ISOLATION AND “TOXIC” PRIVACY IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC: FEMALE SUFFERING

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Abstract
The practice of self-isolation as a preventive and combat measure against the Covid-19 virus brought up the discussion about domestic violence practiced against women in Brazil. The author understands that the legal protection of intimacy favors the process of denial of this type of violence and presents a reflection on the practical measures that can be taken to face violence against women in the current pandemic context.

Keywords
Isolation. Domestic violence. Invisibility. Protective measures. Coronavirus

Summary
1. Introduction. 2. Silence and social change. The price of confinement. 3. The awakening to the problem of domestic violence in Brazil. 4. Denial, confinement and family intimacy. 5. Initiatives to combat COVID-19.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Feminists were the first, even in the 1980s, to indicate the relationship between privacy and the issue of gender-based violence practiced in the context of family relationships\(^3\). Domestic violence, already in that decade, was understood as a correlate of the historical-social construction of unequal relations between genders. In our social model (patriarchal and, therefore, heterosexual), this type of violence constituted a systematic means used to control women through intimidation and punishment, even if, in common sense, it prevailed (and unfortunately, in certain environments still prevails) the idea that domestic violence is a phenomenon of "deviation" and isolated, which can be attributed to "pathologies" of the man or the couple\(^4\).

We understand that the unequal construction between genders does not only affect women of heterosexual orientation. In the patriarchal worldview there is also no room for sexual diversity. Consequently, all "deviations" must be "punished", all "deviations" must be properly "neutralized". For this reason, we also devote a little reflection here on the suffering experienced by people who are part of the LGBTQI+ community in Brazil at a time when privacy demonstrates its potential destructive effect.

Brazil is a deeply unequal country. Race, gender and poverty intermingle in such a way that, in times of crisis, such as the current health crisis, historical inequalities are made explicit and only by evaluating the three factors can one understand the reasons why the black population has been the most vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19.

Since racism is a structural component, it is therefore not possible to reflect on domestic violence without taking into account the singularities and

\(^3\) DOBASH, E. & DOBASH 1983, *passim*.

greater vulnerability of black women during the health crisis, which is why we will also dedicate part of the analysis to the issue.

2. SILENCE AND SOCIAL CHANGE. THE PRICE OF CONFINEMENT.

In Brazil, it took many years for the Brazilian authorities to recognize the existence and seriousness of the problem of domestic and sexual violence against women in their relationship with the protection of privacy and intimacy. Obviously, this does not mean disdaining everything that the feminist movement has done in the country and in Latin America, especially since the 1980s. Just remember, for example, that the first women's defense station was created, in São Paulo, in 1985, because of this issue and the 1988 Constitution, which highlighted the problem of violence in the family. In any case, it has always been very difficult to fight domestic violence in our country, given the strength of the inertia of patriarchal culture. We believe that silence is a kind of sacred mantle of Brazilian patriarchy; in fact, it integrates it. Silence has always been an accomplice to violent men who rape, beat, humiliate and, in many cases, kill their women and even their own offspring, regardless of their sexual orientation. However, changes have occurred in recent years. And talking about social change is a very delicate topic, because it does not mean that there are no setbacks and that the so-called “advances” are not marked by contradictions. It is not easy to change patterns of behavior that are very ingrained in a society. In addition to women victims of domestic violence, people whose sexual orientation, gender identity or expression differs from traditional “heteropatriarchal” norms suffer a lot of discrimination and rejection, inside and outside the home, despite the advances in discussions about their rights.

5 For a lucid analysis of the role of women in the Constituent and its limits in the face of the power of patriarchal culture, VIDAL 2015, passim.
in recent decades. Returning to the theme of women: when we look at the quantitative data on violence against Brazilian women, we identify this difficulty in changing the mentality reflected in figures, however, absurd. We recall that, in 2011, the murder rate of women in Brazil was 3.9 per 100,000 inhabitants and studies in 2019 pointed out that this same rate jumped to 4.7 per 100,000 inhabitants (with an increase in the level 30.7% of violence against women).

3. THE AWAKENING TO THE PROBLEM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN BRAZIL

We consider that the Maria da Penha case was crucial for what I call “the awakening of Brazilian society” to the reality of domestic violence, among other reasons, because this sad story has an important symbolic aspect, with a strong psychological connotation, hardly perceived by jurists due to their own professional training and lack of knowledge of the subject. Who is Maria da Penha Maia Fernandes? A biochemical pharmacist, from the middle class of Ceará and who met her ex-husband (economist) when both were studying for a master's degree at USP. They are enlightened, educated people, inserted in what we can call “intellectual elite”. He even achieved professional success for many years, taught classes at colleges and advised several companies. However, the husband “became” what we all know and which corresponds to the “historical” cycle of domestic violence: he became a violent man, who twice attacked his wife's life and left her paraplegic.

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7Statistical data can be consulted at SABADELL 2017, 223. See also: BIANCHINI 2018, passim.
Furthermore, he obviously relied, as we all know, on the benevolence of the sexist Brazilian Criminal Justice system.
What many people have begun to realize is that gender violence affected people who, we thought, were protected by the protection of family intimacy!
Well, if a woman like Maria da Penha was not safe, who really is? In our opinion, people realized that it was a “normal” middle class couple. It was not possible to apply the typical sexist excuses: but she betrayed her husband, wore inappropriate clothes for a mother of the family, did not take care of her children; or he was a tramp, a drunk who always fell into the gutter.
Maria da Penha meant breaking the myth of aggressive “pathological” behavior. And we think that this, in a way, caused a social commotion and a certain awareness. Something that in clinical psychology is usually called with the term "insight". Feminists, for their part, wisely explored this opportunity to strengthen the fight against violence with which Maria da Penha herself engaged. The country was convicted in the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the case exploded in the media. And then, we started a process of discovering what we call visibility of invisibility and we started to hear, even if little, the voices of silence. We all are or can potentially be “Maria da Penha”.
A complex social change process, as is the awareness of the female public in the face of domestic violence, is hardly due to a single factor. Brazilian women have become more independent, but the patriarchal culture has changed little. And, in our opinion, this generates, in a sociological perspective, many social tensions. Imagine that in 1991 less than 25% of

8 Little by little, other women (of greater social visibility) began to denounce their executioners, as was the case of ex-model and businesswoman Luiza Brunet.
9 There are other factors that contributed to the beginning of this rupture of the pact of silence, such as the massive female presence in the public sphere. These are presented in the bibliography indicated in footnote 1.
Brazilian households were headed by women, but an IBGE study in 2015 pointed out that the percentage of women heads of household reached 40% and, in 2018, we already represented 45%!\(^\text{10}\). So, what happens? I, the woman, now have laws and institutions that I can turn to in case of violence; I became independent and walk on my own legs, why should I submit to a situation of oppression? Why should I be married to a man whom I no longer love and who humiliates me? I no longer feel identified with Amelia\(^\text{11}\). On the other hand, we must also work with the hypothesis that the increase in complaints is related precisely to this awareness-raising process and to the greater interest of research bodies in the study of the matter. Until a few decades ago, research institutes were not interested in the issue of gender violence, it was not a central theme in people's lives.

And today the coronavirus arrives and its invisibility makes it the ideal accomplice of Brazilian sexism. We know from various statistical studies carried out since the 1980s (see note 1) that the increase in violence against women maintains a correlation with the male presence in the home. This is not speculation, it is scientific data. For example, on weekends and holidays there is always an increase in domestic violence.

4. DENIAL, CONFINEMENT AND FAMILY INTIMACY

And now the question comes: What can we do to prevent more deaths of women and more gender violence in a time of confinement?


T.N.: Amélia is a reference to the Brazilian song "Ai que saudades da Amélia", whose lyrics praise a protagonist who fulfills the stereotypes determined by a conception of sexist femininity.
First of all, understand finally that the most dangerous place for the protection of feminine integrity is the home. We know that the statement is both frightening and heartbreaking. It is very sad to say. However, without being aware of this situation, we will not be able to face the problem. It is precisely because the effects of this finding are so difficult to be "absorbed" by our social organization, that the denial mechanism still works so successfully in a country as sexist as ours.

Just over two decades ago, one of the authors of this article has been writing about the perverse consequences of this denial, which does not even allow us to “rethink” the family on other grounds !!! Imagine that at the end of the 1990s, in the city of Heidelberg (Germany), a survey was conducted with women, composed of a very simple question: where do you think you can be a victim of sexual violence? Most responded “in the public space” (bus stop, underground parking, etc.).

However, this response by German women went against the research carried out by the German scientific police itself, which pointed to an opposite result. Reality and the female imagination did not fit! In almost 90% of cases, sexual violence occurred within four walls, within the family. Do you realize the seriousness of the problem? If we were raised believing that the base of society is the family, that at home, with our loved ones, is where we can feel fully protected from a hostile, competitive and violent world, what remains when we discover that this does not correspond to reality? It is at home that we share our deepest intimacy and that is why we ask: how to deal with such a contradiction? If we reflect seriously on this issue, we can begin to understand the complexity of the denial processes. Intimacy is a serious problem for women in sexist societies like ours. In sexist cultures, the most common is that the straight man considers the private space as a place for exercising his domination. Men can fight and

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12 SABADELL 2003, 1 et seq.
13 In relation to the arguments about denial and the issue of protection of privacy, see: SABADELL 2005, 429 et seq.
even kill themselves on the streets, but with women, what they do is hit them at home; in the private sphere.
And what are we going to do? Hear the voice of the president who practically says that we should let women die in a corona in the street so that we don't die at home? Or leave the attackers at home so that women are killed?
And, in a way, this also occurs when young people, in the wake of sexuality, realize that they are not heterosexual. If these "come out of the closet", they will be subject to double discrimination: the family, expressed by their loved ones, and the one that is exercised in the public sphere.
For this reason, not only heterosexual women are at risk, but the entire LGBTQI + community, because confinement takes place in the space for the exercise of patriarchal power.
Returning to the reference to the awareness of Brazilian women in relation to domestic violence, I think that today they feel a bit like that character (a boy) from Hans Christian Andersen's tale (The Emperor's New Clothes)\(^\text{14}\) when he discovered that the conceited King, who believed he was walking with a beautiful outfit all embroidered with gold threads ... in fact ... he was never dressed; it was completely naked !!!

And this is happening today with many people who even unconsciously start to question the idea of family and, obviously, it is also reflected in this new feminist wave that took over the country in less than a decade. Awareness of who I am and what I can be. The defense of intimacy and privacy in a liberal society cannot be seen as an excuse for us to accept violence practiced in the home. We have a serious conflict of fundamental rights, where, of course, life must be prioritized. And this the Brazilian jurist, who

\[^{14}\] A very vain king is the victim of two opportunists who claim to make a very special outfit, which only honest, good, correct people, with many moral qualities are able to see. The King's assistants, when asked to talk about clothing, for fear of being considered dishonest, told the king that it was wonderful. Until one day the king goes on a parade through the kingdom and a boy screams: “The king is naked!”
is extremely sexist, especially the penalist, does not understand. We live in a world that still explores the image of women as submissive and that accepts gays and Drags Queens as “carnival ornaments”. We women are used to sell beer, cars and cheer, with our bodies, in the Sunday ballets of Faustão's program the male imagery of domination. We end with a legal impact phrase. What is being fought for is the recognition of women and all people in the LGBTQI + community as a “subject of rights” and this does not agree with the patriarchal culture.

a) Racism, violence against women and COVID-19
Among the black population, the highest mortality rate in COVID-19 has been observed. Why? To understand this statement, we invite you to look at reality with the help of data.
Blacks are the majority among the poor Brazilians. According to the Social Inequalities by Color or Race in Brazil, from the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), blacks represent 75.2% of the population with the lowest earnings, they are the majority among unemployed workers (64.2%) and also among those who are in the informal sector (47.3%). When considering gender in the analysis, black or brown women receive, on average, 44% of white men's earnings.
Consequently, this is the portion of the population that is found among the majority of residents of peripheral regions, villages and slums without basic sanitation and in greater need of using the services of the Unified Health System (SUS).
It is also the black and poor population that has difficulty accessing sanitary measures, financial resources for the purchase of hygiene products, the

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15 T.N.: Domingão do Faustão is a famous TV program broadcast on Sundays on national television.
guarantee of a healthy life, with nutritious food, essential for maintaining immunity.

Social isolation and hygiene measures are the two main WHO recommendations to curb the spread of contamination until a certified vaccine is produced. Taking into account the exposed situation and the situations that produce the vulnerability of the black population, it can be easily said that the pandemic in Brazil has color and this should be the starting point for the formulation of public policies that aim to protect effectively the entire population.

Black women are the majority among the professional category of housekeepers, as well as professions such as hairdressers, manicurists, caregivers for the elderly, babysitters, cleaners and people who work in informal work. During social isolation some of these women have no income. 58% of unemployed women during the pandemic are black\(^{17}\). It is a dramatic situation for these women and their families.

61% of women who suffered some form of violence during the pandemic are black\(^{18}\). Black women are also most affected by physical and sexual violence.

At the same time, there was a drop in the record of police reports of domestic violence in police stations in March and April this year, compared to 2019. The record of intentional bodily injury resulting from domestic violence dropped by 25.5% and of rape and rape of the vulnerable, 28.2%. The drop has been attributed to the difficulty of access to police stations during the period of isolation\(^{19}\).

The interpretation is corroborated when analyzed together with the increase in the number of femicides in Brazil (22%), according to the second edition


\(^{19}\) Available in [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H7d-UJXcYGAaGOM6iIZhegu_Kj9xZhtr/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H7d-UJXcYGAaGOM6iIZhegu_Kj9xZhtr/view) Access: 22/09/2020
of the technical note Domestic violence during the covid-19 pandemic, published in May this year by the Brazilian Forum of Public Security\textsuperscript{20}. In addition, the complaints registered at \textit{Ligue 180}, the Federal Government's Service Center for Women in Situations of Violence, grew 27\% in the months of March and April this year, compared to the same period of 2019\textsuperscript{21}.

Confirming the state's policy of negligence in this regard, at the federal level, the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights did not invest and carried out few actions to combat violence against women during the pandemic. Of the R$ 45 million made available to the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights in actions that benefit women, the street population and traditional peoples during the covid-19, only 2 thousand reais were spent until May 26\textsuperscript{22}.

Considering the scenario of social change and the gradual, but consistent, awareness of women previously pointed out by what the country has been going through especially in the last decade, it is also possible to understand another important data and that, we are convinced, presents itself as crucial for the resistance and survival of these women who seek to build their lives in a scenario crossed by such injustices and violence.

Thus, we understand the articulation of civil society entities, especially social movements in favelas and peripheral areas, which denounce and promote programs of assistance and protection to women in situations of domestic violence. This is the case, for example, of the initiative of the feminist school Abya Ayala in the creation of a food support network for the psychological reception of women in Capão Redondo, on the outskirts of the south of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} Available in https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H7d-UJXcYGAaGOM6iiZhegu_Kj9xZhtr/view Access: 22/09/2020
\item \textsuperscript{21} Available in https://drive.google.com/file/d/1H7d-UJXcYGAaGOM6iiZhegu_Kj9xZhtr/view Access: 22/09/2020
\item \textsuperscript{22} Available in http://www.generonumero.media/gastos-ministerio-mulher-coronavirus-damares-covid/ Access: 23/09/2020
\end{itemize}
São Paulo\textsuperscript{23}, and also the action promoted by the Observatório das Favelas in Rio de Janeiro that, through WhatsApp, disseminate basic information about the evolution of the pandemic, hygiene measures to prevent infection and share information on access to emergency financial assistance and obtaining help in case of domestic violence\textsuperscript{24} In any case, some institutions, such as Rede de Advogadas Feministas Coletes Rosas (Rio de Janeiro), provided an orientation guide for women victims of domestic violence\textsuperscript{25}, as they also occur in other states.

5. INITIATIVES TO COMBAT COVID-19

Brazil is the second country in number of deaths by coronavirus in the world\textsuperscript{26}. In addition to the socioeconomic crisis in which the country is plunged, maladministration in the control of the pandemic is marked by the posture of the executive who, following the example of the American president (the USA is currently the country with the most deaths by COVID-19), has adopted from the beginning, a speech denying the virus and the prevention measures recommended by the WHO. Such behaviors not only contributed to the neglect of prevention measures by the population, but were reflected in the absence of government measures and adequate investments. Between May and September, months in which the number of deaths increased its escalation, we did not even have a Minister of Health. He was temporarily employed, and since last


\textsuperscript{25} Available in: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1h6TF7lV6ni6cw0BRlg94g8kw_BoTc0JFH9zAW9e9Uk/mobilebasic. Access: 08/04/2020.

September, definitely General Eduardo Pazuello, a military man with no specialization or experience in the health field. Despite the position of the Brazilian government, several initiatives were notable on the national scene, both by civil society and by bodies not directly linked to the executive, such as the public defender. At the national level, the public defender's office of the Union has led to concerns about the prevention and treatment of COVID among prisoners. Two collective habeas corpus were filed with the Supreme Court aiming at relaxing prison or converting prisoners at home to prisoners at risk. The public defender of the State of Rio de Janeiro (DPERJ) obtained collective Habeas Corpus so that people who are serving time in a semi-open regime (with temporary leave to visit the family or therapeutic leave) do not return to their original prison units, staying under house arrest temporarily.

At the institutional level, DPERJ launched a portal with useful information about the coronavirus and its performance during the pandemic contingency plan. It includes a document containing all the addresses and telephone numbers of police stations specialized in combating gender violence.

It was no different with the Public Ministry. Constituted the Integrated Office for the Follow-up of the COVID-19 Epidemic by the Public Ministry of the Union, the initiative seeks to unify and articulate the action of the State Public Ministries in the fight against the pandemic, has an

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30 Available in http://sistemas.rj.def.br/publico/sarova.ashx/Portal/sarova/imagem-dpge/public/arquivos/5.1_Rede_de_atendimento_a_mulheres_em_situacao_de_violao%3A%3A7%3A3%3A0_de_violao%3Ancia_de_g%3Aanero_no_Estado_do__Rio_de_Janeiro.pdf Acess: 04/10/2020.
electronic website that provides data, documents and information about the pandemic. We highlight the various initiatives in the scope of civil society that, especially in relation to social groups in the most vulnerable state, have prevented the disasters caused by the coronavirus crisis from being greater. Thus, the initiative “sociedade contra o corona”, has an website that seeks to map and report on the various self-organized actions to combat the virus across the country. Among them, for example, mapa do corona nas periferias, developed by the Marielle Franco Institute and the Favela em Pauta movement in order to locate initiatives to combat coronavirus in Brazil's slums and peripheries.

We have reached the eighth month since the beginning of the isolation measures and the picture is not encouraging. In spite of all the initiatives of civil society and institutions in the exercise of their autonomy, about which some examples we have gathered above, the absence of specific planning for the crisis, public policies and the terrible administration of the Federal Executive leaves us in one of the worst planet situations in the coronavirus crisis.

The level of unemployment breaks a record and at the end of the second quarter we have a rate of 13.3% unemployed, 6.9% higher compared to the same period in 2019, according to PNAD, we also reached the lowest number of workers with a formal contract already observed, since the beginning of the historical series. In a realistic interpretation, in order to understand the plight of the working class, especially women, we need to read these data together, which allows us to affirm that in 2020, among the poorest, those who have an occupation - which becomes more rare - he

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34 PNAD / IBGE Research
works in terrible conditions, not only needing to expose himself to the risks of the virus but also having little or no guarantee in case of illness, as we have already shown above. Safe to say that among these more we find black women.

We passed the 150,000 dead mark. Moment that the federal government considered conducive to reduce emergency aid, the only source of income for many families, announcing its end in December. The already low amount of R $ 600.00 paid monthly, increased to R $ 300.00. To give you an idea of what it means, the value of the basic basket has increased in 13 of the 17 Brazilian capitals in the last month. In São Paulo, the current value of the basic basket is R $ 539.95.

Unfortunately it is necessary to remember that Brazil has returned to occupy the UN's hunger map, according to the report, the long-standing rate of malnutrition in the country went back up. It is not difficult to believe that this disastrous situation will deepen.

It is also important to remember that between the months of April and June 2020, the fortune of Brazilian billionaires saw an increase of 39%. Brazil is also one of the most unequal countries in the world and the situation has not changed during the pandemic, the increase in income concentration clearly shows the contradiction in the official discourse of the Brazilian government that the isolation measures, notably the closure trade, would hurt the economy. What kind of damage are we talking about if at the end of seven months we were only able to ascertain the increase in unemployment, the worsening living conditions of those already in a vulnerable situation and an increase in the income of the wealthiest?

35 DIEESE research.
36 UN / FAO Report “THE STATE OF FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION IN THE WORLD. CURVE OF MALNUTRITION AGREED AGAIN.” and article on the Justificando website of 10/09/2020.
37 UBS and PwC research.
Covid-19 is a new virus and we still don't know how long we should live with periods of isolation. Europe is currently experiencing the second wave of contamination and most likely the same will occur in Latin America. In such a context of uncertainty, it is necessary to develop strategies to face violence against women in situations of confinement.

REFERENCES


