



REFLECTIONS ON GAME AS AN INTERSECTIONAL TECHNOLOGY¹

REFLEXÕES SOBRE JOGO ENQUANTO TECNOLOGIA INTERSECCIONAL

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Abstract

Introduction: "Práticas e Cuidado: Revista de Saúde Coletiva" is pleased to publish a lecture from our special section Conferences/Lectures, which aims to broaden the dissemination of debates and research on issues pertaining to contemporaneity and their interaction with education and health. **Aim:** The aim of this section was to promote a dialog with researchers who study the world of games and the concept of intersectionality. **Method:** Our speaker is Dr. Kishonna Gray, who is an associate professor of writing, rhetoric and digital studies and African studies at the University of Kentucky. She is an interdisciplinary and intersectional digital media scholar whose research areas include identity, performance and online environments, embodied deviance, cultural production, video games and black cyberfeminism. This lecture was mediated by Dr. Suiane Costa, a researcher in the field of games at the interface with health and education. **Results:** Gray addressed the inevitable chains that link marginalized populations to stereotypical frames and limited narratives in video games. She also discussed how the multiple identities of black players affect their gaming experiences.

Keywords: Game; Intersectionality; Race; Racism.

Resumo

Introdução: A Práticas e Cuidado: Revista de Saúde Coletiva tem a satisfação de publicar uma palestra da nossa seção especial Conferências/Palestra que se propõe a ampliar a divulgação de debates e pesquisas que trazem questões inerentes à contemporaneidade e sua interface com a educação e a saúde. **Objetivo:** Essa seção teve como objetivo promover o diálogo com pesquisadoras e pesquisadores que se dedicam aos estudos sobre o mundo dos jogos e o conceito de interseccionalidade. **Método:** Nossa palestrante é a Dr^a. Kishonna Gray, que é professora associada de redação, retórica e estudos digitais e estudos africanos na Universidade de Kentucky. Ela é uma acadêmica interdisciplinar e interseccional de mídia digital cujas áreas de pesquisa incluem identidade, performance e ambientes online, desvio corporificado, produção cultural, videogames e ciberfeminismo negro. A mediação dessa palestra foi realizada pela Dr^a Suiane Costa, pesquisadora da área de jogos na interface com saúde e educação. **Resultados:** Gray abordou sobre as cadeias inevitáveis que ligam as populações marginalizadas a quadros estereotipados e narrativas limitadas nos videogames. Discutiu ainda como as múltiplas identidades dos jogadores negros afetam suas experiências de jogo.

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Palavras-chaves: Jogo; Interseccionalidade; Raça; Racismo.

INTRODUCTION

Práticas e Cuidado: Revista de Saúde Coletiva is pleased to publish a lecture from our special Conferences/Lectures section, which aims to broaden the dissemination of debates and research that address issues inherent to contemporaneity and their interface with education and health.

In this lecture, the debate focuses on the urgent need for dialog about games, race, racism and intersectionality.

Games represent a medium that brings together verbal, visual, audio and gestural elements, as well as rules and mechanics that carry meanings and emotions. They are therefore a powerful form of connection and communication. However, in modern times, both the process and the imagery used in the creation and enjoyment of games are almost exclusively based on a Eurocentric, white and colonial perspective (Bettocchi, 2021; Ferreira, Garcia, Dias, 2023), reproducing universalizing information and visions, stereotypes and violence that confirm the dominant perspectives in a society that is hierarchical based on phenotype.

Game narratives and characters can act as an important instrument for strengthening and propagating stereotypes and, given their centrality in the construction of the social environment, they also contribute to their naturalization, confirming certain worldviews to the detriment of others. The normalization of whiteness in gaming culture inevitably leads to the isolation, exclusion and punishment of marginalized people.

Aaron Trammell (2022) highlights how deeply the subjectivity of white European colonial thinking is bound up in games: white protagonists are heroes, they are exceptional, they grow in power over time, they make decisions with consequences for others in the world, they are forgiven, they are individualistic, they carry guns, they remake the world as self-expression, they do not see race and are not read through the lens of race. Simply put, the deeply connected histories of games and colonialism have produced a context in which the pleasures of many games are colonial pleasures.



Lindsay Grace (2021) points out that this situation involving representation is very complicated. When players take on the identity of their black male character in a fighting game, they are eager to enjoy the best parts of the stereotype and leave their racist history behind. A potential fantasy in game design can be the illusion that stereotypes (not archetypes) can be invoked from history and detached from their alarming literal histories. The stereotype of black people in games is fantasy at its best and perhaps also its most uncomfortable. It's a time to use blackness without owning it. In other words, it's enjoying the benefits without any responsibility. Our contemporary society is well aware of the power of images, portraits, representations and their history. Media scholars are also likely to recognize the relationship between reality, simulacra and simulations. That's why it's important to recognize that games are neither neutral nor simple technologies.

It's also important to think that this gamer subject doesn't just carry their social marker of race/color/ethnicity. Thus, our speaker, Prof. Dr. Kishonna Gray, helps us to understand and unravel blackness in games along with other intersections of identity, gender, sexuality and disability. Grey coined the term "intersectional technology" as a framework for exploring these intersections. The supposed white, cisgender, heterosexual, physically fit gamer is far from representative of the full intersectional picture in games and that's what we're going to delve into.

The lecture given by Professor Dr. Kishonna Gray on gaming and intersectionality was mediated by Dr. Suiane Costa, a researcher in the area of gaming at the interface with health and education.

LECTURE BY KISHONNA GRAY

I'm Kishonna Gray, I'm a professor in the United States in a program called Writing, Rhetoric and Digital Studies and, I think it's really interesting thinking about games as a text and how they're written and the things that they say. Also, something that I spend a lot of time on is thinking about game, the cultural scripts that's inside games. A lot of my work, I've been in this space for a little while now, I did my PhD, I finished it in 2011 and I remember back in those days, we didn't really have a lot



of this critical race, engagement, we didn't really think a lot about race, and when we thought about gender, we only thought about white women's gender. It's been really interesting just to see the growth of this work and one of the things that I always try to do in my work is, because I get the core of my work, it's intersectional, but also it's always been expensive to include the black diaspora. And even though, a lot of folks, a lot of a lot of iterations of my work have focused on the United States context, but there have always been so many different folks inside the diaspora inside my work. I'll share just an example. That's just a screen of me and my work. If you don't know intersectional tech, I think it's a pretty good book because basically it was hella black.

I know a lot of times where, and especially in the scholarship that we work on, a lot of folks say we can't do research that's too close to home, and too close to home means black spaces. And there just weren't enough people looking at black spaces for me, and the story I had started, and I want to continue that story. One of the earliest online spaces in Xbox Live that I remember being in, it featured black folks from across the globe. We had some brothers from the United States, there were some black Brits in there, there were some dudes from Nigeria in there and there were some dudes from Brazil in there. And I remember, during that time, a lot of the conversations were focused on the blackness in the United States.

I think Trayvon Martin had just died, had just gotten killed and that was the emergence of the movement for black lives, but in this moment of contention, there was the sharing of, "Listen, we're all experiencing that." And I believe at that time, there were rolling blackouts in Nigeria, so, there was precarious electricity, there were a lot of the villages that were impacted to save electricity. In the Brazilian context, that was the lead up to the Olympics, and there was all this black death that was happening, in Rio, and they were talking about just how they're continuing to just erase us, and decimate us, and destroy us, and kill us. And I think there was this moment when I remember one of the dudes said, "I guess the ghetto is the same everywhere".

And that moment hit them really hard because they were like, "Hmm, we thought y'all experienced something different than we experienced and we thought y'all experienced that because you're in that country." And I think there was just this



moment of bringing the black diaspora together and as much as the situation was awful, there was this beautiful moment where all these black dudes just saw each other and they were like, “Wow, okay, we're really connected.” and that was one of the things that I wanted to convey inside intersectional tech. So intersectional tech, I think a lot of folks think about it more as the technology. And that's true. It's where our intersectional identities meet the technology but it's also the space of so many other meetings. It's the space of where the physical meets the digital and it's also the space of where the personal meets the communal. So, in those moments, there are so many beautiful things that are happening in what I call the ancestral plane, the space of where we're all just meeting and gathering and coming together. And the beautiful part about all that is how the technology enables and allows and affords the possibilities and the opportunity to be able to connect.

The connections across the Black diaspora are some of the most beautiful and some of the dopest things that I think have happened inside the gaming space and inside the gaming world. One of the things also, as I reflect back on the work that I'm doing, is that I'm seeing all the changes over time. I'm seeing all these changes across the technologies, the changes across the spaces, there's the innovation of all these technologies, but still so many things just remain the same.

I'm inspired by the work of W.E.B. Du Bois. Hopefully, there's some engagement with W.E.B. Du Bois, there in that space. He's considered the father of sociology, but some of the things that I think that he's the dopest in doing is his visualizations of data. He realized that humanity was not going to be enough to let white folks know that we are humans, important, significant, especially after, and this is global, right when, the abolishment of the slave trade happened across the countries, from Brazil to the United States and different places. There were all these questions about what are we going to do with this property, with black folks? And I know our different countries had a different approach, right? Some countries, we're like, “Let's just mix them together and let them become one of us”, other countries were like, “Let's just keep them separate, we'll distinguish the lines of race, we'll have a distinct black race and a distinct indigenous population.” It's really interesting to see how our different countries approach what to do with blackness but also there were just some real things to contend with of health care and population and housing, there are all these things and W.E.B. Du Bois, just made it plain and clear



what the needs of black folks are through these data visualizations. I love this because this looks like something from some other world but I think that it's a part of that conversation of W.E.B. DuBois and what he talked about inside the Afrofuturism lens.

We don't often put him in conversation with Afrofuturism. He has a series of three essays that really kind of put him in conversation with other black speculative, fiction stories, black futures, black possibilities. That's *The Negro church*. That's *Princess Steel and The Comet*. What I focus a lot of my time on is that piece of the Negro church, *The sociology of Religion*.

Now what's interesting around that is that W.E.B. Du Bois noticed that there were distinct racialized differences in the leisure time and how people engaged in leisure and recreation, and that black folks were left out of those conversations. A lot of folks, focused their energies on black folks needing to work, black folks needing housing, black folks needed to be integrated into society somehow, but he recognized that a key moment of integration was who had enough time to play, who had enough time for leisure, who had enough time for recreation. And in that essay, W.E.B. Du Bois, he noticed that black folks were so overwhelmingly connected and tied to religion in ways that were not progressing us forward and collectively as a people. He recognized that we didn't have enough time to just sit and think about our collective experiences and what this life was going to look like and what we're going to look like in these moments. In this quote here, he said, "what is now the chief point of friction in race relations? And that's the leisure time." And I don't think it's ironic at all that we still spend so much time contending with play and who gets to play, which is why even the narratives around who gets to play are still so contentious, or even thinking about whenever we're playing and then people say, "Oh, you're lazy!", "You're wasting your time!"

It's not set across all cultures and all populations, because the assumption is that certain bodies, our bodies, the black bodies are working and we're working in service to white supremacy, and we're working in service to the institution. And so it's expected that we are working to continue to uphold the structures and the systems, and that we don't get a chance to play or to have leisure or recreation. And so that's also why I wanted to highlight the importance of play in all of my scholarship and in all of my work.



There is a quote here, that talks about the importance of space. And I've upgraded this a bit to just plug in, space and I've plugged in or inserted the word play, and the quote says "play is not just a passive backdrop to human behavior and social action, but it's constantly produced and remade within complex relations of culture, power and difference." Why is that quote so important?

I think it extends that conversation that W.E.B. De Boy had and it highlights why space is so important and the things that we do inside that space are still in service to a lot of the power structures in the world. Here's another little quote from that work where I talk about video games, and this is a quote from the black game studies work that I'm doing right now. It says "video games while a site of leisure and recreation sometimes offer a peek into the human condition to make sense of present realities and futuristic desires." And I added that, "it's like correcting these past mistakes or correcting the troublesome property." And that's why a lot of folks don't allow us the space to just be able to engage recreationally, because they're still controlling our bodies, they're still trying to control our bodies and they're trying to control our movements and which is why play is so important because it's in this space for us to reclaim the time, to reclaim the moments, to reclaim our humanity. Because if we just have these spaces of unfettered or unstructured engagements, then we can think about who are we? what do we want to be? what do we want to engage in the world? And play gives us the opportunity to do that.

I'm gonna go into some examples of some games right here. Whiteness tells us certain stories about us through their games, right? I focus a lot on the apocalyptic genre, the zombie genre, the end of the world genre. And I have this phrase that says "if we whiteness can't exist, then you can't either." And we have all of these examples that illustrate this trend. In *The Last Of Us 2*, you have this white woman, Ellie, and you have a black woman Nora, and there is this really violent scene of where Ellie is basically getting revenge on everybody. She wants to kill everybody in her path. But there's just something extra in the killing of the black body that happens here. In this scene the game forces us to be complicit in this black woman's death. And I always had to ask myself the question, why? I'm always asking myself why. Why was it not just a scene, a cutscene to transition us from the action? Why did you all make us have to do this? And there's another example here. I'll offer these two examples.



In Battlefield one there is this trend to have this hyper-visible black death. And what do I mean? In this example, we're on the battlefield, it's World War I and we are these black and brown soldiers who came out of the New York area in the United States. And this game was released in 2016. So 2016 was a moment of the election of Trump, I think the election of Bolsonaro came pretty soon after. There's the election of all these rightwing leaders. It's a very significant moment in the global movement for black lives. In this example here, we're playing this game, we're shooting, we're fighting, we're killing, we're dying. But there was something that was happening at the deaths of these games. So, we recognize that the game was trying to kill us. Of course, every game is trying to kill us, but it was harder for our health to regenerate, they had a really good aim so, you would peek out and then they would shoot and their accuracy would be really high. I recognized that the game was designed for us to be killed, because at the end of each death, there was a memorial. There was a memorial that would pop up on the screen and it gave a year of birth and a year of death, it would pop upon on the screen, "Willie Jefferson 1897 1918", it would give us the year that this person was born and the year this person died. It was cute at first. We honored, the fallen soldiers in that way, we recognize their sacrifice but the problem, is that this continued to happen. Every death was a memorial and it became really heavy because black folks in particular were having that racial fatigue, because every day there was "hashtag black death" everywhere. We continued to see all of these names and we had to ask ourselves the question, who is the audience? Who's the audience for this? Who did you all create this for?

They didn't create it for us, for black folks, because we had constantly seen black death everywhere. We were seeing black death on social media; we were seeing black death in our neighborhoods and then we had to see black death in our video games, the space where we often found peace, tranquility, calmness, a respite away from white supremacy, from colonial supremacy. Gaming was the space that we could go to where we didn't have to think about the pressures and the struggles of what it meant to be black in the world. And then these games brought it right to our front porch of like, "Hey, we're going to kill these black folks and we're going to kill all of them." And then so, about the fifth name in, we immediately made the linkages and made the connection between #WillieJefferson in the game and #TamirRice, #MikeBrown, hashtag so many other names. There was all of this black



death just around all of us and we couldn't really make sense of it, that the treatment of black death was really done in service to white supremacy in a lot of these games. Now, I want to shift gears a little bit, and talk about another example.

It's still along the lines of death and erasure, maybe erasure is the better word to use in this example. A few months ago, I was tagged in social media to look at this post, this event was happening, something about the metaverse. And there was this picture of this black woman here, there is not a lot of black women inside gaming in tech, and I didn't know who she was and so I was like, "Oh, this looks cool. Who is she?!" And somebody associated with this group said, "That's you, Kishona." and I was like, "No, she ain't." My initial response was being flattered. I thought it was a beautiful engagement with my work, it was a beautiful way to acknowledge and recognize my scholarship in this field. That was my initial reaction. A secondary reaction was, you could have used my face, my face is right there. But also, I wasn't mad because a lot of the AI generated photographs at that time were very Eurocentric, and to see a black face, full face, full lips, full nose, the Afro is present... that made me feel a little good that the generative AI is doing a lot better at capturing blackness. But then my third feeling was, if folks didn't know who I was and didn't know my scholarship, who would they think was the actual Kishona Gray? Would they recognize me? Or would they think that this generative AI could possibly be Kishona Gray? And there is some of the danger with this generative AI. Because there is this erasure, there is this enhancement, there's alteration, there's enhancement and there's erasure. A lot of, for instance, white women in this space who were critiquing and complaining about AI in the space, they often say that AI is altering how they look. "It's not actually me, but it's this kind of caricature of me." But the problem is, especially when it comes to black women, they are erasing us entirely. They are destroying us, they are in essence... I don't want to be dramatic and say they're killing us, but they're doing something. There's this engagement with blackness without engaging black folks. And that's what we saw with these examples. We're engaging blackness without engaging black folks.

In the other example, we're engaging blackness, but we're not engaging black folks because we aren't thinking about the holistic experience of what it means to be black in the world, of what the dangers are, of what the real, the holistic experiences of being black are.



The other problem is that we've got representation without embodiment. This beautiful black woman here, her name is Shudu. She's not real. So many of these entities and organizations, have said that, "Well, we have a problem with diversity, we can't find black people, we don't know where black people are." The system said, "Oh, we'll create it. We can use, we can use this generative AI and we'll just make black people." The company Levi Strauss, the jeans company, said "We couldn't find any black models so we'll just make some, we'll just create some." Now some people, some folks might not think that this is a major concern, but I think it just really gets back at this, this is beyond alteration, this is beyond enhancement. This is erasure and it's continuing the colonial supremacist practice of continuing to destroy and kill the black body, the troublesome property, the property that they never knew what to do with but they're able to continue to decimate us and then create us in their own likeness, create these subordinate subjects, the subjects that can be controlled because they're tired of the unruly, they're tired of the angry black woman, they want to have us docile and subordinate. This generative AI space allows them to create and to do these kinds of things, to finally get rid of the troublesome property.

One of the things that I think is very important that we do inside these spaces, we have to develop a synthetic literacy to decipher AI from reality. So synthetic literacy is very similar to digital literacy and other forms of literacy, because if I didn't tell you that she wasn't real, I think we're getting a little savvier at being able to identify what's real and what's not, we wouldn't know, so it's important for us to develop this synthetic literacy. But I also say that because there's AI has also been in gaming. I don't want to start a panic, I don't want us to engage in these moral panics around AI, because AI has always been inside the gaming space. AI has generated worlds, AI has created NPCs, non-playable characters, AI has created all kinds of experiences in the space. AI also has given us a lot of cool innovative technologies but the problem is when we think about machine learning and we think about AI inside the technology space, it's always been problematic. I think about the examples of the recognition technologies inside gaming and I think about the Kinect, the camera that was on the Xbox of where your body becomes the controller. And in the earliest iterations of the Kinect, it could not see darker skin people. And a lot



of people were, “Whoa, we got a problem.”, “Hey, this is racist, it can't see us, it can't recognize us.” Even in the voice recognition space, it could not hear us. It's very Western, it's very English dominated, but if you speak English with an accent, AI's not going to pick up on, it's not going to hear you. If you have a twang or a draw, so if you speak English, outside of standard American English, it won't recognize you, it won't hear you.

A lot of people don't think that there are any problems associated with that but if you are creating an entire infrastructure and an entire world that relies on these technologies and you've excluded entire segments of the population that leads to further erasure. We're not a part of that, and so we can't participate in that. There are dangers associated with that. If we were to pay attention to the conversations around facial recognition technology, back then, this was in 2009, if we had paid more attention to that space, we could have been better prepared for the conversation that came with this racist recognition technologies. All the surveillance cameras that are looking and watching, they can't differentiate black dudes from each other, brown dudes from each other. One of the dangers right now is the carceral logic that's embedded inside these technologies. And what do I mean by carceral logic? That carceral logic includes confinement, detainment, punishments and it also includes death, right? I'm trying to link all of these kinds of conversations together so that we recognize just how harmful a lot of these things are to black folks.

I talk a lot about carceral logics inside that article where I talk about these social media platforms and how they basically punish black women for expressing things about the overuse of police violence, especially in the United States context. And these were some of the conversations associated with the *Say Her Name* campaign. So, underneath the *Say Her Name* campaign, black women were talking about how they too are experiencing violence and those kinds of violence in their communities, the misogynoir that they engage in as well. And so, on social media, their posts were flagged, their posts were removed, things were reported, and here we have this continuation of these carceral logics inside all these spaces from the physical space to the social media space and then also to gaming. I think it's really important. This is one of the continued conversations about why it's important to then think about this facial recognition technology inside all of our tools, inside all



the technologies, because there's a slide that talks about, the bias in Detroit, and how, it can't differentiate different people and how the camera system in Detroit that's being used, it's directly connected to the police department, and so here you're sending real time data of people, straight to the police and because these tools are not savvy, it couldn't tell, for instance, Jamal from Jerome. Let's say Jamal had warrants, but it's sending the data about Jerome. And then so both, they're sending this data and then they're sending the police out. It's a really dangerous harmful system.

And a lot of those technologies were embedded inside gaming and we were trying to, blow the whistle then, so they would recognize that there's a problem here. There's a racialized problem here. I also think it's important to then talk about I.R.L., in real life, the physical spaces where we also see the manifestations of these things and where we see this continued erasure and black death. In the Pokemon Go example, I remember trying to play Pokemon Go in Chicago, Illinois in the United States. We tried to play Pokemon Go and in the white areas, we had a lot of stops for Pokemon Go. Now, in the south side of Chicago in a black neighborhood called Englewood there weren't that many places to go to interact with Pokemon Go. So, I reached out to the company, because I was working with a group of young folks and we wanted to see, how can we participate with Pokemon Go. They said there's three conditions have to be met. Three conditions must exist: One, the Poke Stop must be an area of significance, a landmark, which is why touristy places are the places that have a lot of PokeGo stops. The second is it has to be an area that has sidewalks, so people have accessibility to be able to move and pass and go. They have to be accessible. The third one was, the area had to be safe. We already know what they mean when they say safe, they don't mean black and brown neighborhoods, they don't mean our communities, they don't mean those spaces that we're in. So, already there are a lot of issues that are working against us to just get a PokeGo stop, to just play Pokemon Go. But there was one stop in the neighborhood, and so we went to this one stop, and it was a statue to the Confederate dead. In case folks don't know what the Confederacy is, The Confederacy was basically the people that were upholding the institution of slavery



in the United States. And these were the states that separated and tried to create their own country because they wanted to keep slavery intact.

You might not know much about the Confederate States of America, but we do know about these institutions that tried to keep slavery because those are some of the things that link the diaspora, that link the United States and link Brazil. Those are, where sadly we have a lot of our closest connections. This is a statue that's devoted and dedicated to the people that wanted to uphold slavery. I was with a group of students and I had to become a historian really quickly. I'm not a historian, but I had to let them understand the legacies of the transatlantic slave trade. I had to tell them the legacies of slavery. I had to tell them the legacies of Jim Crow. I had to help them understand Redlining. I had to help them understand divestment, just the lack of investment inside black communities. I had to tell them about White Flight. There are all these things that are present inside this gaming space that led to us not being able to play and interact. And so many people take for granted that they can just open up their phone, and they can just go and do Pokemon go. That's not the case for black folks. There are so many things that we have to think about and engage with: Will I be safe when I'm out there? Safe from even the intercultural kinds of violence that may exist, but also safe from police brutality and police surveillance and oversight? And then we have to think about what will that experience then look like.

I'm framing a lot of this work through a lens of racial accessibility. This game is not racially accessible because it puts black people inside white spaces that could lead to harm. And this was one such example that led to a lot of harms that so many folks don't talk about and they don't have to think about.

I also want to lead off with an example of: What does intersectional tech look like? It's not always about, talking about the oppression and racism and colonial supremacy. What I want to make sure that people know is that it's also a space of joy, and coming together, and connectedness, and making, and creating, and doing all of those things together. And this is one of those examples that I absolutely love.

I'm not sure if folks have ever have played the game *Hair Nah*, but *Hair Nah* is created by Momo Pixel and basically, she's just swatting away the hands of everybody that's trying to touch her. And the reason I love this example so much is



because it dismantled a lot of assumptions about black women, our agency, bodily autonomy, black hair politics. There are so many kinds of conversations that I think are had here that this is really the epitome of what intersectional tech is and could be.

I hope I haven't taken up too much time. I want to stop sharing right here, because I want to talk to people and interact with them, and I hope people have learned something from this.

- AI and the erasure of black bodies

I'm frightened by the direction many of these companies are taking. There's this moment, especially this diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) moment, and I hate to say it, I'm sure you all have similar conversations associated with diversity, equity and inclusion. But many of these spaces see DEI only as the presence of black bodies and that's it. And because we leave that definition very broad, the presence of black bodies can mean many things. Does it mean real integration? Does it mean hiring people? Does it mean a redistribution of wealth, money and resources? And if it doesn't mean any of these things. In fact, it's just the presence of black bodies. And that's why many of these companies say: "Well, we can create our own black bodies!", just like the example that Professor Costa said, "we can just create black bodies using this AI and then we'll solve all the problems". And that's a very dangerous precedent, because it allows institutions to absolve themselves of responsibility and not have to engage more deeply with us and our needs and what we want in this world. And I also find it difficult to completely abolish all things, to just get rid of everything. I know that's not going to happen, so I just want harm reduction.

These things are harmful to us. Whenever blackness is created in a vacuum, it is created by the hands of whiteness and white supremacy. This becomes really dangerous because the things they create are not who we are and this is what they will continue to do, so we need to be present in these spaces and in these conversations.



- Intersectional technology

We need more of that. We need more joy, because I think what I wanted to do with intersectional technology was to show the world that we are more than our oppression, we are more than just colonial subjects in foreign lands and I wanted to show that these tools have given us the ability to, first of all, connect across the diaspora. The fact that I can talk to all of you in this space is only possible thanks to technologies. And I think that's a beautiful thing. And I also think that these tools offer the possibility of doing and creating something we've never seen before. They allow us to tell stories. I love the storytelling capacity of these things. I also love the fact that the tools and technologies give us the possibility to imagine something different and to create something different. I love the black creative space, and I mean that broadly: the black creative space in streaming, streaming technology is really cool, I love seeing people making and creating all this content. The black designers and developers, the black people who are creating these games and creating these different kinds of worlds. And I just want to make sure that our whole community has access to these tools. One of the things I'm working on at the moment is a community engagement project where I'm teaching older people how to create games, not big budget games, a Grand Theft Auto, not a AAA studio game. But I want them to be able to use their everyday tools to make and create.

In that space, I had a group of grandparents who were rethinking, creating different rules and doing things differently within that space. It's very analog and low-tech, but I just want them to get into the mindset of making and creating and doing and empower them so they know they can do something, but I also want intergenerational engagements. So there are all these grandmothers and aunties teaching these kids how to play solitaire, how to play dominoes, all these kinds of cultural things that they don't have access to, and then the kids are teaching them Fortnite and Roblox and all these kinds of games.

- Development of Afrogames



I totally agree that it's important that we make, create and have our own spaces. Because these institutions will never recognize or see value in who we are, they won't see value in our cultures and they remind us of this all the time, because we can see it in the things they do and create about us. Stereotypical stories always show us at our worst, blackness at its worst, there is no room for possibility or hope. And I often get frustrated because I think of games as the space where everything is possible. They have created and can create these fantasy worlds, these speculative possibilities, but when it comes to creating blackness, they want to give us the "authentic experience". And then they keep us in the ghettos and they keep us in the violent neighborhoods and they continue to show us as dangerous, and they continue to show us as unintelligent, inferior and problematic, and we've seen that for a few decades now, and if they haven't improved, that means they can't or won't do it. But in any case, it's important, as Professor Suiane Costa said, that we create, make and have our own spaces where we can tell and share our own stories. And I think that's where the space of black joy is, where we can imagine the possibilities and hope for a better future.

- Black characters in big games

I think it's one of those things where, because we're not there, we're not in the space, there aren't many black designers and developers, we're just not there, so whenever it comes to creating stories about blackness, they do it in very stereotypical ways because they don't know any other way to tell our stories, because it's based on their assumptions and prejudices that they already have about blackness and so they haven't expanded those stories. I also think it's important to recognize that even if we are present in these spaces, the problem is the culture. The presence of black people in these spaces isn't going to change the culture either. Black people are struggling in these spaces, women are struggling in these spaces, gay people are struggling in these spaces, because they are being forced to adhere to a dominant culture of telling white stories, of adhering to white male norms and ideals. And it's these corporate spaces that are a problem, because they've ended up adopting this white supremacist colonial capitalist mentality and,



when we're there, we have to adhere to it too. That's why I agree with what Professor Suiane Costa says, that we have to break this system or simply create our own alternative spaces and systems. That's difficult to do, but it's not impossible, because I also think that we have these alternative tools and other things that we can do in these spaces that may seem different, but we also need to recognize and value our own things, what we do and create, and that's also another issue, we have to appreciate each other and appreciate the things that we can create as well, and that can represent another challenge.

- Intersectional game studies in the USA

I think that whenever we think about the stories of blackness that are told, the conception of blackness is very singular, very small and, of course, that blackness is usually the blackness of the United States. We don't even think globally about blackness, but I also think it's important that we recognize, in an intersectional way, all the different variations of what blackness is and what the possibilities of blackness are. But this is also something that we should value collectively, as a people. I think the first example I shared with all of you only highlighted disputes, even among black people. In that group I was talking about, black people in the United States thought that their blackness was more important and that their issues were more important, and they were devaluing, for example, blackness in Europe, there was a lot of disparity and that kind of thing. And even thinking about black people outside of Africa. There are also some disputes and it's not always a pleasant relationship, even between us. I'm not going to go on and on about the problems we have even in our own cultures or communities, but I think it's important that we recognize that these tensions that are occurring in our own communities have their origins in white supremacy. They are colonial legacies that are directly linked to the transatlantic slave trade. That was done to us, but we have to recognize that we are in control of our healing and we are making sure that we come together to have more connections, to see each other and to value each other, because I want to make sure that we don't have to wait for institutions to do something for us. We don't



have to wait for institutions to tell our stories and help us heal. We have power and we can do these things on our own, and that's why we love having this conversation across the diaspora. That's really beautiful.

- Role-playing games

Oh my God. This is one of those examples where they could do anything, so many things are possible, but they keep doing the same thing over and over again. It's the tropes. It becomes a trope, women are the healers and certain characters are the defenders and the fighters. And I ask you: is that all you can come up with? I don't know if you all remember when Black Panther came out and suddenly people were saying, "Wow, we can do that? Can we have an all-black cast and it do well? Oh, I didn't know we could do that with the superhero genre. Whiteness is so limiting, it's not creative, and then they kick us out because of the things we can bring to those spaces. Our creativity, our innovations, I've been in so many spaces and when I think about how incredible black people are, that's what intimidates these structures, the institutions, that's what intimidates our white colleagues, white people just can't imagine that black people have something to offer, something to give and something to bring to the table. That's why we keep having this in the RPG space, because they're just creating the same thing over and over again. Now, I'm going to be fair, I'm going to offer an alternative.

The main objective of many of these companies is to make money. Therefore, if their task is to make money, they will continue to do the things that make them money. They're not going to deviate; they're not going to try something new. They say: "Hey, that worked. Let's keep doing it over and over again. And the masses love black people as the brute, the criminal, the sidekick, the funny, they love blackness in these roles. So it's hard for them to think of blackness as the hero. I would like the system to understand that they can do more, that they can be more creative and innovative if the imperative of the market, if the profit margin wasn't what drove them, we could have much more. But capitalism, all things go back to capitalism.



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