

Reflection Article/Essay

Dona Ivone Lara and Occupational Therapy: the becoming-black of the profession's history

Dona Ivone Lara e terapia ocupacional: devir-negro da história da profissão

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Abstract

This essay presents an analysis of the contributions of black memories within Occupational Therapy field - highlighting the story of Yvonne Lara. Yvonne Lara was a nurse, social worker and specialist in Occupational Therapy. From the 1940s, her practices aimed to care for people with mental disorders using music as a therapeutic activity and working in cooperation with families and communities in her efforts to deinstitutionalize individuals. The article discusses the innovation of these care practices bearing in mind the hegemony of the organicist current and the asylum-based model that marked psychiatry at that time. It is argued that the salvaging of Yvonne's history is central to the historical reconstruction of the profession, turning from the racist epistemicide against the contributions of the knowledge of black people. Herein, we seek to give visibility to individuals who were marginalized by official narratives and to build an epistemic diversity in the field, which we denominate the becoming-black of Occupational Therapy.

Keywords: Racism, African Continental Ancestry Group, History of Public Health, Occupational Therapy/History.

Resumo

Este ensaio apresenta uma análise das contribuições de memórias negras que perpassam a terapia ocupacional – colocando em tela a história de Yvonne Lara. Yvonne Lara foi enfermeira, assistente social e especialista em terapia ocupacional. A partir dos anos 1940, realizou práticas voltadas para o cuidado de pessoas com transtornos mentais, utilizando a música como atividade terapêutica e o trabalho de articulação com a família e comunidade, na busca de processos de desinstitucionalização dos sujeitos. O texto aponta a inovação dessas práticas de

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cuidado, tendo em vista a hegemonia da corrente organicista e asilar que marcava a psiquiatria na época. Defende-se que o resgate de histórias como de Yvonne seja central para a reconstituição histórica da profissão, rompendo com o epistemicídio racista das contribuições do conhecimento dos povos negros. Busca-se visibilizar figuras marginalizadas pelas narrativas oficiais e construir uma diversidade epistêmica no campo, o que denominamos como o devir-negro da terapia ocupacional.

Palavras-chave: Racismo, Grupo com Ancestrais do Continente Africano, História da Saúde Pública, Terapia Ocupacional/História.

Introduction

This essay arises from debates undertaken by us and other colleagues in Occupational Therapy, members of the group “Dona Ivone Lara - Studies and Research in Occupational Therapy and the Black Population”¹, which engage into the knowledge and practices (theoretical or otherwise) concerning ethnic-racial issues in their professional field. The people who are part of our group make up a movement for critical and epistemological renewal of Occupational Therapy, specifically for the visibility and contemplation of the demands of the black population.

As demonstrated by Grosfoguel (2016), the epistemic structure of westernized universities has been internalizing the racist/sexist logic of knowledge through the genocides and epistemicides of the 16th century, implemented by the colonial and patriarchal project. The disqualification of knowledge and the condition of cognitive injustice experienced by the political and geopolitical bodies of colonial subjects, Muslims and Jews, native peoples, enslaved Africans and burned-at-the-stake European women accused of witchcraft, configured the naturalization of privilege and epistemic inferiority under the tradition of male Western thought.

In the production of knowledge in Occupational Therapy, researchers and professionals from different parts of the world (Ambrosio, 2020; Amorim et al., 2020; Beagan & Etowa, 2009; Farias et al., 2018, 2020; Grenier, 2020; Nicholls & Elliot, 2019; Martins & Farias, 2020; Ramugondo, 2000; Steed, 2014) have brought debates centered on the configuration of life from the perspective of race, in a sociological conception of social relations, questioning white supremacy and addressing issues related to the ideology of racism. With that in mind, investigations on the academic production and research that focus on structural and procedural issues - racial, historical, social, political and cultural, involving black individuals and collectives, as well as their interfaces with Occupational Therapy - have led us to understand what places black people have occupied in the consolidation of theoretical and practical knowledge related to their profession. In other words, we have asked ourselves, “What has been the place

¹ The group “Dona Ivone Lara - Studies and Research in Occupational Therapy and the Black Population” was created in October 2016, as an independent group, bringing together a collective of Occupational Therapists from different regions of Brazil who were interested in deepening the debate on questions involving the black people. The group's name is a tribute to Dona Ivone Lara, a black woman, nurse, social worker and Occupational Therapy specialist who played an important role in Occupational Therapy since the 1940s in Brazil, standing next to Nise da Silveira in proposing humanized care practices for asylum patients.

of black men and women and their contributions in the constitution of the history of Occupational Therapy?”.

Based on this question, the interest emerges to understand and deepen the story of Yvonne Lara, a black woman who contributed to the development of Occupational Therapy in Brazil, which remains often ignored and invisible in the profession's historiography. Although Yvonne Lara was next to Nise da Silveira in her propositions of care within an asylum, little is known and acknowledged about her importance.

Yvonne Lara had different names. Her birth name was Yvonne da Silva Lara, and after getting married she change it to Yvonne Lara da Costa². In the music world, as a samba dancer, she became known as Dona Ivone Lara, the “Dama do Samba” (Lady of Samba), and, later, she was consecrated Queen of Samba (Dona Ivone Lara, 2020; Scheffer, 2016; Burns, 2006; Santos, 2005). In the present essay, we choose to call her Yvonne Lara due to the fact that we have acquired a deep understanding of her career as a health professional, specifically in public health. It is also worth mentioning that, for Yvonne, it was crucial to separate the life she had built as a health professional from the universe of music, although we can now see there was a considerable overlap between these two worlds that she was part of.

Yvonne Lara was a nurse, a social worker and a specialist in Occupational Therapy (Scheffer, 2016). Until the 1950s, Occupational therapy was not yet a profession that required technical or higher education in Brazil. At that time, Occupational Therapy (also called praxitherapy and occupational therapeutics, among other names) was defined as a set of practices that employed occupation in a therapeutic way (Soares, 1991). Thus, Yvonne's status of specialist came when she graduated in the 1940s from an *Elementary Course in Occupational Therapy* offered by Nise da Silveira. This course provided professional training for the so-called praxitherapy assistants (Silva, 2011; Paranhos, 2018).

We therefore propose an immersion in her narrative, as an attempt to break with the systematic invisibilization of the fundamental contributions of black people. This recognition is in line with what Trouillot (1995), in his work *Silencing the Past*, presents about how the production of historical knowledge is mediated by power relations, arguing that, ontologically, European intellectuals attributed a place of incapacity to black people in the production of works of value and prominence. Munanga (2015, p. 31) corroborates this proposition by emphasizing that the history of Africa was denied in colonial historiography, and “the history of blacks in Brazil was subjected to the same strategy of falsification and denial and, when it was told, it was from the point of view of others and according to their interests”. Thus, the history of subordinate social groups is mentioned in a degraded and episodic manner, and therefore it is essential to identify and delve into these stories which have been eclipsed by the official narratives (Gramsci, 2002).

Adichie (2019, p. 16), in her book *The Danger of a Single Story* argues that:

Stories matter. Many stories matter. Stories have been used to dispossess and to malign. But stories can also be used to empower, and to humanize. Stories

² Part of our research material indicated she was registered as Yvonne da Silva Lara, and another part referred to her Yvonne Lara da Costa. For the elucidation, we thank Fernanda Jacob, the actress and singer who plays Dona Ivone Lara in the play “Dona Ivone Lara - The musical”, as well as André Lara - singer, songwriter and grandson of Dona Ivone Lara.

can break the dignity of a people. But stories can also repair that broken dignity.

Thus, telling, retelling, reworking and reconstructing the official stories (once presented as unique) become an essential process to humanize, recognize and repair the dignity of subjects or collectives that were fundamental for the consolidation of society and, in our case, of practices that accounts for Occupational Therapy. In this perspective, we seek to contribute to the salvaging and strengthening of the black memories that permeate Occupational Therapy. According to Araújo (2004, p. 247), we reaffirm that:

[...] we need to be proud of the achievements of our [black] men and women who, despite the stigma inherited from slavery, have left their marks in our history as scientists, engineers, poets, writers, doctors, sculptors, painters, historians [and Occupational Therapists].

“I just wasn't what I didn't want to be³”: Excerpts from the Life of Yvonne Lara

Yvonne Lara was born at home, her birth was assisted by a midwife, on April 13th, 1921⁴, in the beachfront neighborhood of Botafogo, southern Rio de Janeiro - Brazil. She was the first daughter of the musicians Emerentina Bento da Silva and José da Silva Lara. Her father died when her mother was pregnant with her sister, Elza. As her family was poor and her father was the one primarily responsible for the house income, that time was of great instability in the household, with the constant fear of not being able to meet basic needs hovering over her mother. The situation improved a few years later, when Emerentina married Venino José da Silva. They subsequently had two boys, Nilo and Valdir, to join Emerentina's two daughters from her previous marriage (Burns, 2006).

Yvonne's parents were very concerned about their education. They enrolled her at the *Instituto Profissional Feminino Orsina da Fonseca*, a public boarding school maintained by the City of Rio de Janeiro. The school was very traditional, recognized by the rigor, severity and quality of the teaching they offered⁵. She started school at the age of ten and only finally left when she reached adulthood. With the intense everyday activities, she visited her family every fortnight, on weekends. Yvonne took singing lessons and participated in the choir, having one of the best voices in the group. During this period, she had the opportunity to take classes with “Dona” Lucília and Zaíra de

³ Excerpt from Dona Ivone Lara's interview to Burns (2006, p.40).

⁴ In 2021 is celebrated the centenary birthday of Dona Ivone Lara. As evidenced from literature sources, there is divergencies about her name, as well as her birth date. André Lara elucidated to us that, in the reality, Yvonne Lara was born in 1922. Her mother, to make sure that her daughter could access school, altered Yvonne's original documents. Since then, Yvonne's family choose to recognize and celebrate the centenary birthday of Dona Ivone Lara two times: one in 2021 and another in 2022.

⁵ According to Burns (2006), Orsina da Fonseca was a school focused on the professionalization of women, especially those of low-income, in order to turn them into *ideal women*. Their objective was to train women as mothers, wives and workers - alongside men, when necessary - so that they could maintain themselves independently and free from humiliation. In 1933, there was a major remodeling of the school, with the introduction of new teachers and principals. In addition, disciplines such as geometry, chemistry, physics, natural history and Portuguese gained more prominence in the curriculum, which previously was more focused on teaching arts, typing, cutting and sewing, among other skills.

Oliveira⁶, which made her very proud of herself. These experiences, as well as the progress of her singing studies nurtured in Yvonne the pleasure of music; already at that time, she started composing melodies (Burns, 2006). She lived between two different worlds (Scheffer, 2016); “[...] while at school she spent her days studying a particular musical genre, its theory and applications, on weekends, in the company of her family, she never gave up listening to others – not only a different genre but, in the eyes of society, one that was almost opposite to the former” (Burns, 2006, p. 36-37), marked by samba, chorinho, jongo, among other types of music common in that region.

Burns (2006) relates that during the boarding school period there was an important event in Yvonne's life: the death of her mother. Emerentina died at the age of 33 due to her high blood pressure. This fact combined with the fortnightly visits weakened Yvonne's relationship with her family and the boarding school became central to her identifications and references in the female universe.

Yvonne spoke of the considerable hardship of being a girl of only 12 years old, black and orphaned by father and mother. “It demanded more from me than girls of that age are usually able to deal with.” In the same year when she lost her mother, she saw the Federal Constitution approved, which gave women the right to vote and equaled them with men in terms of labor rights. It was a moment of effervescence in the country, when women began leaving the position of subordinates to demand recognition and equality (Burns, 2006, p. 39).

Thus, since the age of 12, Yvonne was devising strategies to live and survive, building herself towards an independent life, to be the master of her own fate.

After finishing school, she went to live at the home of her maternal aunt Maria, who was responsible for the children after the death of her sister. To help with the house expenses, which were already high before her arrival, her uncle asked her to look for a job. Quite reluctant to follow the fate of the people around her, and having other ambitions in life, she did not want to be a factory worker. Then, one day, she read in a newspaper about the opening of vacancies for the *Alfredo Pinto Nursing School* and decided to apply for it. She picked nursing because it was the only free course, and she saw in it an opportunity to change her socioeconomic status. So, she managed to make a deal with her uncle: they agreed that, if her application was rejected, she would have to find some job (Burns, 2006; Santos, 2005).

Yvonne passed the selection test and her score placed her among the top 10 candidates, which gave her the access to a scholarship. The money that she made was passed to her aunt, in order to help with household expenses. The nursing course was undergoing a curricular reformulation, with new guidelines for professional training and specialization, in psychiatric institutions (Burns, 2006).

Holding a nursing degree and now living at the home of her maternal uncle Dionísio, an ambulance driver and music scholar in his spare time – Yvonne went to work at

⁶ "Dona" Lucília was music teacher Lucília Villa-Lobos, also the wife of conductor Heitor Villa-Lobos. The conductor was in the habit of attending the choir's performances, and Yvonne even sang under his conduction. Yvonne also took classes with Zaíra de Oliveira, considered one of the great black singers in Brazilian musical history. In 1921, Zaíra won the *Escola de Música* music contest, considered to be the most important at the time, but, due to her skin color, she was barred from receiving the award (Dona Ivone Lara, 2020; Burns, 2006).

Colônia Juliano Moreira, an asylum. Music was something she did on the side, for leisure and in her spare time. Therefore she did not see it as a professional career. Her passion for music clashed with her desire for financial stability, for working under a formal contract and having a steady salary. Her financial stability projects, combined with her affinity with the field of social care led her to take a course in social assistance and become a student in the first class of the profession, which was still unregulated in the country (Dona Ivone Lara, 2020; Scheffer, 2016; Burns, 2006; Santos, 2005).

In 1947, at the end of her new training, she took a job at *Instituto de Psiquiatria do Engenho de Dentro*, an asylum where she worked until she retired in 1977. Initially, her work at the Institute was focused on the preparation of reports on patients; she traveled great distances to visit the relatives of hospitalized people, seeking to make technical decisions that also took the patient's family into consideration. Subsequently, she described the subjects' behavior while they were at home, with their families.

Nise da Silveira, a psychiatrist, was a member of Yvonne's team, as her supervisor. As previously mentioned, Yvonne had attended the *Elementary Occupational Therapy Course* offered by Nise, achieving the title of specialist in Occupational Therapy (Dona Ivone Lara, 2020; Burns, 2006; Santos, 2005). According to Scheffer (2016) and Vasconcelos (2000), "psychiatric social workers", in this historical period, received recognition for their services, being rewarded with social prestige and very decent payment. This was important because it meant these workers had opportunities to have their economic value acknowledged.

Yvonne still loved samba. However, with her heavy workload, it became more difficult to reconcile career and her love of music. Yvonne's strategy was to schedule her vacations for February, when the big Carnival party took place. She wouldn't miss it for anything. Already in the late 1940s and early 50s, Yvonne could hear her songs being performed by great musicians. It was at one of her meetings with groups of samba dancers and Carnival organizers and enthusiasts that Yvonne met Oscar Costa, the man who would later become her husband. In 1947, they were officially married (Burns, 2006; Santos, 2005).

One strategy that Yvonne found to combine her professional life with her passion for music was becoming part of the team responsible for organizing "patient day", on which several patients were brought together for playful music activities. On these occasions, which took all day, spaces were created for the existence of the other person, giving way to their voice, dancing, and their skill with musical instruments. In that space, someone with mental disorders were not ignored. They were seen as a person and they were appreciated (Burns, 2006).

Although samba had always been something enjoyable and a central aspect of socialization throughout Yvonne's adult life, it was only after her retirement that she pursued a singing career. That does not mean, however, that she was oblivious to the samba movements at the time. Because of sexism, it was not possible - socially and culturally - for a woman to compose samba. So, during part of her life as a young adult, the strategy adopted by Yvonne to participate in the musical scenery, albeit with restrictions, was to write songs and hand them over to her cousin, Mestre Fuleiro, who presented them as his own. This strategy was gradually abandoned and after a while, Yvonne became an official member of the group of composers for the *Império Serrano*

Samba School in Rio de Janeiro, having even achieved recognition as the first woman to compose an official samba theme (Burns, 2006; Santos, 2005).

Her musical career was as brilliant as her career as a health professional. Yvonne, who also became known as Dona Ivone Lara, was a mother, formed great partnerships in music, recorded several albums and won numerous awards. Indeed, she was a woman who left a vast legacy, which includes her work in Occupational Therapy.

Yvonne and the Becoming-Black of Occupational Therapy: Inspirations and Paths for the Current Thinking/Doing

It is upon noticing the absences and claims for the acknowledgement of the contributions of black people in the historiography of Occupational Therapy that we bring forward the proposal of a *becoming-black* for the field, highlighting stories such as Yvonne's one. The use of the term "becoming-black" is inspired by Mbembe's proposal (2018). The author encourages the construction of a common world that recognizes the historical wounds suffered by blacks since the Atlantic traffic and the whole history of exploitation, objectification, and denial of their humanities, but also – at the same time – envisions the project of a world to come.

...for those who have been subjected to colonial domination, or for those whose share of humanity was stolen at a given moment in history, the recovery of that share often happens in part through the proclamation of difference. But as we can see within certain strains of modern Black criticism, the proclamation of difference is only one facet of a larger project — the project of a world that is coming, a world before us, one whose destination is universal, a world freed from the burden of race, from resentment, and from the desire for vengeance that all racism calls into being (Mbembe, 2018, p. 315).

The thinking/doing of Occupational Therapists grows from the narrative of people in relation to their needs and desires throughout life (Galheigo, 2009), and the Occupational Therapy resources are listed in a contextualized and meaningful way for the subjects we encounter and to whom we provide assistance (Lima, 2003, 2019). Thus, in the logic of a becoming-black, we conceive the possibility of favoring the construction of an Occupational Therapy that has as its project premises that dialogue with the problems of the black population, contemplating the recognition of their memory, as well as their once-denied-and-distorted contributions, their research agendas and theoretical discussions, fighting against racism and promoting the lives of these people. By treading this path, we envision the possibility of an increasingly ethical configuration of the work done in our field, taking into consideration the needs and desires reflected in a diversity of people, demands and situations as they present themselves to us.

In this sense, the practices carried out by Yvonne at that historical moment, starting in the 1940/1950s, signal elementary aspects of the search for alternative forms of care, centered on understanding the subject and their expressions. In an interview with Santos (2005, p. 68-69), Yvonne discusses the subject.

I met many patients who were musicians, schizophrenics, who nobody knew that were musicians. Many of them who had been abandoned by their families. Dr. Nise set up a music room with a piano, a ukulele, a tambourine; in the afternoon, there was a dress rehearsal, and I was always there, dancing with them, dancing the samba, singing with them. There was a patient who was catatonic, but Dr. Nise was very amused because he would say: "Ivone, are we having a rehearsal today?" and then he would retreat into his world; he only talked with me.

From Yvonne's report, we can see she used resources that made it possible to meet the demands of that group. Her practices ranged from visiting the homes of hospitalized patients to using music. With that, she sought to reach the patients, to articulate and enable their return to their families, which we can read as deinstitutionalization processes, even though an "asylum model" was in force at that time. According to Scheffer (2016, p. 491), as a member of a group of pioneers, Yvonne "was responsible for making the extramural articulations between patient, family and community".

Upon reflecting on these resources, we are able to identify a repertoire of activities presented by Yvonne that are inseparable from the history and context of her life, such as her own experience in music. The use of music and her work with the families of hospitalized subjects, especially at that time, illustrate her contributions to the advancement in humanized care (Vasconcelos, 2000), in multi/inter/transdisciplinary care, and in territorial practices, especially those centered on public health, acknowledging the importance of linking these practices with popular knowledge/cultures. Thus, part of our exercise is to turn to Yvonne as an important reference, despite the limitations she faced in her time, in a counter-hegemonic proposal of care.

In a research report by Burns (2006), Yvonne reaffirmed that, at work, she was in charge of all activities related to music, such as the preparations for the so-called "patient day". In an interview, she says:

On these special days, we organized some patients who wanted to perform, dance, sing, and these were the activities most stimulated by Dr. Nise's method, which was beginning to be put into practice. Then, we spent the whole day with them. There was a patient, for example, whose name was Ribamar, who had played in the *Tabajara Orchestra*. Another was nicknamed "Sheriff", who played the piano very well. Sometimes we would listen for hours (Burns, 2006, p. 58).

Yvonne was a professional who recognized the importance of activities, linking them to artistic, recreational and cultural expressions, and she used them in her work with Nise da Silveira at *Engenho de Dentro* (a psychiatry institute) and at *Casa das Palmeiras* (a nonprofit created by Nise in 1956, as an extension of the services provided by *Engenho de Dentro*). Yvonne's proposals were innovative, welcoming personal and subjective stories from her patients (Vasconcelos, 2000). This was radically different from the predominant treatments of that period, which were adopted from a symptomatologic and medication-driven perspective, and favored the clinical-surgical interventions of traditional psychiatry, such as electroshock and neurological surgeries (Soares, 1991;

Castro & Lima, 2007). Moreover, Yvonne's practices broke with an empty perspective of activities – which were often monotonous and repetitive, or aimed at maintaining the institutions themselves at the time (Soares, 1991; Castro & Lima, 2007) – to understand them as spaces for the expression of the subjects, taking into consideration their desires, needs and creativity. In another account by Yvonne, this perspective is evident:

There was Ribamar, who was catatonic. He lived there, forgotten by the family, almost never speaking. One day, we were listening to another patient playing the piano and I started to sing. He paid attention and seemed to enjoy the music... then he told me he was himself a musician. Later, I came to learn that he had been a clarinet player for the *Tabajara Orchestra*. Then he started playing at the hospital parties. He got better overnight, an impressive thing! I went to his house to speak with his relatives, who then started visiting him. And he was healed. In a while, he left there, good as new! (Burns, 2009, p. 8).

It is interesting to note and highlight that, if the theoretical repertoire of Nise da Silveira was the readings of analytical psychologist Carl Jung (Soares, 1991), Yvonne used her musical repertoire as an intervention methodology based on the popular knowledge/culture of samba and rooted in her own life story. If the care practices developed at the institute *Engenho de Dentro* had music in them, a considerable part of this was due to Yvonne's knowledge. It was through her technical and personal knowledge that the effects of music on patients were made evident. Through her journey, the benefits of a life steeped in popular culture became understandable.

Thus, we continue in our exercise by reflecting that Yvonne Lara's work in Occupational Therapy, at that time, enabled the development of a repertoire of resources and interventions that expanded on the set of actions that we have as reference in the work of Nise da Silveira.

Lima (2019) points out that, following a new direction, the practice of Occupational Therapy as a higher education profession occurs in the field of possibilities and resources, seeking the connection and management of experience, life potentiality and the promotion of transformations. Thus, Yvonne's life and career, although made invisible by history, have been – and certainly continue to be – a reference for actions in Occupational Therapy. Although in an institutional context of dehumanization and violence, the cracks caused by the work developed by Yvonne encourages and informs us in different ways. Either through activities, especially music, used to promote the participation and expression of institutionalized subjects, based on their needs and desires, albeit constrained within the limits of the traditional asylum model; or through her work coordinating with the families in search of deinstitutionalization processes, through which she sought to restore the family network, following an extramural logic.

We recognize that these are some examples, albeit limited, of actions that reinvented the thinking/doing of what was previously understood and subsidized as Occupational Therapy practices at that time. These actions, in an embryonic but transgressive way, sought to break with the traditional asylum model, and now they guide and inspire the current Therapeutic-Occupational work, given the continuous importance of reaffirming the need for critical work, centered on the subject and the experiencing of life through creation, art, encounters and free circulation, the promotion of autonomy,

citizenship and the expansion of culture, and the fulfilment of the subjects' desires – in a society without asylums.

Final Considerations: A Manifesto to the Many Yvones Laras

Yvonne Lara is an icon of resistance because of her life and career. She was a black woman of poor origin in a sexist, racialized and socioeconomically unequal society, seeking to build and give life to her projects in various dimensions, continually dealing with the everyday violence of this socio-cultural structure. It should be noted that some of this was expressed in her music, such as the song *Lamento do Negro*:

Canto do negro é um lamento

Na senzala do senhor...

O negro veio de Angola

Fazendo sua oração

Na promessa da riqueza

Só ganhou a escravidão...⁷

The song is a denunciation of something that was experienced at the everyday life, but without abandoning the beauty and the possibility of announcing freedom, as we can see in the song *Sorriso Negro*:

Um sorriso negro

Um abraço negro

Traz felicidade

Negro sem emprego

Fica sem sossego

Negro é a raiz de liberdade...⁸

In this perspective, the examination of Yvonne's history calls our attention to her life experiences and a professional practice that made the contributions of a becoming-black possible in Occupational Therapy, as well as to the fact that her work in Social Service has been receiving more recognition (Scheffer, 2016). The production of knowledge in the field has undertaken important discussions that highlight the study object of

⁷ The black man's song is a lament/In the master's slave house.../The black man came from Angola/Saying his prayer/On the promise of wealth/He won nothing but slavery...

⁸ A black smile/A black hug/Brings happiness/Black without a job/Has no peace/Black is the root of freedom...

Occupational Therapy as centered on active human beings and on the multiplicity of their normal everyday lives. It is not by chance that we believe that Yvonne's experience, her contexts and life story may have brought important elements to reflect on the resources used by our profession, such as music – samba, for instance – to expand life possibilities for the people under our care, defying the consolidated structural processes.

For this reason, we agree that Yvonne's story makes it possible to advance our understanding of the need to illuminate the proposals and the multiplicity of experiences that human beings in action will produce with basis on their unique life stories. Thus, the becoming-black of Occupational Therapy might be found in these moments of reflection, analysis and criticism concerning the contributions that black people have made to the field, especially when presenting ways to build a world that is to come.

Finally, we understand that telling the story of Yvonne Lara to the Occupational Therapy community constitutes a manifesto for the recognition and salvaging of black memories – of several black women who collaborated to consolidate the practices that gave life to the profession. Her reasoning, methods and technical actions can inform Occupational Therapy, either targeting current practices or for a historical reanalysis, identifying her influences for the development of the profession in Brazil. Certainly, Yvonne and many others have contributed and still contribute to what was, and has become, Occupational Therapy. We seek here to assist with the exercise of retelling history, breaking with the epistemicide of these historically subordinated subjects and, from that, to expand the knowledge and recognition of the diverse black influences on the profession.

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