

## PROCESSES OF DESUBJECTIVATION OF MARABAIXO'S BLACK SUBJECTS

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- **ABSTRACT:** In this work, the aim was to demonstrate the processes of desubjectivation of black Amazonian subjects in events involving power exercises from the period called Vargas Era. These cases involved the black subjects of Marabaixo from Macapá, in Amapá State, Brazil. The *Marabaixo* is, nowadays, the largest set of Afro-American religious and festive practices in devotion to the saints of the Catholic Church. Discursive analysis of the Foucault's perspective was used as a theoretical reference, and the conceptual terms of desubjectivation (FOUCAULT, 2000b; DELEUZE, 1988; AGAMBEN, 2009; MILANEZ, 2013), event and power (FOUCAULT, 1998, 1983, 1972) applied to various discursive materialities, such as scientific texts, television reports, popular songs and images were mobilized. The study indicated the development of desubjectivation occurred due to an exercise of power by the forces of the state and also the church. This resulted, however, in resistance by the black Amazonian subjects.
- **KEYWORDS:** speeches; desubjectivation; black people from Marabaixo; Amazon.

### Introduction

There has been in television and digital media in recent years the proliferation of racism cases as well as racial insults inflicted on black subjects. For a quick resumption, we recall some facts that have passed to the level of discourse. In 2014, in a *Copa Libertadores* match, midfielder Tinga, a former *Cruzeiro* player in Brazil, was harassed by fans of the *Real Garcilaso* team from Peru. When the player touched the ball, the fans of the opposing team imitated the sound of “monkey”. Also, in 2014, a *Gremio* fan, a Brazilian soccer team, was caught on TV cameras calling goalkeeper Aranha “monkey” in Porto Alegre, in a Brazilian Cup match between teams *Gremio* and *Santos*.

Other events can also be highlighted. In 2016, the weather journalist of the *Jornal Nacional* of the *Globo* Network, Maria Júlia Coutinho, was the victim of offensive

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and discriminatory statements on social networks because of her color. This case had great repercussions in the media as well as in academic and legal circles. Another case happened in November 2017. The socialite Day McCarthy launched prejudiced sayings like “horrible monkey” against the child Titi, daughter of Brazilian actors Bruno Gagliasso and Giovanna Ewbank.

On May 25, 2020, we saw a video circulating on social networks, internet channels and television media, in which a white policeman from the United States, Derek Chauvin remained, for almost nine minutes, on his knees on the neck of George Floyd (black American, because he is suspected of using counterfeit bills in a store in Minneapolis, Minnesota), while the black guy declared “no I can breathe” and therefore died. The case generated revolts and protests in the USA, England, Spain, Italy, Brazil, and other countries, putting racial issues into discussion.

Unfortunately, these are sayings and events that run the course of history. According to Foucault (2005), if at a certain moment these sayings appeared and enrolled in the social body, in the same way, they can also disappear. Thinking about it, we tried to understand the desubjectivation processes of a group of blacks from Marabaixo, that is, abrupt ways of removing subjects from the discursive order that constituted them. Operations mobilized by racist actions and discourses that fell upon this black social body.

The *Marabaixo* is, nowadays, the largest set of Afro-American religious and festive practices in devotion to the saints of the Catholic Church. It is made up of elements from African matrices, such as musicality, dance and objects that carry memories of African religions and groups (TARTAGLIA, 2019). Thus, it can be pointed out there is no overlap of Catholic saints by *orixás* of African religions in the practices of *Marabaixo*.

These festivities take place in the main municipalities, in urban and rural areas, as well as in remaining communities of quilombos. In Macapá, the *Marabaixo* is held every year after the liturgical-ritualistic period of Lent, passing through Holy Week and extending until Lord’s Sunday (which corresponds to the first Sunday after the *Corpus Christi* holiday). In this way, the *Marabaixo* is called *Ciclo* considering it is an event that lasts approximately 60 days, following the Catholic calendar. It is worshiped by remaining blacks of slave subjects and Amapá refugees. It is an open party for the community, and white subjects are also invited to participate in the ritualistic practices of black subjects.

Regarding the presence of blacks in the Amazon Region, research conducted by Oliveira (2015), in records of the colonial administration, points out the presence of African slaves in the Amazon since the 18th century.

We highlight two processes that contributed to the formation of the black social body of Macapá, in the 18th century. The first corresponds to the transplant of residents (black non-slaves) from Mazagão, a Portuguese city in Africa, to Nova Mazagão (district of the current municipality of Mazagão), located in the south-central part of the current state of Amapá. The residents of Nova Mazagão, due to the terrible conditions

of the city's structure, in the middle of the Amazon jungle, and the neglect of *Coroa Portuguesa*, migrated to the headquarters of the current municipality of Mazagão and also to the municipality of Macapá.

The second occupation process concerns slaves who were taken to the Macapá region to work on the construction of the *São José de Macapá* Fortress, inaugurated in 1782. The black subjects served as labor for the construction of the fortification and, after its conclusion, they were abandoned by the Crown and gathered around Fortaleza, building a village that became the city of Macapá.

The reflections on the modes of objectification launched by the church on the black subjects practicing the *Marabaixo* were analytical paths followed in the latest research (TARTAGLIA, 2019, 2020a). Related to everything that has been established so far, the focus is on the *Ciclo do Marabaixo*; since there is little scientific work on these practices and on black subjects. Moreover, when it comes to these objects, from the perspective of discourse, the number of studies is reduced considerably. Thus, all of this has accentuated the worries in the attempt to visualize the aggressive way in which these black subjects have been placed on the margins of society. Considerations that also lead to ask how racist discourses undermine the plot of history, silence, suffocate, crush, and annihilate the subjects.

Then, the development of desubjectivation of *Marabaixo*'s black subjects from Macapá were sought in visibility, especially from the period called Vargas Era. A great event that affected the lives of black subjects of the *Marabaixo* in the urban perimeter of Macapá can be stressed in the 20th century. The way in which the government of the Amapá State, aligned with the policy of President Getúlio Vargas, managed the black population of Macapá, removing it from the center of the capital and relocating it in neighborhoods of the periphery. With this, there is a binary action of the state government in dividing whites and blacks, worshippers and non-worshippers of *Marabaixo*.

Another similar event happened, also in the 20th century, with the black community, immigrants from the English Antilles, in the city of Porto Velho, Rondônia. These subjects went to the Amazon to work on the *Madeira Mamoré* Railway and built a community, called *Barbadian Town*, on top of a hill, in the center of the city. This space was configured in a community of foreigners, with language, religion and customs different from the culture of Brazilians, becoming a dualistic border between Brazilians and foreigners. With a nationalist and progressive discourse, the State, in an exercise of power, destroyed the houses and expelled these subjects from the hill, as well as transforming this space into flat terrain, in an attempt to prevent these blacks from rebuilding their homes.

The practices of desubjectivation, which were analyzed from the Vargas administration, have a strong impact on the historicity of black subjects from Macapá. Hence, the movements of desubjectivation put into operation exercises of power also by black individuals, that is, a resistance against the practices of exclusion and erasure of subjectivities launched by the state under the *Marabaixo* subjects.

Under this direction, in order to understand the discursive functioning and government practices in desubjectivation processes, we selected diverse materialities such as images, popular song lyrics, television reporting, law and historical texts, which circulated between the 20th and 21st centuries. They are scattered discourses that find a regularity when they talk about the black subject of the *Marabaixo*. With this, this research is part of the theoretical and methodological field of Discourse Analysis (AD), practiced in Brazil, supported by the postulates of Michel Foucault and its developments.

Hence, this work takes into account our latest research (TARTAGLIA, 2020a, 2020b, 2019, 2014; TARTAGLIA; BURGEILE, 2020) on black subjects, as well as our current research project entitled “*Negritude Amazônica: os sujeitos negros em discurso*”, which consists of studying and making visible an Amazonian negritude. Thus, in the following pages, this group of Marabaixo blacks who have been marginalized mainly by the state-political deterritorialization will be discussed.

### **Recounting history through the bias of desubjectivation**

From the French Discourse Analysis, as it has been configured in Brazil, especially affiliated to the notions created by Michel Foucault, the discursive practices that emerged throughout the historicity of the black subjects of the *Marabaixo* have been understood. Foucault (2000a) analyzed the relations of knowledge and power within the discourse, for instance, the scientific discourses on the life and practices of the subjects, on natural history, on economics and politics. The work with concepts such as desubjectivation reveals relationships of knowledge and power that cross discourses, which, in this way, affect the construction of subjects.

In this way, the concepts of discursive event and power are used to understand the process of desubjectivation, since they give scope to understand the functioning of this action in relation to the black subjects of the *Marabaixo*. So, in view of the specificities of this research, Foucault (1972, p. 26-27) points out if, in the first moment of a discursive analysis, the immediate forms of continuity are suspended, that is, the canons of traditional history, we can release “[...] a vast field made up of the totality of all effective statements (whether spoken or written), in their dispersion as events and in the occurrence that is proper to them”, then a set of dispersed events can be thought, which finds a regularity in the thread of discourse. This is configured in a project of description of discursive events as a horizon for the search of the units that form there. This is the direction of this study, that is, in the series of desubjectivation actions of black people in the Amazon in events from the 20th century that were inscribed in the historicity of the black subjects of *Marabaixo* from Macapá, capital of the Amapá State.

In the text *Retornar à história*, by Foucault (2005), which is alluded to in the title of this section, the discussion about serial history and global history is imbricated with the idea of a discursive event. The author stresses history

[...] appears then not as a great continuity underneath an apparent discontinuity, but as a tangle of superimposed discontinuities. [...] The types of events must be multiplied just as the types of time span are multiplied. That is the mutation that is occurring at present in the disciplines of history (FOUCAULT, 1998, p. 429-430).

From this quote, the event is not limited to something homogeneous. It brings together many events of greater or lesser intensity that make possible an analysis, in a certain way, more refined due to the multiplicity of events that can emerge from relationships of knowledge and power. This is because serial history abdicates the notion of linear causality. Moreover, it does not use the understanding of continuous and unilinear time as it is based on a history built on the interweaving of multiple casualties and different social temporalities. The idea of serial history goes against the old idea of continuity of global history; whereas, with the work of raising the multiple events, one can think about the discontinuity of events and the transformations of society. Thus, this approach digs out an Amazonian micro-history.

To this point, Foucault (2000b, p. 241), rooted in the readings of Nietzsche, Blanchot and Bataille, calls desubjectivation the process that “[...] has the function of wrenching the subject from itself, of seeing to it that the subject is no longer itself, or that it is brought to its annihilation or its dissolution”. This movement of destruction is not about the elimination of the discursive subject and the resumption of a founding subject, but it is an action that leads the subject to a dislocation of the discourse order that constituted him, leading to other experiences.

Developing the idea of desubjectivation, Foucault (2000b, p. 256) states that

[...] one finds a kind of meeting point, expressed as kinship, between the discourse on limit-experiences, where it was a matter of the subject transforming itself, and the discourse on the transformation of the subject itself through the construction of a knowledge.

In this way, the movement of desubjectivation moves along two paths that meet to build the subject: one based on a transforming subjection by limit experiences, that is, between a point and another (one before and one after); the second concerns the discourses that constitute the subject. Discourses that are involved in knowledge and power relations.

The question of power is also a productive concept for understanding the development of subjectivation. Gilles Deleuze, in some texts and books, also tried to discuss Foucaultian thought. Regarding power, Deleuze (1988, p. 59, our translation)

asserts that Foucault's definition seems quite simple; for he states that "[...] power is a relation of forces, and every relation of forces is power". On the other hand, the author warns that the unfolding of this concept puts into play numerous questions involving these social relations. It is not possible to stop the force. It is not something that can be taken. It is characterized by the relationship with other forces. Hence, every force is already a relationship, that is, power. Its object and its subject are nothing more than force itself.

In order to understand the clashes and approaches that Foucault makes for the term power, the following section is selected:

The exercise of power is not simply a relationship between partners, individual or collective; *it is a way in which certain actions modify others*. Which is to say, of course, that something called Power, with or without a capital letter, which is assumed to exist universally in a concentrated or diffused form, does not exist. Power exists only when it is put into action, even if, of course, it is integrated into a disparate field of possibilities brought to bear upon permanent structures. (FOUCAULT, 1983, p. 219, emphasis added).

By this reasoning, we understand the relationship of power as ways of acting on the other. Thus, analyzing power relations in discourse is configured as a political analysis; since the discourse, in its midst, is constituted by games of knowledge and power that affect subjects.

Our sayings therefore are tied to a network of social and historical relationships that work on the bodies of subjects, inscribing and directing categories to which they should frame themselves. This movement, composed of a set of underlying laws, transforms individuals into subjects. However, by external factors, subjects can be driven by diverse forces and practices that go against the social relations to which these subjects are inscribed, leading them to experience either as a process of resistance or as a course of breaking with themselves, or other forms of experiences. Hence, the development of desubjectivation consists of a rupture of both the practices and relationships that have historically operated in the manufacture of the subject as well as in the gears that lead the subjects to recognize themselves as such.

In view of this, the desubjectivation can occur in two movements. The first involves the discursive mechanisms of erasing black subjects and their practices linked to the ways of objectification, that is, a set of forces operated by devices (religious, political, media etc.) that seek to rupture a discursive order to which the subjects were built. The second is to analyze how these subjects experience, resist and break down in relation to the linearity of the order that constituted them as subjects.

In this study, the emphasis is in the course of action of desubjectivation that takes into account the exterior, that is, the practices and relationships that disorganize and reshape the subject. As follows, the mobilization of the concepts of discursive event

and serial history is justified, since it is given the possibility of several past (events) appearing, which are often invisible.

Therefore, an Amazonian discursive event will be described, which verticalizes and confronts the general history. This episode is linked to the guarantee of possessions of the Brazilian northern lands in the 20th century, since it was crossed by discourses justifiable by progress and regional development, which led black subjects from the Amazon to the series of desubjectivation actions.

### **Annihilation processes of the black subjects of *Marabaixo* from Macapá**

We begin this section by highlighting a process of silencing black subjects from the urban *Ciclo do Marabaixo* of Macapá, by the State, at the end of the first half of the 20th century. For a policy sustained in the discourses of progress and urban development, blacks were removed from the center of Macapá and relocated to peripheral neighborhoods. This may have created the way for the black subject to discursivize himself, in addition to being the target of prejudiced discourses. We associate this process with the desubjectification of blacks.

In the Amazon, other desubjectivation processes took place, such as the case of black Antilleans immigrants in Porto Velho. We also point out the desubjectivation of the rubber tappers who were exploited and reconfigured as “slaves” in the contexts of Amazonian rubber plantations at the turn of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. According to Cunha (2006, p. 28, our translation), the rubber tapper “[...] realized a tremendous anomaly: he is the man who works to enslave himself”. This signals, as Milanez (2013, p. 384, our translation) pointed out about desubjectivation, “[...] the process of erasing the work from the subject’s existence”, since they were hostage to the laws and power hierarchies of the rubber plantations and with that, they were forced to transform their way of being a subject. The desubjectivation of black subjects of Macapá, on the other hand, can be thought of through the exercise of state power, as these subjects were removed from the city center because they were black and, for the majority, for being worshippers of *Marabaixo*.

Hence, when analyzing the course of desubjectivation of a specific subject, Milanez (2013) expressed that it is what is taken from the subject, considering the social and historical place that composed him as a subject or, as the author himself considered, what life made of him, going through a rupture in his way of being a subject.

The most orthodox part of the Catholic Church, centered on tradition and the family, always maintained friction with the *Ciclo* even before the event of removal of these subjects from the center of Macapá. In the 1940s, it intensified the conflicts with the black subjects of the *Marabaixo*, considering their practices profane and immoral. This led to the closure of the doors of the Mother Church of São José de Macapá for the *Marabaixo* festivities. It was a tradition to do the parades to the main church and, with the prohibition, the black subjects could no longer enter the religious space. However, they kept the ritual until the front of the religious building (Figure 1).



**Figure 1** – Marabaixo practices in front of the *São José de Macapá* church.<sup>1</sup>



Source: Ciclo (2017).

For a very brief example of the practices of black subjects, the figure 01 can be highlighted. It is a place where black people dance and sing the *Marabaixo* in front of São José church. The photography carries with it an effect which refers to real and true. Thus, illustration 01 activates the discursive memory of black subjects and takes up discourses and practices such as the prohibitions of the church against the practices of *Marabaixo*, as well as those also operated by the state; because it deals with the practices of black subjects (an example of the latter is inscribed in a popular song called *Marabaixo*. It narrates the events evolving the removal of blacks [See discursive sequence 2]).

Canto (1998, p. 13, our translation) points out, due to the fact that the *Ciclo do Marabaixo* is “[...] full of ‘profane’ folkloric elements from non-European culture, the most orthodox wing of the church tends to reject this ‘folklore’”. And this was one of the discourses used by the church in the exercise of power which consisted in silencing and eliminating the practices of the black subjects of the *Marabaixo*.<sup>2</sup>

On the historical production conditions of speeches, in the Vargas Era policy, Koifman (2017, p. 73, our translation) affirms the liberal immigration policies adopted by the state between the middle of the 19th century and the early decades of the 20th century “[...] which until then responded to the concerns of the leaders in filling the

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<sup>1</sup> In Marabaixo practices, it is possible to identify some elements and rituals (such as processions, dances, masts, drums, etc.) that are recurrent in other religious and popular festivals of Afro-Brazilian culture, such as in the Congadas of Minas Gerais, at the festivities of Divino Espírito Santo of Maranhão, at the festivities of São Benedito of Mato Grosso and Espírito Santo, among others. On this subject, we recommend reading our text “O Marabaixo e a relação com a ideia de comentário de Michel Foucault” (TARTAGLIA, 2020b).

<sup>2</sup> The discussion about the frictions between the church and the black subjects of the *Marabaixo* will not be extended, since this question is developed in the thesis entitled “*Práticas de poder, de resistência e de subjetivação: os discursos dos/sobre os sujeitos negros do Ciclo do Marabaixo macapaense*” (TARTAGLIA, 2019).



empty spaces of our territory and ‘whitewashing’ the population, began to become more restrictive and, from 1934, increasingly selective. The author points out that racist discourses constantly commented on many of Brazil’s problems, such as illness, misery, illiteracy etc. All of this was based on the knowledge that he considered the “ethnic malformation” of the Brazilian social body, and that it was possible to improve this picture with the proper selection of immigrants in favor of the miscegenation of the national element. A discourse which cut across Vargas’ whitewashing policy.

In this sense, the President of the Republic of Brazil, Getúlio Vargas, appointed Captain Janary Nunes as Governor of the Federal Territory of Amapá. He arrived in Macapá in 1944 and brought with him the motto “to sanitize, educate and populate”; after all, it was part of the strategic policy to guarantee the possessions of the Amazon lands. Janary implemented in Macapá a policy of whitening that first consisted of displacing the black subjects from the center of Macapá and relocating them in peripheral neighborhoods.

This exercise of power by Janary had a direct impact on the organization of *Marabaixo* practices, as

#### Discursive sequence (Henceforth) 01

[...] the *Ciclo do Marabaixo* which until then was carried out in a unified way in the capital Macapá was divided and started to be carried out in the [district] Laguinho and in the [district] Santa Rita [slum] by Master Julião Ramos and Dona Gertrudes Saturnino, respectively, according to CANTO [sic] (1998 *apud* ALVES *et al.*, 2014, p. 58, our comment and translation).<sup>3</sup>

In the discursive sequence 01, it can be understood why, nowadays, the *Ciclo do Marabaixo* happens in some districts of Macapá and not in a unified way. It highlights the episode of the *Marabaixo* silence movement in the urban area of Macapá, as they were relocated from the central area of the capital to peripheral neighborhoods, motivated by a policy of “progress” and “urban development”, as well as by the idea of “race whitening” by the government.

Two stanzas from the lyrics of a *ladrão de marabaixo* were selected. The *Ladrão de Marabaixo* is a kind of popular oral-based song sung and danced in the *Marabaixo* practices. The *ladrão* (verse of the song)

[...] steals a daily event and takes it into the *Ciclo do Marabaixo*. Its verses link the past to the present in a movement in which verses and

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<sup>3</sup> Original: [...] o *Ciclo do Marabaixo* que até então era realizado de forma unificada na capital Macapá dividiu-se e passou a ser realizado no [bairro] Laguinho e no [bairro] Santa Rita [Favela] pelo Mestre Julião Ramos e Dona Gertrudes Saturnino, respectivamente, de acordo com CANTO [sic] (1998 *apud* ALVES *et al.*, 2014, p. 58, comentário nosso).

events are stolen, linking them to religious prayers and reconfiguring them in a textual genre that transits between the religious, political and identity statements of the black subjects of *Marabaixo* (TARTAGLIA, 2019, p. 102).

Thus, we quote below, an excerpt from the *ladrão de Marabaixo* entitled “*Marabaixo*” by Julião Tomaz Ramos (black subject), recorded later by Luiz Gonzaga, Brazilian composer and singer, known as the *Rei do Baião*. He was in Macapá in 1949 and, on that occasion, met Mestre Julião. Gonzaga promised to record the *ladrão* “*Marabaixo*” in the rhythm of *baião*, a popular musical genre in Northeastern Brazil.

Discursive sequence 02:

*Aonde tu vais rapaz?  
Neste caminho sozinho} bis  
Eu vou fazer minha morada  
Lá nos campos do laguinho} bis*

*As ruas do Macapá  
Estão ficando um primor} bis  
Tem hospitais, tem escolas  
Pros fios do trabalhado  
Mas as casas que são feitas  
É só prá morar os doutô<sup>4</sup>*

**Source:** Marabaixo (2018).

This thief is known with a *Marabaixo* hymn in Macapá and was composed at the end of the first half of the 20th century. Thus, in this discursive sequence, there is the event passing to the level of discourse, since it refers to the withdrawal of blacks from the center of Macapá by an exercise of state power. The management of the governing subject, Janary Nunes (first governor of the Amapá), operated with the idea that the whitening of the race was synonymous with progress and then initiated the process of urbanization of the capital. Using the exercise of power, he removed the black population from “[...] the central part of the city covered by the districts of Largo de São Sebastião, Formigueiro, Largo de São João and Vila de Santa Engrácia to the outskirts [...]” of Macapá (ALVES *et al.*, 2014, p. 58, our translation) and urbanized the capital by paving streets, building squares, hospitals and schools.

For Foucault, power is not studied as something that is stopped, but as an exercise of power, as a way for some to structure “[...] the a mode of action upon actions” of others (FOUCAULT, 1983, p. 222). By this reasoning, the power relationship consists

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<sup>4</sup> The text contains marks of orality and regionalism, so it was preferred to keep the Portuguese version, since there are comments on the speeches in the analysis.

of modes of action over actions of and on subjects. In this sense, the words present in SD 02 narrate the actions of the Government in the removal of black subjects, who had to build their houses in Bairro Laguinho, as they were not worthy to live in the center of the city, a place destined for the white elite or for doctors (“the learned”), as discoursed in the thief.

The *Favela* was another space occupied by the black subjects from the course of withdrawal from the center of Macapá. This space was constituted in a new neighborhood that portrayed the urban situation of the residences of the black subjects and was renamed Santa Rita neighborhood.

### Discursive sequence 03

The *Favela* has always been very questioned. A part of the blacks were resistant to eviction and, in opposition to the decision to go to Laguinho, went to the *Favela*, which, because of this, was never recognized as such, having its name since the beginning been erased by the name of Santa Rita. (COSTA, 2013 *apud* IPHAN, 2018, p. 57, our translation).<sup>5</sup>

These words come from the *Inventário Nacional de Referências Culturais do Marabaixo do Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (IPHAN)*. They describe a semantic operation in the name of the neighborhood which sought to silence the impacts caused by the exercise of state power in relation to the ways of life of the community of black subjects. The name *Favela* did not dialogue with the progress discourse brought and implemented by Janary. It was necessary to replace it with a name that gave a neighborhood character and not a disorganized set of dwellings, that is, slums. Then, in the exercise of power, the State operated in the construction of knowledge that also worked in the process of desubjectivation. Foucault (2000b, p. 256) affirms that knowledge is “[...] a process by which the subject undergoes a modification through the very things that one knows” and, thus, the Government worked to build a space legitimized by its actions, while silencing and annihilating black spaces and subjects.

About this process of desubjectivation of black subjects, which remained latent in the memory of these subjects, the discursive sequence 04 can be stressed. It corresponds to an interview with the Amapá TV Newspaper (from a broadcaster affiliated to *Rede Globo de Televisão*) in 2013, in which a black subject from *Marabaixo* discourses on the friction between the state and the practicing subjects of *Marabaixo* in the first half of the 20th century.

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<sup>5</sup> Original: *A Favela sempre foi muito questionada. Uma parcela dos negros foi resistente ao desalojamento e em contraposição a decisão de ir para o Laguinho foram para a Favela, que, em função disso, nunca foi reconhecida como tal, tendo seu nome desde o começo sido apagado pelo nome de Santa Rita.* (COSTA, 2013 *apud* IPHAN, 2018, p. 57).

**Josefa Pereira (Tia Zezinha):** - In Dante's time we came with this music and came to dance here to play capoeira. It was a very beautiful thing. When Janary arrived, who came to rule, he didn't like it, and then it ended. (APTV, 2013, our translation).<sup>6</sup>

For the discussion, we also bring the understanding of the Italian philosopher, Giorgio Agamben, about the concept of device. He also dealt, among the most varied themes, with politics. In his text *O que é um dispositivo?*, besides making an explanation about the power and the discursive and non-discursive machinery that constitutes the device according to which it is a decisive term in Foucault's thinking strategy, the idea of desubjectivation was discussed. The author points out that "[...] a desubjectifying moment is certainly implicit in every process of subjectification", since this movement destroys a subjectivity while transfiguring a new one (AGAMBEN, 2009, p. 20). In this sense, it is observed in the discursive sequence 04 the subject Josefa launches sayings that signal the exercise of state power in the course of erasing the practices of *Marabaixo*, corroborating the author's sayings about the destabilizing force game present in the development of subjectivation.

**Figure 2** – *Capoeira* and wrestling in front of São José church after *Marabaixo* 1946.



Source: Pereira's picture (1989 *apud* IPHAN, 2018).

The figure 2 represents the events inscribed in discursive sequence 04, as the subject who enunciates it remembers black practices that have been silenced by institutions. The

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<sup>6</sup> Original: **Josefa Pereira (Tia Zezinha):** – *No tempo de Dante que nós vinha com essa música e vinha dançar aqui, jogar capoeira, era uma coisa muito bonita. Quando Janary chegou, que veio governar, ele não gostou da coisa, e aí acabou.* (APTV, 2013).

free fights and the *capoeiras* dialogued with the practices of *Marabaixo* in front of the São José church and were part of the subjectivities of blacks. However, these practices were against the policies of the government and the hegemonic practices of the church.

Agamben (2009, p. 10) describes “[...] contemporary societies therefore present themselves as inert bodies going through massive processes of desubjectification without acknowledging any real subjectification”. In addition to this, Deleuze’s discussion is also resumed, based on the works of Foucault, in which he launches the metaphor of the “folds” of the subjectivation action. For this author, the outside, which corresponds to power, is not a fixed limit, but a moving matter; for the exercise of power operates in all directions, composing “[...] peristaltic movements, folds and foldings that together make up an inside: they are not something other than the outside, but precisely the inside of the outside“, being configured in cases of subjectivation (DELEUZE, 1988, p. 96-97). Thus, desubjectivation is done in a progressive and also aggressive way within a game of force that sometimes appropriates knowledge and power to objectify, sometimes that game of subjective force the subject, but not in a passive way; because it sets in motion a machinery of exercises of powers whose interior resistance also operates. We emphasize that the existence, at present, of the *Ciclo* is the result of a historical path of resistance of black subjects, since they also exercised powers against the forms of oppression and objectification of their practices.

Deleuze (1988) declares Foucault has demonstrated how the courses of subjectivation are carried out in a varied way at different times, producing unique knowledge, ways of existing and lifestyles. Hence, the struggles for recognition of the practices and modes of subjectivation of the *Marabaixo*’s black individual have crossed the centuries and, in the first years of the 21st century, the black people subjects have achieved some achievements that were a reflection of the exercise of struggle against the actions of the state and also of the church. To illustrate it, the discursive sequence 05 is cut out.

#### Discursive sequence 05

##### THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF AMAPÁ,

I make it known that the Legislative Assembly of the State of Amapá approved and I, pursuant to Article 107 of the State Constitution, sanction the following Law:

Article 1. The *CICLO DO MARABAIXO AND BATUQUE* is created in the State of Amapá.

Article 2. The *CICLO* will start on Hallelujah Saturday (Holy Week of the Christian calendar) and will continue until the first half of June, a period dedicated to the Divine Holy Spirit and the Holy Trinity.

Article 3. THE *CICLO DO MARABAIXO* AND *BATUQUE* extends to all Communities, regardless of the period in which each celebrates the festivities in praise of the Patron Saint. (AMAPÁ, 2004, our translation).<sup>7</sup>

The struggles for self-assertion of *Marabaixo* practices and ways of being black subjects against the power of hegemonic groups have brought the *Ciclo do Marabaixo* through the centuries. On July 13, 2004, through State Law No. 0845 (discursive sequence 05), the black subjects of the *Marabaixo* obtained a representation before the population of Amapá State, that is, the law that created the *Ciclo de Marabaixo* and *Batuque*,<sup>8</sup> recognizing it as a cultural, social and identity expression of the people as well as inserting it in the cultural calendar. This signals the social struggles of black groups that resisted, claimed their rights, demanded the recognition of their practices and the way of being subjects.

In 2013, the doors of the São José de Macapá church were reopened to the *Ciclo Marabaixo*. This event marked a milestone in the struggles between the church and the black subjects, considering the processes of resistance of these subjects throughout the history of the *Marabaixo*, they are inscribed as the possibility of conducts, reactions and modes of behavior that were against the religious forces. As observed, since the middle of the last century, black subjects practicing *Marabaixo* have been forbidden to enter São José church.

Another conquest of the black subjects took place in 2018. The *Marabaixo* was recognized by *Instituto do Patrimônio Histórico e Artístico Nacional (IPHAN)* as a cultural expression of devotion and resistance of the black subjects from Amapá and was registered in *Livro de Registro das Formas de Expressão: Bens Culturarias Imateriais dessa instituição*.

## Conclusion

In this text, we take as a basis the theoretical and methodological contributions of Foucault's discursive studies to develop and support our analytical movement. We have tried to extend our readings on the processes of desubjectivation present in Foucault's writings (2010) and the way they have been understood by some scholars (DELEUZE, 1988; AGAMBEN, 2009; MILANEZ, 2013). It was observed Foucault

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<sup>7</sup> Original: *O GOVERNADOR DO ESTADO DO AMAPÁ, Faço saber que a Assembleia Legislativa do Estado do Amapá aprovou e eu, nos termos do art. 107 da Constituição Estadual, sanciono a seguinte Lei:*  
*Art. 1º. Fica criado o CICLO DO MARABAIXO E BATUQUE no Estado do Amapá.*  
*Art. 2º. O CICLO terá início no sábado de aleluia (semana santa do calendário cristão) e se estenderá até a primeira quinzena do mês de junho, período dedicado ao Divino Espírito Santo e Santíssima Trindade.*  
*Art. 3º. O CICLO DO MARABAIXO E BATUQUE se estende a todas as Comunidades, independente do período em que cada uma realiza as festividades em louvor ao Santo Padroeiro. (AMAPÁ, 2004).*

<sup>8</sup> The *Batuque* is an African dance present in *quilombola* communities of Amapá. It is also configured as practices of black subjects. It is danced to the sound of *macacos*, that is, long drums and tambourines. The *Batuque* is danced in praise of the catholic saints of devotion of the communities as well.

(2000b) called desubjectivation the action that seeks to tear the subject from himself, making him no longer the same. This annihilation is linked to an action that leads the subject to a displacement of the order of discourse that constituted him, leading to other experiences.

Thus, black subjects have gone through several ways of marginalization and exclusion throughout the history of Brazil, involved in exercises of power. In the face of current events, structural racism has been discussed. Within a theory of discourse that works with historicity, this expression is understood as a discursive machinery made up of sayings, actions, laws, institutional and cultural practices etc., that is, what Foucault (1977, 2015) called a device that often works and falls in a negative and prejudiced manner on a particular subject or group of subjects and entails inequalities between subjects and social groups, in this case, the black social body.

In the Brazilian context, the black subjects managed to secure some public policies, such as the quota system for entering public universities, the insertion of subjects of Afro-Brazilian history and culture in school curriculum and, in Amapá State, the recognition of *Batuque* and *Marabaixo* as Afro-American practices. Nevertheless, these rights are far from establishing equity among the social body, considering the issue of structural racism; because these movements of repression, resistance, identification and social representation are imbued with power relations that often naturalize discursive practices that minimize and even erase the subjects.

In the case of the black Amazonian subjects under analysis, the exercise of state power in the desubjectivating process is perceived. A power of annihilation involving mechanisms of removal and destruction of spaces, practices and cultures in favor of a white nationalist hegemony that, unfortunately, is part of the social body and transcends the centuries.

The desubjectivation of the *Marabaixo* subjects worked, therefore, as mechanisms and practices of erasing the black subjects and their cultural practices, linked to the practices of objectification, that is, a set of forces operated mainly by political, religious and social devices which seek and sought to break with a discursive order to which the black subjects were built. In this way, making use of Foucaultian philosophy, as well as its application within Linguistic Studies, this research leads to this reflection: if the past cannot be changed, it can be made visible and describe what general history does not say, and then interfere in the future, so that desubjectivating practices and actions, such as those described in this research, do not continue to fall upon the subjects, suffocating, disqualifying and removing them from their subjectivities.

TARTAGLIA, E. Processos de dessubjetivação de sujeitos negros do Marabaixo. *Alfa*, São Paulo, v.66, 2022.

- *RESUMO: Neste trabalho, objetivou-se pôr em visibilidade os processos de dessubjetivação de sujeitos negros amazônicos em acontecimentos envolvendo exercícios de poder a partir*



*do período denominado de Era Vargas. Esses acontecimentos envolveram os sujeitos negros do Marabaixo de Macapá, estado do Amapá, Brasil. O Marabaixo é, na atualidade, o maior conjunto de práticas festivas e religiosas afro-amapaense em devoção aos santos da Igreja Católica. Utilizou-se como referencial teórico a análise discursiva de linha foucaultiana e foram mobilizados os termos conceituais de dessubjetivação (FOUCAULT, 2010; DELEUZE, 1988; AGAMBEN, 2009; MILANEZ, 2013), acontecimento e poder (FOUCAULT, 2013, 1988, 1972) aplicados a materialidades discursivas diversas, como textos científicos, reportagem televisiva, cantiga popular e imagens. A análise sinalizou que o processo de dessubjetivação deu-se por um exercício de poder pelas forças do Estado e também da Igreja. Isso, entretanto, resultou em exercícios de resistência pelos sujeitos negros amazônicos.*

- **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** discursos; dessubjetivação; negros do Marabaixo; Amazônia.

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