughts and, crucially, engage in a collective conversation about their/our experiences of TFGBV. Participants challenged and contributed to our interpretations, collectively complexified and deepened our analysis of interview data, and shared experiences among each other regarding their experiences with TFGBV.
- **The third group gathering was held after our team completed drafting the first version of this report.** A total of five research participants were present and the conversation revolved around the report findings and next steps for this research project.

CRITICAL OBSERVATION: A PRACTICE OF INTENTIONAL, CONTEXTUALISED STUDY OF PARTICIPANTS' ONLINE PRESENCE

For this research, we employed critical observation and intentional study of selected digital, publicly available artefacts from research participants. The digital artefacts we collected include social media posts, blog entries, Instagram posts and stories, and public writing in media. Their content is often related to their lived-experiences as Black Brazilian women, their participation in hashtags and/or online debates, their publications related to feminism, anti-racism, anti-LGBTQI+, as well as their experiences outside of activism, including their personal and professional lives. Considering the decision made with participants' of anonymising their participation, these texts are not reproduced in their entirety in this report: we opted to include adapted versions of these texts, being careful to offer context and exclude details that may identify participants.

57. Johnson, L. S. (2015). Op. cit.
58. Nathan, B., Love, R., & Carlson, L. (2023). An Autoethnographic Reflection from Two Black Women Ph.D.'s and Their White Woman Advisor on the Use and Impact of Sista Circle Methodology in the Dissertation Process. *The Qualitative Report.* https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2023.5577
59. Ibid.

Our decision not to extract posts without context or conduct analysis of massive data sets allows us to employ a critical, contextualised observation of participants' online presence and conduct a qualitative analysis of selected texts. The selection of texts and our subsequent analysis is informed by our prior engagement with the ecosystems of Black Brazilian women communities online (and offline) and by a rigorous deep reading of these artefacts in relation to data collected in interviews and group gatherings.

As researchers, we have prior engagement and participation in different spaces of Black Brazilian women's (digital and offline) organising to varying degrees over the years, being ourselves members of some of the online communities research participants mention. Many of the blogs, online communities and publications described by research participants are places we, the researchers, have been following for years, where we have published our own writing, and/or engaged with discussions and events. Some of the examples cited during interviews are incidents that we had witnessed ourselves, prior to beginning this research. We have known some of the interviewees and/or followed some of them throughout the past decade due to their online presence and digital activism.

Our positions as both researchers and, to some extent, members of the same groups as some of our participants offers us access to these artefacts as well as much of the rich context required to analyse them qualitatively. We are indebted to researchers such as Catherine Knight Steele and Dulci Lima who have brilliantly articulated similar approaches to critical analysis of digital Black feminism in their own work.[60]

This approach to critical observation allowed us to analyse participants' digital presence in a way that is attentive to context, authorship, and meaning. Rather than isolating online content from the social and political environments in which it circulates, we considered how these artefacts relate to broader dynamics discussed during interviews and group gatherings. While this method does not aim for generalisability, it offers a way to examine how participants articulate their experiences, positions and strategies in public-facing digital spaces. It also enables us to connect individual expressions to collective patterns, without assuming uniformity or coherence across different contexts.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

While the qualitative approach adopted in this research provides rich, situated insights into participants' experiences, there are several limitations to consider. First, the relatively small number of interviews conducted thus far does not fully

60. These texts have been mentioned earlier in this introduction.

capture the diversity of experiences among Black Brazilian women. The sample reflects a group of women who are engaged in political and digital activism, or who have access to networks of solidarity and institutional support.

In addition, our methodological decision to rely on critical observation of curated digital artefacts introduces its own constraints. The digital materials we analysed reflect a subset of online content, namely, posts that are public and situated within our social and activist networks. This approach, while contextually rich, may over-represent politically engaged or culturally visible expressions of resistance, while underrepresenting quieter or more vernacular forms of engagement. Furthermore, as researchers who are ourselves embedded in these digital ecosystems, our interpretations are inevitably shaped by proximity, familiarity and shared positionalities. While this positioning enhances our understanding through experiential knowledge, it also underscores the value of community-centred research approaches. Additionally, the ephemeral nature of digital content, which is subject to deletion, editing and platform restructuring, poses challenges to the long-term replicability and stability of our dataset.

Despite these limitations, we believe that our methodological approach offers valuable contributions to understanding how TFGBV operates in the lives of Black Brazilian women. Rather than striving for universality or statistical generalisation, this research embraces depth, complexity and relational knowledge. We hope that by articulating these limitations transparently, we not only strengthen the integrity of our findings, but also invite future research to expand, diversify and challenge the terrain we map here. We urge and welcome more research that engages further with the realities of Black Brazilian women with TFGBV, to both complement and expand the findings we present here.

Spaces we've carved out: Black Brazilian women's expression and organising online

As a teenager in Pará, Flávia (37) initially turned to the internet to find people who liked the same music, movies and anime as she did. Having just transferred to an elite private school, where most of the other kids came from a more affluent background, she found herself in what she called a "thorny situation." Flávia looked to online communities to find people "who [she] had just so, so much more connection with." She developed a community of friends online and, with time, as she entered university and became engaged with student organising, the internet also became a space for her to express her political views.

Taking her engagement with feminist organising, as well as with anti-racist, abolitionist organising to these online communities, collective blogs and social media platforms cultivated by feminist activists was a natural progression for her. At the time of our interview, Flávia had accumulated years of organising in political parties and feminist movements, extensive experience with public writing (across media channels, blogs and her own social media) and digital activism.

As we talk, she alludes to some of the "problematic sides" of commercial social media we have today, but also describes the early 2010s as a time where some "fantastic things happened online." Referencing her engagement with feminist and Black feminist communities online at that time, she explains:

> We carved out this space for relationships and exchanges, really. There were many conceptions that were very different [across the political spectrum], which were also different among us [feminists], but we didn't always have the space [to have these nuanced discussions in mainstream politics]. Because in the offline space, feminist debates and Black social movement debates... they were very targeted, right? They were put in a "little box" that was never going to engage with mainstream politics. [...] So, the internet for me was also a space where I felt: "Here, I can debate." I can write what I'm thinking about the penal state, I can relate it to the genocide of Black youth, and the deaths due to illegal abortion. [I realised] the internet isn't just a space where I make friends, where I meet people I'm connecting with: it's a space that has an impact on activism.

Looking to the early 2010s as a reference point is not incidental. In addition to being an important time for Flávia's own trajectory as an organiser, the perception of this time as one when nuanced conversations about issues that matter for Black Brazilian women were taking place online is something many other interviewees shared with us. This period was characterised by a growing presence of Black Brazilian women across social media – as well as the discourse they were producing – and feminist activism on the internet.[61] Black Brazilian

61. Lima, D. C. (2020). Op. cit.

women's organising and writing at this time introduced a new vocabulary to online publics in the country, as well as disseminated diverse Black feminist thought.[62] Blogs, social media pages, online groups and networks were emerging: Black Brazilian women were finding new channels for expression and ways to share their experiences and seek belonging.[63] Not coincidentally, this was a time when many of our interviewees became engaged with activism and/or when they found online spaces where they shared their experiences with other Black women across the country.

As Flávia points out, this was made possible by a practice of Black Brazilian women "carving out" the spaces to have conversations, negotiations, intellectual elaboration and political analysis; in other words, these spaces were not necessarily open or welcoming to the discourse and organising Black Brazilian women were building. As Lima highlights in her research, "Black [Brazilian] women had been experiencing, with online media, the novelty of expressing demands publicly, at any time, without intermediaries. With that, they also ended up exposing themselves to haters, resentful individuals that feel entitled to invest against minorities in online spaces".[64] In subsequent chapters, we expand on the impacts and consequences of these attacks. For now, let's look at "carving out".

WHAT DOES "CARVING OUT" SPACES FOR BLACK WOMEN ONLINE LOOK LIKE FOR OUR INTERVIEWEES?

Describing the emergence of feminist and Black feminist blogs, online groups and digital communities as being "carved out" resonates with what we heard across interviews and group gatherings. **Black Brazilian women interviewed for this project both acknowledge that commercial social media platforms and mainstream digital technologies are not designed for (and can be hostile to) Black women and talk about the value of "carving out" their own spaces across the internet: spaces to share experiences, engage in discussions with other Black women, build connections and foster a sense of community.** The notion of "carving out" is reminiscent of the ideas of "findings chasms" and "digital alchemy", articulated by scholars Knight Steele and Bailey, as mentioned in the introduction.[65]

62. Ibid.
63. Barros, T. N. (2021). Cited in Lima, D. (2020); Dulcilei Lima states that: "Black feminist women, in this way, seem to rely on social media as a space for sharing and exchange, but also as an environment where they can exercise forms of participation in society's political agendas." Lima, D. C. (2020). Op. cit.
64. Lima, D. C. (2020). Op. cit.
65. Steele, C. K. (2021). Op. cit.; Bailey, M. (2018). Op. cit.

Exploring this idea of the value of carving out their own spaces online, we highlight the following themes from interviews and group gatherings: Self and collective expression, identity building and sharing experiences with other Black women; and engagement with Black feminist discourse and activism. These themes are inherently intertwined, and each of them contains limitless opportunities for further exploration; but for the purposes of this text, we share an overview below.

SELF AND COLLECTIVE EXPRESSION, IDENTITY BUILDING AND SHARING EXPERIENCES WITH OTHER BLACK WOMEN

Organiser and communicator, Ana has been embedded in some of the same online communities that Flávia referenced earlier in this chapter. Ana, now 35, created a blog in the early 2010s[66] to share her experiences as a Black fat lesbian woman shortly after entering university and engaging with social movements. Her public writing, infused with her lived experiences as well as her engagement in women's movements, was crucial for her to develop her self-perception. In our conversation, she shares that though she had suffered episodes of violence and prejudice related to her sexuality throughout her life, "it wasn't until [she] joined social movements that [she] named these things":

> Between 2012 and 2014, I was already involved in feminist groups on the internet. So I was reading theories, discussing with people, and exchanging a lot of things. I remember taking part in a very important community of Black women bloggers. There was the time when intersectional feminism was a big part of the conversation and so on. I was able to connect with people online through these groups [...] Starting in 2013, I began writing on a blog, which is this space I created from my self-perception, in the sense of recognition. Because up until that point in this process, everything I'm telling you, I didn't have an identity. I thought I was morena, like my mom, who is in fact a light-skinned Black woman, like me. My family did not have a positive view of Blackness, and so I didn't have one either. This changed when I started accessing these [online] groups, concomitantly writing the blog, and attending [social movement in-person] meetings.

66. It is important to note that, in the early 2010s, internet access in Brazil was still in the process of becoming more widespread, though significant socioeconomic and regional inequalities persisted. In 2011, only 38% of the Brazilian population were internet users, and household connectivity varied drastically by income level: while 91% of upper-income households had internet access, this figure dropped to just 10% among the poorest households (see: https://cetic.br/media/analises/apresentacao-tic-domicilios-2011.pdf). Brazilian socioeconomic classes are commonly categorised as A, B, C, D and E, with classes D and E comprising the lowest-income groups, typically households living on up to two minimum wages per month. Among these groups, internet access often occurred in LAN houses (paid public access centers), which continued to play an important role in digital inclusion: 60% of internet users from classes D and E accessed the internet through such venues. Mobile internet access was also rapidly expanding: between 2010 and 2011, the number of people accessing the internet via mobile phones grew from five to 18 million, with 81% of that growth driven by prepaid data plans. Public initiatives such as the Plano Nacional de Banda Larga (National Broadband Plan, 2010) and the Banda Larga nas Escolas program (Broadband in Schools, launched in 2008) aimed to expand access, particularly in public schools, but faced limitations related to infrastructure and connection quality.

Ana describes public writing on her blog as a tool for self-expression and her participation in these online communities of Black women as essential for understanding her own lived experiences. Growing up in a family where their Blackness was rejected and avoided, it was through her engagement with these online communities that she developed racial awareness.

Between discussing Black feminist theory, joining long discussions with other Black women and writing her own life, Ana fostered her own identity and established a dialogue with thousands of readers:

> This blogging thing worked out well. I really enjoyed writing. I'd never practiced writing before, but I liked simply being able to get it out of my head and into a place. At the time, it was interesting because people would read the texts and comment. That was really cool, being able to see feedback. [...] I started to have some kind of relevance: people started calling me to public debates and to take part in conversation circles. Because the issues I raised on the blog weren't topics that were being widely talked about at the time, were they? Nowadays it's much more common, but back then it wasn't.

Ana has an important point: the themes she has written about were not widely discussed. As readers of her former blog and members of some of the same online communities as Ana, we were able to witness how influential her writing was for shaping a conversation around Black womanhood, fatness and lesbianity. Her relatable writing would bring to light the experiences of those simultaneously impacted by racism, fatphobia, lesbophobia and misogyny. In the quote above, Ana also raises an important point about how, in writing in their own, unmediated blogs and social media pages, Black Brazilian women would share their experiences with one another, establishing both exchange and connection while actively breaking silences and creating spaces for multifaceted Black women's identities to flourish.

Using digital technologies as tools for sharing knowledge and reflecting on their experiences is a common thread among the interviewees. For Lúcia (39), a technologist who entered university in her early thirties, posting about her experiences with higher education and with her profession was a way to both question the lack of diversity in those spaces and to share with other Black women what possibilities could be available for them:

> For those of us who have access to certain spaces [such as academia], we start to think that it's natural for everyone to have access to them. Over time, you realise, by glancing a little to the sides, meeting some people, that there are many who actually don't have access, that there are many women, for example, saying, "Technology and programming aren't

> for me; I'm not going to learn that." When I was producing this kind of content, I intended to share with other women that it is indeed possible to learn, to access university, to become a technologist.

In Lúcia's posts, we found encouragement for Black women seeking to enter STEM fields and universities in general; guidance for Black people of all ages interested in accessing university; content about literature and gaming; and sincere reflections about her everyday experiences as a Black woman in her 30s going back to university while being a mother of a teenager. As the only Black woman over 30 in her university class, in Lúcia's online presence we saw her own search for other Black women in similar contexts and an effort to convey to other Black women "who wanted to arrive there" how to do it. It was a deliberate strategy to show Black women who wanted to or who were already pursuing similar paths that "they were not alone". To Lúcia, sharing her experiences and learning about fellow Black women's own lives was about uncovering how, even though certain places such as academia and STEM professions "have been historically elitist in Brazil", **"this does not have to be the absolute truth; things do not have to be limited for us, we can do other things."**

To many of our interviewees – like Flávia (37), Ana (35) and Lúcia (39) – attending universities represents an important convergence point in their trajectories, which impacts their lives online. In August 2012, as a result of decades of organising by Black social movements, Brazil rolled out legislation to democratise Black people's access to universities across the country, which increases the number of Black women attending academic spaces. As they navigate the difficulties of occupying seats at highly elitist and, up until that moment, majority white institutions, Black Brazilian women were turning to social media for self and collective expression and for sharing experiences. It was a search for belonging, a strategy to navigate the sense of isolation and a place to denounce the injustices they lived and witnessed.

The role of the amplification of Black women's access to universities combined with this "carving out" of spaces in the internet both also play a big role in Black Brazilian women's engagement with Black feminist thinking,[67] as we will see in the next section.

ENGAGEMENT WITH BLACK FEMINIST DISCOURSE AND ORGANISING

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the last decade was one in which Black Brazilian women from different parts of the country were coming together

67. Lima, D. C. (2020). Op. cit.

to dive in, complicate and grow the long-standing history of Black feminist organising and theorising in Brazil, as well as to invite new generations to join the conversation. The year of 2012 has been described as "the first great Black [Brazilian] women March online" and, in almost all of our interviews and group gatherings, research participants pointed out their personal exposure to and engagement with Black-women-led online communities during this time as a fundamental part of their trajectories.[68] As many Black women enter universities in this decade, they are introduced to Black feminist thinking[69] – whether in formal classes, public debates or through student organising, while also looking to the work of key Black women organisations (such as Criola and Geledés) and engaging with online communities on social media to deepen and further complicate debates about Black feminism.

Ana describes how these communities were formative to her own engagement with Black feminist thought:

> Online groups, feminist groups, Black feminist groups also trained me a lot from a theoretical and methodological point of view. We shared texts from both Black Brazilian feminists and Black feminists across the world. There were people who translated texts that hadn't been published in Brazil yet. For example, the official publication of Angela Davis' work recently arrived in Brazilian bookstores, you know? Imagine ten, fifteen years ago: at that time, people were already translating a lot of things and there was already a transfeminist movement too, which is when I also started reading about transfeminism. I began to meet many, many activists, who at the time weren't really activists, but who were also starting their own thing.

What Ana refers to here is the collective articulations of Black feminist thought that took place in many of the online groups and communities emerging during this time, which is seen as essential to the formation of many activists, thinkers and organisers. Letícia (24), for example, is a university student, talks about her engagement with the internet beginning around 2015-2016, a period which coincided with a significant surge in feminist discourse on social media platforms in Brazil:

> My family is not a family of militants. That's very funny to me, because everyone in my [student movement] "bubble" has a father who is a trade unionist, a mother who has been a party leader, people who have been this, been that. My family has no tradition of militancy. Perhaps it has a more ancestral tradition of resistance, because my family is all Black

68. Thiane Neves cited in Lima (2024).
69. Lima, D. C. (2024). *#Conectadas: O Feminismo Negro Nas Redes Sociais*

> and Indigenous. My great-grandmother was the daughter of an enslaved woman. My grandmother is an Indigenous person. It's not necessarily [traditional, organised] militancy. (...) So, the internet was very much my guide in this sense. At the age of 15, 16, I followed this "boom", on social networks, of a narrative dispute about feminism. That's also how I think I started my activism. Of course, [my activism] includes [struggle against] racism, because I've suffered racism since I was six years old.

As a student organiser, it was initially through Black feminist discourse on social media and on the internet that Letícia accessed what she called her "foundation" for her activism, enabling her to engage in discussions about feminism and the impact of racism, ultimately "guiding her activism".

Across our interviews and group gatherings, we have heard countless references to some of the most prominent groups and platforms seen by research participants as important in their personal trajectories. Some of these groups include Geledés Instituto da Mulher Negra, Blogueiras Negras, Preta & Acadêmica, Criola, Rede de Mulheres Negras Ciberativas, among others.[70]

Research participants also point to these and other groups as responsible for bringing Black feminist conversations to broader audiences and reaching Brazil's cultural and political agenda. As Lima elaborates in her research, the emergence of Black Brazilian feminist discourse on the internet, which coincides with the broadening of Black people's access to the university in the country and is part of the legacy of Black Brazilian women's decades-long activism, contributed to disseminating a vocabulary that facilitated Black Brazilian women (and their priorities) to participate more widely in society's political agendas.[71] In the next chapters, the topic of carving out spaces online to dispute Brazil's political agenda more broadly will be further explored, as we get to know stories such as that of Joana (29) and Michelle (34), two politicians and community organisers who gained notoriety in the 2020s and who turned to social media to connect with their constituencies.

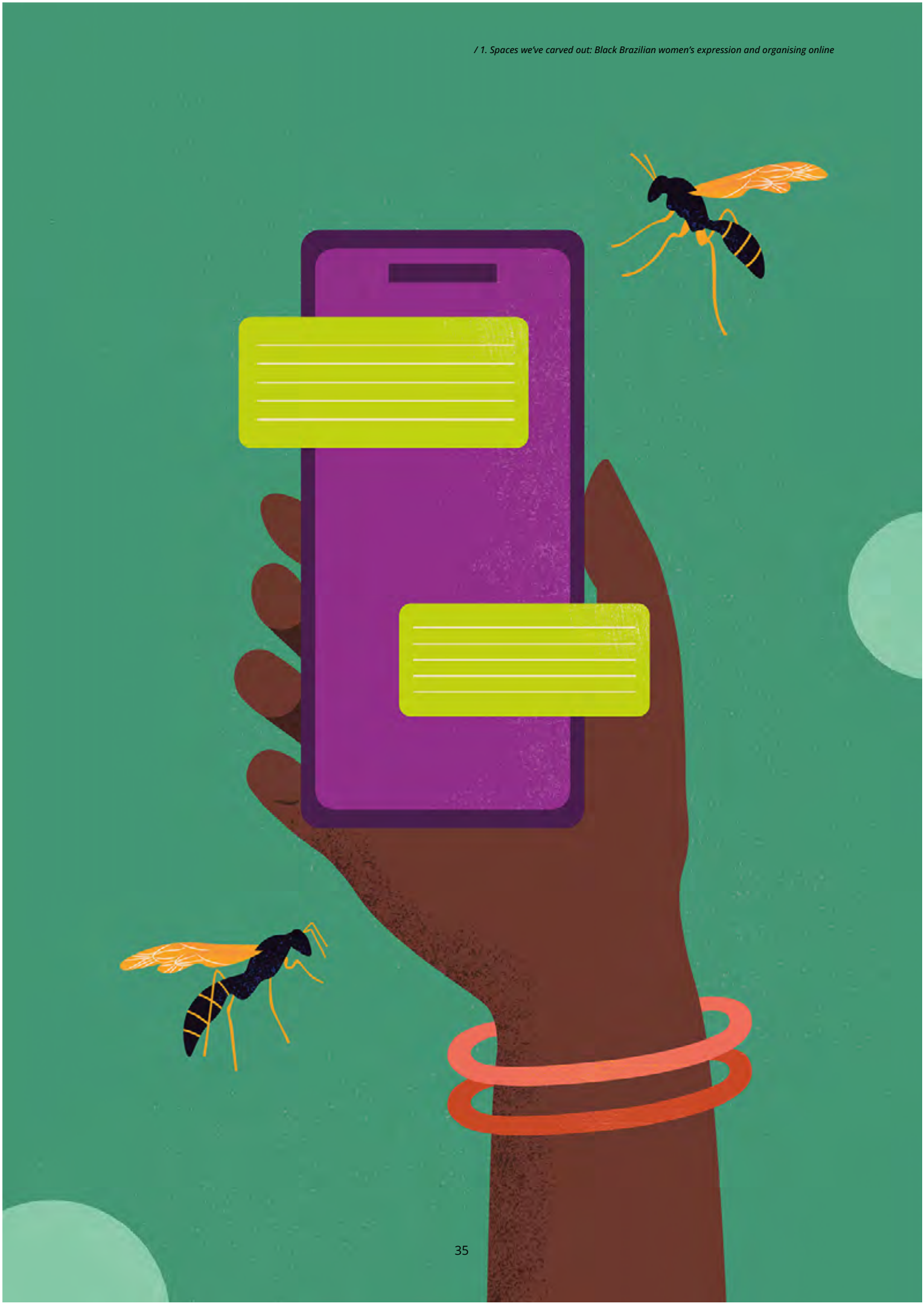
70. These are Black feminist platforms and organisations in Brazil dedicated to amplifying the voices of Black women, promoting racial and gender justice, and challenging structural inequalities through activism, digital communication and knowledge production. For instance, Geledés and Criola are longstanding organisations focused on advocacy and public policy; Blogueiras Negras and Preta & Acadêmica are digital platforms that centre Black women's narratives and intellectual production; while Rede de Mulheres Negras Ciberativistas mobilise online activism through an intersectional feminist lens.
71. Lima, D. C. (2024). Op. cit.

n this chapter, we have explored how through "carving out" their/our own spaces online, Black Brazilian women have made room for relationship-building and knowledge exchange amongst each other, found avenues for collective and self-expression and engagement with Black feminist discourse and activism, and influenced cultural and political agendas across the country.

But as we have briefly mentioned earlier in this chapter, "carving out" spaces for Black Brazilian women online was not without challenges. Though the internet amplified Black Brazilian women's discursive reach, it continues to be a space where "values of exclusion and stereotypes are reproduced".[72] As Letícia described during an interview: "Technology is an intermediary for my activism. But I've come to realise its cruelties: because the internet has made a lot of things easier, but it has also come to facilitate a lot of bad things," and the impacts are often felt by Black women.

In the next chapters, we will take a closer look at the ways in which online spaces are embedded with racism, sexism and misogynoir in Brazil and its impacts on the experiences of Black Brazilian women online.

72. dos Santos, C. M. S. (2018). Pesquisa ativista e a comunicação de ONGs de Mulheres Negras Brasileiras. *Revista Extraprensa, 11,* 23–36, https://doi.org/10.11606/extraprensa2018.146036



Tech-facilitated gender-based violence and online misogynoir: The experiences of Black Brazilian women

As Black Brazilian women have carved out spaces for themselves in digital environments –writing, organising and asserting their presence in political and cultural spheres – they have also become targets of tech-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV). This chapter examines this tension. In the first section of this chapter, "Writers, activists and politicians", we examine how Black Brazilian women's public writing, organising, and political engagement online have been met with attempts to delegitimise and intimidate. The stories of Ana (35), Michelle (34), Joana (29) and Maria (30) show how digital attacks, ranging from racist and sexist insults have sought to punish them for speaking out. Whether blogging about Black lesbian experiences, opening a community library or running for office, these women encountered violence aimed at discrediting their contributions and removing them from public life.

The second section, "TFGBV against Black Brazilian women who dare to reclaim tech", focuses on Black Brazilian women who face attacks as they step into professional or digital spaces not traditionally open to them, especially in technology. The experiences of Cláudia (36), Lúcia (39), Natália (72) and Beatriz (50) highlight how being a Black Brazilian woman in tech or academia is often perceived as an unwelcomed transgression. These women share experiences that show how TFGBV is deeply connected to the enforcement of racial and gendered boundaries in Brazilian society.

Finally, "Impacts of TFGBV in the lives of Black Brazilian women" discusses the consequences of these violences. In the interviews and stories we present, TFGBV has led to silencing, emotional distress, professional setbacks, and in many cases, withdrawal from public life. Some women abandon candidacies or political work, others stop writing or participating in social media altogether. For many, the trauma of violence is ongoing, manifesting in fear, self-censorship and reconfigured life paths.

Together, these sections illustrate that TFGBV is not an isolated experience, but rather systemic attempts to silence Black Brazilian women and limit their participation in shaping public, political and professional life.

Writers, activists and politicians: Attacks to Black women's expression, organising and political projects

One evening in 2016, Ana (35) was on her way back home from a party when her phone seemed to stop working properly: "When I tried to unlock it, there were so many notifications I couldn't open anything." A few hours earlier, she had posted a photo on Facebook, in which she appeared nude in her bedroom. The self-portrait included a short caption about self-esteem and an invitation for other fat women to exercise self-compassion. "You couldn't see my body explicitly, but you could tell I had no clothes on." Her Facebook page, which by then had thousands of followers, received so many racist, sexist, anti-fat comments that Ana's mobile phone "crashed completely."

Since the early 2010s, Ana had been organising social movements, participating in online communities of Black feminist women, and posting feminist, anti-racist reflections. As we have seen in the previous chapter, her public writing, on her blog, as well as on her social media, covered her experiences as Black lesbian and reflections about the broader impacts of anti-Blackness, misogyny, lesbophobia and fatphobia in Brazilian society. Written in first person and with honest, critical prose, her blog and social media gained thousands of followers and Ana became a significant young voice in Black Brazilian feminist discourse online.[73]

That evening, going through hundreds of comments and DMs attacking her, as well as messages from friends and followers concerned about her wellbeing, Ana realised she had suffered a coordinated attack:

> There were over 4,000 comments, many racist, xenophobic, fatphobic, sexist insults. Girls who were more knowledgeable about tech said: "We think your photo and your profile ended up in groups of masculinists." That was it, I was the target of the moment. I was really scared, my inbox had many messages, ranging from people saying that I should inflict self-harm, to people saying, "I have your phone number, I know where you live."

73. The researchers, together with the research participants, collectively chose not to include a link or reproduce the content of this digital artefact in its entirety. Please refer to our methodology for more information on how this decision was made.

The violent character of messages and comments she received was multi-layered: they invoked threats to Ana's physical integrity, expressed anti-fat, anti-Black sentiment, included harmful mentions of self-harm, contained sexual harassment and targeted Ana's intellectual contributions. The coordinated nature of the attacks was not uncommon at the time. As Ana mentioned in our conversation – and as she wrote in one of her posts shortly after this incident – it was a time when several sexist and misogynistic groups and networks, misogynistic were being articulated in the country, across social media platforms and other online spaces.[74] Ana shared that it was through her contact with fellow feminists and Black feminists that had been following the growth and the tactics of these harmful groups that she realised where the attacks she received had probably emerged from.

This incident was not an isolated one. During the years when her public writing was more prominent, Ana would frequently receive comments and direct messages containing violent, anti-fat, racist, sexist content and in many instances her photos and images of her would be re-shared without her consent across groups on social media where attacks were coordinated. In a public post in one of her social media accounts at the time, she collected screenshots of attacks she would receive and wrote about the complexity of wanting to continue to write and carry her feminist organising and it seemingly leading to more incidents of TFGBV: "The more I stand firm, the more they try to bend me to break me in half."[75]

Many of these attacks also sought to question and deny the validity of Ana's work, insinuating that her writing and her posts were not worthy of the engagement and attention they got. A few years later, Ana wrote about these attacks and pointed out how she had grown to be afraid of exposing herself, of sharing her opinion, of writing about things she liked and things she had learned.[76]

Looking back at the impact of these experiences of misogynoir and TFGBV, Ana shares with us that this contributed to her feeling as if her organising, her writing and her perspectives were not worthy of being published online:

> This episode contributed to my low intellectual self-esteem. Because though I had been writing and publishing, at the time I couldn't recognise the value of my own work. That episode worsened these issues and made me stop writing and publishing.

74. Valente, M. (2023). *Misoginia na internet, de Mariana Valente.* Editora Fósforo. https://www.fosforoeditora.com.br/produto/misoginia-na-internet-uma-decada-de-disputas-por-direitos-70193
75. The researchers, together with the research participants, collectively chose not to include a link or reproduce the content of this digital artefact in its entirety. Please refer to our methodology for more information on how this decision was made.
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TFGBV has led Ana to stop writing publicly, something that is similar to what many other research participants shared with us. Later in this chapter, where we explore further the consequences of TFGBV, we will dive deeper into this topic. For now, we would like to turn to the ways the attacks targeted Ana's intellectual work.

Throughout this research, several interviewees have described their experiences of TFGBV as processes that, successfully or not, are linked to triggering and/or amplifying the notions of Black Brazilian women being inadequate contributors to public debate and conversations about politics, culture, society, race relations and social issues in Brazil. While researching hate speech in Brazil, Trindade argues the existence of Black Brazilian women who are socially ascending and posting about it is something that destabilises the imaginary hierarchy maintained since colonial times and preferred by white supremacy logic in the country.[77] Black women between ages 20 and 35, who have varying degrees of social mobility, represent 81% of victims of racist speech on social media in Brazil.[78] The author found that the posts, "jokes" and attacks targeting Black Brazilian women attempt at portraying Black women as "others", whether as "invaders"; as "delinquent"; or as "uncultured" – especially when Black Brazilian women access (or appear to be accessing) positions of relatively higher social status.

As we will see in this section, in analysing the data we've gathered through interviews, these categories emerge again and again: Ana's story with TFGBV can be interpreted as one example of how these categories have been mobilised against her, demeaning and dismissing the value of her public writing and attempting to undermine her ability to do her work. It is important to emphasise here that we interpret this constraint on the existence of Black women who dare to express themselves not as something new, that happens exclusively in relation to TFGBV, but rather as a pillar of the expression of racism and sexism in Brazilian culture. Gonzalez, when analysing racism and sexism in Brazilian culture, explains that the accepted place for Black women in this society is that of domestic worker, servant or prostitute and demonstrates how the existence of Black women who have the audacity or daring to express themselves generates in this society an embarrassment, a reaction, a backlash.[79]

"What is that little woman doing?": Daring to start a community library honouring a Black woman

Michelle's story is another example of how these categories are mobilised. In 2017, she (34) started a community project focusing on youth from marginalised

77. Trindade, L.V.P. (2019). Op. cit.
78. Trindade, L.V.P. (2018). Op. cit.
79. Gonzalez, L. (1983). Op. cit.

communities. As the coordinator of a public youth centre in her small town, she found herself being targeted by racist and misogynistic attacks from what she identifies as "far-right groups."[80] Her experience with TFGBV started in 2019, when she led the opening of a community library, which young people she worked with had collectively chosen to name after the politician Marielle Franco:[81]

> In the morning after posting about the opening event, my phone had countless calls from my boss at the time [a government official], as well as countless Facebook notifications and messages on Instagram calling me names. My boss was angry with me and asked me to remove the post because it had generated "negative repercussions." As I deleted the post, I saw all kinds of comments and attacks. It was the first time I'd been attacked on social media. The attacks included gendered and racialised insults: "Oh, what is that little woman doing?," "Don't let your children visit that leftist library," "This one is trying to end up like Marielle." They were horrible.

In addition to a blatant opposition to Michelle's political positions – or the political positions her attackers assumed she had, based on the name of the community library she was announcing– these attacks also carried an attempt to belittle Michelle's work as a community leader and especially with regards to her work creating a community library. The comments that referred to Michelle as a mulherzinha (which can be translated as "little woman"), questioned her ability and/or her power to open a library ("What does she think she is doing?"), and sought to de-authorise her as someone who could lead a project centred on democratising access to knowledge for her community. Once again, stereotypes of Black Brazilian women not belonging in spaces such as libraries, universities, higher education institutions and not being seen as valid intellectuals, knowledge creators, and educators are invoked. This online harassment thus extends beyond digital spaces, creating tangible barriers to Black Brazilian women's professional mobility and career advancement, effectively reinforcing offline exclusion from academic and intellectual spheres.

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80. In Brazil, the far-right is not a homogenous or centrally organised group, but rather a diffuse and complex ecosystem. Scholars like Camila Rocha (2021) and Marcos Nobre (2020) describe this ecosystem as a convergence of moral conservatism, anti-feminism, racism and authoritarianism, expressed across political, religious and digital spheres. These actors often act independently of formal political parties, and include both men and women, many of whom are aligned with evangelical movements or online disinformation networks. Researchers such as Esther Solano and Rosana Pinheiro-Machado have shown how resentment toward feminism, anti-racism and progressive politics fuels grassroots mobilisations. Importantly, due to Brazil's vast territorial and social diversity, far-right activity varies widely across contexts: in small towns, local dynamics give rise to their own versions of far-right organising, often rooted in personal networks, religious conservatism and local power disputes. As such, "far-right groups" in Brazil must be understood as a multifaceted and localised phenomenon rather than a single, unified movement. Cesarino also points out the role of technical infrastructure and digital technologies in the growth of the far-right and populism, post-truth, denialism and conspiracism. Please see: Rocha, C. (2021). *Menos Marx, mais Mises: O liberalismo e a nova direita no Brasil*. Todavia; Nobre, M. (2020). *Ponto-final: A guerra de Bolsonaro contra a democracia*. Marcos Nobre; Solano, E. (2018). *Crise da democracia e extremismos de direita*. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Brasil; Pinheiro-Machado, R. (2019). *Amanhã vai ser maior: O que aconteceu com o Brasil e possíveis rotas de fuga para a crise atual*. Planeta; Cesarino, L. (2022). *O mundo do avesso – Verdade e política na era digital*. Ubu Editora.
81. Marielle Franco was a Black bisexual politician from Rio, who defended a feminist, anti-racist, progressive agenda and who had been executed the previous year.

Also worthy of note is the aggressive and threatening nature of the comments and attacks, which contained direct threats to her physical integrity. At the time of our interviews, while working as an elected city councilwoman, Michelle has continued to face attacks:

> I started recognising the actors of the far-right in my town. They still persecute me. I became their target. For them, a Black woman, on the left, who mobilises young people is absurd. Every post I make has comments from them. I often get screenshots of people saying, "I'm in this [WhatsApp] group, look at what they're saying about you."

These coordinated groups have created disinformation campaigns, trying to discredit Michelle and question whether she should occupy a seat in the legislature.[82] As Michelle eloquently described to us, these actors see a Black woman in politics as something "absurd". The attacks align with the stereotypical tropes: these groups have used WhatsApp to spread false accusations of her having received money illegally for her campaign; they used images from her parliamentary aides' social media accounts in which they questioned the content of a controversial bill to claim Michelle did not observe "decorum"; when Michelle received youth-led groups in her office and held a "rhyme battle" with them, they used social media to accuse her of "playing indecent music" inside the legislative house.

In our interviews, Michelle recounts how these attacks, designed to undermine her political performance, left her fearful. In addition to attacks against her political project as an elected member of the council, the TFGBV incidents also attacked Michelle as a person: surveilling her personal behaviour and associating elements of Black Brazilian culture with a notion of inadequacy and non-belonging to the institutions of Brazilian politics (which have historically been occupied mostly by white men).

As this research was wrapping up, Michelle had distanced herself from institutional politics. Due to the frequency as well as the severity of the attacks and threats she had been subjected to – both online and offline – Michelle made the decision to step away from the political scene to preserve her mental, emotional and physical wellbeing, as well as that of her family.

Standing up for reproductive justice, anti-racism as a Black lesbian

Joana, a 29-year-old politician who started her career as a student organiser and feminist activist shares a similar story. When she ran for city council in the 2020 municipal elections, she turned to social media to connect with her constituency:

82. This case (and many others that are public knowledge) show that, in addition to the misogyny and racism already present in Brazilian society, there is a professionalisation underway of these misogynist and racist political groups that often conduct strategies to attack women parliamentarians, especially Black and trans women, as their main agenda.

> My first electoral race was in 2020. I was elected councilwoman with 4,405 votes, in an unusual election: there were no street campaigns, since it was during the pandemic and I was relatively unknown in the city. I thought: "What am I going to do?" I picked up my phone and started messaging people, asking if they agreed to a video call. [...] We set up a daily schedule of 15 to 20 calls, spending 15 minutes with each person, presenting our political project, and asking for support. This resulted in votes.

In 2022, while running for federal deputy, she adopted a similar campaign strategy on social media. Her content went viral, especially on TikTok where her posts with feminism and anti-racist discourse gained traction. In a country where many Black women face gender-based violence and reproductive injustices, Joana's videos and posts explain the importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights, denounce gender-based violence, expose sexist, racist and transphobic discourse popularises in Brazilian popular culture and politics, and more.[83]

Her publications have helped her connect with voters and her broader constituency, while simultaneously placing her at the centre of coordinated attacks by what she identifies as "groups associated with the far-right", who harassed her with racist and LGBT-phobic comments, as well as exposed her and her family's personal data:

> I was posting a lot of content about abortion rights. I also took some terribly problematic songs that described sexual violence and recorded "reaction videos" to spark dialogue. Those videos started going viral quickly. Then my content fell into a group of anti-rights actors. They took my videos and shared them in a Facebook group with over 27,000 people, who started organising attacks on my social media pages. They began creating memes and sending racist, LGBTQ-phobic comments.

As data was being collected for this research, Joana was going through another political campaign, running in the municipal elections and following a similar communications strategy. During the period of this research, an intentional observation of Joana's social media presence showed us how she continues to receive derogatory gendered and racialised attacks on social media, especially in response to videos in which she addresses issues related to gender-based violence and/or sexual and reproductive health and rights. Many of these attacks are directed at Joana's sexuality and physical appearance, calling her "manly" – a common trope for many Black Brazilian women, especially those who are dark skinned, queer and others who do not fit standards of "femininity" often linked

83. The researchers, together with the research participants, collectively chose not to include a link or reproduce the content of this digital artefact in its entirety. Please refer to our methodology for more information on how this decision was made.

to whiteness. In response to a TikTok video in which she addresses gender-based violence, we identified an overwhelming presence of comments seeking to diverge attention from her content and suggesting she was not "a real woman" and questioning her legitimacy in "having a job addressing 'real women's' issues." Though Joana is a ciswoman, those who attack her mobilise transphobia and long-lasting racist stereotypes related to Black women's womanhood. Anti-rights actors have also tried to associate Joana to "criminal activity" and perpetuate the notion that she was a delinquent, using social media to accuse her of corruption and spreading false rumours that she had been arrested and could no longer run for office.

A political career in jeopardy due to TFGBV and online misogynoir

Maria (30), a young Black woman from the northeast of Brazil who moved to São Paulo to attend university and became involved with social movements and partisan politics. By 2016, she had notoriety as an influencer on social media:

> I was a digital influencer. After the first episode of [tech-facilitated gender-based] violence I suffered was when I realised that I needed to be more careful with my digital security, right? As I was an influencer, everything I posted on Facebook went viral, absolutely everything. And I made political comments, analysed the political situation and so on.

She was planning on running for municipal elections in 2018, when she began receiving anonymous calls, in which callers described exactly where she was: "They would tell me, 'I know you're in such-and-such neighbourhood'." The constant threats, anonymous calls detailing her movements, and the feeling of being constantly watched became unbearable:

> After this first contact [with a TFGBV incident], I realised that social networks had this very important role [of increasing my reach], but that I also became discouraged from being an influencer. I completely abandoned the role of political influencer after that.

Maria withdrew her candidacy and is no longer engaging in public writing and/or posting political content in the same ways.

In the examples we have explored in this section, Black Brazilian women had been using digital technologies to express their views, write about their experiences, denounce injustice, organise within social movements and advance their political projects. In doing this work – through practices such as public writing, posting about creating a community library, openly posting about politics and more – they were challenging social hierarchies present in Brazilian society. As we have seen, much of the TFGBV they have received has been permeated with narratives that attempt to portray Black women as unfit and/or unqualified for intellectual work, writing, working in politics and/or organising around social issues. **At the same time, beyond the mere act of being online, the fact that the content of their work made evident their intentions of bringing radical change to their communities, has also heavily influenced the attacks they suffered.**

Maria's story, as well as the other stories we've shared above, exemplify how TFGBV and misogynoir severely impact Black Brazilian women's freedom of expression and act as an obstacle to Black women's careers as politicians, as well as their trajectories as public intellectuals and organisers.

"Stirring up a hornets' nest": TFGBV against Black Brazilian women who dare to reclaim tech

At 36 years old, Cláudia, a Black Brazilian woman, decided to step away completely from her plans to work as a technologist. A mother of three with a full-time job, she had been using her limited spare time training to become a programmer. She had been part of an online group where people shared job opportunities, when someone posted a job announcement that finally seemed like a fit for her. She sent a CV. "The first online interview went well, but something felt off": The interviewer, who had announced the alleged job, was a white man in his mid-40s who asked little about Cláudia's professional experience, claimed the name of the hiring company was confidential, and commented about her physical appearance. A few days later, he messaged to invite her to the next round of interviews. The second video interview had barely started when he asked "how desperate she was," told her that he knew of "easier ways for her to earn money," exposed himself and proceeded to sexually harass her.

This story illustrates how Black Brazilian women attempting to enter professional fields dominated by white men often face gendered and racialised harassment online. As we will see in this section, TFGBV and online misogynoir affect Black Brazilian women across living in many different realities: to be targeted, they do not necessarily need to be occupying high-profile positions such as working in media and journalism, and/or involved with political organising, but the mere involvement with certain professions and/or disciplines can lead to misogynistic, racist responses.

Misogynistic, racist reactions to Black Brazilians socially ascending and/or occupying (or aspiring to occupy) professional positions in fields predominantly occupied by white Brazilians are not uncommon. In her seminal essay, Gonzalez exposes racism and sexism in Brazilian culture, explaining how the country has naturalised seeing Black women exclusively as "cooks, cleaners, servants, bus changers or prostitutes" and only accepting them in hypersexualised roles.[84]

Brazilian researcher Cida Bento evokes "the whiteness pact" – a non-verbalised agreement of self-preservation among members of the dominant group – to

84. Gonzalez, L. (1983). Op. cit.

analyse how power dynamics emerge in the workplace. Bento explains that, under the rationale of Brazilian race politics, whiteness is threatened by Black Brazilians' social ascendance: "Black people seem to be invading that which white people consider their private space, their territory. To them, Black people are out of place when they occupy prestigious positions and places of power."[85]

TFGBV IN STEM FIELDS

Throughout this research project, we found that the rejection of Black Brazilian women in professional spaces outside stereotypically assigned roles is strongly related to TFGBV. Women aspiring to or working in STEM – a field heavily dominated by white men – are particularly targeted with misogynoir and TFGBV.

For instance, Lúcia, a 39-year-old developer and IT manager, used social media to "democratise access to spaces that have been historically elitist." Becoming a mother in her early 20s, she didn't enrol in university for a STEM degree until about a decade after having her child. As one of the oldest students in her class and the only mother, she found that being active in online communities helped her feel less alone, connect with women in related professions, and help those from similar backgrounds find university access information.

By publishing content about her experiences in tech, tips for young professionals, and comments on racial injustices, she cultivated a small following. It was not long before she began receiving attacks:

> I've suffered some of the worst types of virtual attacks you can imagine. [...] I once gave a talk [at an event] about the challenges of being an undergraduate student in your 30s, especially for people from lower-income neighbourhoods and who lack access to quality education. People came at me hard for that on social media. There was a time when I filed at least two [legal] complaints a week due to these attacks and threats.

Lúcia argues that, though her content was not explicitly political, merely being a Black woman producing "content about tech" was enough to incite a reaction:

> In the online professional communities I participated in, we interviewed Black people about their careers, we'd highlight Black streamers in the gaming industry. That was it, it was enough to get attacked. [...] No matter how simple what you're going to say is, as a Black woman talking about tech, you're going into a hornet's nest.

85. Bento, C. (2022). *O pacto da branquitude.* Companhia das Letras. https://www.companhiadasletras.com.br/livro/9786559212323/o-pacto-da-branquitud

When the attacks became frequent and escalated into more severe threats, Lúcia stopped creating content:

> Every day you get a DM from someone threatening your life, saying you're despicable, using racially charged slurs. The heaviest attacks I've received are the ones saying they'll "hunt me down" and so on. That's mentally exhausting. That was one of the reasons for stopping. I want to start [posting] again [eventually]. For now, I'm still processing it.

We find that the notion of the "hornets' nest," as Lúcia skilfully described, is an adequate metaphor for the hostile environments of online communities of tech professionals in Brazil, where Black women are seen as "invaders", "outsiders", and where it can be dangerous to speak up against racial and gender injustices. For example, the online group for programmers Cláudia mentioned – in which job opportunities were shared every day – sexist statements were widely disseminated:

> They were machistas, extremely. The group was full of people and it was mostly men who shared problematic, misogynistic statements frequently. I wanted to say something, but I didn't have the courage to do so. I had the feeling that if I spoke out, they'd ban me [from the group], that they'd think I was being dramatic.

While Cláudia knew the content shared in the group was harmful, she was afraid that, upon opposing it, she would be banned and miss out on professional opportunities. The stories of Cláudia and Lúcia (39) illustrate some of the TFGBV faced by Black Brazilian women in the tech industry. Despite their aspirations and professional trajectories, both women encountered toxic environments marked by misogynoir.

ATTACKS AS A SILENCING STRATEGY

Natália, a 72-year-old retired librarian and economist, uses social media to discuss both political matters and everyday topics. For most of her career, Natália held a civil service position and worked at a major financial institution in the country, facing racism in both face-to-face and digital environments.

What stands out in her case is how, even in seemingly trivial discussions, she faced attacks. For example, when participating in a debate in a Facebook group about parenting and media, Natália was targeted with comments that did not directly mention race, gender or age explicitly, but disqualified her presence and opinions. One such comment read: "After seeing your profile and that horrible appearance, I'm done." Other comments insinuated that, due to her age, she should remove herself from public exchanges and discourse, in a clear expression of ageism.

This form of abuse is particularly insidious, leading to discouraging Black Brazilian women from engaging in public digital spaces. **The constant devaluation of Black Brazilian women's opinions, combined with an environment where our presence is treated as unwelcome, pushes us away.**

Just like Cláudia, who abandoned her plans of working in tech after experiencing gender-based violence, and Lúcia, who had to file multiple complaints due to systematic harassment, Natália operates in a hostile space that restricts her expression, albeit in ways that are difficult to explicitly categorise.

ACADEMIC SPACES AS SITES OF VIOLENCE

In addition to Cláudia, Lúcia and Natália, another significant case illustrating how TFGBV manifests in professional and academic spaces is that of Beatriz (50), a substitute professor at a Brazilian University in STEM-related courses. Throughout her tenure, Beatriz was subjected to sustained attacks from students who used social media platforms like Facebook to defame her and encourage others to do the same. She recalls struggling to grasp the extent of the harassment at first. She was not deeply involved in social media and only discovered the attacks when her students began telling her about the situation. "There was a page where they insulted people, mocked other faculty. I took a while to find out about it."

The attacks did not merely target her teaching methods, but included racialised and gendered offensive content. "They said I was too harsh, that I needed a man to take care of me instead of assigning difficult coursework. And people would go there and 'like' those comments," she explains. This culture of incitement and validation in comment sections exposes how online violence serves to legitimise attacks against Black women in positions of authority, directly challenging established hierarchies.

Beatriz also faced direct threats, prompting a response from the university administration. However, institutional acknowledgment of racism, misogyny and homophobia was superficial, reflecting the normalisation of violence against Black women in such environments. Beatriz recalls: "I took the issue to the course coordination and, when I mentioned racism and sexism, I felt dismissed." She describes how the response she received downplayed the gravity of the incidents. "The coordinator told me he had gone through the same and that things would change over time." Rather than condemning the violence, the institution framed it as inevitable, simultaneously absolving the students responsible for the harassment.

The experiences of Cláudia, Lúcia, Natália and Beatriz illustrate how TFGBV serves as a mechanism of exclusion and silencing against Black Brazilian women in professional and academic spaces. Whether through overt harassment or subtle delegitimisation, TFGBV operates as a barrier that limits our access to opportunities and public presence.

More than isolated incidents, these accounts reflect a broader systemic issue: the resistance to our participation in elite and male-dominated fields. As Cida Bento points out through the concept of the "whiteness pact," our presence in these spaces is often perceived as a territorial invasion, a threat to the established order.[86] When we, Black women, dare to cross these invisible boundaries, we become preferential targets of hate speech that characterises us as "others" that do not belong in those environments.

Through digital and institutional violence, these mechanisms work to push Black Brazilian women away from spaces that were never designed for us in the first place. However, our persistence continues to challenge these exclusionary structures, even when, as Lúcia said, our presence "stirs up a hornets' nest."

86. Ibid.

The impacts of TFGBV in the lives of Black Brazilian women

In the previous sections, we familiarised ourselves with the stories of the interviewees, their contexts, and we learned about their experiences with TFGBV and misogynoir. In this section, we discuss the impacts of these experiences in their lives, highlighting effects on their freedom of expression, including silencing, self-censoring and limitations to online behaviour as a result of TFGBV; the psychological and emotional consequences; and consequences for their careers, organising and activism.

"Man, I can't write": The impacts of TFGBV on Black Brazilian women's expression

Bianca (26) worked as a communications professional for a civil society organisation and was a senior at university. As she began writing her thesis focusing on inequities in access to technology in the majority Black neighbourhood where she is from, one of her male relatives strongly opposed her doing this work. One day, during a discussion, he violently broke her laptop. She found herself unable to write:

> One experience that traumatised me was him [family member] breaking my laptop. I was finishing university and writing my undergraduate thesis. Then I found myself suffering violence in a very symbolic way. I understood that he wanted to communicate that my progress as a woman, who in his view should be serving him, serving his wishes, and not growing on my own, should stop. I had to buy new equipment, going into debt. I had to finish my thesis and it was a cruel writing process. I was emotionally exhausted. I would cry while writing. I remember sitting with my friend and saying, "Man, I can't write."

Throughout this research, we found TFGBV can have severe impacts for Black Brazilian women's expression. Like Bianca, many of our interviewees described feeling exhausted, emotionally depleted and point to TFGBV as one of the reasons why they are unable to fully exercise their freedom of expression.

Lúcia (39), who used to post content about careers in tech informed by her perspectives as a Black woman, also reached a point of fatigue: "I stopped posting because it is psychologically tiring to keep doing it while receiving weekly threats and DMs calling you names."

For other interviewees, TFGBV drove them away from online spaces they had used for connection and self-expression. Ana, who once kept a following of considerable size while blogging about fatness, Blackness and lesbianity, experienced online attacks affecting her "intellectual self-esteem":

> After this episode, I decreased my frequency of posting a lot. Then I completely stopped writing [on my blog]. Then I completely stopped posting [on social media]. That experience is still bothering me, it's inside me. But since I didn't have enough [emotional] tools to deal with it, I simply didn't.

The long-lasting nature of the impacts of TFGBV in Black Brazilian women's lives emerged in multiple interviews. For example, nearly a decade after the attacks, Ana has now begun to reclaim her online presence, but shared that she's afraid of a similar situation happening again.

The fear of TFGBV happening again is an almost constant presence

Throughout this research, interviewees have also indicated that the fear of TFGBV happening again is a near-constant presence in their lives. One example is Letícia. At 24, she had been engaged with student political movements when she suffered a physical assault by someone from an opposing group, followed by a defamation campaign on social media, led by her attacker's group. She then received threats online, which contributed to her experiencing depression and ongoing fear of the possibility of another incident. She became afraid of attending her university and ceased her participation in student-led movements:

> I felt unsafe. I thought I would suffer violence at any moment. I was afraid of going to university. After the [physical] aggression, the situation was exposed in a public way on social media. [...] I think that because I'm a Black woman and because of how we hear that we always have to be strong all the time, at the time I assumed this position of confrontation when I saw the [online defamation campaign]. People came after me online to confront me and said I was a liar. On social media, I faced them [the accusers]. In my day-to-day life at university, I was afraid of walking alone for a while.

Flávia is a feminist activist impacted by TFGBV on numerous occasions sometimes after sharing her views related to politics and gender and racial injustices. She feels restlessness due to the possibility of TFGBV happening again:

> None of the violence I suffered online ever "went offline," unlike several of my friends and fellow activists, who have suffered threats that have materialised. [The online attacks] are something that shocked me a lot, it bothers me a lot. But when I started to be able to silence them, I

> just silenced the posts and that was that. [...] Every time something of mine goes viral, I'm like "here it comes again," you know? Like why is this happening? It's so annoying. Because you don't want to deal with violence, you want to do other things, get on with your life.

TFGBV driving Black Brazilian women away from their chosen paths

Several of our interviewees have described distancing themselves from political careers, prominent positions in social movements and political parties, and their activism and/or organising.

For example, when reflecting on the challenges of carrying on her political career, Michelle refers to the political gender-based violence she has suffered and enumerates a long list of TFGBV incidents. At the time of our first interview, she was working as an elected official, and told us she has received misogynistic and racist comments and messages since starting her political career and is often targeted by disinformation campaigns:

> They monitor me all the time. When the attacks are more intense, I get into a state of depression, I don't want to leave the house or do things. I'm afraid to go out, because I fear they will endanger my life or my children. I get scared. Sometimes I consider withdrawing from the [political] process to protect my life and my children.

Months after this first conversation, as we were concluding this research, Michelle shared with us that she has ultimately decided to distance herself from institutional politics to preserve her mental, emotional and physical wellbeing, as well as that of her family. She was not the only one. Throughout this project, other interviewees have described a similar situation – some of them, like Ana, Maria and Flávia, who were also involved in political movements, explicitly organising around social issues and had a considerable following on social media – also changed their career paths due, at least in part, to TFGBV (and wider expressions of racism and sexism in Brazilian society).

Others were not explicitly involved in politics and/or social organising, but still had their career paths impacted by TFGBV. In the previous section, we saw how Lúcia's, Cláudia's and Beatriz's STEM careers were jeopardised as a result of TFGBV. Another example of the impact TFGBV may have on Black Brazilian women is that of Mariane, a make-up artist and community organiser, who was 27 when one of her social media accounts was flooded with derogatory comments about her weight. She had been using social media. She tells us her first reaction was to deactivate all of her accounts and completely quit social media, which she says highly impacted her business, her freedom of expression and her relationships.

Throughout this research, we have mapped some of the ways in which TFGBV and misogynoir impact Black Brazilian women lives, limiting freedom of expression, leading to psychological and emotional trauma, and negatively impacting their chosen paths in their careers, organising and activism.

In the next chapter, we discuss how Black Brazilian women are resisting in spite of TFGBV and misogynoir, continuing to carve out spaces for expression, connection and organising online.

“In the duality”: Black Brazilian women carving out spaces online through digital care, community and friendship

Our interview with Natália (72) was one of the last ones we conducted for this project. At 72, she is a retired librarian and public servant, holding multiple degrees in Library Science and Economics and decades of experience leading the implementation of key libraries in Brazilian governmental institutions. She started her career at a time when few Black Brazilian women were university graduates – even fewer than today – and when it was even harder to combat racism and misogyny in the workplace (and in Brazilian society in general). As we have seen in chapter 3, Natália has experienced TFGBV in ways that are profoundly impactful, especially in online spaces where her opinions and presence have been invalidated.

When we asked her what she imagines for the future of Black Brazilian women's engagement with digital technologies, she told us:

> The first thing is for people to understand that freedom of expression doesn't give you the right to disrespect people [online]. That's the maxim. People need to respect other people's ideas. Without the need to be cursing, humiliating, without attacking people's appearances, their disabilities [...] Then I think we can get there, to that future. I don't think I'll be alive. I'm 72, right? Back then, you had to accept many things. I had a colleague in the [public sector] who "joked" like that: On May 13th,[87] he'd go to the post office, pick up official telegram paper and type: "Lei Áurea revoked, return urgently to the slave quarters." He would send me the telegram. I would open it, read it and he'd laugh. And I'd laugh. He would show it to everyone in the department, and everyone laughed. This went on for about five years. And we had to accept it. When I was young, my mother had taught me that I had to respond to racism, you know? We were brought up like that, "You're not supposed to accept it." My mother was ahead of her time when she said "you're going to answer, you're not going to accept," right? But it wasn't something that could always be done. But in my time, [the job market] was tough, you had to accept it. Nowadays it is not like that anymore, you know? It's slow, it's a very slow thing. Things depend on this awareness that people develop and [then] things change. It's slow, but there has to be research like this to get us there.

Comparing the slow changes happening in the job market and in Brazilian society more broadly, with the changes she wants to see in digital technologies, Natália calls us to think about how TFGBV and online misogynoir are a continuation of broader violent expressions of racism, sexism and ableism that are prevalent

87. May 13th is a date marked in Brazilian history as the day slavery was technically abolished in the country in 1888.

in Brazilian society and, at the same time, demonstrating how, despite the seemingly rigid context, changes are happening. We told Natália that "we hope that this moment of more respect and more freedom of expression for Black women will come soon." She responded:

> You're young, you'll get there. When you're 72, you'll remember: "Just like that lady said, things are not like that anymore, are they?" Because we're in the process. It's hard, isn't it? It's very hard. But we have to resist.

In this final chapter, we turn to the matter of Black Brazilian women's resistance, connection and possibility in spite of TFGBV and misogynoir. We share highlights from interviews and group gatherings with research participants regarding the ways they are refusing to be silenced by TFGBV and misogynoir, continuing to "carve out" their own spaces, engaging with digital care practices, and fostering community and connection with other Black Brazilian women. As Natália illustrates, this is a process we are in, and not a fixed set of strategies.[88]

Critical reconsideration of engagement with digital technologies

As demonstrated in previous chapters, interviewees described TFGBV impacting in their lives and wellbeing, as well as in their online behaviour – some changed how they were posting or engaging in online spaces, some left online spaces they had been participating in, others became discouraged from continuing organising and/or pursuing their careers. While analysing these changes in online behaviour, our interpretation is that, while the silencing effect is an undeniable consequence of TFGBV, harming the freedom of expression of those who experience it; Black Brazilian women we interviewed have also engaged in a sort of refusal to be completely silenced.

For example, Maria described that after suffering TFGBV and gendered political violence, she completely reshaped her online behaviour. Though ultimately deciding against pursuing a public high-profile position as a political influencer and as an elected representative, she has continued to work in politics in other ways. She explains that she reconciles both the impact of her experience with

88. We are indebted to the Transfeminist Digital Care Network (Rede Transfeminista de Cuidados Digitais) to the articulation of the concept of "digital care": a way of approaching digital security from the perspective of everyday care, instead of the perspective of fear and securitisation.

TFGBV with her interest in using digital technologies in ways that she finds affirming:

> I'm still on social media, but sometimes a memory of those times hits me and I close my profile, I remove my picture, I do everything [to decrease exposure]. I really like influencing. No wonder I work with political articulation. But at the same time, after my past experiences, I have fear, I have removed potentially sensitive information from my social media accounts, I no longer post [about my family or routine]. There's this fear that when we have a digital presence, we can be tracked. At the same time as I removed all this information, I still check my accounts, I still post about politics and things I care about. I'm living with this duality, you know?

This "duality" was echoed by many interviewees who describe the aftermath of TFGBV incidents as moments of pause, as periods of critical reconsideration of how they want to engage with digital technologies moving forward.

We found that Black Brazilian women who experience TFGBV navigate a complex set of repercussions. Interviewees go through a process of decision-making about their engagement with digital technologies, informed by notions of digital care, balancing an awareness of how online spaces are permeated by misogynoir and a belief that they can still be valuable for their goals. For example, Letícia explained that, though she finds digital environments can be hostile and acknowledges how the design and development of mainstream social media can be harmful to Black women, she believes in the potential they hold and points to digital care practices as a strategy:

> Social media algorithms aren't made for us. They're not designed to give a voice to our content; they're designed to boycott [Black women]. [To be on social media] is to put our bodies in a position where they are susceptible to attacks. So I fight. I use technology to present my ideas about things that really move me. I record videos and post them. While I see technology as something hostile to our bodies, I also see a place that is up for political dispute, that we can't get away from. When I think about what we can do to improve it, so that it isn't so hostile for us? [I believe that] at a minimum, having digital security measures to protect these bodies and minds.

Letícia's intervention is a useful illustration of two important considerations that emerged in this research. The first relates to a recognition on the part of the research participants – which was expressed in interviews and in meetings held throughout the project – that digital technologies, including the platforms that dominate the internet today, are not designed in ways that are fair to Black women. Many participants expressed that, in their perceptions, their

experiences with TFGBV and online misogynoir are examples of how the design and development of many of these mainstream digital technologies ends up reinforcing phenomena such as racism, machismo, ageism and ableism. This is a sentiment that aligns with the findings of thinkers who theorise about digital technologies with foundations in Black feminism and who posit that these biases are not "glitches" or accidental flaws, but rather structural elements of how these technologies are created.[89]

The second consideration we want to highlight concerns research participants' desire to adopt digital security measures, in order to continue using these digital technologies in ways that preserve Black women's "bodies and minds," in spite of "technologies being hostile." Throughout the research project, several interviewees described making decisions over their use of digital technology with the goal of maintaining their wellbeing, including changing privacy and security settings; selecting social media platforms to prioritise, pondering where it would be strategic to maintain an online presence; moving to more "private" online spaces for organising; and reflecting about what kinds of content they post in which platforms. For example, when an organised group reached her personal number and published her personal address, Joana and her team implemented a new strategy for her engagement with social media:

> We made the decision that I shouldn't interact with the hate comments I receive. I don't look [at social media]. It's a way of protecting myself. Today [my team] works on my social media. We understand my profile as a public profile, not for people to know about my personal life, precisely to reduce exposure and not let malicious people invade my intimate space. Nowadays, I treat my social media as a professional channel and I only interact with what will motivate me, push me forward and not with content that will somehow damage my mental health. Today, as an individual, I don't have social media: My public figure has social media. Unfortunately, this is the way for me to avoid getting hurt again the way I did when this wave of attacks began.

Flávia also cited a series of precautionary measures she has taken since she began experiencing TFGBV, effectively "dividing" her online life into different spheres with the goal of maximising her privacy:

> Before [I started receiving frequent attacks], my Instagram was public and I would talk about politics. I still talk about politics, but I made my Instagram private, because I wanted a space where I could post photos with my child, all that stuff. There came a time when I couldn't post these things

89. See Broussard, M. (2021); Browne, S. (2015); Benjamin, R. (2019); Noble, S. U. (2018).

> on Twitter [because I was getting attacks]. On Instagram, which is closed, I post normally, because then it's much more controlled, I can select my followers and know who's there. I divided my life up in this process as well.

As mentioned in introduction, Black women – including Black Brazilian women – have a history of "finding chasms" within systems of oppression and appropriating existing technologies (digital and analogue).[90] We argue that the ways in which interviewees have continued to use digital technologies for their organising, for connecting with other Black women, for sharing knowledge constitute another example of how we/they find chasms. Through making complex decisions aiming at maintaining health, privacy and safety, they are navigating the duality of dealing with digital environments where TFGBV and misogynoir take place and the need to use digital technologies for their own goals.

As we'll see in the next section, for many interviewees, the process of "finding chasms" was made possible precisely because of their community with other Black women.

"We're together": Building community, friendship and support networks

But it is above all the anonymous Black woman – the economic, emotional and moral support of her family – who, in our view, plays the most important role. Precisely because, with her strength and courageous capacity to fight for survival, she transmits to us, her more fortunate sisters, the impetus not to refuse to fight for our people. All the more so because, […] despite her poverty, her loneliness with regard to a companion, her apparent submission, she is the bearer of the flame of liberation, precisely because she has nothing to lose.[91]

Lélia Gonzalez

90. In our literature review, we reference the work of Catherine Knight Steele, who argues that through digital Black feminism, Black women in the US have "regardless of the intention of specific technologies to subjugate, Black women [long found] chasms within which to undermine the logic of this system of oppression and craft space to survive and thrive." We argue that, in Brazil, too, we see a history of Black women "finding chasms" within systems of oppression and appropriating existing technologies (digital and analogue), citing the work of Taís de Sant'Anna Machado, Thiane Neves Barros, Perrine, Lima and Oliveira, Gomes, Nunes, Santiago and others.
91. Gonzalez, L. (2020). A mulher negra na sociedade brasileira. In F. Rios & M. Lima (Eds.), *Por um feminismo afro-latino-americano.* Zahar. https://mulherespaz.org.br/site/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/feminismo-afro-latino-americano.pdf

In Gonzalez's concluding words in her essay "A mulher negra na sociedade brasileira", she pays homage to the "anonymous Black women," recognising them as the sustaining force which makes it possible for Black women to organise. A common thread across many of our interviews is when Black Brazilian women face various forms of TFGBV, it is too in other Black women that they find the friendship, community and support they need.

When Bianca (26) found herself unable to work on her research after a male family member broke her laptop, it was her friends and neighbours, who are also Black women, who provided the support and friendship she says helped her make it through:

> I was emotionally exhausted. I remember sitting with my friend and saying, "Man, I can't write". She would respond: "Yes, you can." She would send me messages on WhatsApp to check in: "Hey, girl, have you written a few pages today?" I would sit down with my neighbour who lives around the corner, a psychologist who is also Black woman. We would talk about how bad [the incident] had made me feel and how much I couldn't write, you know? She'd tell me: "You'll manage, do it little by little." We formed a network to the point that a neighbour made me a chocolate cake [to encourage me].

In Mariane's (27) case, after suffering an influx of misogynistic, racist and fatphobic attacks, her immediate reaction was to "delete, delete, delete" all her social media and described a great sense of shame that took over her life. She completely distanced herself from digital spaces. It was through her friendship with a neighbour and community organiser that her recovery process began: joining a local Black feminist collective, she was able to understand the seriousness of the violence she had suffered, understand the dimensions and misogynistic and racist content of the messages she received and receive support from other Black women who understood her situation.

After experiencing successive forms of TFGBV, Maria told us that her participation in a community of Black women was fundamental for her to be able to access more information about digital care:

> My contact with [a Black women's organisation] increased my knowledge of digital care. Because [the organisation] has this department for digital care, raising awareness of software and tools that we can use. This gave me a perspective of harm reduction of sorts.

When talking about the choice to continue to stay in social media platforms and organising with social movements, in spite of the violent incidents she endured, Letícia explains it is the hope of building new possibilities with other Black

women, as well as the community and friendship she has found in these women, that "keep her going":

> As much as this space is hostile, I'm willing to build something that can be more comfortable for us, so that others don't go through what I went through. Because we are building a new world. [...] It is a place where I suffered violence. It's a place where many people suffer violence, but it's a place I'm going to be in, because it's an arena of political dispute and where we'll need to be. The difference is who's going to be there with us. I've realised more and more that Black women are the ones who can fully bear the brunt for other Black women. It's Black women who hold each other and who say: "We're together, negona,[92] you're not alone and let's go." We need to have more self-organised spaces, where we can debate, formulate, think. About us. By us. For us.

In examining the crucial role of community among Black women, we draw upon Lélia Gonzalez's homage to the "anonymous Black women". Our research reveals that, in the aftermath of TFGBV, Black women find hope and support through friendship and community. Letícia's poignant declaration, "We're together, negona, you're not alone," serves as a call to action, looking to build more self-organised spaces where Black women can convene, discuss, strategise and transform their realities.

In one of our gatherings with research participants, we asked those in attendance if they have any reflections or questions about the process more broadly. "I want to know: what happens after you publish this research?" asked Ana. "I think it should be a springboard for other things. It should be a starting point for more. More gatherings, more serious public debate about [TFGBV against Black Brazilian women]." Others agreed.

The interviewees' demand for more spaces for exchange and conversation between Black women impacted by TFGBV and misogynoir was mapped throughout our research. Many point out that it is precisely through community and connecting with other Black women that it will be possible for those impacted by TFGBV and online misogynoir to combat some of the consequences in their individual lives and also more broadly as a strategy for organising.

For example, for Michelle talking about TFGBV and more broadly about political gender-based violence against Black women are strategies to decrease the sense of isolation that can emerge in those targeted by it and to demonstrate how systemic this issue is:

92. The word "nega", and its variation "negona", comes from the word "negra" and it is used in this context as a term of endearment, expressing love, familiarity and affection between the interlocutors.

> We have to talk about the violence we suffer. So that other Black women know that there are others going through these attacks, that this is all systemic. Because that’s what [the aggressors] want... for us to believe that politics is not our space, for us to feel alone.

This is also the case for Joana (29), a Black lesbian woman who has been politically engaged since adolescence and who has suffered a series of attacks online. A few years ago, in light of the ongoing debate related to the right to abortion in Brazil, she posted several videos defending sexual and reproductive health and rights, which generated a violent reaction from anti-rights groups. In our interview Joana described experiencing shock and indicated the support of those who understood the severity of the attacks and who knew her political work was key to not feel isolated and to recover from the traumatic experience:

> The main thing about this support network was the people who know me and reaffirmed to me that I’m not what the attackers were trying to paint me as, that I’m not what this wave of organised attacks by [anti-rights actors] was trying to build. This helped me so that I wouldn’t be afraid to continue presenting the things I defend publicly.

The tech we want: Hopes and demands Black Brazilian women have for digital technologies and the internet

As part of this research project, beyond deepening our understanding of how TFGBV and misogynoir impact Black Brazilian women, we also sought to explore what are the hopes and demands Black Brazilian women have for digital technologies and the internet.

A significant portion of our conversations with research participants during interviews and group gatherings were animated by questions related to what they wanted for digital technologies and the internet. “What would it look like to have digital technologies that resonate with what we want and with what we need?”, “What do we want out of digital technologies?”, “How can digital technologies be affirmative, instead of harmful?” These are not simple questions to explore and research participants had a lot to share. In this section, we are sharing an overview of these explorations.

Freedom of expression for Black Brazilian women

As we have seen in the previous sections, TFGBV and online misogynoir seriously affect the freedom of expression of Black Brazilian women. Research participants in this project indicated that guaranteeing Black women's freedom of expression is a crucial element of a healthy internet. As Lúcia said, "that we can post, write, publish without fear of retaliation and without being exposed to (virtual or otherwise) racist and misogynist attacks." Relatedly, research participants pointed to the recreational use they make (or made) of digital technologies as an important part of their lives. With this in mind, we highlight the idea that, for the project participants, it seems important that digital technologies are created in ways that enable Black Brazilian women to have fun, connect with each other, have leisure, dance, make music, read and write.

At the same time, the participants reject the false dichotomy between freedom of expression and hate speech, with several of them pointing out that "freedom of expression" does not mean that racist and misogynist attacks should be tolerated.

For Black Brazilian women, freedom of expression is not a right in a vacuum. As many participants highlighted, no one can truly experience freedom of expression when others are systematically oppressed. Freedom of expression relies on creating an environment where everyone feels safe and able to speak their mind without fear of harm or reprisal. When there is space for hate speech or other forms of technology-facilitated violence, there is no true freedom of expression. This aligns with the findings that the presence of abusive content, including hate speech and misogynistic or racist attacks, directly undermines the right to freely express oneself online. Without protections for marginalised groups, including Black women, the internet cannot be a fully free space.[93]

Access to knowledge and information and freedom of thought

Participants described that an affirmative internet for Black women would be a space where they can easily access diverse narratives about the lives of Black women, including knowledge and content generated by Black women. Our conversations also pointed to the importance of Black women (and other minority groups in Brazil) being able to access relevant information and knowledge that is useful to them in a free and accessible way. At the same time, in our conversations participants very much emphasised the importance of having digital environments where information and content about Black women is not laden with racist, sexist, pejorative views.

Finally, many participants expressed concern about the business models of the large commercial technology platforms that are widely used in Brazil. Reflecting on the negative impacts of these platforms on Brazilian society and on their

93. Valente, M., & Neris, N. (2018). Are we going to feminise the internet? *SUR 27*. https://sur.conectas.org/elas-vao-feminizar-a-internet/

lives, the participants stressed the importance of having digital environments where our attention is not "captured by addictive algorithms that contribute to polarising society" and that affect democracy.

Digital technologies made by us and for us

Among the research participants, there is a recognition that digital technologies are not neutral and that the platforms that dominate the internet today are not designed in ways that are fair to Black women. Throughout the research project, participants frequently pointed out how the design and development of many of these technologies can, in many cases, reinforce phenomena such as racism, machismo and ableism. In view of this, two points seem to us to be of importance. The first concerns the call for more spaces and conditions so that more Black women can continue to learn how to develop technologies and also question and audit the social impacts of digital technologies that already exist. Secondly, there is also a perceived demand for digital technologies to be developed in a way that does not reproduce inequality, racism and misogyny.

Accountability

The women we interviewed also often pointed out the importance of holding the companies that create digital technologies accountable and holding the actors who perpetuate TFGBV against Black women accountable. Although the research did not map out in detail what this accountability might look like – as this would be beyond the scope of this work – the importance of this topic for the women interviewed is undeniable, as many reported a perception of almost total impunity for actors who perpetuate TFGBV against Black women and indicate the existence of limited accountability for the companies responsible for many of the digital platforms where incidents of TFGBV against Black women take place.

While this study did not examine in detail how participants sought justice through institutional means, it is important to note that Black women in Brazil have been at the forefront of organising responses to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (TFGBV) and political violence through both advocacy and legal mobilisation. Since 2020, the Instituto Marielle Franco has been researching and monitoring political violence in Brazil, documenting its gendered and racialised dimensions. Their project Não Seremos Interrompidas[94] mapped eight types of political violence experienced by over 140 Black women candidates, underscoring that, elected or not, Black women remain largely unprotected. The campaign also advocates for concrete actions by public authorities and stresses the importance of implementing Brazil's Political Gender Violence Law (Law 14.192/2021)[95] with attention to race and gender.

94. https://www.global.org.br/blog/apoio/nao-seremos-interrompidas-eleicoes-municipais-de-2024/
95. Brazil's Political Gender Violence Law (Law No. 14.192/2021) establishes measures to prevent and combat political violence against women, particularly during electoral processes. It criminalises acts that seek to hinder or limit women's political participation, especially when motivated by gender or race. The full text is available at: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2019-2022/2021/lei/l14192.htm

Conclusion

This report presents findings from research conducted by Instituto Minas Programam between April 2024 and March 2025 regarding the impacts of TFGBV (tech-facilitated gender-based violence) on the experiences of Black Brazilian women and their stories of resistance, connection and possibility. The research included semi-structured interviews with 12 Black Brazilian women – writers, politicians, technologists, students, community organisers, artists and journalists – who have experienced some form of TFGBV and who are engaged with social justice organising, social movements and political and/or digital activism, as well as group gatherings with research participants, and critical observation of participants' online presence.

Research participants had been using digital technologies to express their views, write about their experiences, denounce injustice, organise within social movements and advance their political projects. In doing this work – through practices such as public writing, posting about their careers and/or community projects, openly sharing their views regarding social issues and politics and more – they are seen as challenging social hierarchies present in Brazilian society. **Our findings show how, in spite of mainstream digital technologies being often embedded with racism, sexism and misogynoir, Black Brazilian women have been carving out their/our own online spaces** – using digital technologies for relationship-building and knowledge exchange, finding avenues for collective and self-expression and engagement with Black feminist discourse and activism, and influencing cultural and political agendas across the country.

We found that TFGBV against Black Brazilian women often seeks to reproduce and/or amplify narratives of Black Brazilian women being inadequate contributors to public debate about politics, culture, society, race relations, social issues in Brazil and/or not being fit to occupy certain professional positions in fields predominantly occupied by white (and often mostly male) Brazilians. In the experiences of our interviewees, we found that harmful stereotypes related to Black Brazilian women not belonging in spaces such as libraries, universities, politics, STEM professions and not being seen as valid intellectuals, knowledge creators and educators have been often invoked in the instances of TFGBV. **The various forms of TFGBV research participants faced have been permeated**

with narratives that attempt to portray Black women as unfit and/or unqualified for intellectual work and/or for certain professions, politics and/or organising around social issues. At the same time, we found that when the content of their work made evident their intentions of bringing radical change to their communities, it also heavily influenced the attacks they suffered.

This research shows TFGBV and online misogynoir impact Black Brazilian women's freedom of expression, leading to silencing, self-censoring and limitations of online behaviour; generate long-lasting psychological and emotional consequences; and, at times, become obstacles to women's professional careers and engagement with activism.

While looking to Black Brazilian women's resistance, connection and possibility, **we found that – in the aftermath of their experiences with TFGBV and misogynoir – research participants engage in a critical reconsideration of engagement with digital technologies, continuing to "carve out" their own spaces, engaging with digital care practices, and fostering communities and connection with other Black Brazilian women.** Our research reveals that, in the aftermath of TFGBV and online misogynoir, Black women find hope and support through friendship and community.

Toward a future research agenda

Throughout the research process, participants often asked: ***What comes after the publication of this report?*** This question stays with us. It reflects a shared desire for continuity, care and concrete change. We hope this report contributes to broader efforts to build a field of research and practice that is accountable to Black women's lived experiences and political visions. We understand this work as part of a longer-term conversation that requires collaboration, listening and sustained engagement to imagine and create more just and safe digital futures. We invite others – academics, activists and institutions – to take these questions seriously within future research agendas, and to join in shaping the answers.

Carving out our spaces: Experiences of Black Brazilian women resisting technology-facilitated gender-based violence

feminist internet research network