


## From discourse to writing: the memory of Brazilian National Rap as an effect of resistance /

### *Da fala para a escrita: a memória do rap nacional brasileiro como efeito de resistência*

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#### **ABSTRACT**

This article aims to analyze the effects of resistance emerging from three songs in Brazilian national rap: “Pânico na Zona Sul” (1989) by Racionais MC’s, “Cidadão Comum Refém” (2002) by Mv Bill, and “Favela Vive 4” (2020) by ADL. More specifically, we seek to understand how the lyrics of these songs contribute not only to the popularization of Brazilian culture but also constitute spaces of resistance and denunciation for minority groups placed “on the margins” by a portion of society, as they represent environments that reinforce dominant spaces imbued with social stigmas and visually represented by negative stereotypes (“poor”, “slum dwellers”, among others), attributions primarily assigned to the black community. The material chosen consists of three songs from three different decades, each with certain regularities that represent the current configuration of Brazil’s social reality. In this context, we analyze the excerpts beyond their well-known musical genre, observing them as instruments of resistance embodied in the verses, thus contributing to the denunciation of the segregation of this community. Through French discourse analysis, we aim to understand rap as a discursive event that redefines the entire memory of resistance among blacks and the poorest in different spheres of Brazilian society, placing them in a significant and necessary space of redefinition.

**KEYWORDS:** Discourse; Brazilian Rap; Resistance.

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## RESUMO

*Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar os efeitos de resistência que emergem de três canções do rap nacional brasileiro: Pânico na Zona Sul (1989), dos Racionais MC's, Cidadão Comum Refém (2002), de Mv Bill e Favela Vive 4 (2020), de ADL. De maneira mais específica, buscamos compreender como as letras dessas músicas contribuem não só com a popularização da cultura brasileira, mas também constituem-se como espaços de resistência e denúncia de grupos minoritários colocados "à margem" por uma parcela da sociedade, uma vez que se tratam de ambientes que ratificam os espaços de dominância impregnados pelo social e que são, visualmente, representados por estigmas negativos ("pobres", "favelados", entre outros), atribuições feitas sobretudo à comunidade negra. A escolha do material é constituída por três canções de três décadas distintas, ambas com certas regularidades que mostram a atual configuração da realidade social do Brasil. Nesse caminho, analisamos os recortes para além de seu gênero musical, bastante conhecido, os observando como um instrumento de resistência corporificado pelas estrofes e pela fala que corroboram, assim, para a denúncia da segregação dessa comunidade. Por meio da análise de discurso francesa, buscamos compreender o rap como um acontecimento discursivo que ressignifica toda memória de resistência dos negros e dos mais pobres nas diferentes esferas brasileiras e que os colocam, também, em um espaço de ressignificação importante e necessário.*

*PALAVRAS-CHAVE:* Discurso; rap nacional; Resistência.

## 1 Introduction

In our history, May 13, 1888, is a significant milestone that puts an end to one of the worst practices that served as Brazil's economic mainstay for more than three centuries: slave labor. Sanctioned by Princess Isabel, the Golden Law was responsible for abolishing, at least in theory, slave labor, with the black population as the main subsidy for the services and chores of the plantation owners. In this sense, freedom was, in fact, the definitive result that brought new airs to a section of the population that had been exploited the most and valued little at the hands of the powerful at the time. However, in recent decades, we have seen that, in practice, this document promulgated by the princess was not enough to guarantee the necessary changes; what we have seen and, unfortunately, still experience, is an increase in cases of exploitation of people, placed in work analogous to slavery. Therefore, daily news and information is broadcast by the major national media as a way of denouncing these facts, which by far are still a major problem in our territory and which call into question the entire history of achievements of a minority people, the blacks, who suffer the violence of powerful businessmen whose main objective is profit.

According to Oliveira and Paulino (2020, p. 95), "[...] the public policies demanded by the abolitionists were stifled by the Brazilian elite represented by the oligarchy." Thus, the lack of attention and incentive movements for this group were responsible for triggering a process of marginalization and abandonment of the black community in Brazil. In the big cities and commercial centers, for example, there are many black men and women struggling to find a place in the job

market in the face of a reality marked by the stratification of history, resulting in alarming and very unequal data that persists throughout our geography. In addition to this process of marginalization, we see concepts that spread meanings of the precariousness of this population associated with poverty, slums and the few resources and spaces for occupation in capitalist society, inheriting a prejudice that history insists on determining through social ills and racist and separatist attitudes.

We can also say that there were certain mechanisms that associated this poor part of the population with the meaning of "vagrants" and, as a consequence, any culture created from this "vagrancy" is marked by traits that are considered "peripheral", that is, far from the seal of the powerful in the big commercial centers. Thus, criminalized in 1890, vagrancy established that individuals who did not have a profession, means of subsistence or home and who were found wandering the streets would receive a sentence of 15 to 30 days in prison. As a result of this intense monitoring, the black population was forced to migrate to the slums and outlying areas of the cities and live precariously, forming what we know today as the Brazilian favelas. There isn't a single major capital in the country that doesn't have a "marginalized" space, the result of all this Brazilian historical (mis)construction. In some large cities, we see extremely precarious conditions and a lack of minimum public policies that guarantee the dignity of those who do not fit into a "standard" of living stigmatized by capitalism and, above all, by the order of concentrated profits in the hands of a few.

Therefore, remembering the past is essential if we are to talk about the present and the way in which there are (or are not) public policies that integrate this community into the heart of large capital cities. Consequently, this "marginalization", created by the clear separation of capital, contributes to prejudices becoming ingrained in societies, further ratifying social and economic difficulties and the work of caring for others in situations of vulnerability. Even after so many years, there are still remnants of these racist practices in the 21st century, which always appear in a disguised or "erased" way, either by debauched humor, especially from the upper classes, or by institutions that "forget" this stereotype of blacks and the less privileged and unfortunately foster inequalities.

The differences in treatment are seen in the various Brazilian spheres (economic, political, social), but if we could cite a brief example, which is very prevalent in contemporary times, we can see the large number of poor and black children, who come from this constructed "margin", who do not have access to private education and, as a result, are left with only municipal and state schools, which for years have been scrapped and poorly valued by the state. Sometimes there is a lack of

food at home and these environments are the only places where these children can find something to eat. According to Silva et al. (2020), 2011 data from the IPEA (Economic Institute for Applied Research) show that 66.2% of houses in favelas are occupied by black people, 39.4% of which are headed by black men and 26.8% by black women.

Brazilian culture is marked by its diversity. Music, painting, sculpture, and poetry are just some of the artistic representations that place the Brazilian people as a symbol of plurality and resistance. In particular, art and music have become an escape valve from these "marginalized" centers, often representing the cry and voice of resistance from communities that are constantly separated. Music, in turn, is considered the force of minorities to fight against violence; national rap, in its context, is also a form of expression that is associated with these evils and considered "less" important compared to a Blue or Jazz rhythm, which certainly occupy other meanings in the Brazilian elite.

It is thus through these artistic expressions, discourses that emerge from very diverse contexts, that we see certain spheres of Brazilian society breaking with stigmas and prejudices. Faced with so much oppression and discrimination, resistance against these racist practices emerges in these spaces through music. Therefore, it has, for a long time, brought effects of meanings that demystify these daily prejudices capable of determining what is "marginal". In other words, to the sense of "stray", which is now associated with this community, we find ways in which contradictory discourses emerge from the dominance that re-signify history and the social imaginary, placing them no longer in this "marginalization", but making them visible and necessary for the creation of a genuine culture of their own. We can say that in this way, music and resistance end up becoming a motto for the fight against this stratification that is so latent in our country.

It is through the lyrics and beats of the songs, for example, that we see the warrior force of this culture "shouting" at the horror of violence and resisting the story told by the elite. In fact, for this reflection, we are starting from this cultural expression, national rap, to (re)visit these deep-rooted prejudices, distancing ourselves from crystallized stigmas and emphasizing the forms of resistance against a section of the population that determines what can be "cultured" and "uncultured", "marginal" or "non-marginal". We therefore want to observe some of the regularities that emerge from these musical rhythms that re-signify not only the memory of black people in Brazilian communities and place them in a space of necessary resistance, but also the entire population that is "marginalized" from the discourses promoted by the big centers and financial markets. Rap is much more than just music or artistic expression, it is, according to its verses and

strong writing, a cry of resistance that is increasingly popular in different parts of Brazil, whether on the outskirts or in large urban centers. It is no longer possible to draw stereotypes about this form of expression without resisting the prejudice that they are no longer accepted and will no longer be accepted. Our aim is to understand the slippage of meanings about national rap based on the concepts of memory and event, woven by Michel Pêcheux and his group in France at the linguistic turning point of the late 1960s.

## 2 National rap culture: discourse and resistance in the speech of the subjects

We can say that it's not just today that rap and the scenario in which it emerged are seen as spaces of "marginalization", especially discursively by the Brazilian elite. These are dysphoric stereotypes created precisely because they are linked to the context of the favelas and the conditions of (r)existence of minority groups. The song, much more than a simple reproduction of juxtaposed lyrics and verses, is a sung speech of re(x)istance that represents, through its oral characteristics, the cry of "separated" communities, left "on the margins" of a society determined by dominant values and discourses.

Thus, due to great political, social, and economic difficulties, and as a gesture of singular expression of favela culture, this musical style has fallen into popular taste as a form that resists the prejudice of these regions of the country, with little investment, exposing much of the difficulties faced by this working class. For a long time, this artistic style was considered to be just "marginal music", which had a negative and segregationist effect, completely unfavorable to this culture that has achieved great visibility not only in Brazil, but all over the world. Rap is no longer just a symbol of the favela, but a form of expression that has taken the world by storm and in fact marks a plural Brazilian culture. In other words, from a culture inherited from the peripheries and the "ills" of poor people, and especially black people, we see a rap that goes beyond its limits and acquires new effects across the globe, representing not only a relevant artistic and musical expression, but also as a breath of hope that resists any form of social discrimination.

On the threshold of history, if we think about its origins, rap is part of the cultural scene of hip-hop, whose birthplace is the United States of America. Santos (2011), in his reflections, points out that this cultural manifestation, which combines rap (music), break (dance) and graffiti, erupted from the leisure sphere of black and peripheral youth in the 1970s and became an instrument of struggle, re(x)istance and denunciation against social prejudice and racism. This movement arrived

in Brazil in 1980 and according to the author, there were "denunciations and incentives for information [which] were part of the first contacts Brazilians had with this manifestation" (Santos, 2011, p. 17).

Drawing on and being influenced by American rap, the genre's country of origin, Loureiro (2016, p. 237) mentions that Brazilian rap "never ceased to be experienced in connection with the particular social, cultural and artistic context in which young people from the Brazilian peripheries breathed". Twenty-three years ago, rapper Sabotage summed up the aim of this musical genre in the title of his song "Rap é compromisso" (in Portuguese), a commitment to fighting social inequality, police violence, and racism. For example, in the outskirts of São Paulo, this genre gained ground mainly from the 1990s onwards, and the group Racionais MC's took on an important role in this history, spreading rhythms in the style of "scream-denunciation" to all corners of the country. Founded in 1988 and formed by Mano Brown, Ice Blue, Edi Rock and KL Jay, the group became known after the release of the album *Holocausto Urbano*. In the documentary "Racionais: das ruas de São Paulo pro mundo", released on November 16, 2022, by the streaming platform Netflix, KL Jay, one of the members, says: "we came to fulfill a mission through music". Rap is the voice of the people, through which a dialog between art and social life is established. Regardless of the aesthetic value that this genre may have, Camargo (2015) states that:

The importance of this culture/music for debates around contemporary society lies, in general terms, in the fact that a considerable part of it constitutes means of expression associated with the popular classes and, from their perspective (of ordinary people, workers), an intriguing interface between history, culture, society, social protest and everyday life takes shape (Camargo, 2015, p. 18).

Nowadays, there are many DJs who work with different styles of music. In hip-hop, the participation of these professionals is essential, because it is through melody that the MCs<sup>1</sup> construct their speeches. According to Pina (2018, p. 9):

DJs are autonomous workers responsible for creating music through electronic audio intervention processes, which can be unpublished or by-products of modifications to third-party music, adding secondary effects to the original recorded bases.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Minuzzi (2017, p. 18), the term MC is short for Master of Ceremony. This expression first appeared at parties held in the Bronx in the United States by DJ Kool Herc in the 1970s. Kool Herc has Jamaican origins and at parties in that country men used a microphone to entertain the crowd. This tradition was taken to American neighborhoods and the role of the MC appeared in hip-hop, with the aim of bringing excitement to the parties while the DJ played the music.

In this vein, the sociologist argues that working as a DJ is in the opposite field to traditional jobs, in which the artist can materialize their identity and present content full of subjectivity (Pina, 2018). However, it is not an easy task to constitute oneself as a worker in the music industry. One of the people he interviewed said the following:

(...) But you get screwed for being a musician. You must like what you do, because musicians and vagabonds are side by side in society's view. When people ask me what I do, and I say I'm a musician, they always ask - but what do you do for a living? - You've even asked me if I do anything other than DJ (DJ Vicente, 2016).

From the way the DJ expresses himself, it's possible to say that the social imagery about this profession is still quite lacking or, at the very least, there's a lack of incentive both on the part of the government to foster and enable the advancement of popular culture in Brazil, and on the part of society, which still classifies this musical style as "marginal" and carries with it a strongly prejudiced trait. In the colonial and patriarchal molds, a worker is only someone who exercises a "recognized" profession and acquires a certain prestigious social status. Anything that doesn't fit into this memory is considered to be outside the standards set by a dominant society and, as a consequence, of little value. In his problematizations, we see Michel Pêcheux (2010) defining discursive memory as the "intertwined meanings of mythical memory, social memory inscribed in practices, and the constructed memory of the historian" (Pêcheux, 2010, p. 50).

The negative imagery that is created about rap is reproduced and crystallized by historical traces. We can sometimes observe certain linguistic traits, such as "vagabond", "rascal" and "unoccupied", which are used to describe singers and producers of this genre (as we saw in DJ Vicente's outburst, 2016, highlighted by Pina, 2018). These adjectives highlight a social imaginary that stigmatizes the figure of peripheral music and, above all, the musician, placing them in a space of inferiority and exclusion.

In view of this, "worker" does not seem to be the appropriate term for those who dedicate themselves to producing music, especially lyrics and songs that do not fit into "dubious" styles, outside the elitist or "prestigious" chair that a certain society constructs and disseminates. Given this social and historical imaginary, the stigmatized and negative trait of rap is always associated with crime, since it comes from economically disadvantaged regions, generating a malaise characteristic of this type of music; for example, titles such as "Eu sou 157" and "Diário de um detento" (in Portuguese), both produced by the group Racionais MC's, would be songs that, in the

view of part of the population, mainly conservative and fundamentalist, would make an apology for crime.

Rap has a commitment to those who are considered "marginalized" and suffer prejudice and repression daily. The imagery of the "poor, black favela dweller" is constantly advocated when we see police action in large favela complexes that associate them with crime and violence. Contrary to what most of society thinks, this style is not just a cultural and artistic manifestation, but also serves, in a very special way, as a form of awareness-raising. The verses and oral marks are responsible for describing the various housing and survival conditions that these people suffer, the lack of investment and care for the whole community.

More than just an artistic expression, the "cry" of rap is the establishment of a new memory, marked by the pressing need for recognition and belonging to society as a whole and not just to one part of it. In other words, more than representing gestures, sounds and beats, music is how the peripheral community has to denounce the difficulties of the residents and the constant repression and deaths that occur, as well as the neglect and lack of adequate public policies from the state. It is therefore not a soundtrack that fits into any moment, but "rap [as] commitment" (Sabotage, 2000).

These productions are not created to support crime, much less to encourage prejudice and violence. On the contrary, they are a way of representing a community that is always placed "on the margins" of popular culture, considered to be outside an elitist system created by dominant sectors (businessmen, financial centers, and markets, among others) of Brazilian society. Let's take a look at an excerpt that ratifies this imaginary: "Hey, kids, I'm watching you, huh? Don't go to the group, the scene is sad. Let's study, respect our father and mother and live, live! This is the scene, lots of love (Racionais MC's, 2002)".

Rap is a discursive event that emerges to modify the collective memory of prejudice and establish new gestures of reading and interpretation, in a positive and euphoric way. More than just an artistic expression, this genre transcends the artistic field into the political and economic, establishing new memories that re-signify the negative and transform it into the positive. According to Pêcheux,

The new discursive event disturbs memory', and can dismantle 'regularization', because the event displaces and deregulates the implicit associated with the previous regularization system", which can inaugurate a new series of understandings about a certain historical event, already established in common sense by social memory (2010, p. 52 *apud* Camargo, 2019, p. 174).



As a marginalized genre, intolerance towards rap is not simply due to the lyrics of the songs; in fact, it disguises the prejudice that exists against the specific profile of those who sing and against the places of origin of these voices. To say that racism in Brazil is structural<sup>2</sup> is to remember that since its formation we have lived with cruel social practices of inferiorizing others who are different from the standardized model: white, heteronormative, and middle/upper class. The original peoples suffered at the hands of the Portuguese who invaded and took their land.

The racist practices of the oligarchies of the 1890s, which were based on racial domination, are still strong in the 21st century, even more so in Brazil, with cases of slave labor being reported, especially in the central-western region of the country<sup>3</sup>. In addition to the social inequality that has never been effectively resolved, prejudice against African cultural matrices, such as music and religion, is still a problem impregnated by our history, the last country to abolish slavery, since most of the time it attributes a pejorative value to everything that is (re)produced and disseminated by African culture.

According to Sales Jr. (2006), during the Estado Novo, racial cordiality was established in social practices. For the author, the articulation between clientelism and patrimonialism configures the "Aunt Anastasia Complex". In this context, black people are like family members, but when they decide to occupy places that are not assigned to them, the asymmetrical reciprocity - established by the rules of sociability - is broken, opening space for violent practices.

Black people are often seen occupying subordinate spaces. This is the case, for example, when we see black people occupying "less" favored characters, with little screen time, such as in Brazilian soap operas, where they are mainly placed in the role of employee (maid, butler or "general service"). Therefore, the legacy left by slavery has made the process of black social ascension more arduous than that of white people. In a way and given this scenario that is still heavily corrupted by segregation, we can see that the rise of a black person and their occupation of spaces that were previously dominated by whites will always bother the oppressive, dominant

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<sup>2</sup> Regarding racist practices in Brazil, Arruda (2021, p. 496) says that "because racism is structural in Brazil, it is consequently structured and structuring, as it constantly affects the formation of subjects and institutions". In the introduction to the song Chapter 4, verse 3, by the group Racionais MC's, the cultural producer Primo Preto lists statistics on racism in Brazil and clearly presents some racist practices that are not perceived by society, since structural racism is crystallized in social practices.

<sup>3</sup> Recently, in reports in the major Brazilian media, we have seen an increase in complaints and rescues of people in work analogous to slavery in Brazil. The Midwest of the country is the region with the most cases, according to the Public Ministry of Labor (MPT). We saw several operations that acted strongly to combat this crime, rescuing 372 workers, as well as fifty complaints. Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/go/goias/noticia/2023/05/13/goias-e-o-estado-com-mais-trabalhadores-resgatados-em-situacao-analoga-a-escravidao-diz-mpt.ghtml>. Accessed on: 10 Dec. 2023.

class, since the black subject is placed in a position of marginalization, a sad reality that rekindles discussions about Brazil's slave-owning past.

So let's return to our initial question: was the abolition law of 1888 really the change that everyone ("men, whites and the powerful") wanted? In fact, being sometimes branded as "unqualified", we see the constant need for black people, in the eyes of an elitist society, still guided by the retrograde rules of slavery, to "prove" their ability to occupy important positions, while white people, in the face of history, would be the "natural heir" to achieve their goals<sup>4</sup>.

For centuries, black people have been subordinated and have occupied places that are sometimes called white. Since the period of false abolition, the black population has not had access to basic rights and is thrown into a dominant white society, which has always dictated the rules, placing them as "superior" to others. As a result of actions such as the "Bota-abaixo<sup>5</sup>" (in Portuguese) and the vagrancy law, these groups were forced to migrate to the marginal areas of the cities, forming the favelas. In the 19th century, most of the popular housing was tenements. These dwellings were "associated with insalubrity and the spread of epidemics such as yellow fever and cholera, promiscuity and violence" (Queiroz Filho, 2011, p. 34).

Faced with these facts, the government of the time took action to develop a process of sanitization in these places. As a result, some of these houses were demolished<sup>6</sup>. In this way, the black population was once again disadvantaged and subordinated, undergoing the process of

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<sup>4</sup> In the 21st century, we still need to discuss the issue of diversity in public office. Recently, after the compulsory retirement of Rosa Weber, president of the Federal Supreme Court, discussions began about who would occupy the position, with a greater emphasis on the appointment of a woman and a black woman, as a way of breaking with the history of male chauvinism that has plagued our country over the last few decades. However, even in the face of popular pressure and the support of governmental societies, the appointment of a man was maintained, Flávio Dino, Brazil's former public security minister under Lula, paraphrasing the stigmatized sense that there is still little representation of women, and especially black women, occupying important political spaces. Resistance continues even in the face of these still latent and separatist social "preciosities". Available at: <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/politica/lula-confirma-indicacao-de-flavio-dino-ao-stf/>. Accessed on: Dec. 10, 2023.

<sup>5</sup> At the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the city of Rio de Janeiro was Brazil's main postcard. In view of the visibility that the country's capital was attracting, Abrahão (2022, p. 162) points out that "the population of Rio expected an urban reform along the lines of the great cities of Europe, considered models of development, civility and culture". The then mayor Pereira Passos, inspired by Parisian urban reforms, began his reform plan, which became known as "Bota-Abaixo". In 1902, the flow of cars intensified, so one of the proposals of Pereira Passos' project was to "adapt areas of the city for the transit of cars and people, aiming at a strategy of reorganizing the urban space" (Abrahão, p. 162)". During this process of remodeling the city of Rio de Janeiro, housing that was considered unsuitable and seen as the main source of the spread of disease was demolished and the people who lived there were forcibly relocated to the city's hills.

<sup>6</sup> According to Toledo (2018, p. 5) "(...) with the justification of controlling diseases through sanitary campaigns, the demolition of tenements began in order to cleanse the city of the diseases and vices that the population living in these areas was likely to transmit. This was a populist action by the government, but it was much more identified with a policy of controlling this specific section of the population, which the government felt needed to be neutralized."

forced migration. Vaz (1994 apud Queiroz Filho, p. 35) points out that the tenement is considered the seed of the favela<sup>7</sup>. The re-urbanization of city centers promoted the process of whitening, since most of the residents expelled from the tenements that were demolished were black and brown. Behind the origin of the favelas lies the history of a people stigmatized by their color and excluded from society.

Poverty, deprivation, and hunger are common conditions in these communities, and these factors are the consequences of a cruel and inhumane past. At the same time, the problems perceived in the favelas are a reflection of a false abolition and the state's abandonment and neglect of the population, especially if we consider that the majority of them are black. Out of this helplessness comes revolt, and out of revolt songs are born as cries of denunciation from those who have been abandoned, "marginalized" and who, today, have the opportunity to give visibility to those who are still victims not only of the state, but also of society as a whole:

It's the lack of perspective  
Without the possibility of choosing what is best for your life  
And that generates revolt in the minds of the community  
Which is marginalized by society  
Who keep quiet in their condominiums  
The law of genocide still reigns in the favela (Mv Bill, 2002).

Looking at the lyrics of rap songs, we can see that, regardless of the year they were released, they all deal with the same themes. According to Orlandi (2002, p. 22), "discourse has its regularity, its functioning that can be grasped if we do not oppose the social and the historical, the system and the realization, the subjective to the objective, the process to the product". The community's problems and the absence of the state are the conditions of production that make regularity possible in these discourses.

Orlandi (2002, p. 39) points out that "there is no discourse that does not relate to others. In other words, meanings result from relationships: a discourse points to others that support it, as well as to future sayings". In this way, meanings are constructed in society and circulate through

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<sup>7</sup> On the origin of the word favela, Cruz (1941, p. 14) states that "the favela has its toponymy linked to the so-called 'war of Canudos". The fighting in the Bay had ended. The troops who had fought and extinguished Antônio Conselheiro's fanaticism were returning. Many single soldiers came back accompanied by "cabrochas" (...) These soldiers had to find housing. They went to the old hill of S. Diogo and made their home there. The "cabrochas" were from a mountain range called Favela, in the municipality of Monte Santo, in that state. They talked a lot, always about their bay, their hill. And so, Favela remained in Rio de Janeiro. The shacks appeared, one by one. First of all, on Providência, a hill on which a large population already lived; then it went up and turned to the other side, to Livramento. Favela was born.

discursive memory, which "establishes the implicit (that is to say, more technically, the pre-constructed, quoted and reported elements, discourse-transverses etc.)" (Pêcheux, 2010, p. 52). Memory is what stabilizes discourse and the possibility of repetition, triggering regularities between different utterances, as we will see in the following analysis topic.

### 3 Rap in the (de)construction of discourse: art, culture in the voices of the resistant

**Table 1:** Regularities in speeches denouncing state neglect<sup>8</sup>.

Pânico na Zonal Sul - 1898	Cidadão Comum Refém - 2002	Favela Vive 4 - 2020
(...) E nós estamos sós ninguém quer ouvir a nossa voz	(...) Mais um preto que morre ninguém me socorre a comunidade na cena	(...) Sem pedir esmola que eu nunca vi lucro nisso (lucro nisso)
(...) E então que segurança se tem em tal situação	A arma dispara o pânico aumenta parece até cinema não é (É real)	Nós pede comida e eles querem jogar míssil (eles querem jogar míssil)
Quantos terão que sofrer pra se tomar providência	(...) O Zé povinho fardado vem entra mata e sai	(...) Lá vem o Caveirão, diabo que mandou
Ou vão dar mais algum tempo e assistir a sequência	Sem ser julgado, corrompido, alienado, revoltado, fracassado vai pintando esse quadro	Crianças nesse tapetão, na TV a mãe chorou
E com certeza ignorar a procedência		Se existe alguém, quem que vem para nos salvar?
(...)E acatar o que nos prejudica		
O medo		
Sentimento em comum num lugar		
Que parece sempre estar esquecido		
Desconfiança insegurança mano		
Pois já se tem a consciência do perigo		

Source: Prepared by the authors of this article.

The Table 1 above shows three rap songs produced in different decades. "Pânico na Zona Sul" was released in 1989 by the group Racionais MC's, "Cidadão Comum Refém" in 2002 by MV Bill and "Favela Vive 4" in 2020 by the group "Além da Loucura" (ADL). The interval between songs is more than ten years, but the reality portrayed is always the same. From the verses in bold, we can see the strong presence of a voice of denunciation as a result of the neglect and abandonment of the black population in favelas across the country.

While living in the tenements, the black population was subjected to terrible living conditions, but the reality of this community did not change when they moved to the slums of the

<sup>8</sup> For this work, we will keep the lyrics of the songs in the charts in the original Portuguese, as a way of making explicit the meanings of resistance that emerge in their respective contexts in Brazil.

cities. As we said earlier, placed "on the margins" of society, black people continue to deal with inequality and the lack of basic services such as sewage and sanitation. The lack of infrastructure and the gradual increase in precarious housing are problems that prevent the residents of these areas from living in a dignified manner. Regarding vulnerability in these areas, Rolnik (1999) points out that:

The excluded territories were created without the presence of the state - or any public sphere - and therefore develop without any control or assistance. Public services, where they exist, are more precarious than in other parts of the cities; working in these areas is often seen by public officials as punishment. What's more, living permanently under a condition of deprivation of basic environmental needs makes inhabitants feel as if their lives have little value (Rolnik, 1999, p. 107).

The songs produced today come back as already said but ignored. For Orlandi (2022, p. 31), memory is "the discursive knowledge that makes every utterance possible and that returns in the form of the pre-constructed, the already said that underpins the sayable, sustaining every utterance". It is because of the lack of change that a discourse produced twenty years ago still becomes current through its reproduction in the voices of others.

According to Wacquant (2001), favelas are places stigmatized by society and often attract negative media coverage. The author mentions that these places are known as:

'Problem areas', 'forbidden areas', the 'wild' circuit of the city, territories of deprivation and abandonment to be avoided and feared, because they have or are widely believed to have an excess of crime, violence, vice and social disintegration. Because of the aura of danger and dread that surrounds their inhabitants and the neglect they suffer, this varied mix of reviled minorities, low-income working families and unlegalized immigrants is typically portrayed from a distance in monochrome tones, and their social life seems the same everywhere: exotic, unproductive and brutal (Wacquant, 2001 p. 7).

The favelas are associated with drug trafficking, a problem that "has become the main factor in the escalation of violence in the communities" (Albuquerque; Domene; Sawaya, 2018, p. 244). The lack of inclusion of black people in the job market, racism and the illusion of a good financial return were (and still are!) problems that corroborate the entry of many young people into the world of crime: "As a result of neglect and corruption/ A kid who grew up and didn't have a job, so he became a thief/ There are lots of minors around here/ One dies, another is born with a greater disposition" (MV Bill, 2002); "There are many in crime, they were supposed to be on the podium

(Cria favela)/ Trigger, many mothers here were left without a child/ Trying to get out of the lowest rung of the ladder" (Lord, 2020).

In fact, some inhabitants of the communities are associated with criminal organizations. However, flawed policing creates cases of generalization, always targeting the same subjects: black, poor, and slum-dwelling men. Thus, for Wacquant (2007):

There is violence that comes from above, that is, violence practiced by the elite through the state, which acts in a structural way through economic, social, and political transformations resulting in the polarization of classes. (...) From this context, the social representation that links blackness and poverty to criminality gives rise to racist policies of criminalization and extermination, coming from the state justice and security apparatus, which are marked by repression and authoritarianism (Toledo apud Wacquant, 2007, p. 13).

Therefore, in this flawed context, the fallacy of the "war on drugs" has been a pretext for the police to exterminate the black population. According to Peduzzi (2023), the coordinator of the Center for Security and Citizenship Studies (CESeC) points out that spending to put the anti-drug law into action is R\$5.2 billion in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo alone, which is also denounced in rap songs, as we can see below: "The people up here ask for help/ Indignant when the bullet eats them/ They have money for war in the slums/ But they can never end hunger, no" (MC Cabelinho, 2020). Faced with this scenario of the annihilation of black lives, it is common to see in rap lyrics denunciation in the form of resistance that comes up against violence and police force (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Regularities in speeches denouncing police violence.

Pânico na Zona Sul - 1989	Cidadão Comum Refém - 2002	Favela Vive 4
(...) Então quando o dia escurece Só quem é de lá sabe o que acontece Ao que me parece prevalece a ignorância (...)	(...) Toda a vez a mesma história criança correndo, mãe chorando chapa quente. Tiro pra todo lado silêncio na praça o corpo de um inocente Chega a maldita polícia, chega a polícia e o medo e geral Armado, fardado, carteira assinada com ódio na cara pronto para o mal (...)	(...) Eu ouço tiros em doze por um, sirenes e latidos de cachorro Deus, nunca vi finalidade dessa guerra burra que rola no morro A nossa revolta você só vai entender Quando uma bala perdida simplesmente achar você Me perguntaram um dia o quê que eu acho da UPP <sup>9</sup> A maior covardia que o governo foi fazer Só me diz pra quê? Melhorou o quê? Mudou o quê? Quero saber Tem alguém aê pra me responder? Será que ninguém vê?
(...) Justiceiros são chamados por eles mesmos Matam, humilham e dão tiros a esmo (...)	(...) Batalhão de choque de porrete na mão Tiro para o auto pra assustar a multidão Tira o pino da granada de efeito moral	

<sup>9</sup> Franco; Mariano and Moraes (2015, p. 495) point out that the UPPs (Pacifying Police Units) were implemented by the state in communities as strategies to recover territories impoverished by drug trafficking and militias.

	<p>Nessa hora todo mundo apanha igual marginal          E chega o Bope de preto botando geral pra correr          Sai voando se não quer morrer          Se pega te esculacha, bomba de gás, bala de borracha (...)</p>	<p>Pelo amor de Deus, mais quantos vão morrer?          (...) Eles são covarde, ó como eles agem          Querendo invadir minha comunidade          Por isso, meu mano, eu já 'to cansado          De ouvir papagaionagem          Quem nasce em meio ao massacre          Tem o ódio de amostra grátis          Que minha vida não é um Tik Tok          Minha vida é um tic tac, ó (...)</p> <p>(...)A conta não enche se é contra a demência, contra essa falência          Em cada quintal, que bem ou mal, em cada qual uma crença          Racistas fardados matam mais com mais uma licença (...)</p>
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Source: Prepared by the authors of this article.

During community policing, Soares (2019) points out that:

When, on raids into Rio's favelas, they act like soldiers at war, devoted to eliminating their enemies, putting into practice training sessions in which they sing hymns that exalt the killing of black slum dwellers, they are not exercising their role as police and prove that their commanders have long since betrayed their constitutional commitments. Instead of serving to guarantee rights, the defense of life and public safety, the state agents of lethal brutality are showing that they have become the mechanisms of a cyclopean and tyrannical machine of death and degradation, which deepens structural racism and social inequalities, and ends up crushing them too, tormentors and victims, in fratricidal clashes. (Soares, 2019, p. 133).

Police patrols in the communities are flawed. Instead of the state developing effective and intelligent techniques to monitor drug trafficking in the slums, the police prioritize invasion, which sometimes ends in slaughter and, among the number of people who die in these police operations, there are innocent citizens who are victims of stray bullets, see below: "You're not right, right bro, and the innocents, who's going to bring them back?" (Racionais MC's, 1898); "War tactics, shooting, mud and dirt/ Dry bush captain shoots and doesn't miss/ Then he finds out that the guy lying on the ground was innocent" (Mv Bill, 2002); "I fight for justice until the end/ For all the innocents affected" (MC Cabelinho, 2020). According to Santos (2021, p. 43),

To understand the chaos of a police operation in a Rio favela is to understand how little life is worth in these areas. It means realizing, through official figures and data, how many innocent people die, including children who, without protection, become hostages of a genocidal state.

Orlandi (2022, p. 30) considers the conditions of production to be the immediate context. Thus, considering the circumstances of enunciation, "the conditions of production include the socio-historical, ideological context". The occurrences of police violence present in the context of each song highlight the importance of these discourses and, through the lyrics, leave society with the memory of the innocents who have died, victims of abuse of authority and neglect by the state: "Do you remember Favela 3? They confused Marcos Vinícius/ Now in Favela 4 it was Ágatha and João Pedro" (DK 47, 2020).

From our observations, we can say that police violence is one of the practices that express structural racism in Brazil. In the face of this violence against the black population, which stems from other eras, rap still honors its commitment to resistance and denunciation against all kinds of prejudice. Reis (2008) points out that from the outset, rap was considered to be:

the representation of a discourse of resistance by those who fought against social oppression and, above all, racial prejudice. In their lyrics, what can still be seen today is the presence of a narrative that features characters who clearly demonstrate the discursive formation of a socially oppressed class. They generally portray the problems of low-income people, mostly slum dwellers who experience injustices, especially those related to ethnic/racial issues (Reis, 2008, p. 9).

João Pedro, Ágatha Félix, Kauê Ribeiro dos Santos, Kauan Rosário and others<sup>10</sup> are some of the children who have lost their lives during police operations in Rio de Janeiro. The cases are recurring and measures to ensure that the police act with respect for life during operations have yet to be taken by the state. The family is still crying out for justice and rap musicians are also committed to this: "Don't they realize that now they've become the same/ They've inverted themselves and are also criminals but/ They'll have to be persecuted and clarified/ Everything and everyone until the last individual" (Racionais MCs, 1989); "I'll fight for justice until the end/ For all the innocent people affected" (Lord, 2020); "Even if I die, I'll denounce/ Until my last breath for those who can't breathe" (César MC, 2020).

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<sup>10</sup> These are some of the cases of children killed during police operations in Rio de Janeiro. Except for João Pedro's case, all of them happened in 2019 and within a short period of time. Available at: <<https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/geral-52731882>>. Accessed on: 26 Nov. 2023.



Colima and Cabezas (2017) point out that what has characterized rap since its inception is the condition of marginality, as this genre arises from an oppressed social group. Regarding the aim of the genre, the authors point out:

Because it is inserted within an unequal socio-political structure, and fights against the injustices created by this system, rap is a form of resistance oriented towards the ['trans(formation) of local' and global realities, through 'linguistic practices'] (Alim, 2006 apud Colima; Cabezas, 2017, p. 11).

In addition to the frequent discourse of resistance, we can see that rap was created to raise awareness among young people from the peripheries who live with violence and drugs daily. In the songs, there are often passages raising awareness against the world of crime, for example (Table 3):

**Table 3:** Regularities in speeches raising awareness among young people from the periphery.

Pânico na Zona Sul - 1898	Cidadão Comum Refém - 2002	Favela Vive 4 - 2020
(...) Não entre nessa a toa Não de motivo pra morrer Honestidade nunca será demais Sua moral não se ganha, se faz Não somos donos da verdade Porém não mentimos Sentimos a necessidade de uma melhoria A nossa filosofia é sempre transmitir A realidade em si Racionais MC's (...)	(...) Resta agora você se livrar do mau que te corrói e te destrói Porque o crime não é o creme bota a cara Mister M Qualé mane o que, que há? Vacilou virou Mun-ha. Porque o crime não é o creme bota a cara Mister M Qualé mane o que, que há? Vacilou virou Mun-há (...)	(...) A droga destruiu algumas das minhas amigas Causando na família perdas com várias feridas Eu vi viciado sendo cobrado Levando tiro na mão, a mãe chorando do lado Fazendo um pedido pra não matarem o filho que virou bandido Consequências previsíveis de escolhas erradas Não dá pra ser do bem, do caminho do mal Dessa forma várias histórias foram encerradas Roteiro de um filme que eu sei o final Protagonista invisíveis, narrativas contadas (...)

**Source:** Prepared by the authors of this article.

Silva and Soares (2004, p. 984), in turn, point out that in addition to the discourse of denunciation, rap takes on the "function it came for", bringing:

an alternative possible way of life on the periphery, living with violence, drug trafficking and drug use. In the context of exclusion, unemployment, police aggression, discrimination and drug trafficking violence, rap becomes a reference and creates an identity through which young people from the periphery can (re)structure themselves.

Rap plays a fundamental role in the lives of those who are often oppressed and victims of some kind of prejudice or police violence. As well as transforming lives, it is an alternative for young people to avoid a life of crime, which is still a problem in most Brazilian communities. The dream of being a singer is the new version of the dream of being a footballer. Several famous voices on the Brazilian rap scene have managed to rise socially and economically through music, such as: "Sou a prova que a favela venceu/ Sou o contrário do que querem para mim (...)" (Orochi, 2020). In this excerpt from "Favela Vive 4", the singer Orochi exposes his departure from a place of exclusion and poverty that racist and elitist society expects of a young black man and marks his (triumphant) entry into a place of economic ascension achieved through music: "I lifted up my city and got some brothers out of crime/ I'll pay any bail, a Mainstreet contract" (Orochi, 2020).

### Final considerations

Through this work, and the bibliographical survey we have carried out, it is possible to see that rap is a genre that stands out from the rest, and at the same time is often revisited as a way of observing resistance in the various Brazilian communities. Alongside more cult genres, according to a portion of the population, rap has been gaining strength not only in Brazil, but all over the world, breaking with certain stigmas that history insists on (re)inscribing. This style has not changed over time, from its inception to the present day, musicians produce songs that go beyond entertainment. Rap is the tool that the "marginalized population" has found to denounce the problems of a society that is still predominantly racist, elitist, and separatist. In this way, the lyrics, the verses sung orally, are not detached from the social and historical context and the character of denunciation is what defines this musical style.

When analyzing rap from a discursive perspective, we can see that these dominant discourses have certain regularities and crystallized meanings that the lyrics have the function of

breaking down, such as "poor" and "favela". If the discourses always carry these same effects and return from an already said, the songs have the function of problematizing these interdicts marked by prejudice through history as a way of resisting the dominance of a portion of the Brazilian population. In this way, we move away from portraying the historical imaginary of this group to visualize a new instance of discourse, a language event that re-signifies the favela as a place belonging to Brazilian society, like its culture, and places it in the hope of better days. In effect, new possibilities of memory are established that dismiss prejudice and the "imposition" of history, acting as "cries" of new hope and social change.

Thus, associating rap with crime is something that society has done for a long time. The strong beats and deep voices bother part of society, which expects art to be more "refined" or "cultured". However, what really happens is that the lyrics and verses annoy those who turn a blind eye to social problems and do nothing to ensure that problems such as inequality, racism and violence are actually resolved. Therefore, rap is not a genre that is linked to criminality; on the contrary, it emerges as an event of language that (de)constructs the identity of a group that for years has been subordinated in absentia in large urban centers and places them in a place of social relevance. It is also through this art that young people from the periphery dream of rising socially and thus providing a better future for the members of their families. This is our act of resisting too!

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