

### Research Article

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# Narrative Constructions of Online Imagined Afro-diasporic Communities in Spain and Portugal

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**Abstract:** This article focuses on representative digital platforms created and coordinated by African and Afro-descendant people from Spain and Portugal. It argues that, by sharing and articulating mutual narratives online, these platforms act as spaces where Afro-diasporic communities are being imagined. To that effect, this paper not only builds on theoretical reflections on how Blackness and Afrodescendance are conceptualised on the internet. Adopting a cultural studies' approach that offers an interpretation of selected posts, it deduces the main narratives displayed and the diverse identificational spaces intertwined in those narratives. In doing so, the paper shows that these platforms challenge biased perspectives on Afro-diasporic communities and, within the digital space, conceptualise alternative, decentred—national and transnational—communities of Afro-diasporic people that are based on shared experiences of displacement, exclusion, resistance and self-empowerment.

**Keywords:** Afro-European studies, diaspora studies, digital media, Iberian cultural studies

# Introduction

In a *Huffington Post UK* blog post from December 17, 2017, Madeline Wilson-Ojo highlights the crucial role of social media networks for Black women in the UK, for there "We are being represented. We are being inspired. A simple thing that mainstream media has failed to do." She argues that internet has given the hitherto silenced a "voice that can reach anyone with an internet connection—uncensored and uninterrupted." The online mobilisation of Black Europeans who use the internet as a space to defy the Eurocentric mainstream discourse on Africans and Afro-descendants mentioned by Wilson-Ojo is not a phenomenon limited to the UK but one that can be observed across Europe.

Whereas "Black Britain" is a phenomenon that has already been studied in extenso, this is less true for African and Afro-descendant communities from Spain and Portugal and their self-positioning in the Internet. This paper argues that the internet serves as a space of counterdiscourse for Afro-diasporic communities as it allows them to voice their own narratives and, thus, to actively participate in producing and circulating knowledge. Considering examples from Spain and Portugal such as Afroféminas, Femafro, Negrxs Magazine and Plataforma Gueto, this article examines how digital platforms—created by and for Africans and Afro-descendants—articulate collectively meaningful narratives that conceptualise online

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imagined Afro-diasporic communities, ones that African and Afro-descendant individuals in Spain and Portugal can embrace and relate to.

In a first step, this paper tackles the potential of the internet as space where otherwise marginalised groups can gain visibility and raise their voices to promote empowering narratives and alternative knowledges that challenge the hegemony of Eurocentric perceptions of Black people in Europe. Approaching the phenomenon from the perspective of cultural studies, it builds on theoretical reflections about how Blackness and Afrodescendance are conceptualised in the internet and studies the specificities of the Spanish and Portuguese context. In a second step, through close readings of selected posts, this paper deduces and compares the main narratives to untangle the diverse intertwined identificational spaces.

### Theoretical Remarks

With the Web 2.0 launch around 2004, the Internet has become a more interactive space, enabling new venues for human communication and sociability and, therefore, giving a new impulse to what André Lemos called the "post-mass media" functions (cf. Lemos). In contrast to the hierarchical, univocal and mostly national and benefit-oriented knowledge production of mass media, post-mass media potentially enable a more participatory and multidirectional structure, one that can release producers and consumers from several constrictions of traditional emission and reception, such as national borders and the hierarchical, capitalist logic underlying mass media functions. Although post-mass media are not exclusively a recent phenomenon-analogue flyers, fanzines and alternative radio stations have existed for years (cf. Lemos 404)—in particular digital media have transformed the communicational landscape due to the new lowbudget venues opened by social networks and to other information-communication technologies (ICT) being omnipresent in everyday life. Not only do these avenues increase the flow of messages we produce and receive instantaneously no matter where we are, but they also transcend the hitherto existing senderrecipient dichotomy. Users, now, have become content-producers who engage in a "many-to-many communication" (Fuchs 56), a decentralized structure that potentially allows users to participate in collective positionings and community building that are not (or, at least, less) based on a hegemonic topto-bottom approach, as is the case in traditional media (cf. 56).

Still, social inequality does not elude the digital sphere, as the ongoing debate about "digital divides" shows: that is, the class-derived gap in access to digital technology; the socioeconomic gap in the use, ability and motivation to take advantage of the internet's potentialities and the unequal opportunities of extrapolating to the "real world" the knowledge and social resources acquired online (cf. Azzonlini and Schizzerotto; Ragneda and Muschert; Leurs). Furthermore, critical postcolonial media studies not only point to the necessity of accounting for both the intersections of class, "race" and other discriminatory regimes when debating accessibility to digital technology and hierarchical structures, norms and mainstream users' habitus in cyberspace "that may restrict subaltern users in their ability to become active agents in their own representation" (Leurs 251; cf. also Buccitelli 2-3).<sup>2</sup> They also warn of media studies' Eurocentric and universalising tendencies and signal that online interactions may reproduce variations of "subaltern" positionings in the digital space (cf. Merten and Krämer; Gajjala). In fact, the democratising force and the real impact of post-mass media functions in the Internet should not be overestimated. However, the mere existence—and, even more so, the noticeable number—of venues of digital communication by people of African descent indicate that the internet does provide a space for Afro-Spanish and Afro-Portuguese people to articulate their positionings, as we analyse in the following. So, what stories do they tell in the Internet and how do they imagine themselves as communities?<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lemos does not use the prefix "post" to allude to something that "arrives at the end of mass media process, but a new way to understand what cannot be put under the label 'mass communication'" (417).

<sup>2</sup> While the consequences of colonialism in the everyday experiences of Afro-descendants are more than evident, the effect of the digital gaps for these people in Europe—not to speak about Spain and Portugal—has not yet been examined at length.

<sup>3</sup> During our research for this article, we found dozens of examples of blogs, video blogs and other digital formats that deal with and/or originate from within Afro-diasporic communities in Spain and Portugal—and our list is far from exhaustive.

In her study on indigenous and diasporic peoples, Kyra Landzelius argues that "cyberspace not only assists in the emplotment and mediation of diaspora, it actively keeps the ideology of diaspora alive" ("Introduction" 21) for it "arguably boosts the value of 'being' diasporic as a sustainable identity construction" (21). The internet thus represents a space to stay connected, "write [oneself] into larger histories" (24) and to articulate a shared diasporic condition (cf. also Kumar; Brinkerhoff, "Digital" 32-33). Such an articulation can comprise a meaningful and empowering moment with respect to a diasporic subjectivity that is otherwise often characterised by a feeling of alienness and marginalisation within the host society and that, thus, can (re-)connect to a virtual diasporic community.

Yet, Landzelius's analysis puts into focus a concept of diaspora that strongly relies on the idea of return—both physical and symbolic/fantasized—to an actual "homeland" or a dream of one (cf. 20-21). Such a conception draws on William Safran's frequently quoted definition of diaspora as an expatriate minority community that—among other characteristics—shares a collective vision of an original homeland to which the diasporic subject relates—as a potential place to return to in the future—and the relation to which strongly shapes the group's consciousness as a community (cf. Safran 83-84). However, given that many communities commonly considered diasporic—in particular in a postcolonial framework—would not comply with Safran's idea of an "ideal type" based on the Jewish diaspora (cf. Clifford 305-06), other notions of diaspora have developed. They notably emerged from a debate of postcolonial displacement and transnational migration and direct attention to the possibility of non-territorial, symbolic frames of reference and lateral ties beyond "homeland" and "hostland" (cf. Faist 12).

Accordingly, such newer notions emphasize the significance of "a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering adaptation, or resistance" (Clifford 306) that gives rise to a collectively meaningful narrative of commonality: a common framework of reference and solidarity that, with respect to the diasporic community's self-image, might be as or even more important than "the projection of a specific origin" (306). Such an approach—as propagated, for instance, by Paul Gilroy in his study on *The Black Atlantic*—simultaneously shifts the focus from a unidirectional connection to a "lost centre" to decentred, plural and lateral connections between different Afro-descendant diasporic communities and their transnational practices. Gilroy's notion of the "Black Atlantic" is insightful in this context, for he, as Ruth Mayer argues, puts emphasis on the constructedness of the Black diaspora "as a result of a history of adscriptions, projections, prejudices and self-presentations" (83) in terms of a shared lived reality that constructs the experience of Blackness in the first place (cf. 83; also Brinkerhoff, "Digital" 32; Banjo 2).4

Yet, in particular, if we talk about "Black Europe," we have to bear in mind the heterogeneity of Afrodiasporic communities around the globe and even within Europe. For this reason, scholar Michelle Wright advocates thinking beyond a dominant master narrative of Blackness—one that is linked to the geography and temporality of the Middle Passage, the transatlantic slave trade, as well as "the heteropatriarchal male body as the Black norm" (*Physics* 12). Such a narrative, thus, does not capture the multidimensionality of Black experiences and excludes alternative narratives of Blackness, in particular in an era of "increasing proliferation of [...] 'hyphenated' Black identities" (5; cf. also *Becoming* 5-6; Falola 1, 244).

Dealing with online self-positionings of Afro-European communities in general, we need to bear Wright's warning in mind, not only to remind us of the limits of potential "generalizing assumptions" we make within our analysis (cf. Wright, *Physics* 13) but also while subsequently analysing the complexity of the communities' shared narratives that circulate in the digital space. That is, narratives that go beyond a Middle Passage Epistemology and, likewise, broach the issues of (forced) movements of enslaved Africans beyond the transatlantic route, of discriminatory border politics—characteristic of a postcolonial era of transnational migratory flows—and of racist experiences in everyday life in Europe, which, nevertheless, are closely entangled with a legacy of European colonialism and its underlying hegemonic thinking patterns (cf. 8).

In addition, Europe itself is all but a homogeneous space, and we need to consider the specific context of Spain and Portugal (cf. Crumly Deventer and Thomas 336-37), two countries that not only both geographically represent Europe's "borderland" to Africa but also look back on a long history of migratory

<sup>4</sup> All translations of quotes into English are ours if not otherwise indicated.

movements between the African continent and the Iberian peninsula that tends to be pushed aside in the collective memory (cf., e.g., Henriques Castro; Lowe; Herzog; Maser; Vi-Makomè). The presence of African people in the Iberian Peninsula has a long history that goes back to the Roman Empire, and thus includes the Al-Andalus period and, later on, the maritime-commercial ventures and the conquest of the Americas. Some scholars even argue that the early modern Iberian Peninsula had the largest African and Afro-descendant population in Europe (cf. Martín Casares and Barranco 52; Arenas 169). After a decline of the Black population after the abolition of slavery (cf. Arenas 168; Martín Casares 20), the consequences of Iberian colonialism and postcolonial politics in Africa as well as an economic boom in the 1980s/90s attracted migratory flows from the African continent to Spain and Portugal, with arrival peaks at the turn of the 21st century (cf. Ferrero Turrión 87).

Despite this (more or less numerous but) continuous presence of African and Afro-descendant people in Portugal and Spain, both countries share the paradoxical tendency to foster a biased discourse on their national identities as generally homogeneous "white" European nations. This is a discourse that has framed Afro-descendant people in Spain and Portugal as "aliens" to both societies and relegated them to the status of (mostly undocumented) immigrants (cf. Arenas 171; Vi-Makomè). Yet, several studies argue that Spain and Portugal were less racist than other European countries until the global financial crisis of 2007-2008 (cf. González-Enríquez 155, Rinken 222). This crisis, however, led to the countries' economic situations deteriorating and, thus, added fuel to lingering racist and xenophobic attitudes that were fostered by the mass media disseminating stereotypical pictures of immigrants and spreading anxiety among the alleged "original" population (cf. Berriane and de Haas 2).

Now, if we follow Stephen Small's argument in his recent article, despite this inhomogeneity, there are salient "[s]imilarities in the ambiguous visibility and endemic vulnerability in which black people find themselves" ("Theorizing" 2) throughout Europe. As he elaborates, a shared narrative of what he calls "Black Europe" emerges from this context, a narrative that is characterized both by an experience of race-thinking and institutional racism within European societies and by the persistence of a colonized knowledge production about Black people based on racist clichés that still dominate a European imaginary about Blackness (cf. Small, 20 Questions 11-13). Yet, as he confirms, "for every act of racism there is an act of resistance—collective, organized, individual, or spontaneous" (21), as, e.g., in terms of cultural products that generate alternative narratives on Black Europe and, thus, trigger a critical knowledge production subversively challenging Eurocentric interpretations of Black culture (cf. 21-22, 66; also Alzouma).

In the extra-academia alternative spaces of Black mobilization and knowledge production that play a central role, it is, in particular, digital networks and social media that are crucial: They give rise to "new routes of circulation, [where] uncharted forms of emancipation emerge" (Vergès 46) and, as a form of "counterpublic" (cf. Fraser), provide a space to uncover and disseminate Afro-diasporic people's self-images and self-positionings (cf. also Small, "Theorizing" 5, 9; 20 Questions 18; also Nakamura 5). Correspondingly, Afro-German activist and writer Noah Sow emphasizes the potential of ICTs to enable Africans and Afrodescendants to "self-publish digitally, reach anyone who is interested, and use networks to get the word out, autonomously and on a global scale" (30) and, thus, to "communicate directly, [...] using virtualities to form the tangible" (29-30) in the sense of a digital diasporic space in which people of African descent can connect with each other on a transareal and/or global level (cf. Grassmuck and Wahjudi; Alzouma).

Although we should not idealize the digital space due to the afore-mentioned power structures that are at work here as well as to the (ab)use of ICTs to spread extremist ideologies and hate-speech (cf. Buccitelli 1; ENAR 15; also Landzelius, "Postscript" 295; Mansell 107-08), our analysis shows that the internet, regardless, provides a space for the marginalized Afro-diasporic subject to articulate "the tensions between chosen identities and given identities" (Gilroy, "Roots" 19). Being an alternative option to hegemonic media structures, whose representations of Black culture frequently serve "the interests of non-black people, who mainly control its finance and distribution" (Small, "Theorizing" 9), these self-articulations enacted online might play a crucial role in the context of Black social mobilisation. As Koen Leurs comparably argues in his study on how Moroccan-Dutch youth articulate identity in cyberspace, digital platforms can be considered as "ambiguous constellations full of tensions and hierarchies but with room for subversion" (23) as the content producers become agents in their own representations by articulating self-determined

identificational spaces (cf. also 25; de Leeuw and Rydin 175). Accordingly, the mentioned self-articulations might act as strategic positionings—positionings that do not necessarily rely primarily on a racialised notion of identity as origin or descent but, rather, on a lived reality of being "the racialized Other" (cf. Crumly Deventer and Thomas 337).

Common narratives articulated and shared online create a consciousness of belonging to a community (cf. Falola 252; Leurs 21). In this sense, as several studies have signalled (cf. Fox; Lutz and du Toit; Grădinaru; Mahmod), these identity-building emplotments are articulated around the same logic that underlies Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities": it refers to the shared perception of belonging to a community—a community whose members the individual might never have met, but that is held "together by stories, images and symbols that represent shared meanings about itself" (de Leeuw and Rydin 178). The individual relates to this community, which—independent of its ontological status—is imagined as such.

While Anderson refers to the national identity-building processes in 19th-century Europe that emerged from the circulation of (selective) vernacular narratives in the context of the democratisation of the printing press, which was facilitated by technical improvements, we apply the concept of "imagined communities" to a different context. If we speak about online "Afro-diasporic imagined communities," we, first, have to keep in mind the contextual and medial particularities of the 21st century. It is as an age in which diasporic communities and their cultural practices are progressively gaining rising visibility and in which shared narratives—narratives that, relating to diasporic subjects' everyday experiences, create a sense of belonging and, thus, give rise to an imagined community—"are increasingly constructed through and in media" (de Leeuw and Rydin 178) in general and notably in digital media (cf. 178; Bailey, et al. 2; Alzouma 204; Siapera, *Understanding* 174). Although by no means unaffected by existing hegemonic structures of power and privileges, digital media allow for a more decentralised and liberated content production and consumption so that narratives arise that tend to be overlooked or repressed elsewhere (cf. Small, *20 Questions* 219).

Second, and most importantly, we need to take into consideration that these online imagined communities do not necessarily refer to a common national and/or cultural origin and do not primarily revolve around the axes of the nation as the narrative thread but around transnational networks and experiences related to "race," or more precisely "racialization." For in Spain and Portugal—as in Europe in general—national identities have been constructed not only "in *inclusionary* terms as the result of constitutive formations structured around existing demographic, historical and cultural modalities" but also "through recourse to *exclusionary* constructs in which identity is simply expressed in negative and dissociative registers—being European means not being African, Latin American, Asian, and so on" (Crumly Deventer and Thomas 336-37), a double-edged construct that, within Spain and Portugal, however, tends to not be openly discussed.<sup>5</sup>

Correspondingly, the articulation of shared narratives that shape an image of a transnational Afro-diasporic community in the Internet and, consequently, create mediated symbolic spaces for identification has a political dimension. As previous research affirms, "mainstream media mostly define the representation of ethnic minorities' identities in the public sphere while diasporic media allow for resistance, appropriation, and counter representation as well as identity assertion" (Bailey 212; cf. also Georgiou 17, 25; Siapera, Understanding 185). To that effect, they bear the potential of constituting digitally mediated "counterpublics" which, according to Nancy Fraser's argument, represent "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (123; cf. also Siapera, Cultural 97-102). Accordingly, digital platforms that challenge mainstream perceptions of so-called "minority groups" stage alternative perspectives articulated by Afro-diasporic people as "strategic positions for self-expression and representations" (Bailey et al. 2; cf. also Fraser 126). Doing this, they both imagine and negotiate narratives of commonality "advanc[ing] processes of critical and reflexive engagement with imagined communities" (Bailey et al. 3). Yet, their political impetus can be considered as both promoting an intra-community debate and potentially reaching a wider audience to make it aware of the relevance of the matters discussed and, simultaneously, destabilise mainstream views (cf. also Fraser 124; Siapera, Cultural 106).

<sup>5</sup> In this respect cf. also Brabazon; Balibar.

Other than media and communication studies and/or social sciences approaches that discuss the interrelations between mediated diasporic spaces (as "alternative" public spheres) and their effects on diasporic communities in the "offline world" (cf., e.g., Brinkerhoff, Digital; "Digital"; Kumar; Mainsah; Bailey; Leurs; Siapera, Cultural), we adopt a cultural studies perspective. This perspective allows us to concentrate on an analysis of shared narratives and discourse traditions that become manifest within digital platforms coordinated and written by Afro-Spanish and Afro-Portuguese people and that, consequently, provide a basis for a mediated imagination of Afro-diasporic communities in national and transnational contexts, which are characterised by certain commonalities. Therefore, a key question is: do the studied digital platforms stage narratives that give rise to an imagined Afro-Spanish/Afro-Portuguese and/or Afrodiasporic community and, if so, what are these shared narratives? While this paper concentrates on the narratives that function as potential identificational spaces for Afro-Spanish and Afro-Portuguese people, these issues also outline a field for further (empirical) research that links online articulations and their effects on the offline world. The issues give rise to questions such as whether those self-representations do, in fact, mobilise communities in "real life" and what effects they might have on communities' collective memories as well as on the general political debate on past and present migratory movements or on social and political participation of "minority groups" within mainstream society.

In the following, we, accordingly, investigate the potential of individuals' and/or collectives' online positionings to give rise to common narratives. These common narratives frame an imagined Afro-diasporic community based on shared experiences of transnational belonging-evoking diasporic subjectivities that inhabit an in-between space-and of "being Black in Europe." These experiences are shaped by the ongoing effects of a colonial legacy and a discursive tradition of racism and/or racialization of "the Black Other" in present-day Europe as well as of a Black social mobilization against such a tradition and a subversive epistemological re-appropriation of Blackness. Correspondingly, we examine to what extent our case studies map counter-images that antagonise Eurocentric assumptions about Blackness and relate to powerful moments of African and Afro-descendant resistance and empowerment within a national (Spanish/Portuguese) and transnational context (cf. also Alzouma 210).

# **Case Studies**

The last years have seen an impressive rise in the variety of digital platforms managed and/or written by African and Afro-descendant people in Portugal and Spain. These range from webzines and digital databases to individual and collective blogs, video blogs or video channels on platforms such as Youtube, podcasts and social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. Examples from the Spanish context are Africanidad, Afroféminas, Radio Africa Magazine, Comunidad Melanina, Negrxs Magazine, Nadie nos ha dado vela en este entierro, Desirée Bela-Lobedde's (aka La negra flor) blog and videos, Espacio Afro and Black Barcelona, to name but a few. In the Portuguese context, one could enumerate Plataforma Gueto, Femafro, Roda das Pretas, Afroportuguesa, Fórum Afroportugal, Djass-Associação de Afrodescendentes, Afrolis, Diário de uma Africana or Yolanda Tati's Instagram and Youtube accounts.6

In the following, we focus on four examples: Afroféminas, Femafro, Negrxs Magazine and Plataforma Gueto. By offering an exhaustive analysis of the discourses expressed within these platforms' posts, we take a closer look at the communities they imagine for Afro-Spanish and Afro-Portuguese people, thus, shedding

<sup>6</sup> Many of these examples are recent and provide evidence of increasing use of the internet by representatives of communities that tend to be marginalised in mainstream media but aim at gaining visibility and participating in the creation/transformation of knowledge about these communities within the digital space. Whereas this paper focuses on examples where African or Afro-descendant people in Spain and Portugal speak for themselves, one can also find several cases where non-Africans or non-Afro-descendants edit digital magazines, coordinate digital platforms and/or write blogs that deal with issues of African and Afro-descendant people in Spain and Portugal and their cultures such as Afribuku, Wiriko, newspaper El País's África no es un país or Publico's Racismo à Portuguesa. Moreover, it needs to be born in mind that digital authorship is not always clearly discernible on digital platforms.

light on the narratives they articulate to conceptualise those communities.<sup>7</sup> From this comprehensive analysis of the platforms' individual posts, we deduce the key discourses, illustrating our argument with chosen representative examples.

In general, these platforms, which combine their own websites and/or blogs and social media networks, have a significant number of followers and/or a comparatively long history. While content from all channels is considered in this paper, the main focus is the more extensive and elaborate statements and comments that mostly appear on the websites and blogs. Furthermore, the studied platforms illustrate the connectedness of the respective community for they both gather texts by individuals who are active in real life and on other internet platforms and relate to the activities of other platforms and initiatives. These are all parameters that establish them as important points of reference for the online African and Afro-descendant communities in Portugal and Spain, and they show how community-related discourses circulate in the Internet.

# Main Foci of the Studied Platforms

Afroféminas is an Afrofeminist blog founded in 2013, with multiple entries and linked to social media networks such as Twitter, Instagram or Facebook, where both the blog's own posts and content by other (Afro-)feminist and/or antiracist activists and initiatives are reposted/retweeted. It is coordinated by Antoinette Torres Soler and mostly written by more or less ten different bloggers (cf. Civieta). Having an impressive number of followers—as at July 9, 2018, over 10,000 on Twitter and Instagram, nearly 40,000 on Facebook and 2,048 on the blog itself—*Afroféminas*, as "an online community for Afro-descendant/Black women," brings together Spanish-speaking African and Afro-descendant women to fight non- and/or misrepresentation in Spanish society and media. It aims at "celebrating" these women's knowledge on all kind of topics and is, therefore, considered a "fundamental tool for our collective liberation" that makes people listen to the heterogeneous discourse of Afro-Spanish women who, within *Afroféminas*, finally speak for themselves. 11

As the webpage editors confirm (cf. Editorial NGX), *Negrxs Magazine* emerged from the collective initiative *Espacio Afroconciencia* (since February 13, 2018, at Facebook as *Espacio Afro*), which—by organizing cultural, artistic and social activities and, thus, providing visibility—aims at empowering Africans and Afro-descendants in Spain and allowing them to participate in initiatives and social transformation.<sup>12</sup> To expedite this project, the digital journal *Negrxs Magazine* was founded at the end of 2017 to address issues and disseminate information of relevance to the Afro-Spanish community. Conceptualized as a platform of reference that brings together different Afro-Spanish initiatives/voices and establishes a communication network on a national and international level, <sup>13</sup> *Negrxs Magazine* focuses on constructing "the world from our blacknesses in a self-determined manner" (Editorial NGX), allowing for the heterogeneity of African

<sup>7</sup> In the following, when quoting, *Afroféminas* will be indicated as *AF*, *Femafro* as *FA*, *Negrxs Magazine* as *NM* and *Plataforma Gueto* as *PG*.

<sup>8</sup> AF, "¿Quiénes somos?" afrofeminas.com/acerca-de/.

**<sup>9</sup>** Cf. *AF*, "Entrevista a Antoinette Torres, creadora de Afroféminas." 25 June 2015, afrofeminas.com/2015/06/25/entrevista-a-antoinette-torres-creadora-de-afrofeminas/.

**<sup>10</sup>** *AF* on Instagram, www.instagram.com/p/BUPdvFjlBg4/.

<sup>11</sup> AF, "Comportamiento de negro/a." 18 January 2016, afrofeminas.com/2016/01/18/comportamiento-de-negroa/.

**<sup>12</sup>** Cf. *Matadero Madrid*. "Espacio Afroconciencia: grupo de pensamiento y acción colectiva." www.mataderomadrid.org/ficha/6032/espacio-afroconciencia.html.

<sup>13</sup> As in the text on Brazilian activist Marielle Franco that is signed by a number of Afro-diasporic activist groups from other European countries (cf. NM, "A nuestra hermana Marielle: el puño levantado, el corazón en un puño." Start Page, www.negrxs. com). Moreover, the posts include, e.g., texts by popular activists and/or authors of digital content who are also active on other digital platforms such as Lucía Asué Mbomío Bacheng, Antumi Toasijé, Desirée Bela-Lobedde or yos erchxs piña narváez.

and Afro-descendant people in Spain and their diverse identity constructions. <sup>14</sup>

Similar to Negrxs Magazine, which emerged from a thinking group and collective action, Plataforma Gueto and Femafro are the online expressions of two associations in Lisbon with a strong political and social commitment. Correspondingly, the often rather short posts—in particular on Femafro—mostly compendiously share information on the activities of the association and of other initiatives, upload materials such as a scanned version of a magazine published by *Plataforma Gueto* and disseminate news of interest for the Afro-Portuguese community.

Plataforma Gueto is a self-defined "Black social movement" born in 2005 that, since June 2012, holds one of the oldest blogs managed by and written for Africans and Afro-descendants in Portugal—among others by Flávio Almada and Jakilson Pereira (cf. Gorjão Henriques). Its goal is to "defend the self-determination of all peoples in the struggle against capitalism/imperialism, colonialism and racism." Femafro is younger, having emerged from a Facebook page that, in 2016, led to the creation of an association for Black, Afrodescendant and African Women, which was founded by Raquel Rodrigues, Joanna Sales and Dary Carvalho (cf. Gorjão Henriques). Nowadays, it holds a website and a powerful Facebook account with around 1,900 followers, as of July 9, 2018. Its goal is to gather people "around the fight against racism, sexism, xenophobia, classism, discrimination and violence on the basis of gender by means of promoting their active participation and representativity in the public and private sphere."16

# Denouncing (Past and Present) Racisms and Marginalization of **Afro-diasporic Communities**

All platforms studied in this paper emphasise the long history of racism and marginalisation of African and Afro-descendant people, with a particular focus on the situation of Afro-diasporic communities in Europe, which relates to a master-narrative of Africans' and Afro-descendants' oppression worldwide but also reveals local histories specific to the Iberian Peninsula. Moreover, as we show in the following, they likewise embody the communities' quest to counteract the persistence of racism and to empower their readers by offering visions of resistance and affirmative identificational spaces.

Personal testimonies and theoretical discussions of every-day racism and discrimination in Spain are numerous on Afroféminas. Though historical Black figures and diachronic persistencies of racism are discussed, 17 the majority of posts tend to deal with present-age phenomena such as the devaluation of African and Afro-descendant people's natural hair, 18 the stereotyping of Africans and Afro-descendants in the public's perception and in media and advertising<sup>19</sup> and racism in the education system or working

<sup>14</sup> Cf. NM, "About Ux." www.negrxs.com/aboutux/. The magazine's official webpage is supplemented by a Facebook page where the website's texts and other texts dealing with similar issues are reposted. Furthermore, it disseminates information about current antiracist and/or cultural events of interest to African and Afro-descendant people in Spain. As it has been recently founded, Negras Magazine has only 132 followers and 128 likes on Facebook (with a rising tendency) and 1,148 followers on Twitter as at July 9, 2018. Espacio Afro on Facebook has 3,733 followers.

<sup>15</sup> PG, "Plataforma Gueto." 13 January 2012, plataformagueto.wordpress.com/2012/01/13/plataforma-gueto/.

**<sup>16</sup>** FA, "Home," femafro.pt.

<sup>17</sup> Cf., e.g., AF, "Del Blackface y otros demonios." 25 December 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/12/25/del-blackface-y-otros-demonios/; "Antumi Toasijé: 'Hay una invisibilización total de los aportes de las personas africanas y afrodescendientes en la historia de España." 2 January 2018, afrofeminas.com/2018/01/02/antumi-toasije-hay-una-invisibilizacion-total-de-los-aportes-de-laspersonas-africanas-y-afrodescendientes-en-la-historia-de-espana/.

<sup>18</sup> Cf., e.g., AF, "¡Quien manda en mi pelo soy yo!" 28 June 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/06/28/quien-manda-en-mi-pelo-afrosoy-yo/; "8 razones por las que quieren tocar el pelo de las mujeres negras y por las que decir que no." 26 April 2017, afrofeminas. com/2017/04/26/8-razones-por-las-que-quieren-tocar-el-pelo-de-las-mujeres-negras-y-por-las-que-decir-que-no/; "Pelo malo..." (Pelo malo...) and the period of the periodPelo bueno." 9 April 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/04/09/pelo-malo-pelo-bueno/.

<sup>19</sup> Cf., e.g., AF, "La violencia simbólica vende." 23 April 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/04/23/la-violencia-simbolica-vende/; "Cola Cao nos insulta." 24 March 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/03/24/cola-cao-nos-insulta/; "La hipersexualización de la mujer negra. Testimonio." 5 June 2018, afrofeminas.com/2018/06/05/la-hipersexualizacion-de-la-mujer-negra-testimonio/; "Reconociendo estereotipos racistas: Jezebel, la negra insaciable." 20 June 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/06/20/reconociendo-estereotipos-racistas-jezebel-la-negra-insaciable/.

environments.<sup>20</sup> The blog also gets involved with socio-political debates and reacts to current scandals such as the highly problematic advertising campaign by H&M in 2018.<sup>21</sup> There is a specific focus on (the omnipresence of) microracisms in Spain, that is, circumstantial gestures in daily life that are, nevertheless, offensive and violating as they rely on discriminatory stereotypes, as in the comment "you are very beautiful for being black."<sup>22</sup>

Although the posts tie in with internationally discussed issues such as the *Black Lives Matter* movement, <sup>23</sup> our reasoning above details how a particular focus on the Spanish context can be observed that enables the readers to reconnect to their own realm of experience, as for instance the scandals of Blackfacing in the Spanish TV-show *Sálvame* or in the context of the Alcoy Christmas traditions. <sup>24</sup> Moreover, posts discuss how the situation of Afro-descendant people in Spain differs from that in other European countries due to Spanish society's particular perception of Black people as being "foreigners" and the conspicuous lack of Black people as role models or in positions of power within the Spanish context (cf. also Vi-Makomè 54; Carretero). <sup>25</sup>

Similarly, both Portuguese platforms denounce racism in all their manifestations inside and outside Portugal's borders, although national cases prevail for the purposes commented above for *Afroféminas*. *Plataforma Gueto* incisively criticises the violence inflicted by the Portuguese police against Black youths in Cova da Moura in Lisbon, <sup>26</sup> sustained by their discursive and factual criminalisation within the Portuguese prison system. The platform further argues that this is the "slaveocratic legacy," "an old ghost" in Portugal's history of slavery and colonialism: "we further suffer the consequences of colonialism and slavery, which . . . are not past things but processes that have barely changed their appearance." Furthermore, several posts at *Plataforma Gueto* discuss the set of Portuguese laws that allow the state to imprison or deport Africans and Afro-descendants without Portuguese citizenship and explicitly relates the logic that

**<sup>20</sup>** Cf., e.g., *AF*, "Mujer, negra, española y policía nacional." 13 April 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/04/13/mujer-negra-espanola-y-policia-nacional/; "Diario de una mujer negra en el mundo del trabajo." 14 August 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/08/14/diario-de-una-mujer-negra-en-el-mundo-del-trabajo/; "Racismo en la escuela pública española." 19 November 2017, afrofeminas. com/2017/11/09/racismo-en-la-escuela-publica-espanola/; "Para quién aún se pregunta si sufrí acoso escolar de tipo racista en el colegio." 5 April 2018, afrofeminas.com/2018/04/05/para-quien-aun-se-pregunta-si-sufri-acoso-escolar-de-tipo-racista-en-el-colegio/.

**<sup>21</sup>** Cf., e.g., *AF*, "Negrofobia en H&M para vender sudaderas." 9 January 2018, afrofeminas.com/2018/01/09/negrofobia-en-hm-para-vender-sudaderas/.

**<sup>22</sup>** *AF*, "Manual contra los microracismos." 5 February 2018, afrofeminas.com/2018/02/05/manual-contra-los-microracismos/. Cf. also *AF*, "6 ejemplos de microracismos contra las mujeres negras." 22 May 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/05/22/6-ejemplos-de-micro-racismos-contra-las-mujeres-negras/; "MicroRacismos." 24 March 2015, afrofeminas.com/2015/03/24/microracismos/.

<sup>23</sup> Cf., e.g., *AF*, "Black Lives Matter." 13 July 2016, afrofeminas.com/2016/07/13/black-lives-matters/; "Otra vida menos, otro muerto más #blacklivesmatter." 11 July 2016, afrofeminas.com/2016/07/11/otra-vida-menos-otro-muerto-mas-blacklivesmatter/.
24 Cf., e.g., *AF*, "Un BlackFace masivo en Alcoy, ¿puede ser patrimonio inmaterial de la humanidad?" 7 December 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/12/07/un-blackface-masivo-en-alcoy-puede-ser-patrimonio-inmaterial-de-la-humanidad/; "Sálvame iniciará una campaña para que la Rambla de Catalunya pase a llamarse 'El Rastro 2'." 27 August 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/08/27/ salvame-iniciara-una-campana-para-que-la-rambla-de-catalunya-pase-a-llamarse-el-rastro-2/.

**<sup>25</sup>** Cf., e.g., *AF*, "Tu nombre." 5 July 2018, afrofeminas.com/2018/07/05/tu-nombre/; "De negra carbón a Princesa." 29 September 2014, afrofeminas.com/2014/09/29/de-negra-carbon-a-princesa/; "El racismo sigue siendo un problema." 1 January 2018, afrofeminas.com/2018/01/01/el-racismo-sigue-siendo-un-problema/; "El primer alcalde negro de Mallorca." 19 June 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/06/19/el-primer-alcalde-de-mallorca/. Specifically, the personal account of a British Erasmus student of Nigerian descent about her experiences in Spain is symptomatic in this context, cf. *AF*, "Racismo en los Erasmus en España." 13 April 2018, afrofeminas.com/2018/04/13/racismo-en-los-erasmus-en-espana/.

**<sup>26</sup>** Cf., e.g., *PG*, "Excecionalidade Jurídica do Gueto e Legitimidade do Uso da Força." 17 July 2017, plataformagueto.word-press.com/2017/07/17/excecionalidade-juridica-do-gueto-e-legitimidade-do-uso-da-forca/; "2 Anos Depois, A Persistência da Brutalidade Policial em Portugal." 7 February 2017, plataformagueto.wordpress.com/2017/02/07/2-anos-depois-a-persistencia-da-brutalidade-policial-em-portugal/; "Video do Genocídio da Policia Portuguesa contra Jovens Negros." 27 February 2017, plataformagueto.wordpress.com/2015/02/27/video-do-genocidio-da-policia-portuguesa-contra-jovens-negros/.

**<sup>27</sup>** *PG*, "A falácia do 'racismo inverso'—JOACINE KATAR MOREIRA." 17 July 2017, plataformagueto.wordpress.com/2017/07/17/a-falacia-do-racismo-inverso-joacine-katar-moreira/.

<sup>28</sup> PG, "Jornal Gueto. Olhos, Ouvido e Vozes." 10 April 2017, plataformagueto.wordpress.com/2017/04/10/625/.

<sup>29</sup> PG, "Jornal."

justifies these laws to the institution of slavery: "slavery is an indissoluble principle in Law." 30

Femafro informs about these cases as well but rather focuses intersectionally on gender-related racism and structural and institutionalized racism—e.g. by reposting news on housing politics and social insurance,<sup>31</sup> as well as on the racist logic that underlies the invisibilization of Black Portuguese people and their history,<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Femafro unveils the miserable situation of Black women in Portugal, who still lack essential rights such as access to a health system. In this context, it also signals the sharp chronological break between the revindications for which Black women in Portugal need to fight and those already achieved for white occidental women—a critical approach to Western feminism that Femafro in particular shares with Afroféminas.33

However, in both Portugal-based platforms, there is a special impetus in revealing the history of slavery not only in the Americas but also within Portugal by reposting pieces of news about an exposition on slavery in Portugal as well as about activities that deal with the topic by other associations such as Djass.<sup>34</sup> By addressing the reality of Africans and Afro-descendants in Portugal throughout history, they, thus, diversify the perspective on the enslavement of African people from a Portuguese perspective in compliance with Wright's argument (cf. *Physics*) by thinking beyond the transatlantic slave trade to the Americas.

Negrxs Magazine tackles racism by referring to internationally discussed current events such as the sit-in of migrants and refugees at the old Escola Massana in Barcelona in 2018, which protested against racism and claimed greater rights, or the violent deaths of the Senegalese migrant and undocumented street vendor Mame Mbaye and of the Brazilian activist Marielle Franco in the same year-events that serve as examples of the racism in Spanish society and the "acceptability of killing" of Black lives in Spain and elsewhere, which is also denounced in the poem "Trozos de rabia" [Pieces of Rage] by Yeison F. García López, integrated with another post. <sup>36</sup> Comparable to the Portuguese examples that emphasise the momentous event of slavery, there is an insightful post in which this present-day violence is traced back in time: "the Black extermination started during colonisation and in the slave trade and  $\dots$  still continues." $^{37}$ 

Given "the pact . . . of oblivion . . . and lack of memory" reigning in Spain, digital platforms such as Negrxs Magazine or Afroféminas, consequently, serve as digital archives to remember African and Afro-descendant people's past and present stories—otherwise forgotten or silenced—and to fight, with joint forces, against a colonial legacy.<sup>39</sup> Simultaneously, individual posts criticise Spain's silence about

<sup>30</sup> PG, "Correlações entre Direito e Escravidão," 30 April 2017, plataformagueto.wordpress.com/2017/04/30/correlações-entredireito-e-escravidao/; cf. also "Justiça por código de barras." 28 April 2017, plataformagueto.wordpress.com/2017/04/28/justicapor-codigo-de-barras/.

<sup>31</sup> Cf., e.g., FA, "Oracismonoacessoà habitação." 26 August 2017, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/1991305457768973; "Esta é a realidade de milhares de mulheres negras/africanas/imigrantes em Portugal." 26 March 2018, www.facebook.com/ femafroportugal/posts/2088855921347259.

<sup>32</sup> Cf., e.g., FA, "O discurso sobre a história africana é muitas vezes baseado unicamente na perspetiva das antigas potências coloniais. Os jovens africanos não têm acesso fácil à documentação histórica." 24 January 2018, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/2058823761017142; "A falta de representatividade em vários sectores da vida portuguesa por pessoas não brancas é evidente. Desde a política à educação." 2 November 2017, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/2020465698186282; "Investigadora em Ciências Agrárias e da Alimentação e cientista social, Nina Vigon Manso critica a forma como a relação entre "o eu e o outro" é representada nos manuais." 9 September 2017, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/1997293290503523.

<sup>33</sup> Cf., e.g., FA, "Oue 8 de Marco para as mulheres Negras." 8 March 2018, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/?hc ref=ARR eH3FyAiGsIjOlFDzipVhLhQMk7Vwq9C0ZGsmXj-AiNE6jj-VvARtoCmTs9OwoTiQ&fref=nf; AF, "Por qué Afroféminas no se suma a la Huelga Feminista." 5 March 2018, afrofeminas.com/2018/03/05/porque-afrofeminas-no-se-suma-a-la-huelga-feminista/.

<sup>34</sup> Cf., e.g., FA, "Divulgamos: Sessão Djass com a exibição do episódio 'Os Escravos e a Escravatura em Portugal', da série documental da RTP 'História', da autoria de Fernando Rosas." 20 February 2018, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/ posts/2071964376369747.

<sup>35</sup> NM, "La presencia de la ausencia." Start Page, www.negrxs.com.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. NM, "Tarajal: en memoria de nuestros hermanos." 6 February 2018, www.negrxs.com/numero-2/2018/2/6/tarajal-enmemoria-de-nuestros-hermanos.

<sup>37</sup> NM, "La presencia."

<sup>38</sup> NM, "La presencia."

<sup>39</sup> Cf., e.g., NM, "La presencia"; "Nota de prensa." Start Page, www.negrxs.com; "El silenciamiento blanco es una estrategia histórica para opacar nuestras voces." 29 June 2018, www.negrxs.com/new-blog/2018/6/29/el-silenciamiento-blanco-es-unaestrategia-histrica-de-opacar-nuestras-voces.

its own involvement in the enslavement of Africans as well as about the age-long coexistence of Africans and Europeans on Spanish territory in the times of Al-Andalus. They remind Spanish society of the long presence of enslaved and free Africans not only in the country's former colonies but in Spain itself, thus, comparable to the Portuguese platforms, unveiling the particularities of the history of African and Afrodescendant people in Spain.40

The problem of racism is also picked up on Negrxs Magazine by a subcategory entitled #RACISMOESBULLYING that subsumes the testimonies of Black people in Spain on their every-day experiences of racism. Furthermore, the webpage comprises a subcategory entitled "ISSUES" that, as of July 9, 2018, contains three issues. Each one includes several texts that, likewise, discuss the historical dimensions of racism in Spain (and Europe) that emerged from a legacy of colonial oppression and enslavement of African people and persists until the present day, although commonly denied by Spanish mainstream society.41

# Constructing Narratives of Resistance and Fuelling Self-Empowerment

However, pursuant to Small's argument that racist actions have not, at any time, remained unanswered (cf. 20 Questions 21), one can find on all four platforms numerous posts that deal with African and Afrodescendants answers to racism. Frequently, racism is tackled in relation to the historical dimensions of African/Black resistance and activism against racism and oppression with a particular emphasis on movements in Spain and Portugal and on Afrofeminist movements in the case of Afrofeminas and Femafro. 42 This display of resistance shows that the self-image constructed within these platforms, thus, can allow the initial experience of oppression and suffering to be partly superimposed by (historical and present) moments of individual and/or collective resistance: it unveils alternative narratives of empowerment that may serve as a source for a self-determined discourse on Blackness in the present. This is a discourse that thwarts stereotypical notions of the "Black Other"—as seen through the white gaze—and serves as an identificational space for Afro-Spanish and Afro-Portuguese people. 43 For they replace discourses that tend to exclude Afro-Spanish and Afro-Portuguese people from the Eurocentric notion of "community" with

<sup>40</sup> Cf. AF, "Antumi"; "De negra"; "Celebrando la barbarie. Perspectiva decolonial." 12 October 2016, afrofeminas. com/2016/10/12/celebrando-la-barbarie/; NM, "Nota"; "Activismo africano y afrodescendiente en España." 18 February 2018, www.negrxs.com/numero-2/2018/2/18/activismo-africano-y-afrodescendiente-en-espaa.

<sup>41</sup> Cf., e.g., NM, "El Orgullo será antirracista o no será." 6 November 2017, www.negrxs.com/numberone/2017/11/6/sera-antirracista-o-no-sera; "Racismo, ¿cuestión de ignoracia ... o estrategia?" 31 May 2018, www.negrxs.com/new-blog/2018/5/31/ racismo-cuestin-de-ignorancia-o-de-estrategia; "II Guerra Mundial: muerte, horror y negritud." www.negrxs.com/numero-2/ muerte-horror-y-negritud.

<sup>42</sup> Cf., e.g., NM, "Tarajal"; "Activismo"; "El 12N." 6 November 2017, www.negrxs.com/numberone/2017/11/6/desde-dondehablamos-pe88p.; "Esto también es feminismo." 6 November 2017, www.negrxs.com/numberone/2017/11/6/esto-tambin-esfeminismo-647ap; "'Allí estuve, allí lo hice' / 'Black in the Days.'" www.negrxs.com/numero-2/back-in-the-days; AF, "Antumi"; "Una historia del Afro." 16 March 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/03/16/una-historia-del-afro/; "Algunos nombres de la lucha de la mujer en África." 9 July 2015, afrofeminas.com/2015/07/09/algunos-nombres-de-la-lucha-de-la-mujer-en-africa/; "El futuro del Panafricanismo." 20 May 2018, afrofeminas.com/2018/05/20/el-futuro-del-panafricanismo/; PG, "Primavera global." 11 May 2012, plataformagueto.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/522770\_392816937430033\_195547923823603\_1204164\_773130065\_n.jpg; FA, "Amanhã." 16 May 2018, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/2113264988906352; "Numa altura de grande consternação e questionamento, importa reflectir sobre: Qual o nosso papel na cultura, na arte, na política, educação e direitos humanos?" 16 March 2018, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/2083900251842826; "Efeito-Suruba." 6 December 2017, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/2035770299989155; "A não perder." 24 October 2017, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/ posts/2016692931896892.

<sup>43</sup> Cf., e.g., AF, "Antumi"; NM, "Desde donde hablamos." 6 November 2017, www.negrxs.com/numberone/2017/11/6/desdedonde-hablamos; "Resistencia desde el activismo estético." www.negrxs.com/numero-2/resistencia-desde-el-activismo-estetico; "Querida Afroconciencia." 31 May 2018, www.negrxs.com/new-blog/2018/5/31/querida-afroconciencia; FA, "Um projecto maravilhoso!" 9 November 2017, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/2023530774546441; PG, "Sobre o Despacho do Caso 5 de Fevereiro de 2015." 15 June 2017, plataformagueto.wordpress.com/2017/07/15/sobre-o-despacho-do-caso-5-de-fevereiro-de-2015/.

alternative images of inclusion that those so far usually excluded are invited to relate to. Accordingly, the reveal perspectives of African and Afro-descendant people's past and present that are usually unavailable in mainstream perception and media.

This joint opposition to racism gives rise to the "collective project" of a Black community—"We Blacks"—<sup>45</sup> that defies a Eurocentric "whitewashing" of history and knowledge through collective resistance and action: "They want us in silence, but we are here, screaming, denouncing, reinventing ourselves and resisting." This joint resistance, as called for by *Negrxs Magazine*, is represented as a fight against racism and for the appraisal of Black people and their cultures across national and linguistic borders. It is represented as global solidarity due to a shared experience of racist violence in its historical dimension. The shared experience of racist violence in its historical dimension.

Notably, all platforms show examples where opposition in "real life" and in the digital sphere intersect, hinting at two spheres of (actual and digital) community building, for several texts deal with current antiracist protests—in Spain, Portugal and elsewhere—that, in a second step, are made visible in the internet. Furthermore, resistance to racism and other forms of discrimination also becomes evident via many practical guidelines on antiracist behaviour and on facing racism. A vivid example is a manual on *Plataforma Gueto* of how to survive police violence if one is Black. It clarifies the rights and duties of those affected in order to "awaken awareness" with the belief that "knowing them would somehow protect our population."

Moreover, activism and resistance are often exhibited within the portraits and interviews of individual Black women (and men) such as in the subcategory "Referentes negros" [Black role models] on *Afroféminas*. Both there and on *Femafro*, numerous portraits are available of individuals from Spain, Portugal and elsewhere who exert resistance in an open or subtle manner, which is why those representations frequently have an empowering impetus. <sup>51</sup> Comparable to those portraits is *Negrxs Magazine*'s subcategory "D-NEGRX-A-NEGRX," which aims at visibilizing testimonies "in which we can recognise ourselves" and that are considered as being part of "a narrative that we construct between us all." <sup>52</sup>

Another central issue concerning resistance to racism and Eurocentric thinking, distinctive for *Afroféminas*, is the decolonisation of Western beauty ideals. By using both texts and highly aesthetic pictures, numerous posts display Black women's "decolonized bodies" as beautiful, thus counteracting "the dominating visual world" and fostering Black women's "self-esteem." Consequently, they can be considered as exerting a "contestatory function" (Fraser 124) characteristic of counterpublic spaces that aim at disseminating alternative, oppositional notions to challenge conventional hegemonic representations (cf.

<sup>44</sup> NM, "Desde donde."

<sup>45</sup> NM, "Desde donde."

<sup>46</sup> NM, "El silenciamiento."

<sup>47</sup> See also yos erchxs piña narváez's lyrical text called "Para mis hermanos negros," cf. *NM*, "#Blacklove We feeling my beautiful self." 13 February 2018, www.negrxs.com/numero-2/2018/2/13/blacklove-we-feeling-my-beautiful-self.

**<sup>48</sup>** Cf., e.g., *NM*, "El 12N"; "El silenciamiento"; "Tarajal"; *PG*, "Sobre o despaco"; *FA*, "Partidismos à parte." 19 March 2018, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/2085653851667466; "No passado dia 11 de Dezembro de 2017." 18 December 2017, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/2041126749453510; *AF*, "El pueblo de Buenaventura no se rindió." 6 June 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/06/06/el-pueblo-de-buenaventura-no-se-rindio/; "Las mujeres negras alzaron su voz de resistencia en Sanpachito en Medellín." 16 October 2014, afrofeminas.com/2014/10/16/las-mujeres-negras-alzaron-su-voz-de-resistencia-en-sanpachito-en-medellin/; "El día de las Trenzas." 19 May 2014, afrofeminas.com/2014/05/19/el-dia-de-las-trenzas/.

**<sup>49</sup>** Cf., e.g., *PG*, "Sobre o despacho"; *AF*, "10 consejos para mi pareja blanca." 26 June 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/06/26/10-consejos-para-mi-pareja-blanca/; "6 cosas que personas aliadas de la lucha anti racista no pueden olvidar." 31 March 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/03/31/6-cosas-que-personas-aliadas-de-la-lucha-anti-racista-no-pueden-olvidar/.

<sup>50</sup> PG, "Sobre o despacho."

<sup>51</sup> These posts include famous women such as the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Adichie, U.S. American talk show host Oprah Winfrey as well as ordinary women such as a Spanish Black female surgeon or referee for instance. They deal with historical figures such as Harriet Tubman as well as today's activists from Spain, Portugal and elsewhere such as the Spanish politician Rita Bosaho, the Angolan journalist and sociologist Luzia Moniz, the Costa Rican writer Shirley Campell Barr, the Colombian unionist María Roa Borja or the Spanish decolonial anthropologist Elena García, to name but a few of numerous examples.

<sup>52</sup> NM, "D-NEGRXS-A-NEGRXS." www.negrxs.com/interviews-btw-blk/.

<sup>53</sup> AF, "Yo soy porque nosotras somos." 12 March 2015, afrofeminas.com/2015/03/12/yo-soy-porque-nosotras-somos/.

<sup>54</sup> AF, "Somos bellas y por eso lo mostramos." 25 November 2014, afrofeminas.com/2014/11/25/somos-bellas/.

also 123). The re-visibilization and re-valuation of the Black female body within the digital space turn this body itself into an act of resistance: "It isn't frivolous, it's a fight," for "to show oneself" means "putting your body in the space from where it has been expulsed by Society,"56 Specifically, ubiquitous esthetical representations of African and Afro-descendant women's skin colour and natural hair play a crucial role in this context, which is interesting as these are bodily features that tend to be depreciated as "inferior" from a Eurocentric and colonial perspective and which are now explicitly exposed—or one might even say "celebrated"—as a means of re-appropriation of Blackness that turns the Black female body—historically considered an object of possession—into a space of empowerment: "Let's celebrate and be proud of our heritage and of what our appearance, our colour, our Blackness represent."57

Accordingly, Afroféminas not only displays Black women's beauty but also comprises numerous posts that promote Black culture and announce important cultural or activist events that aim at making Afro-Spanish voices heard, empowering Afro-Spanish people and/or celebrating their cultural heritage—as does Negrxs Magazine by disseminating information on cultural artefacts and activities, for instance through videos and an event calendar with the vivid title "NEGRXSAGENDA."58

Plataforma Gueto and Femafro also centre on divulging knowledge produced by Africans and people of African descent, not only to promote their visibility in the present but to explicitly recover the "African epistemicide,"59 which has been historically silenced in several knowledge domains that have sustained Portugal's idea of a "white European nation"—this has for instance been the case at universities, schools and in photography.<sup>60</sup> They raise visibility by posting both links to online depositories of books by Black intellectuals from around the globe translated into Portuguese and book recommendations. Moreover, they upload texts such as Aimé Césaire's letter to the French Communist Party and announce any kind of meeting, conference and activity organised by and for Afro-descendants in and outside Portugal, thereby relating to powerful moments of Black empowerment and resistance throughout time and beyond national borders.61

In contrast to Afroféminas' focus on Black aesthetics as an essential strategy for resistance and empowerment, pictures and aesthetics play a minor role in Femafro and Plataforma Gueto. This evinces that these platforms follow an approach less reminiscent of the fourth-wave feminism with respect

<sup>55</sup> AF, "Somos bellas."

<sup>56</sup> AF, "¿Qué es ser activista?" 21 April 2018, afrofeminas.com/2018/04/21/que-es-ser-activista/.

<sup>57</sup> AF, "¿Qué está mal con nosotras?" 9 September 2014, afrofeminas.com/2014/09/09/que-esta-mal-con-nosotras/; cf. also "Mujeres negras y el despojo de sus cuerpos." 30 June 2016, afrofeminas.com/2016/06/30/mujeres-negras-y-el-despojo-de-suscuerpos/.

<sup>58</sup> Cf., e.g., AF, "Recomendaciones literarias de Afroféminas para celebrar el día del libro." 23 April 2018, afrofeminas. com/2018/04/23/recomendaciones-literarias-de-afrofeminas-para-celebrar-el-dia-del-libro/; "Sobre 'No es país para negras' — La obra." 18 July 2016, afrofeminas.com/2016/07/18/sobre-no-es-pais-para-negras-la-obra/: "Taller Feminismos Negros (I) en Madrid." 1 May 2016, afrofeminas.com/2016/05/01/taller-feminismos-negros-i-en-madrid/; "La mujer negra protagoniza la muestra de teatro Novembre Vaca 2017 en Barcelona." 5 November 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/11/05/la-mujer-negra-protagonizala-muestra-de-teatro-novembre-vaca-2017-en-barcelona/; "Presentación del libro 'Mujeres Africanas: más allá del tópico de la jovialidad' de Remei Sipi en Zaragoza." 22 May 2018, afrofeminas.com/2018/05/22/presentacion-del-libro-mujeres-africanasmas-alla-del-topico-de-la-jovialidad-de-remei-sipi-en-zaragoza/; as well as NM, CVLTVRECLVB. www.negrxs.com/cultureclub/; NEGRXSAGENDA. www.negrxs.com/ngrxsagenda/?view=calendar&month=July-2018.

**<sup>59</sup>** *PG*, "A falácia."

<sup>60</sup> Cf. FA, "Investigadora"; "Entrevista a Inocência Matta, investigadora e a única professora negra na Facultade de Letras da Universidade de Lisboa, no Público." 9 September 2017, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/1997180503848135; "Sobre a invisibilidade das/os negras/os na fotografia portuguesa." 25 August 2017, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/ posts/1991098001123052.

<sup>61</sup> Cf., e.g., PG, "Site reúne obras de filósofos africanos." 20 February 2017, plataformagueto.wordpress.com/2017/02/20/ site-reune-obras-de-filosofos-africanos/; "Paternalismo e Fraternalismo." 11 February 2017, plataformagueto.wordpress. com/2017/02/11/carta-a-maurice-thorez-paternalismo-e-fraternalismo-de-aime-cesaire-deputado-da-martinica-traduzida-do-aime-cesaire-deputado-da-martinica-traduzida-do-aime-cesaire-deputado-da-martinica-traduzida-do-aime-cesaire-deputado-da-martinica-traduzida-do-aime-cesaire-deputado-da-martinica-traduzida-do-aime-cesaire-deputado-da-martinica-traduzida-do-aime-cesaire-deputado-da-martinica-traduzida-do-aime-cesaire-deputado-da-martinica-traduzida-do-aime-cesaire-deputado-da-martinica-traduzida-do-aime-cesaire-deputado-da-martinica-traduzida-do-aime-cesaire-deputado-da-martinica-traduzida-do-aime-cesaire-deputado-da-martinica-traduzida-do-aime-cesaire-deputado-da-martinica-traduzida-do-aime-cesaire-deputado-da-martinica-traduzida-do-aime-cesaire-deputado-da-martinica-traduzida-do-aime-cesaire-deputado-da-martinica-traduzida-do-aime-cesaire-deputado-da-aime-cfrances-pela-plataforma-gueto-do-site-httplmsi-net-fevereiro-de-2017; FA, "Online e gratuita. BIBLIOPRETA." 20 October 2017, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/2015082032057982; "Começar o ano om boas leituras." 4 January 2018, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/2049142395318612.

to the role of social media and the aesthetics of the body.<sup>62</sup> In fact, *Plataforma Gueto* and *Femafro*, in general, seem rather sceptical in relation to mainstream and social media and accuse them of practising "media's cannibalism." Moreover, this lack of attention to the body reflects the nature and purpose of these associations in the digital world: they tend to both consider themselves an archive of "real world" activities and put less emphasis on the digital space as an autonomous sphere of (digital) activism that offers resistance mainly through the written word and/or posted (audio-)visual material.<sup>64</sup> Accordingly, the visual material posted on the Portuguese platforms—such as posters announcing events or pictures taken at activities—serves mostly to illustrate the associations' participation in diverse activities in "real life." Instead of gaining visibility via visual content, they both, thus, focus on producing and disseminating textual-based knowledge, giving rise to a knowledge that, first, circulates in paper and/or in meetings and physical libraries to fuel Black agency and consciousness-raising within the Afro-Portuguese community itself but, then, is supposed to have the potential to unsettle Portugal's majority society and, thus, foster social change.

An insightful example that vividly illustrates intersections of digital and "real life" activism in this context is a series of events organised by Plataforma Gueto entitled "Universidades" [Universities] and targeted at decolonising Eurocentric academic practices that silence the "Black Other" or generate one-sided perceptions. As real-life events of "popular education" that do not take place at actual universities and are open to the general public, they are, afterwards, partly uploaded as a video. 65 The label "Universidades," furthermore, is striking in this context, for it subtly challenges traditional universities as (exclusive) places of-according to Small's critique (cf. 20 Questions 18)-biased knowledge production and establishes alternative counter-spheres (cf. also Fraser).

Negrxs Magazine articulates a similar goal, which forms the basis of the platform's creation, that is, "make visible and promote Black, Afro-descendant, African-descendant and Afro-diasporic cultural production: our thoughts, knowledges, history, worries and feelings" that, given "the tyrannies of silence of hegemonic media,"66 otherwise, remain suppressed.

# **Projecting Digital Afro-diasporic Networks**

To allow for alternative knowledge production and dissemination, the analysed platforms represent networks of information, as, by re-posting, they circulate news and content from other platforms and initiatives. In compliance with Grassmuck's and Wahjudi's notion, they act as digital diasporas in the sense that, in the digital realm, they bundle knowledge to which diasporic subjects at diverse geographical locations and different local communities can relate: "'Digital Diaspora' means an informational being/ existence/realm that is relocated to an outside without that the speakers, too, necessarily leave their location" (Grassmuck and Wahjudi). Re-postings, though abundantly existent on all analysed platforms, are a specifically distinctive feature of Femafro on its website and its Facebook page as the majority of its posts link to other platforms.

In this context, it is important to note that all platforms studied in this paper not only disseminate content from within the respective communities in Spain and Portugal but also adopt a transareal perspective when fostering knowledge for and about African and Afro-descendant people. They transcend geographical borders by comprising numerous posts on other cultural contexts or—partly translated—re-postings from

<sup>62</sup> Fourth-wave feminists explicitly reclaim the right to appropriate mainstream stereotypical femininity and girlishness in an empowering manner and to expose it within social media—these being conceived of as powerful means of conducting online activism in its own right (cf. Rivers).

<sup>63</sup> Cf. PG, "Execionalidade"; cf. also FA, "Partidismos à parte." In this context, they point out the media's tendency to benefit from the pain of others, for instance.

<sup>64</sup> Cf., e.g., AF, "¿Qué es ser?"

<sup>65</sup> Cf. PG, "VI Universidade da Plataforma Gueto—A Guerra KKKontra Kwame Turé (Stokely Carmichael). Com a Presença de Bob Brown." 14 April 2017, plataformagueto.wordpress.com/2017/04/14/vi-universidade-da-plataforma-gueto-a-guerra-kkkontra-kwame-ture-stokely-carmichael-com-a-presenca-de-bob-brown/.

<sup>66</sup> NM, "Desde donde."

both other Spanish or Portuguese and non-Spanish or non-Portuguese platforms. This transnational perspective, first, aims at emphasising the shared history and experiences of African and Afro-descendant communities around the globe (cf., e.g., Gilroy, *Black*), but, second, also makes knowledge—originally articulated in other languages—available in Spanish and/or in Portuguese. This accessibility is important if we recall that a self-determined debate about Black identities in Spain and Portugal emerged only recently in comparison to other European countries such as France or the UK or to the United States (cf. Small, *20 Questions*; Crumly Deventer and Thomas; Brancato).

These other contexts tackled on the platforms are other European countries, but also the African American community, which is often perceived as an important point of reference due to its preponderance within the global discourse about Blackness and its seminal Black movements in history. However, as our line of argument has shown so far, *Plataforma Gueto*, *Femafro*, *Negrxs Magazine* and *Afroféminas* explicitly do not limit their perspectives to a U.S.-centred narrative of Blackness. Instead, if we follow Michelle Wright's line of argument and look beyond what she calls the Middle Passage Epistemology (cf. *Physics*), we can detect that the studied platforms specifically give space to other identificational spaces that embrace not only perspectives and stories from the African continent itself but also from the other Americas, that is, Middle and South America (cf., e.g., *PG*, "Comunicado"). This reference to decentred diasporic spaces is conspicuously pronounced in the case of *Afroféminas*, where testimonies by, portraits about or interviews with Afro-Latinamerican women abound. Through these referential ramifications, the platforms not only divulge lateral and decentred ties within a global African diaspora but also unfold historical entanglements

**<sup>67</sup>** Cf., e.g., *NM*, "El Orgullo"; *AF*, "Harriet Tubman: una mujer llamada Moisés." 5 March 2014, afrofeminas.com/2014/03/05/ harriet-tubman-una-mujer-llamada-moises/; "El amor, una categoría política del Black Power." 6 November 2014, afrofeminas. com/2014/11/06/blackpower/; "Soy afrobritánica. Testimonio." 5 May 2018, afrofeminas.com/2018/05/05/soy-afrobritanica-testimonio/; *FA*, "Discurso de Oprah Winfrey na cerimónia dos Globos de Ouro, Estados Unidos." 8 January 2018, www.facebook. com/femafroportugal/posts/2050954668470718; "Desde 1896 que os Estados Unidos de America diferenciavan raças." 27 March 2018, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/2089393607960157; *PG*, "Documentário 'Eu Não Sou Seu Negro' estréia no Brasil." 8 February 2017, plataformagueto.wordpress.com/2017/02/09/documentario-eu-nao-sou-seu-negro-estreia-no-brasil/; "Ferguson Fala." 30 November 2014, plataformagueto.wordpress.com/2014/11/30/ferguson-fala/.

<sup>68</sup> Cf., e.g., NM, "Esto también"; "La inocencia blanca es un dispositivo de naturalización de la violencia." 28 June 2018, www.negrxs.com/dnrx-a-negrxblog/2018/6/28/la-inocencia-blanca-es-un-dispositivo-de-naturalizacin-de-la-violencia; "Nuestro reto es mantenernos vivxs." 24 June 2018, www.negrxs.com/dnrx-a-negrxblog/2018/6/24/nuestro-reto; AF, "¿Por qué es tan difícil hablar de racismo en República Dominicana?" 24 April 2018, afrofeminas.com/2018/04/24/por-que-es-tan-dificil-hablarde-racismo-en-republica-dominicana/; "La violencia y la mujer negra en Colombia." 5 June 2015, afrofeminas.com/2015/06/05/ la-violencia-y-la-mujer-negra-en-colombia/; "Soy chilena y soy negra, soy Afrochilena. Testimonio." 23 August 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/08/23/soy-chilena-y-soy-negra-soy-afrochilena-testimonio/; "Las mujeres Afro en la política uruguaya." 28 October 2014, afrofeminas.com/2014/10/28/las-mujeres-afro-en-la-politica-uruguaya/; "Corrientes del feminismo africano." 16 November 2015, afrofeminas.com/2015/11/16/corrientes-del-feminismo-africano/; "El regreso del cabello natural a Mozambique." 5 May 2015, afrofeminas.com/2015/05/05/el-regreso-del-cabello-natural-a-mozambique/; FA, "Em homenagem à vereadora assassinada Marielle Franco, a Fundação Ford, a Open Society Foundations e o Instituto Ibirapitanga anunciaram a criação de um fundo para incentivar e apoiar as mulheres negras que aspiram à liderança política no Brasil." 6 April 2018, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/2094206997478818; "Campanha contra VBG - Violência Baseada no Género, em Cabo-Verde. Porque a representatividade importa." 29 January 2018, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/2061213767444808; "Só nos últimos tres meses, qutro mulheres foram mortas na procíncia moçambicana de Zambezía." 17 April 2018, www.facebook.com/ femafroportugal/posts/2099419013624283; PG, "25 de julho o filme completo feminismo negro contado em primeira pessoa." 31 May 2017, plataformagueto.wordpress.com/2017/05/31/25-de-julho-o-filme-completo-feminismo-negro-contado-em-primeirapessoa/; "Comunicado de imprensa Líder Guarani-Kaiowá visita Portugal para denunciar genocídio dos povos indígenas no Brasil." 1 June 2017, plataformagueto.wordpress.com/2017/06/01/comunicado-de-imprensa-lider-guarani-kaiowa-visita-portugal-para-denunciar-genocidio-dos-povos-indigenas-no-brasil/.

**<sup>69</sup>** Cf. moreover *AF*, "Tertulia de Mujeres Afrolatinoamericanas. Hablemos de pelo." 10 July 2018, afrofeminas.com/2018/07/10/ tertulia-de-mujeres-afrolatinoamericanas-hablemos-de-pelo/; "Indhira Serrano, actriz afrocolombiana." 23 May 2014, afrofeminas.com/2014/05/23/indhira-serrano-actriz-afrocolombiana/; "Nariz de papa.' Testimonio." 4 July 2017, afrofeminas. com/2017/07/04/nariz-de-papa-testimonio/; "Entrevista con la escritora Yolanda Arroyo Pizarro." 1 April 2014, afrofeminas. com/2014/04/01/entrevista-con-la-escritora-yolanda-arroyo-pizarro/; "Georgina Marcelino: 'Existe la idea de que por ser negra solo vas a abarcar ciertas temáticas en el Arte.'" 25 April 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/04/25/georgina-marcelino-existe-la-idea-de-que-por-ser-negra-solo-vas-a-abarcar-ciertas-tematicas-en-el-arte/; "Afrodescendencia en México." 11 September 2015, afrofeminas.com/2015/09/11/afrodescendencia-en-mexico/.

of the two European nations and their former American colonies.<sup>70</sup>

As the existence of the transareal networks created within the digital space indicates, the platforms analysed in this paper conceptualise a Black community that is not constrained by national borders or cultural contexts and whose narratives—despite the African diaspora's dispersedness (cf. Clifford 304)—can be merged in the virtual realm. Strongly bearing on the intersections of diverging histories and experiences, the platforms, thus, tend to imagine an Afro-Spanish and Afro-Portuguese community within the framework of a global diaspora that emanated from the colonisation of Africa and the transatlantic slave trade and call on a symbolical global bond among African and Afro-descendant people.<sup>71</sup>

In this context, it is striking that most of the platforms studied in this paper resort to an "imagery of fight" that, to a certain extent, echoes internationalist socialist-Marxist rhetoric and is reminiscent of the Black nationalist movements of the 1920s and the 1960s and 1970s (cf. Tomás; Robinson). They use that rhetoric to articulate their resistance to racism and induce a "brotherhood and sisterhood" across the world to imagine a global Black community defined by solidarity. Repeatedly, the posts at *Negrxs Magazine* evoke this collective fight that unites Black communities throughout the African diaspora: "We believe in the internationalism of black fights. Our combats converge. It is in the frame of this black internationalism that we work to construct our solidarities and solid bonds of sisterhood and brotherhood." Consequently, current resistance to racism in Spain and Portugal is not only discussed in a historical dimension but also put into relation to protests elsewhere, as discussed above.

Similarly, another text on *Negrxs Magazine* argues that "Afroconsciousness isn't individual"<sup>74</sup> but experienced within a collective, which is why many posts use metaphors of communality such as "a pack where we embrace each other"<sup>75</sup> or "a home to which we can resort at any moment, a home in which we know that we are looked after and understood, a field of flowers in the middle of a constant battle field."<sup>76</sup> Repeatedly, this communality is articulated through expressions of family ties such as "granddaughters,"<sup>77</sup> to relate to a diachronic tradition of resistance, or "sisters and brothers,"<sup>78</sup> to relate to present-day Black

**<sup>70</sup>** While perspectives on and re-postings from contexts where the same language is spoken prevail, there is an exchange of ideas between Hispanophone and Lusophone communities, too; cf. *NM*, "La Inocencia"; *AF*, "Yo soy"; "Adriana Barbosa directora de Feira Preta. 'No podemos hablar de empoderamiento en las personas negras si no hablamos de dinero.'" 27 December 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/12/27/adriana-barbosa-directora-de-feira-preta-no-podemos-hablar-de-empoderamiento-en-laspersonas-negras-si-no-hablamos-de-dinero/; *FA*, "Testemunho sobre o que é ser-se mulher afrodescendente no Chile." 25 August 2017, pt-pt.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/1991019711130881; "Eterna invisibilidade." 7 August 2017, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/1982974795268706.

**<sup>71</sup>** Cf., e.g., *NM*, "Desde donde"; "A nuestra hermana Marielle"; *AF*, "Ser hermanos es más fácil que ser enemigos." 8 February 2016, afrofeminas.com/2016/02/08/ser-hermanos-es-mas-facil-que-ser-enemigos/; PG, "Jornal"; "Marcelismos contemporáneos." 17 June 2017, plataformagueto.wordpress.com/2017/06/17/marcelismos-contemporaneos/; *FA*, "É já amanhã!" 6 December 2017, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/2035801453319373.

<sup>72</sup> NM, "A nuestra hermana Marielle"; cf. also "Nota"; "La presencia."

<sup>73</sup> Cf., e.g., NM, "El Orgullo"; AF, "Black Lives"; FA, "Amanhã"; PG, "Primavera."

**<sup>74</sup>** *NM*, "Querida."

<sup>75</sup> NM, "El Orgullo."

<sup>76</sup> NM, "EFAE." 6 November 2017, www.negrxs.com/numberone/2017/11/6/efae-2.

<sup>77</sup> NM, "Desde donde."

<sup>78</sup> NM, "El Orgullo."

activism.79

Plataforma Gueto also uses such semantics to conceptualise a community based on a common experience that creates a bond among those affected: "We appeal to all brothers and sisters: join us . . .. Our union will make us certainly win." There, the awareness of the battle to be fought in the future explicitly rises from a historical dimension "if Black people have some rights today, it is because our ancestors fought and bled for it." Emphasising, in particular, the commonalities that unite African and Afro-descendant people on a global level, Plataforma Gueto adopts a clearly Panafricanist idea of community building and brings up dichotomous oppositions that display Europe as the oppressor abusing "African communities in Portugal." Being African people, the members of these communities are asked to stop identifying with Europe, since Europe oppresses them; an approach that would, consequently, deny them the possibility of strategically articulating multiple identificational spaces, such as those of Afro-European and/or Afro-Portuguese identity constructions.

*Femafro*, although less leftist connoted, makes use of such a vocabulary in particular in the context of news about international cases of extreme racism in the present day, for instance, about a demonstration against the slavery experiences of "our siblings" in Libya. Likewise, a post that announces a demonstration honouring the Brazilian activist Marielle France combines the terms "luta" [fight] e "luto" [mourning], which indirectly reveals the empowering impetus that can be found in a commonly felt and expressed vulnerability.<sup>83</sup>

Although such imagery (fight and brotherhood/sisterhood) is less pronounced at *Afroféminas*, numerous posts construct alliances and call for solidarity based on the experience of racism and marginalisation, since, as one blogger says to her (African and Afro-descendant) readers: "that song, you know it." For despite African and Afro-descendant people's heterogeneity and different backgrounds, they all share

<sup>79</sup> Cf. also NM, "El 12N"; "Tarajal"; "#Blacklove"; "D-NEGRXS"; as well as AF, "Nací negra. Testimonio." 24 August 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/08/24/naci-negra-1testimonio/; "Afrohispanidad (I)." 14 December 2015, afrofeminas.com/2015/12/14/afrohispanidad-i/. Comparable to the fact that the studied platforms do not just focus on racism in general but frequently discuss racism in an intersectional context of other discriminatory practices such as sexism, homophobia, transphobia or Islamophobia, many posts indicate that solidarity is not limited to the Black community. Instead, it includes other racialised and/or marginalised groups such as Romani people, Muslims or Asians, homosexual and transgender people as well. Posts tackle, for instance, LGTBQI rights, demonstrations for a reform of the respective national legislation on citizenship and the rising phenomenon of Islamophobia. Cf., e.g., FA, "Amanhã"; "A Íris Angola, as poucas Associações LGBT em África, teve seu registo aceito pelo Ministério da Justiça após cinco anos de espera." 26 June 2018, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/2141384959427688; PG, "A Mesquita de Lisboa foi vandalizada esta madrugada." 13 February 2017, plataformagueto.wordpress.com/2017/02/13/amesquita-de-lisboa-foi-vandalizada-esta-madrugada/; NM, "Nota"; "El Orgullo"; "El 12N"; "10 cosas sobre el Black-Pride." 28 June 2018, www.negrxs.com/new-blog/2018/6/28/10-cosas-sobre-el-black-pride; AF, "¿Por qué Afroféminas?"; "Sobre banderas, patrias y el 12N Sin Racismo." 11 November 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/11/11/sobre-banderas-patrias-y-el-12n-sin-racismo/. This solidarity to other marginalized groups can also be found on Femafro explicitly as a supporter and partner of the campaign #TraduzTeEmForça for empowering immigrant women from all over the world (cf. FA, "A FEMAFRO apoia enquanto parceira o #TraduzTeEmForca - campanha de sensibilização de e para mulheres imigrantes." 21 March 2018, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/2086167854949399). Although solidarity among women, in general, is also picked up as a theme in individual posts, there is a stronger tendency to a generally critical view of the universalising tendencies of Western feminism. Cf., e.g., AF, "Yo no soy tu enemiga." 22 March 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/03/22/yo-no-soy-tu-enemiga/; "Desmitifiquemos el abuso sexual." 23 March 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/03/23/desmitifiquemos-el-abuso-sexual/; respectively FA, "Qué 8 Março"; AF, "Por qué Afroféminas"; "Colonialidad del feminismo blanco." 29 August 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/08/29/colonialidad-delfeminismo-blanco/; "¿Por qué no me identifico con el feminismo, incluso si es interseccional? Testimonio." 7 August 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/08/07/porque-no-me-identifico-con-el-feminismo-incluso-si-es-interseccional-testimonio/; "Entendiendo el Afrofeminismo." 13 June 2016, afrofeminas.com/2016/06/13/entendiendo-el-afrofeminismo/; NM, "8 de Marzo, Día de ¿las mujeres?" 23 May 2018, www.negrxs.com/new-blog/2018/5/23/8-de-marzo-da-de-las-mujeres.

**<sup>80</sup>** PG, "Jornal."

<sup>81</sup> PG, "Sobre o Despacho."

<sup>82</sup> PG, "Jornal."

**<sup>83</sup>** Cf. FA, "É ja amanhã"; "Seguimos em luta e em luto!" 15 March 2018, www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/posts/2083401998559318; "A luta pela descolonização continua." 19 March 2017, plataformagueto.wordpress.com/2017/03/19/a-luta-pela-descolonizacao-continua/.

**<sup>84</sup>** *AF*, "Querido hermano negro, sí, a ti: te quiero." 28 March 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/03/28/querido-hermano-negro-si-a-ti-te-quiero/comment-page-1/; cf. also "Nací."

this condition: "We aren't all immigrants, nor do we all think the same, but we all do suffer the same bullying and rejection." Therefore, the term "afro" can be understood as "a word that contains a hundred million stories that reach from Somalia to Lima; from Cape Town to Stockholm. When suffering from the persistence of stereotypes, claiming one's own affiliation to an Afro-descendant community that endows oneself with the strength to fight discrimination is represented as empowering at *Afroféminas*: "we need identity, we, who resist day after day . . .. We need to be black women to carry the banner of processes of consciousness-raising, fight and empowerment given how others racially perceive us and how we perceive ourselves."

Yet, there are also voices that challenge Blackness as an overarching narrative and critically point to the heterogeneity of such a global Black community. In particular, examples abound explicitly reattaching reflections on self-positionings of Africans and Afro-descendants living in Spain to the local context. Prequently, posts discuss the bloggers' feeling of being deprived of any attachment, as they are turned down by a Spanish society—mostly conceiving of itself as "white"—that is nevertheless their home (cf. Carretero). Many texts, however, also emphasise the ambiguity of diasporic identity constructions that relate to multiple spaces and cultures (cf. Hall 112), which is why the individual, as a "polyhedral being," should embrace both the African heritage and the ties to a local, Spanish context.

Furthermore, terms such as the label "Afro-Spanish" are questioned in this context, for expressions "like Afro-something" oversimplify fairly complex forms of self-perceptions and, according to bloggers on *Afroféminas*, detract attention from the real problem: that is, the fact that skin colour still turns you into "a different type of Spaniard one needs to refer to using a distinct word" or even denies you being acknowledged as a Spaniard: "Because if a Spaniard of the Premier League,' that is, a white Spaniard, asks me where I am from, my answer can never be I am Spaniard and that's it... I automatically pass as being from the country of my father who is black."

Against the background of this debate about frictions of (chosen and given) identificational spaces—of being part of Spanish society and often not being accepted as such—there is an interesting tendency among *Afroféminas*'s bloggers to emphasize that the story of every single person—despite their affiliation to many

<sup>85</sup> AF, "Por una presencia real de los Afro." 7 June 2016, afrofeminas.com/2016/06/07/por-una-presencia-real-de-los-afro/.

<sup>86</sup> AF, "Llámalo Afro, negro o X." 26 January 2015, afrofeminas.com/2015/01/26/llamalo-afro-negro-o-x/.

<sup>87</sup> AF, "¿Necesitamos la identidad?" 18 May 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/05/18/necesitamos-la-identidad/. For a similar thought cf. Yeison García López's poem on NM, "Tarajal."

**<sup>88</sup>** Cf. *AF*, "De negra"; "Ser negro, ¿cuestión de territories?" 21 November 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/11/21/ser-negro-cuestion-de-territorios/; *NM*, "Soy negra por dentro." 30 May 2018, swww.negrxs.com/new-blog/2018/5/30/soy-negra-por-dentro.

**<sup>89</sup>** Alike, *Afroféminas* also includes numerous posts in which Afro-descendants elaborate on their (non-)relatedness to other (European and Latin American) national contexts. *Femafro*, in contrast, does not elaborate on identity-building self-positionings of Afro-Portuguese people within the local Portuguese context in a mentionable manner, apart from using the label "Black Portuguese Feminist" several times in titles and reposting two entries from *Afroféminas* and *Catraca livre* on the issue. Cf., e.g., *AF*, "Afrodescendencia"; "Soy chilena"; "Soy afrobritánica"; "Ni de aquí ni de allá: Ciudadana del Mundo (testimonio)." 13 October 2015, afrofeminas.com/2015/10/13/ni-de-aqui-ni-de-alla-ciudadana-del-mundo-testimonio/; "¿Negra o afrovenezolana?" 30 September 2014, afrofeminas.com/2014/09/30/negra-o-afrovenezolana/; "Feminismo Afro sueco... en español." 9 December 2914, afrofeminas.com/2014/12/09/feminismo-afrosueco/; respectively *FA*, "Testemunho"; "Eterna."

<sup>90</sup> Cf., e.g., *AF*, "Mis dudas con la afroespañolidad." 7 July 2015, afrofeminas.com/2015/07/07/mis-dudas-con-la-afroespanolidad/; "Mi confusión con mi color de piel. Testimonio." 17 October 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/10/17/testimonios-afrofeminas-colorismo/; "Ser de ninguna parte." 29 March 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/03/29/ser-de-ninguna-parte/; "¿Afroespañolas o negras?" 5 March 2015, afrofeminas.com/2015/03/05/afroespanolas-o-negras/.

**<sup>91</sup>** AF, "¿Afroespañolas?"

<sup>92</sup> It is noticeable that this ambiguity is often articulated through the phrasing of questions that reflect the unsteadiness of feelings of belonging such as "¿Afroespañolas o negras?" [Afro-Spanish or Black?], or "Y tú... ¿De dónde eres?" ["And you... Where are you from?]. Cf. also *AF*, "Negra, afroespañola: ¿a dónde voy?" 11 April 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/04/11/negra-afroespanola-a-donde-voy/; "¿Español o afroespañol?" 29 August 2016, afrofeminas.com/2016/08/29/espanol-o-afroespanol/; "¿Somos negras o afrodescendientes? por Cristiane Mare Da Silva." 12 January 2015, afrofeminas.com/2015/01/12/somos-negras-o-afrodescendientes/.

<sup>93</sup> AF, "¿Afroespañolas?"

<sup>94</sup> AF, "¿Español?" Cf. also Gbadamosi.

<sup>95</sup> AF, "Y tú...; De dónde eres?" 24 April 2017, afrofeminas.com/2017/04/24/y-tu-de-donde-eres-2/. Cf. also "Llámalo."

different frames of (cultural, historical, national etc.) reference that locate the individual at the intersections of diverse identity-building spheres—is, in the end, always a unique story. 6 Correspondingly, quite a few posts remind their readers of the fact that the debate about the empowering moments of Blackness should not make one forget that "somos individuos al final" [we are individuals in the end], 7 human beings with individual stories that deserve to be acknowledged and respected as equally valuable. 98

# Conclusion

By means of the examples of *Afroféminas*, *Femafro*, *Negrxs Magazine* and *Plataforma Gueto*, this contribution has examined how Afro-Spanish and Afro-Portuguese people use digital platforms to articulate collectively meaningful narratives that conceptualise imagined Afro-diasporic communities African and Afro-descendant individuals in Spain and Portugal can embrace and relate to. To that effect, we have shown that the platforms challenge biased perspectives on Afro-diasporic communities and conceptualise alternative, decentred—national and transnational—communities of Afro-diasporic people within the digital space, communities that are based on shared experiences of displacement, exclusion, resistance and self-empowerment.

As has been exposed, they conceptualise imagined Afro-diasporic communities by, first, mediating stories of racism and marginalisation experienced by African and Afro-descendant people in Spain and Portugal on a daily basis. Stories that the platforms' readers know well, which lets them relate these stories to their own realm of experience and consciously perceive the symbolical bond that connects them. This shared experience of oppression is furthermore genealogically emplotted in a transareal and historical narrative framework of enslavement and colonialism that emphasises the persistence of this oppression's impact in the present. Furthermore, these references to the past simultaneously relate the particularities of Afro-Spanish and Afro-Portuguese people's entangled histories to a transnational African diaspora.

Second, we have identified that narratives of racism are interlaced with both narratives and strategies of empowerment and resistance that, within the platforms, are understood as a collective project: against the "whitewashing" of history and knowledge, they claim the re-appropriation of knowledge production and circulation for, about and by African and Afro-descendant people. And as we have seen, they do not only claim it but, in fact, re-appropriate it, and that beyond national and linguistic borders: they announce, report on and foster activist mobilization in the "real" and the digital world and, as well, provide portraits of role models that serve as identificational spaces for Afro-Spanish and Afro-Portuguese people.

Last, we have shown that these identificational spaces are by no means homogeneous, but vary from racialised frames of reference to hyphenated identity constructions based on hybrid, plurinational, transcultural adscriptions and to exclusivist dichotomic articulations that oppose Africa and Europe and refer to oppressor/victim narratives.

The results must be understood as first operational hypotheses since they are derived from the systematic analysis of only four representative platforms. To be able to draw further conclusions, it would be insightful to verify our findings by looking into a broader range of case studies and/or examples from other European spaces. Another promising research question would be to look closer at the user's comments to assess the extent to which they pursue, engage into dialogue with, challenge and/or reject the arguments articulated in the posts. Finally, it would be revealing to examine the actual impact of these digital platforms on both Afro-diasporic people and the majority society in the respective countries, as well as the power relations regulating the digital space. Accordingly, an important starting point for further research would be to ask whether the digitally mediated community constructions find an echo in the "real world" and foster "offline" community building and identity politics. In this context, it would be particularly insightful to closely examine online counter-narratives of Blackness as a potential moment of empowerment for Afro-

<sup>96</sup> Cf., e.g., AF, "¿Afroespañolas?"

**<sup>97</sup>** *AF*, "De negra."

<sup>98</sup> Cf., e.g., "De negra"; "¿Afroespañolas?"; "Mi papel." 29 December 2016, afrofeminas.com/2016/12/29/mi-papel/; "Ser humano." 7 September 2016, afrofeminas.com/2016/09/07/ser-humano/.

diasporic people. Worthy of investigation is thus the empirical impact those counter-narratives might have on individuals and collectives both within cyberspace and in the "offline world," for instance, within cyberspace, by analysing how narratives possibly resurface in the context of social media networks or, offline, by conducting interviews with the platforms' producers and/or consumers.

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# **List of Digital Platforms Cited**

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Afroféminas on Facebook: www.facebook.com/Afrofeminas/. Afroféminas on Instagram: www.instagram.com/afrofeminas/. Afroféminas on Twitter: twitter.com/afrofeminas?lang=de.

Afrolis: radioafrolis.com/

Afroportuguesa: afroportugesa.wordpress.com

Black Barcelona: www.facebook.com/BlackBarcelonaColectivo/Comunidad Melanina: comunidadmelanina.wordpress.com/

Diario de la negra flor: www.negraflor.com Diário de uma Africana: www.umafricana.com/

Djass — Associação de Afrodescendentes: lisboaafricana.com/tag/djass-associacão-de-afrodescendentes/

Espacio Afro (El Espacio antes conocido como Afroconciencia): www.facebook.com/EspacioAfroconciencia/?ref=br\_rs

Femafro: femafro.pt/

Femafro on Facebook: www.facebook.com/femafroportugal/?ref=br\_rs.

Fórum Afroportugal: www.facebook.com/forum.afroportugal

Negrxs Magazine: www.negrxs.com

Negrxs Magazine on Facebook: www.facebook.com/negrxs.magazine.1.

Negrxs Magazine on Twitter: twitter.com/revistanegrxs?lang=de.

 $Nadie\ nos\ ha\ dado\ vela\ en\ este\ entierro:\ www.youtube.com/channel/UClEeFFcfEga8NzYldG4XfZw$ 

Plataforma Gueto: plataformagueto.wordpress.com/

 $Plata forma\ Gueto\ on\ Facebook:\ www.facebook.com/Plata forma\ Gueto/.$ 

Radio Africa Magazine: www.radioafricamagazine.com Roda de Pretas: www.facebook.com/RDPRETAS/

Los vídeos de la negra flor: www.youtube.com/channel/UCD2PvnvIOlrggwlgL0ild-g

Yolanda Tati: www.youtube.com/channel/UC20AKHYj\_wyE-UhDBctR8-Q and www.instagram.com/yolanda.tati/?hl=pt