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Black Women Activists and Pan-Africanism in the Black Atlantic Diaspora: Profiles and Dialogues*,**

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Black Atlantic is the term used to describe the transnationality and interculturality of the space-place that comprises Africa (the continent), the Americas, and Europe (the diaspora). It is in the Black Atlantic diaspora that one of the many black movements is established: Pan-Africanism. The pan-Africanist movement emerged in the early twentieth century as an alternative means to fight against oppression and exploitation and for the emancipation of all black peoples in the world. This study aims to investigate the dialogue between the activisms of black women and pan-Africanist principles in the Black Atlantic diaspora. Based especially on the life and work of activists Claudia Jones, Lélia Gonzalez, and May Ayim, I analyze if and how pan-Africanist principles help us make sense of the activism of these women. I found that these activists not only created strategies that engage with the pan-Africanist principles of liberation, integration, solidarity, and personality, but they also became important thinkers and leaders of movements guided by pan-Africanist principles.

Keywords: Africanism; activism, diaspora; black Atlantic; black women.

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Over the years, the discipline of International Relations (IR)[1] has been transformed; it has also been dedicated to understanding the issues that travel across time and space (PERSAUD and SAJED, 2018; SILVA, 2021). Some of these issues – such as the dynamics of race and gender – have pressed the discipline to accept plural authors and theories that reflect distinct realities and perspectives (from distinct groups and geographical regions) about what the international is and how it is formed. This pressure has especially intensified in recent decades due to the expansion of studies on constructivist, postcolonial, and decolonial theories, which propose to reflect on – and from the perspective of – subaltern cultures and identities.

This debate, however, did not begin in the twenty-first century. Race and gender dynamics have always been the focus of much discussion, influencing political, economic, legal, and social discourses, ideologies, theories, and strategies. This is because, according to Persaud and Sajed (2018), race and gender exist and operate at the local, regional, and global levels; they are simultaneously personal and shared, settled and dynamic, conscious and unconscious, and they can result in both cooperation and conflict, peace and violence. International relations have therefore been greatly influenced by issues of race and gender and cannot be ignored by the IR discipline. In this perspective, internationalists and political and social scientists such as Silva (2021), Persaud and Sajed (2018), and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2014) have contended that IR studies should bring in plurality. For these authors, it is problematic that IR courses rarely provide a plural curriculum (with black male and female authors) or offer classes to study race and gender relations.

This is where Pan-Africanism fits in: This movement emerged from attempts to develop strategies for Africans and Afro-descendants in Africa and the diaspora. It is an international idea and movement because it challenges the predominantly Eurocentric status quo of IR. And yet Pan-Africanism remains an invisible theme in academia, especially in this field of study. Therefore, although black

[1]As Brown and Ainley (2005), I understand that International Relations is the study of international relations. Therefore, IR, with the initials in capital letters, concerns a discipline (or a field of study) within the social sciences, while international relations, in lowercase letters, and refers to a set of research subjects that are often associated with the handling of international politics. I believe that this study is not undermined by any possible difference of opinion on this distinction, since race and gender are international subject matters related to both the discipline and the research subject.

man and women thinkers, including – but not exclusively – the pan-Africanists, have contributed immensely to international relations and the IR discipline, "[t]his ubiquity of race in the history of black oppression and exploitation to which Pan-Africanism emerged as response remains outside core concerns of IR as a discipline that seeks to understand the international system" (NDLOVU-GATSHENI, 2014, p. 23).

It is important to note, however, that although one speaks of a pan-Africanist movement, one does not have to speak of a homogeneous pan-African thought. There is a certain plurality regarding Pan-Africanism and how this movement developed across the world – one can speak of different pan-Africanist streams. Such plurality should be comprehended from the historical, political, social, and geographic context in which each activist is embedded so that we can apprehend how each of the distinct contributions could offer different views on Pan-Africanism and related issues.

Issues such as race, gender, and nationality have influenced the way in which Pan-Africanism has developed over the centuries, but not all of these issues have gained prominence or been sufficiently discussed. The movement, therefore, is still grappling with some questions. One, in particular, has caught the attention of researchers and social movements, especially those organized and led by black women: How do women fit into this context? As with Pan-Africanism, gender should be understood as an international topic. Although many scholars reject the importance of gender studies, claiming that it is not a scientific issue, or that it does not affect key areas of IR (which, according to some authors, is circumscribed to war and the relationship between states), "[r]acialized and gendered ideas and actions have been central to various nation-building projects around the world, to the global economy, to foreign policy making and strategy, and to security practices" (PERSAUD and SAJED, 2018, p. 02).

In the case of Pan-Africanism, contributions by women "have not been adequately transmitted to posterity and they risk being consigned to oblivion altogether" (SERBIN and RASOANAIVO-RANDRAMAMONJY, 2015, p. 10). This is because, from the beginning, gender analyses of the movement tended to be marginalized, and thus the participation of women has been minimized. It was argued that gender was not related to Pan-Africanism or that there were more pressing issues to discuss. However, women were not only responsible for formulating pan-Africanist

strategies but also active in pushing for these strategies to be implemented and recognized internationally.

It should be noted that there are so many black women engaged with Pan-Africanism that quantifying them would be an arduous, if not impossible, task. The intention here is not to rank or collect all these contributions but to delve into some elements of the life and work of Claudia Jones (Trinidad), Lélia Gonzalez (Brazil), and May Ayim (Germany). All three women contributed to the establishment and development of organized black movements. They denounced the erasure of black women in leadership positions in black struggles and resistance. They developed their activisms while aware that both action (politics) and intellect (theory) are necessary to combat the oppression and exploitation that materialize internationally. The experiences of these women translated into a legacy of liberation, integration, solidarity, and personality, in other words, into what is known as pan-Africanist principles (BARBOSA, 2016). Their stories show the importance of grasping the life and work of diaspora black women as key elements for reflecting on international systems and critically understanding the world. Thus, in choosing these activists I seek to retrace routes in the diaspora (Americas and Europe), which, linked to continental Africa, constitutes the triangular structure of the black Atlantic (GILROY, 2001).

These women were not only in different parts of the diaspora, but their lives and works stemmed from their reflections and experiences over the twentieth century, when Pan-Africanism achieved the status of a movement – the timing was therefore an additional influence, and it helped direct them to certain forms of activism. In addition, although they chronicled historical events such as Pan-Africanism, their works represent more than just reports or documentation of these events; they also reflect the activists' ideals and manners of expression (WALL, 2015). That said, in this study, I aim to investigate the dialogues between black women's activisms and pan-Africanist principles in the Black Atlantic diaspora. Particularly, I examine how they developed their activisms in the diaspora and whether there are points of convergence or divergence between them: To what extent have the activisms of these women moved towards or away from pan-Africanist principles?

The remainder of this article is structured into four sections and the conclusion. In the first section, I present the methodology and the methodological procedures, as well as this study's core theoretical references. In the second section

('Initial Reflections on Pan-Africanism'), I discuss Pan-Africanism and present data on its emergence and development in the Black Atlantic diaspora. The third section ('The Path of the Activists') is where I review the life and key individual contributions of Claudia Jones, Lélia Gonzalez, and May Ayim to the various expressions of the black movement in the diaspora; this section 'opens the path' for the fourth and last section ('Dialogues and Differences'), where I discuss in more detail how the activisms of these three women engaged with or diverged from pan-Africanist principles, and from each other.

Methodology

I conducted a qualitative and bibliographic study, which involves the revision of existing bibliographical material. I searched for documents in virtual collections of international organizations such as the United Nations, from which I collected reports and publications on race, gender, and Pan-Africanism. As for the bibliographic research, I rely specifically on Gilroy's (2001) discussions about the diaspora, Barbosa's (2016) definition of pan-Africanist pillars (principles), and the lives and work of Claudia Jones (2011; 1949), Lélia Gonzalez (2020; 2018), and May Ayim (1997, 1992[2]). I also mention the work of scholars who have studied these three authors: Davies (2014; 2007), Ratts and Rios (2010), and MacCarroll (2005).

I adopt 'intersectionality' as a methodological procedure. The term, coined in the 1970s by African American civil rights researcher and activist Kimberlé Crenshaw, refers to a political research methodology dedicated to analyzing the interaction between the axes in which the condition of structural subordination occurs, namely gender, race, and class. In adopting this methodology, I intend to understand how IR addresses and is influenced by issues in which gender and race are intersected and, more specifically, by the forms of oppression brought to the heart of the international system, such as racism and sexism. Additionally, I adopted the methodological procedure of 'escrevivência'. Coined by Afro-Brazilian author Conceição Evaristo, 'escrevivência'[3] refers to enabling the writing process to be influenced by the subjectivity of the person who writes (and about whom one writes).

[2]At the time, she was known as May Opitz.
[3]'Escrevivência' is a blend of the Portuguese words *escrever* (to write) + *vivência* (lived experience).

In the case of black women, the fact that they are often stereotyped in the literature contributes to their invisibility as producers of knowledge.

According to Evaristo, for black women, "(...) who historically move in spaces different from the places occupied by the culture of the elites, writing takes a sense of insubordination". Insubordination, here, could mean" (EVARISTO, 2007, p. 21) (...) a form of writing that violates "the formal register" of the language, a prime example being Carolina Maria de Jesus, and the choice of the narrated issue" (EVARISTO, 2007, p. 21 – literal translation). "Escreviver[4], in this sense, means to tell stories that are absolutely private but refer to collective experiences, since a common constituent is considered to exist between the author and the protagonist" (SOARES and MACHADO, 2017, p. 206 – literal translation). 'Escreviver' is thus a way to integrate the self-representation of black women into the methods of investigation and knowledge production.

It should be stressed that, although this study is within the IR discipline, it is an interdisciplinary study that engages with related disciplines, such as political science and history. This dialogue represents an important and original effort since race and gender interact with historiography and the theorization of international relations, as well as with militancy, political thought, and political theory, that is with activism in its various expressions. This study also discusses racialization and politics from diasporic perspectives. Therefore, it aims to place gender and racial studies within the field of IR.

Initial reflections on Pan-Africanism

There is no consensus on the origin of Pan-Africanism. Some of the most prominent pan-Africanists, such as W.E.B. Du Bois, argue that the movement emerged in a conference held in London (England) between July 23 and 25, 1900. According to Thiam and Rochon (2020), this lack of consensus results from the 'obsession' of some researchers with dates and labels; moreover, contributions to Pan-Africanism from various prominent people (especially those in the diaspora) have not been recognized because of theoretical and political conflicts and scarce scientific production. It is my understanding that the term 'Pan-Africanism' should be attributed to one of the main

[4]'Escreviver' is the verb associated with the nom 'escrevivência'.

organizers of the 1900 conference, Henry Sylvester Williams, a Trinidad-born black man who, at the time of the conference, lived in England.

The Pan-African Conference, as it was named, aimed at investigating and publicizing the situation of what Williams called native races under European and American rule (SHERWOOD, 2012). After three days of discussions about the various aspects of racism and how to combat it in the international system, the participants sent Queen Victoria of England a report requesting a series of actions, such as the reform of the colonial system and the protection of the rights of Afro-descendants. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni, it was in this context that, "[f]or the first time, the term 'pan-african' was placed in the centre of the international system" (NDLOVU-GATSHENI, 2014, p. 24) to present demands specific to the black people in continental Africa and the diaspora.

Pan-Africanism thus appears at the beginning of the twentieth century, in the Black Atlantic diaspora (GILROY, 2001), and, from the start, it was an international movement. According to Thiam and Rochon (2020), the essence of Pan-Africanism can be described as a process that starts with the disruption and violence promoted by imperialism and colonialism and results in what the authors call the 'lost sons and daughters of Africa'. In other words, Pan-Africanism begins with the African population in the diaspora. "After all, the story of Pan-Africanism is indeed the story of pioneers in the African Diaspora who, in their quest to find their own identity, found the Pan-African ideal" (THIAM and ROCHON, 2020, p. 36).

So, we can say that Pan-Africanism is not only intrinsically linked to the Black Atlantic diaspora but also constituted in this space-place – it is, originally, an international ideal. It not only analyzes, criticizes, and mobilizes international dynamics, but it also acts in different areas and uses various concepts familiar to IR, such as liberation, integration, solidarity, and personality. For Abrahamsen, in this context, Pan-Africanism "is by its very nature international thought and (…) entails the question of how Africa and Africans fit – and should fit – into the world, and hence by implication the question of international relations and world order" (ABRAHAMSEN, 2019, p. 04).

Thinking about the world from a pan-Africanist perspective, therefore, could certainly enrich the discipline of IR. I do not consider the 'pan-Africanist perspective' as synonymous with a homogeneous pan-African view, after all Pan-Africanism is not

homogeneous. However, I understand that, even in its complexity and diversity, Pan-Africanism has managed to establish some premises – common ideas (or ideals) – which I call pan-Africanist principles. There is no consensus among scholars on these principles – not all studies on Pan- Africanism mention these principles, with this classification. In fact, I draw on the studies of Barbosa (2016) to establish this classification. Barbosa identifies four pillars of Pan-Africanism: 01. Liberation; 02. Integration; 03. solidarity, and 04. personality. I call them principles.

In this sense, according to Abrahamsen, "the discipline of International Relations has much to gain from engaging with Pan-Africanism, both as an intellectual resource for political action and for developing a more global, inclusive, and less Western-centric discipline" (ABRAHAMSEN, 2019, p. 02). According to the author, one of the riches of Pan-Africanism is precisely its theoretical and political diversity, which leads to different ways of thinking about international politics and attributing meaning and legitimacy to political strategies and actions by different political agents, with different political purposes. More than offering visions of the past, present, and future of the world order, the pan-Africanist movement identifies different systems, structures, and ideologies of the international system and engages with them; it has also managed to perpetuate itself over history. For Abrahamsen (2019), this is because Pan-Africanism has managed to conceive and build resources for multilateralism and for a more egalitarian world, one that is free from any kind of oppression or exploitation. Pan-Africanist discussions on identity, transnationality, humanity, and cooperation, for example, give the movement an international nature.

It is important to emphasize that there is some degree of plurality in pan-African thought – we could even say that there are theories of Pan-Africanism, in the plural. According to Barbosa (2016), these theories are part of the 'pan-Africanist school' of IR. My intention is not to develop or return to studies dedicated to a pan-Africanist theory or school in IR but to establish a connection between Pan-Africanism and what twentieth-century black women activists produced that relates to international relations.

Next, I briefly present the life trajectory of activists Claudia Jones, Lélia Gonzalez, and May Ayim – their engagement with pan-Africanist principles will be considered more closely in another section. It is not my intention to separate their lives

from their works (or thoughts). My goal is to present, first, how they became activists who are aware of political issues involving race and gender. That is the paths they took and how they developed their activisms before engaging with what I understand as pan-Africanist principles.

The paths of the women activists

Claudia Jones (1915-1964)

The daughter of Sybil Cumberbatch and Charles Bertrand Cumberbatch, both black, Claudia Vera Cumberbatch – later Claudia Jones – was born on February 21, 1915, in Trinidad. Formerly the British Antilles (or British West Indies), Trinidad is an island country in the Caribbean, in South America, which was colonized by the Spanish, the Dutch, and the British until its independence in 1962. Claudia and her family lived in the capital, in the Belmont neighborhood, which was mostly occupied by lower class, formerly enslaved African immigrants and their descendants.

At the age of 08, Claudia arrived in New York City (United States) with her sisters and her aunt. Her parents had arrived in the United States two years earlier, when Trinidad's economy was in decline because of a downturn in the world coconut trade, one of the country's main products. "Like thousands of West Indian immigrants, they hoped to find their fortunes in America where "gold was to be found on the streets" and they dreamed of rearing their children in a 'free America'" (JONES, 2011, p. 11). In the twentieth century, the US invested heavily in the idea of the 'American dream' (the country of the land of opportunities), which even today drives the interest of foreigners. By that time, Claudia had already noticed the social structures of oppression and exploitation associated with race, class, and gender relations. And she asks: "why there was wealth and poverty, why there was discrimination and segregation, why there was a contradiction between the ideas contained in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights" (JONES, 2011, p. 11). Drawing on her experiences and confrontation with the feeling of otherness in a country where 'anything is possible', she begins to analyze more deeply the social structures and eventually became one of the greatest women activists of the twentieth century.

Claudia was engaged with Pan-Africanism throughout her trajectory – since early in her life she was in contact with several expressions of pan-Africanist organization. However, it was mainly after moving to London in 1955 that she

partnered with other pan-Africanist activists, such as Amy Ashwood Garvey, who worked with her on the editorial board of the West Indian Gazette. According to Davies, "editorials in the Gazette (generally written by Claudia herself) pursued a range of issues linked to Caribbean community advancement, Pan-Africanism, and critiques of imperialism" (DAVIES, 2007, p. 70). Although the Gazette had a broad scope, Adi and Sherwood (2003) argue that it had been created because of Claudia's desire to set up a pan-Africanist-oriented newspaper. Claudia Jones's work in establishing African diasporic policies in England undeniably confirms her involvement with Pan-Africanism, "for her orientation became more directly pan-Africanist and also internationalist" (DAVIES, 2007, p. 124).

Claudia's activism was directly influenced by Amy Ashwood Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois; on the other hand, it has also influenced the work of pan-Africanists such as Kwame Nkrumah. Claudia specifically identifies the pan-Africanist W.E.B. Du Bois as her 'teacher' on issues of black politics and activism (DAVIES, 2007). After her tireless struggle, the activist, internationalist, communist, and black intellectual died in her sleep in 1964 from a heart condition that had accompanied her for many years.

Lélia Gonzalez (1935-1994)

Born on February 01, 1935, in the city of Belo Horizonte (State of Minas Gerais, Brazil), Lélia de Almeida – later, Lélia Gonzalez – was another black woman in the diaspora whose experiences and writing were linked to struggles for social change. A daughter of Urcinda Seraphina de Almeida, an indigenous woman and domestic worker, and Acácio Joaquim de Almeida, a black man and railroad worker, Lélia was "the penultimate daughter of a low-income family with 18 children" (BARRETO, 2005, p. 19). In 1942, Lélia moved with her family to Rio de Janeiro after one of her brothers (Jaime de Almeida) became a professional football player and joined a team in the city, the 'Clube de Regatas do Flamengo'.

Lélia had more years of formal education than her siblings. This opportunity was facilitated by the family for which her mother worked, which decided to pay for her studies; this, however, did not prevent her from also working as a maid for some time (BARRETO, 2005). Despite several difficulties, Lélia completed secondary education, a time during which she learned several languages. She graduated in History and Geography in 1958 and in Philosophy in 1962 from the Rio de Janeiro

State University. Throughout her academic career, the history and culture of black and indigenous peoples – and the cooptation of these populations' imaginations – was underrepresented in the academic curricula. She did not recognize herself as black while she 'educated' herself; instead, she tried to distance herself from any characteristics that might associate her with blacks.

Lélia, whose family was mostly black, grew up at a time when several social movements were fighting so their claims could reach the political agenda. Her family, however, "lived far from any circle of union, feminist or black associativism and activism" (RATTS and RIOS, 2010, p. 26 – literal translation), which explains her complete disconnection from such discussions. Only after her marriage to Luiz Carlos Gonzalez, a white man of Spanish origin and a colleague at the School of Philosophy, whose surname Lélia adopted until the end of her life, she began to realize that, even though she was extremely intelligent and dedicated to her studies and work, she was still a black woman and, therefore, a target for society's structural violence.

Her husband's family never accepted her and made her presence in the family difficult because she was a black woman. Luiz, in turn, sought to protect Lélia from such violence by introducing her to political issues that would engage her in racial discussions. According to Lélia (Gonzalez, 2020), he was the person who first questioned her about her whitening process. Luiz committed suicide due to psychological problems, but he played a key role in the development of her activism.

In addition to her concern with core international relations issues, such as racism and sexism, Lélia was greatly influenced by international artistic and political movements. Her work thus engages with Brazilian literature and history and also with the works of intellectuals from Europe, Africa, and the Americas, all of which have greatly enriched her work and contributed to her being granted the title of most significant black female intellectual in Brazil in the twentieth century. She also visited countries such as Denmark, Italy, France, Switzerland, Senegal, Burkina Faso, among others. She was the first black Brazilian woman to represent black Brazilian movements in international events.

Lélia helped pave the way for a black political thought to be built in the diaspora, an undertaking that ended up linking much of her work with pan-African thought. All these travels overseas offered her the opportunity, for example, to be in direct contact with black activists in distinct expressions of the black movement, such

as pan-Africanists and the Black Panthers. "More than mere encounters, these experiences provided women and men activists-intelectuals with an understanding of the global dimension of certain aspects of racism, as well as its particularities" (BARRETO, 2005, p. 45 – literal translation). Despite the lack of consensus among researchers on whether Lélia was a pan-Africanist, her thinking engaged with Pan-Africanism: the category 'amefricanity' ('amefricanidade'), coined by her, was informed by Pan-Africanism (BARRETO, 2005; GONZALEZ, 2020). With this in mind, the Union of pan-Africanist Collectives of Brazil organized and issued the collection 'Primavera para as rosas negras' ('Spring for the black roses') in 2018, highlighting Lélia's work and their importance for a black 'think-do' ('pensar-fazer').

In the 1990s, Lélia realizes that her dedication to work took over her personal life, causing serious health problems. In 1992, she was diagnosed with diabetes. Her health increasingly deteriorated and, on July 10, 1994, at the age of 59, Lélia was found dead in her bedroom, a victim of a heart attack (RATTS and RIOS, 2010).

May Ayim (1960-1996)

The life and work of Claudia Jones and Lélia Gonzalez resonate in many aspects with that of another activist: May Ayim, who, from her birth, bore the mark of being a black woman in the diaspora. Born on May 3, 1960, in Hamburg (Germany), May was baptized Sylvia Brigitte Gertrud by her parents Ursula Andler and Emmanuel Ayim. However, months after her birth she was mandatorily handed over to the public foster system. German law at the time considered Sylvia, the daughter of a German white woman and a Ghanaian black man, an 'illegitimate' child who could not be raised by her biological parents. She had to assume the identity of May Opitz – in the last years of her life, however, she adopted her biological father's surname, Ayim.

Despite her father being a medical student in Germany who wanted his daughter to be raised by his family in Ghana, her mother handed over May to an orphanage a few days after her birth. She was adopted 18 months later by a white German couple, the Opitz, who already had biological children. May's childhood with the Opitzes was very contentious. In several poems, she describes how the adoptive family lived in an extremely restrictive environment, surrounded by idealized notions of perfection that resulted in punishments and physical aggression whenever they were not achieved. (MAcCARROLL, 2005).

Despite her difficult relationship with herself and her adoptive family, May received a good education and excelled in her studies. At the end of her year of graduation from high school, in 1979, she traveled to Israel and Egypt and, upon returning to Germany, began her degree in Psychology and Education in the city of Regensburg, in the Bavaria region (MAcCARROLL, 2005). At the end of her undergraduate course, she published one of her most important works entitled 'Afro-German: Their Cultural and Social History on the Background of Societal Change'.

This work, the result of her thesis, is the "first academic study on the history of German-born black people residing in Germany, a history that dates back to the Middle Ages, when blacks were already in this territory" (JESUS, 2019, p. 251 – literal translation). This is also one of the first scientific works in Germany that engages with the author's personal life through a methodology similar to the 'escrevivência' created by Conceição Evaristo (2007). Moreover, it is one of the first published works to use the term 'Afro-German'. Indeed, May was one of the first to coin the term in Germany, an inspiration from the term 'Afro-American', used to refer to black people born in the United States.

The act of telling her own story and defining herself played a central role in May's life and work. Through her activism, she sought to break with several forms of oppression and exploration rooted in German society, such as the erasure of the history of black people (and, consequently, the creation of a forged 'official history'). May also fought oppression and exploitation through writing and storytelling methods and methodologies and by using her native language. In this sense, she was one of the first black women to write poetry in German, which influenced the next generations of black poets in Germany and Austria (JESUS, 2019).

Since her youth, May Ayim was eager to travel overseas. In addition to Israel, Egypt, and Ghana, she also traveled to Brazil, Cuba, and South Africa, among other countries. Although she never resided outside Germany, she experienced feelings of otherness deriving from her physical characteristics. Her otherness was a frequent topic both personally and professionally, at the local, national, and international levels. Some of her objectives when traveling was to discuss concepts such as 'diaspora', 'African', and 'European' and understand how racial and gender dynamics operate in the international system.

Her discussions about politics, identity, transnationality, and solidarity, among others, assign thus an international meaning to her life and work. As argued so far, her works show that she was concerned with the political dimensions of the racial issue. As with Lélia Gonzalez, however, there is no evidence proving May's connection to any stream of the pan-Africanist movement. And yet, remarkably, she was engaged with pan-Africanist principles, as will be discussed in the following section.

May's activism was essential to the Afro-German community and to the scholarship on race and gender around the world, but her relentless struggle with psychological and physical problems – related to multiple sclerosis – weighed on her over the years, compromising her physical and mental health. She was twice hospitalized in a Berlin psychiatric hospital (in January and June 1996), but her suffering outweighed her strength to fight. At the age of 36, on August 09, 1996, May went up to the 13th floor of a Berlin building and committed suicide.

Dialogues and differences

The term overseas is commonly used to refer to the land or territory located 'across the sea'. It is, therefore, that which is not always visible to the eye, but which instigates and stimulates the creation of imaginaries, narratives, and stories. It is my understanding that 'overseas' encompasses – but also transcends – the idea of territory. When I think about overseas in the context of this study, I see movements and people crossing from one side of the seas to the other, on crossings that one does not know for sure where begin or if they ever end. In analyzing aspects of the lives and works of Claudia Jones, Lélia Gonzalez, and May Ayim, I note that these activists are also part of this 'beyond the sea'. Each is located at a distinct point in the Black Atlantic diaspora, and, when in dialogue, they represent each other's 'beyond the sea'. In other words, if we could promote a meeting between these three activists today, each would be the other's 'other side of the sea'.

Claudia Jones, Lélia Gonzalez, and May Ayim lived and developed their activism in different contexts (in terms of territory, community, and social and cultural aspects) and this is certainly one of the reasons why their works differ at certain times. Each experienced different conditions in the Black Atlantic diaspora and these experiences guided the way in which they perceived their own identities over time. It is important to emphasize that their perceptions about their identities are shaped as

they develop their political thinking and activism. Despite their different engagements, Claudia, Lélia, and May were consistent and important internationalists. In their efforts to formulate theories and ways of fighting international systems of oppression and exploitation, they 'returned home' – to themselves, their families, their communities – and highlighted the need to think about the world from the perspective of other worlds. It was from these complex perspectives on the world that their activisms engaged with Pan-Africanism. However, how does Claudia', Lélia', and May's activism engage in a dialogue with pan-Africanist principles in the diaspora?

The pan-Africanist principles of 01. Liberation; 02. Integration; 03. solidarity, and 04. personality are, broadly speaking, ubiquitous among pan-Africanists: They are at the heart of most – if not all – pan-Africanist streams of the twentieth century (BARBOSA, 2016). The same is true of the works of Claudia, Lélia, and May. Although they did not always identify these principles as pan-Africanist in their works, their engagement with them is evident, and they are pervasive in their activisms. There are points of convergence and divergence between them on the most appropriate strategies to promote such principles in the diaspora.

The first principle, liberation, refers to the premise that the world's black population should be liberated, independent, and self-determined. This principle was not only present among pan-Africanist streams but also in all expressions of the black movement. Especially in the first half of the twentieth century, this principle became extremely important in the fight against imperialism and colonialism around the world, which involved different practices and dimensions. Remarkably, the life and work of Claudia Jones, for example, reached another level as she began to interact with liberation struggles. Jones was drawing on her experiences and reflections about the life of black women pursuing the American dream in the land of Jim Crow when she began her journey fighting for the independence and self-determination of black people.

According to Claudia (Jones, 2011), capitalist oppression and exploitation would end – and, consequently, black peoples would be liberated around the world – only if blacks and working-class movements joined forces, not to the detriment of other progressive groups. For her, no oppressed group would be liberated without the destruction of capitalism, which is rooted in imperialism and colonialism. The strategy to completely liberate black people (in Africa and the diaspora) was thus to implement

a social model alternative to capitalism: socialism. However, as a Marxist-Leninist, Claudia did not believe that the social-democratic model could liberate blacks. According to her, such a model preserved imperialist practices typical of capitalism[5]. Therefore, communism was the most suitable model to promote complete liberation of black people.

Jones (2011) also argued that, for black people to be effectively and truly liberated, black women should not only take leadership roles but also be recognized for their political potential. This is because black women are subjected to triple oppression (race, class, and gender), which makes them the primary target of capitalist overexploitation; moreover, they play a fundamental role in black communities, which enhances their capacity for collective action and puts them at the forefront of the fight for black liberation (DAVIES, 2007; JONES, 2011). This awareness is what makes Claudia's thought on communist ideology different, to the point that she "became the Communist Party's 'principal official theorist on the 'woman question'" (DAVIES, 2007, p. 59) in the first half of the twentieth century.

For Lélia, black people had already been fighting for freedom for centuries. In Brazil, freedom had been achieved by the inhabitants of 'Quilombo dos Palmares', or Black Republic of Palmares (1595-1695), which was described by Lélia as "the first free state in the entire American continent" (GONZALEZ, 2020, p. 60). According to Gonzalez (2020), Palmares was the first attempt in Brazil to create a democratic and egalitarian society, where everyone (blacks, indigenous people, and whites) lived free of oppression and exploitation. Lélia was aware that movements other than Palmares had been organized over the centuries – by blacks – to free black people, and that one could not attribute such struggles to movements and ideologies created or carried out by 'progressive whites', such as the Communist Party, or, as was commonly the case in Brazil, by the goodness of Princess Isabel and her inclination to free enslaved people. This rejection of white ideals seems to draw a clear distinction between Lélia's thinking and that of Claudia.

[5]Marxism-Leninism, which combines the thoughts of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, was the world's major communist stream in the twentieth century. Social democracy, on the other hand, is a socialist stream that admits capitalism as a socioeconomic system, provided that political reforms are carried out to ensure social welfare.

Although Lélia did not see the communist ideology as a path for black liberation, since she believed that blacks had the strategies and tools to build their own path to freedom outside other movements and ideologies, she converged with Claudia's thought as she also attributed a prominent role to black women in the fight for black liberation. Claudia and Lélia agreed that black women have not only actively participated in all liberation movements over the centuries, but they have also been the economic, affective, and moral backbone of their communities, even as they occupied the most vulnerable positions in society – which somehow ascribes them a key role in their communities and makes them more inclined to lead their people to freedom (BARRETO, 2005; GONZALEZ, 2020). In this sense, according to Gonzalez (2020), to free the peoples in Africa, it was essential to free not only black women but also all black peoples of the diaspora.

In addition to women's crucial role in black movements, another core element in the thinking of Lélia, Claudia, and May Ayim was the internationalization of liberation struggles. Influenced by Audre Lorde's black internationalism, May acknowledged that black liberation should be universal, it should materialize both in Africa and in the diaspora. It was her understanding that the black struggle and resistance should be – and indeed were – waged internationally, not within the limits of national borders. In discussing the history of colonialism and racism in Germany, May understood that the oppression and exploitation of black people in Africa were reproduced in the diaspora (in Germany and in other countries she visited) with the respective particularities. Such a shared experience would therefore justify why black peoples around the world should unite for black liberation.

It should be noted that, for May, black liberation was not restricted to political and economic dimensions per se. Her vision of liberation comprised all social aspects, including the spiritual and/or religious dimension. She contended that any religion could be utilized as a tool of liberation; indeed, many Christian teachings were essential for building her own 'humanitarian cosmovision'. On the other hand, any religion could be used as a tool of domination and oppression. Religion was in fact utilized for centuries mainly to enable the implementation and preservation of imperialism, colonialism, and practices of racial differentiation and subjugation. "On my first visit to Ghana, I was utterly dismayed by the fact that Christianity is also white and European (there are no black angels, for example). The interaction between proselytism and

colonization has extremely negative effects to this day"[6] (AYIM, 1997, p. 109 – literal translation).

In that regard, May's thought is in dialogue mainly with that of Lélia, who contended that religions of African origin, particularly Candomblé, are more than simply a way to connect with spirituality, they are templates of struggle and resistance – led by black women – that help (re)build black identities in the diaspora. Therefore, these religions represent different perspectives through which black independence and self-determination (liberation) are achieved both personally and socially. For Lélia (Gonzalez, 2020), the only circumstance in which black (and poor) women are fully integrated into the dominant society is probably when they are playing a leadership role in spaces of African diaspora religions. These are the only spaces where black women "assume and maintain positions of power and domination over, among other people, white middle-class men" (GONZALEZ, 2020, p. 74 – literal translation). In addition to playing this religious and cultural role, these women have created mechanisms for accessing and redistributing material and human resources, mechanisms that could be viewed as alternative models to capitalism and other socioeconomic ideologies. In this sense, Lélia (Gonzalez, 2020) saw these spaces of Afro-religions as references to how the pan-Africanist principles of liberation and integration are strategically mobilized in the diaspora.

The principle of integration aims to unite individuals into a single community, creating a unified society. However, similarly to the principle of liberation, there was no consensus among twentieth-century pan-Africanists as to how this integration should be carried out. Should integration involve blacks and non-blacks, only blacks, Africans and diaspora descendants, or only Africans? With what strategies? For Claudia Jones' activism, as previously mentioned, the unity of blacks and non-blacks was not only possible but also desirable, as she understood that black struggles and the struggles of other oppressed and exploited peoples could be linked to reinforce each other, including the struggle of white workers.

[6]In the original: "Bei meinem ersten Besuch in Ghana war ich geradezu bestürzt, daß das Christentum auch dort weiß und europäisch bestimmt ist (auch dort gibt es z.B. keine schwarzen Engel). Das Zusammenspiel von Missionierung und Kolonialisierung hat bis heute stark negative Auswirkungen".

Claudia, however, acknowledged that there are limitations to this unity. Even though integration was justified, simply integrating black people into US capitalist, democratic institutions would not guarantee the independence and self-determination (liberation) of blacks. Because such institutions are rooted in imperialism and colonialism, it would be a false integration: Oppressed and exploited peoples would remain in the lowest, most vulnerable, degrading social positions. Therefore, the notion that integration simply suggests assimilating black peoples into the hegemonic model would be another version of imperial and colonial white nationalism. According to Claudia, only Marxism-Leninism, that is 'true internationalism', could promote a form of integration that allowed for the independence and complete self-determination of black people (DAVIES, 2007; JONES, 2011). For Claudia (Jones, 2011), integration between races was desirable as long as the hegemonic socioeconomic system – and the racial nationalisms emerging from it – was abolished and an integrated humanitarian supernation was created, free from oppression and exploitation of any kind.

Lélia also sees an alliance between different peoples and races as a possible way to fight the oppression and exploitation affecting – not exclusively – black people around the world. For her, not only had Luiz Carlos Gonzalez played a crucial role in her 'blackening' process, but also the few white women who were really committed to the feminist cause felt like sisters to her. Like Claudia, Lélia contends that the integration of black people into society is not purely a social issue but involves what she calls 'integration of systems'. In other words, it concerns the relations between all parts of socioeconomic systems.

For Gonzalez (2020), without awareness and discussions about the structural conditions of the system in which black people – and all oppressed and exploited peoples, such as indigenous people – are placed, the patterns observed in the disintegrated society, which creates and maintains hierarchies, oppressions, and exploitations, will remain after blacks and other oppressed groups are supposedly integrated into this same segregated system. The notion of integration eventually became central in Lélia's thinking. Living in Brazil, where the idea of racial democracy was not only disseminated but also constitutive of a forged official history of the country, Lélia was busy understanding and denouncing abroad, particularly in the Americas, Europe, and Africa, the contradictions in this alleged integration and racial harmony in the hegemonic system.

Such contradictions are also addressed by May Ayim. The fact that she was separated from her biological family because of anti-integrationist laws led her to examine the principle of integration constantly in her work. May notes how being part of a white community did not integrate her to the community or allowed her to build and experience her identity as an Afro-German woman. This is because the way in which black people were integrated into German society carried the costs of adhering to the way of life of white people, an experience similar to what Claudia and Lélia described, one that keeps black people – and other oppressed peoples – struggling with the effects of their 'otherness', reduced to being invisible, silent, and vulnerable (AYIM, 1997; MAcCARROLL, 2005).

> Integration is still perceived more as a one-way process of foreigners accommodating themselves to German society than as a reciprocal process of mutual rapprochement in which German society must also find a new identity, one not based on exclusion and separation. (...) Afro-Germans, Asian-Germans, Sinti-Germans, and other 'hyphenated Germans' seem not to count as part of the German population' (OPITZ, OGUNTOYE, and SCHULTZ, 1992, p. 136 – literal translation).

Aware that experiences similar to those reported by May are still present in the twentieth century, civil society organizations conducted an independent census in 2020 (#Afrozensus) to collect data on the black community in Germany. The goal was to understand the experiences of black people in the country and enable a better targeting of public policies and greater integration into society. It is noteworthy that May, like Claudia and Lélia, believed in an international alliance of peoples and races. Much of her work was influenced by her interactions with African and diaspora activists, and she sought to create solidarity networks in Germany and other countries she visited.

For May, solidarity played an important role in perfecting her activism and helping her understand the nuances of racism in different spaces. She denounced and discussed not only white Germans' lack of solidarity with Afro-Germans (or with other ethnic groups and cultures), but also the false solidarity expressed by many progressive politicians – who were more concerned with promoting themselves or collecting electoral gains – and white feminists – who not only placed themselves at the center of feminist struggles but also ignored other

women (such as black and immigrant women) and their difficulties. In theory, such groups were also fighting oppression and exploitation, but in practice, according to May (AYIM, 1997), they did so only for their own benefit. What is more, they also ended up reproducing the oppression they were supposed to oppose. Still, May said she was "convinced that we – and by that I mean all the people in this country who do not tolerate racism and anti-Semitism – are willing and able to form alliances"[7] (AYIM, 1997, p. 100 – literal translation).

As noted in May's thinking, solidarity is what leads people or groups of people to cooperate for a common cause; as a pan-Africanist principle, it concerns political solidarity and racial solidarity. Both types of solidarity were important to the activisms of May and Claudia Jones. Claudia's activism – both in the US and in England – aimed at achieving international solidarity for all peoples. Such a solidarity led to the creation of mechanisms for black people in the U.S., the Caribbean, and Asia to gather, celebrate, and act politically; it helped push liberation struggles in the Americas and Africa. Claudia was one of the founders of the Notting Hill Carnival, an occasion to celebrate and claim the history and culture of Caribbean immigrants in England, an event that she saw as a strategy for promoting black solidarity (DAVIES, 2007).

Claudia also sought to build solidarity among black women. According to Claudia (JONES, 1949), black women have become the symbols of various contemporary anti-fascist, anti-imperialist, and anti-racist struggles, and, for this reason, surveillance and oppression have intensified on black women over the years, exactly the group that was already the most oppressed in society. "Negro women are the real active forces – the organizers and workers – in all the institutions and organizations of the Negro people" (JONES, 1949, p. 01). Since these women continue to be erased and silenced, not only by the hegemonic system, but also by fellow comrades with whom they fight and resist oppression, one should expect to see black women still mobilizing to create international solidarity networks.

The hegemonic system placed black women at the lowest social stratum, in the most vulnerable and unhealthy spaces, and dehumanized them so their activism – and thus their history – remains invisible (GONZALEZ, 2020). Therefore, these women

[7]In the original: "Aber ich bin überzeugt, daß wir - und damit meine ich alle Menschen in diesem Land, die Rassismus und Antisemitismus nicht dulden - zu Bündnissen willig und fähig sind".

must continue to create channels, networks, and strategies for international mobilization. Lélia also sees solidarity among black women as an imperative, especially because women are frequently excluded from spaces of power and leadership within the various expressions of the black movement. Lélia, like Claudia Jones and May Ayim, contends that solidarity among black women should extend – and does already – to other women who are extremely oppressed and socially exploited, such as indigenous women, who have also been organized collectively to ensure their families' survival.

In her in-depth analysis of Latin America, and aware of the principle of solidarity, Lélia identified a specific type of cooperation between different black peoples who have (re)built their identities in this space-place. She called this specific type of cooperation amefricanity, one of her most popular contributions. Amefricanity has a geographical character, essential for thinking about identities and activisms, but it also concerns cultural dynamics rooted in African ethnic identities that were experienced, built, and reinterpreted in the Americas following either forced migration and international human trafficking or voluntary migration of these peoples. It is thus a category that reclaims and validates the various survival struggles and the efforts to maintain and preserve African cultures in the Americas. It is thus undeniable that amefricanity, as described by Lélia, is linked to the pan-Africanist principles of solidarity, liberation, integration, and personality.

Personality refers to the set of characteristics that make up an individual. Each person has a personality, which is expressed and built individually and socially. Some of these characteristics might be found in groups of individuals, and it is precisely the sharing of personality traits that interests Pan-Africanism. In this context, the main strategic conflicts around the pan-Africanist principle of personality were: What would a pan-African personality be? What characteristics make up such a personality? Who shares this personality (Africans and Afro-descendants)? How and where to experience the Pan-African personality? Would it be necessary to return to Africa?

According to Lélia Gonzalez (2020), the personality shared by black people is not static, it is built from international, national, and local lived experiences of black people. That is, although continental Africans and Afro-descendants in the diaspora share many similarities, the Pan-African personality was also built and shaped differently in Africa and the diaspora. Therefore, a black personality cannot be fully

grasped without considering the particularities of a given group's space-place and space-time. The Amefricanity category, for example, shows that the black personality in the Americas was built "in the uprisings, in the formulation of cultural resistance strategies, in the development of alternative forms of free social organization, whose concrete expression is the 'quilombos' (...), which appeared in very different geographical areas in America" (GONZALEZ, 2020, p. 200, emphasis added – literal translation).

Claudia Jones was not thinking of a catch-all African personality that included all Afro-descendants in the diaspora. It was difficult to consider a 'single' personality even in the diaspora. Taking Claudia's history as an example, we see that despite being born in Trinidad, she built her activism in the US black community. That is where she grew up and where, as a child, she faced the implications of being a woman, a black person, and an immigrant in the diaspora. In light of these facts, it is important to question, for example: Why was Claudia never granted U.S. citizenship? (despite her claims, after living in the country for more than two decades). And why, after being treated as a criminal because of her political-ideological orientation, was she deported to Trinidad?

For Davies (2007), the cases of Claudia and thousands of other immigrants who were deported in the US (or whose citizenship applications were rejected) reveal two main deportation-related issues. First, deportation was a way to build the 'ideal American citizenship' – and, consequently, the ideal white, capitalist national personality. Second, deportation was strongly based on notions of 'home' that did not reflect the sentiment, experiences, and multiple identities of some immigrants. For example, is it reasonable to assume that Claudia, who grew up and lived almost her entire life in the US, would feel that returning to Trinidad was like 'returning home'? Possibly not.

Claudia's understanding of personality, like Lélia's, incorporates the similarities, exchanges, and combinations of elements between Africa and the diaspora, and between diasporic spaces and peoples. She proudly claimed to be a Caribbean, but she also understood that her history had been shaped mainly in the US, in dialogue with various national and international movements. In this sense, when talking about her relationship with her father, who worked as an editor at a newspaper about and for Caribbean-Americans, Claudia says: "my father's social ideas instilled in us were that

of a pride and consciousness of our people, of our relation to Africa, from which my antecedents sprang, to our interrelationship to Caribbean independence" (JONES, 2011, pp. 11-12).

It is noteworthy that Claudia's activism was strongly influenced by her relationship with her father, something we also see in the life and work of May Ayim. Even tough May did not have such a close relationship with her biological father in her childhood, the fact that she suffered racism in her own country and had a Ghanaian black father inhabited May's imaginary and led her to consider other possibilities to build and own a personality. After entering university and getting in touch with issues of race and racism, May started to accept her Africanness as part of her identity and tried to find in Ghana the 'home' that so many people attributed to her. She wrote about the contradictions of being Afro-German and not feeling that she belonged to Germany; she also said, in several poems, that Ghana was her homeland, although, until then, she had never been in that country. Such an identification, however, started to crack and led to new internal conflicts after she visited Ghana, where most of the family of May's biological father lived.

According to MacCarroll (2005), May Ayim experienced a new consciousness of herself and her Germanness after travelling in Africa. This is because "although she was not subject to discrimination like that in Germany, she was still seen as other because of her paler skin" (MAcCARROLL, 2005, p. 14); also, she did not speak the local languages nor shared the local culture. The experience of being Afro-German in Africa made her realize that she was in between, or crossing, these territories (Europe and Africa) when it comes to her identity and personality, a feeling that accompanied her until the last days of her life. In this context, the months leading up to her suicide were particularly marked by the "fear of not being able to find a way back to her personality"[8] (AYIM, 1997, p. 171 - literal translation).

As I have shown, activists Claudia Jones, Lélia Gonzalez, and May Ayim were arguably concerned with the most urgent issues of their time, which include Pan-Africanism. All three engaged with the pan-Africanist principles of liberation, integration, solidarity, and personality, and they did so from their specific national and

[8]No original: "fürchtete, daß sie den Weg zur ihrer Persönlichkeit nicht mehr würde zurückfinden können".

international perspectives, based on their own personal experiences. This engagement says a lot about each activist and their thinking about the world and the strategies available to fight black oppression and exploitation, but it also says a lot about the time and place where they lived and developed their works.

Conclusion

By investigating the dialogues between black women's activisms and Pan-Africanism in the Black Atlantic diaspora, I was able to observe and reflect on core IR issues, such as the notions of territory and identity. I believe I have thus successfully travelled the paths I set out to explore. First, I have revisited black diaspora activists and highlighted specifically the history and activism of Claudia Jones, Lélia Gonzalez, and May Ayim. Secondly, I have built bridges between their activisms and Pan-Africanism. Although they were born in different decades and countries, their life (and activism) stories connect and intersect. All three were born in the diaspora, where they faced racism, sexism, and classism since their childhood. All the oppression and exploitation they suffered prompted them to develop Afro-diasporic activisms in which black women appear as the driving force behind international anti-imperialist, anti-colonialist, and anti-racist movements. The three women were also considered pioneers because of their activisms.

It is also remarkable that their contributions engage with the twentieth-century pan-Africanist principles. Liberation, integration, solidarity, and personality are at the core of their activisms. It is true that, just as in the different streams of the pan-Africanist movement, they also diverged about which were the best strategies to achieve these principles. They all agreed on the importance of addressing these principles in their works, which, in turn, were not disconnected from their personal lives. Such an intrinsic connection is also reflected in their deaths: They all suffered early deaths because of their efforts and the fatigue resulting from their struggles.

The life and work of Claudia Jones, Lélia Gonzalez, and May Ayim deserve even more careful and detailed analysis. Conducting such an analysis from a pan-Africanist perspective, however, is beyond the scope of this paper, as it requires more time and dedication. On the other hand, such limitations open avenues for future research on these – and other – activists, or, as I have done here, for building bridges that connect, cross, and open paths between activists and Pan-Africanisms.

Given what I have shown here, it is undeniable that Pan-Africanism is in dialogue with the activism of black women in the Black Atlantic diaspora. The pan-Africanist movement addressed different ideologies and urgent issues of the twentieth century. Consequently, it has strongly influenced the activism of black women, such as Claudia Jones, Lélia Gonzales, and May Ayim. Even though these three women activists had ideological and strategic differences, they all engaged with pan-Africanist principles, which they defended and discussed. That demonstrates how valuable the pan-Africanist ideal is for international relations and, consequently, for the IR discipline.

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