

Black Women's Struggles against Extractivism, Land Dispossession, and Marginalization in Colombia

by
Catriela Esther Hernández Reyes

The neocolonial turn toward extractivism intensifies the use of violence while fostering land dispossession, racism, and militarization of social life. Afro-Colombian women resist this process by using their subjectivities politically, strategically, discursively, and textually. An examination through the lens of black/decolonial feminism of the first national Mobilization for the Care of Life and Ancestral Territories, led by 40 black women from the Department of Cauca in 2014, shows that black women's emotions and collective affections were driving forces that exhibited both their exclusions and their resistance. These feelings may be seen as catalysts through which their lived experiences are expressed and performed in the material world. Examination of this event suggests that a more radical analysis of black women's historicity, subjectivities, and struggles is needed to better capture and understand experience-based epistemologies that challenge hegemonic forms of knowledge production.

El giro neocolonial hacia el extractivismo intensifica el uso de la violencia al tiempo que fomenta el despojo de tierras, el racismo y la militarización de la vida social. Las mujeres afrocolombianas se resisten a este proceso utilizando sus subjetividades políticas, estratégica, discursiva y textualmente. Un examen a través del feminismo negro/decolonial de la primera movilización nacional por el Cuidado de la Vida y los Territorios Ancestrales, liderada por 40 mujeres negras del Departamento del Cauca en 2014, revele que las emociones y los afectos colectivos de las mujeres negras fueron fuerzas impulsoras que exhibían tanto sus exclusiones como sus formas de resistencia. Estos sentimientos pueden verse como catalizadores a través de los cuales sus experiencias vividas se expresan y realizan en el mundo material. El examen de este evento sugiere que se necesita un análisis más radical de la historicidad, las subjetividades y las luchas de las mujeres afrodescendientes para captar y comprender mejor las epistemologías basadas en la experiencia que desafían las formas hegemónicas de producción de conocimiento.

Keywords: *Afro-Colombian women, Neocolonial extractivism, Racialized capitalism, Afro-aesthetic and emotion politics, Political subjectivities, Black/decolonial feminism*

Our strengths come from the resistance of our ancestors and the strength we daily exercise in our homes, families, and communities. . . . Our politics are collective affections and love.

—Afro-Diasporic Gathering of Black Women Caregivers of Life and
Ancestral Territories, 2016

Catriela Esther Hernández Reyes is an Afro-Colombian woman activist and Ph.D. candidate in anthropology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Her research aims to capture the inter-sections between race, gender, and body in the framework of the armed violence, building memories and peace-making in Colombia. She also examines black women's historicity and forms of resistance in the Global South.

On November 17, 2014, 40 black women from the Department of Cauca (La Toma, Suarez, and Santander de Quilichao) arrived in Bogotá after walking 400 miles in the first Mobilization for the Care of Life and Ancestral Territories. Shouting slogans such as “Territories and life are not sold—they are loved and defended!” and “*Bateas* yes! Backhoes no!” they denounced the illegal mining, water pollution, and loss of income created by extractivism and violence in their territories. They opposed the Colombian government’s neoliberal policies promoting resource extraction and agribusiness, which have created dispossession, forced displacement, and social marginalization. They further condemned the government’s failure to remove illegal backhoes and other mining equipment from their collective lands. The women demanded a guarantee of their right to work in the ancestral mining, fishing, and agriculture that provide them economic subsistence. The March of the Turbans, as it was dubbed by the mass media, called attention to the impacts of mining concessions granted without prior consultation to multinational corporations and white/mestizo elites that aimed to exploit the collective lands of ethno-racial communities. It denounced the mistreatment of black people by state officials, anti-black racism, and death threats against their leaders issued by armed actors (paramilitaries). The women occupied the office of the Casa Giralda (the Ministry of Interior and Justice in Bogotá)¹ to press for dialogue with the government. By courageously expressing their anger and pain, they called into question the officials’ reference to black communities as “bad-faith disrupters” and “enemies of economic progress” (Francia Márquez, quoted in PBS’s series *We Shall Remain*, December 21, 2014). Under pressure, the government agreed, on a provisional basis, to stop the mining concessions granted without consultation. It also agreed to remove the illegal backhoes and other equipment and establish a mechanism for monitoring progress on the agreement.

While neocolonial extractivism, as part of a racialized capitalist project, produces and reproduces material forms of exclusion, racism, inequality, and oppression, mobilizations and other forms of resistance by the subaltern are growing across Latin America (Escobar, 2008; Fabricant and Postero, 2013; Motta, 2011; Picq, 2014). What do black women’s struggles contribute to an understanding of this resistance and the ways in which the neoliberal economy of extractivism upholds a racist and classist order in Colombia? I address these questions by drawing on black/decolonial feminist theory and praxis to examine the political statements published² during and after the 2014 march, seeking to show how black women as political actors use their feelings, collective affections, and Afro-aesthetic politics to make their exclusion, marginalization, and resistance practices visible. I also analyze their political discourse through an interview conducted with Francia Márquez, one the most visible leaders of the march, and data gathered from a symposium entitled “Black Women, Territory, and Peacebuilding in the 21st Century” that I coorganized at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, in 2016.³ I complement all this material with secondary sources to explore the intersection between black women’s struggles and their feelings in their production of distinctive political narratives and practices that contribute to an understanding of the broader dynamics of racial capitalism and the marginalization of blacks in Colombia. As a black feminist from the Global South, I believe that black/decolonial feminist theory and praxis provide a critical

perspective for scrutinizing and contesting patriarchy, colonialism, and racial capitalism. They aim at deconstructing Western feminism and problematizing hegemonic and oppressive power relations and the violence produced by the colonial/patriarchal and racialized capitalist system.

In this article I first contextualize black people's historical struggles and activism in Colombia. Then I offer a black/decolonial feminist analysis of black women's historicity, political subjectivities, and resistance. Black feminist epistemologies do not require black men's voices for the legitimization of their discourses and struggles. In this sense, this is not an article about what black women think of black men's ideas of their struggles or how black women's voices and resistance practices compare with black men's struggles in Colombia. My contention here is that black women as political thinkers produce oppositional and situated knowledge that disrupts Western feminism and white/mestizo hegemonic knowledge production. Third, I provide a critical analysis of the way the colonial rationalities of neoliberal extractivism are incorporated into racialized capitalism. Finally, I analyze the production of black women's political subjectivities and Afro-diasporic aesthetics, concluding that black women's aesthetics, feelings, and collective affections are means of resistance that contribute to producing alternative practices of liberation and feminist Afro-epistemologies. Black women's aesthetics, subjectivities, and emotions are driving forces of their activism, political identity, and sense of belonging to African diaspora culture.

BLACK ACTIVISM IN COLOMBIA

While some scholars suggest that strong black social movements in Colombia emerged at the end of the twentieth century with the passage of constitutional reforms and the Black Communities Law of 1993⁴ (Asher, 2004; Grueso and Arroyo, 2002; Paschel, 2016), I contend that black people's activism and their collective resistance go beyond this periodization and constitute a response to the enduring historical, political, and economic project of capitalism in which structural racism and the devaluation of black bodies interlock (Pulido, 2016).

From the sixteenth through the eighteenth century, enslaved black women and men escaped chattel slavery and built autonomous self-governing territories known as *palenques*. Palenques and *cimarrona* communities were maroon⁵ areas of resistance that constituted one of the first projects of liberation from slavery and decolonization in South America and the Caribbean. These communities and the Haitian Revolution were the first attempts to subvert Western knowledge, producing alternative forms of "decolonial thinking" in the colonial/modern system (Maldonado-Torres, 2011). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, enslaved black women in South America and the Caribbean used colonial law strategically to acquire freedom for themselves and their offspring (Hernández-Reyes, 2018). In the first half of the twentieth century, a black woman named Felicita Campos resisted dispossession by white/mestizo landowners who had ordered the eviction of black people from San Onofre, Sucre (a small town on the Colombian Caribbean). She encouraged her community to organize and defend its lands with sticks and machetes. She

was imprisoned several times, and her house was burned down in retaliation (Fundación del Sinú, Fundación Punta de Lanza, y Fundación Oscar Arnulfo Romero, 1985). In the 1960s and 1970s, black people's political discourses validated their African origins and cultural practices and criticized slavery and colonial systems. People from the African diaspora demanded civil rights and the redefinition of Afro-descendant identities (Wade, 1996). In the late 1970s, this movement was led by the black student organization Soweto.⁶

The activism of Soweto and other blacks at the time focused on ethno-racial demands and questioned the political reductionism of the old left parties, which were centered on class struggle. At the beginning of the 1980s, Soweto became Cimarrón, a national movement for the rights of black communities, which worked in defense of Afro-Colombians' human rights and blackness. In the predominantly Afro-Colombian Department of Chocó in 1988, the Organization Barrios Populares del Chocó (Organization of Popular Neighborhoods of Chocó— OBAPO), a movement of the urban poor, began fighting for black communities' right to education, territory, health, transportation, basic services, and employment. A woman from this organization, Zulia Mena, went on to become the first black congresswoman elected after the 1991 Constitution expanded Afro-Colombians' rights. OBAPO played a prominent role in the passage of Law 70 (Hernández-Reyes, 2010; Paschel, 2016).⁷

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM AND BLACK STRUGGLES IN THE 1990s

The 1990s were the most prominent period of mobilization of black communities in Latin America as black movements in Colombia, Ecuador, Brazil, and Guatemala gained legal recognition and protection of their collective rights and their cultural diversity as defining elements of the nation (Agudelo, 2005; Asher, 2004; Escobar, 2008; 2015; Grueso and Arroyo, 2002; Lao-Montes, 2009; Paschel, 2016). Paschel argues that in the earlier constitution legal and institutional discourses were "color-blind" and therefore black communities struggled for the recognition of Afro-Colombians as an ethnic group and citizens in the 1991 one (Paschel, 2016). Transitory Article 55 of the 1991 Constitution recognized black people's rights and led to the formulation of the Black Communities Law (Law 70 of 1993). This law recognized communal lands and prior consultation about development and promoted the creation of black community councils. Many scholars argue that it was the most important "conquest" of the black social movement in Colombia and Latin America (Agudelo, 2005; Lao-Montes, 2009; Paschel, 2016; Valderrama, 2014), even though, borrowing Perreault's (2015) words, it has yet to live up to its liberatory promises. Law 70 has ambiguities and contradictions between local and national judicial decisions in relation to the recognition of black collective territories and rights to prior consultation. For private and multinational corporations interested in seizing black territories in Colombia, it is the main obstacle to neoliberal development agendas based on the commodification of nature and the devaluation of black bodies (Bernasconi, 2014; Escobar, 2008; 2015; Levien, 2012).

A substantial number of black grassroots organizations emerged after the enactment of Law 70. One of these organizations was the Proceso de

Comunidades Negras (the Process of Black Communities—PCN), which emerged at the end of 1993 as a network of local organizations that participated in the promotion and regulation of Transitory Article 55.⁸ PCN promoted the creation of black community councils, including the one in La Toma of which Francia Márquez was a spokeswoman.

LA TOMA: NEOCOLONIAL EXTRACTIVISM, RACISM, VIOLENCE, AND BLACK PEOPLE'S RESISTANCE

La Toma is a small village located in the municipality of Suárez, between the Ovejas and Cauca Rivers in northern Cauca. Black people have lived in La Toma since the early 1600s, when they were brought as captives and forced to work in gold mining under Spanish domination (Ararat et al., 2013; Escobar, 2008). In the Pacific region, “the slave system structured the black labor of the captives for the production of wealth; each mining was organized in such a way that the daily life of the enslaved was marked by the interests of the slave owners” (Ararat et al., 2013: 1819). Mining was the most important economic activity in the colonial system, guaranteeing the wealth of elites and colonial institutions.

Currently, La Toma consists of an area of 7,000 hectares with 1,300 households (Vélez-Torres, 2014: 69), more than 80 percent of which are Afro-Colombian. The main sources of sustenance are agriculture and artisanal gold mining.⁹ Black women and men spend two to three days a week growing coffee and plantains and to a lesser extent vegetables and fruits for profit and sustenance and dedicate four to five days a week to the extraction of gold with traditional methods. The ancestral mode of mining is a traditional activity and a source of subsistence for Afro-descendant families, and it does not destroy the landscape. La Toma has limited running water (20.2 percent of households) and sewerage systems (3.5 percent of households), and even though almost 95 percent of its inhabitants have electricity they have difficulty paying their bills (Ararat et al., 2013; Bernasconi, 2014; Vélez-Torres, 2014). Because of violence, poverty, water pollution, and structural racism, many black women and men migrate to urban areas to work, largely in the informal economy, or to attend school.

Since the 1980s, La Toma's people have been fighting the racial discrimination and dispossession created by the building of the Salvajina Dam on the Cauca River. This dam has produced massive displacement, poverty, and difficulties of mobility (Ararat et al., 2013: 254). In 1998 the people of La Toma set up a community council for the collective defense of their ancestral territories and resistance to extractivism and violence (Escobar, 2015). Nevertheless, the construction of the dam and the military base above its reservoir have led to the influx of foreign companies and the militarization of the social life of black and indigenous communities. “The history of the Salvajina is embedded in dynamics of global capitalism that in northern Cauca have managed to displace thousands of people and alter an ecosystem as old as its inhabitants, while at the same time enforcing a cycle of violence from which politicians, entrepreneurs, and multinational corporations are now generating profits” (Bernasconi, 2014: 109).

At the beginning of the 2000s, the Colombian government initiated a new cycle of granting mining licenses to multinational corporations and local enterprises. Mining corporations, with their backhoes and other mining equipment, and paramilitaries that were “nothing but an unofficial arm of the government” arrived in Cauca (Bernasconi, 2014: 140–141). Paramilitaries began to control illegal mining and drug trafficking (Vélez-Torres, 2014: 75). In April 2001 they carried out a massacre in Alta Naya, killing more than 100 people and driving 3,000 members of local black, peasants, and indigenous communities from their homes (Bernasconi, 2014; Vélez-Torres, 2014; Verdad Abierta, 2009).

Over the past two decades, Colombia’s national development plans have used laws and policies ostensibly focused on increasing security to grant mining licenses to transnational corporations and members of local elites. This has increased historical processes of *vaciamiento* (emptying) (Alimonda, 2011) and the devaluation of black people as the surplus of neoliberal capitalism. In 2009, for example, a local judge issued an order of eviction against “illegal” black miners from La Toma. The aim was to protect the economic interests of Héctor Sarria, a mestizo miner who in 2000 was granted a long-term (15-year) license. According to the local judicial system, La Toma was not legally recognized as a black collective territory, and therefore it could be granted for large-scale mining exploitation without prior consultation. The eviction order overlooked the fact that prior consultation is an international and national mechanism for facilitating democratic participation between ethnic communities and governments (Perreault, 2015). The judge failed to notice that La Toma was, according to the 2005 Census, more than 80 percent Afro-Colombian and therefore its residents had a fundamental right to prior consultation.

In 2010 an illegal mine, San Antonio, in Santander de Quilichao collapsed and nine Afro-Colombian miners died. Representatives of La Toma’s community council Yair Ortiz Larrahondo and Francia Márquez filed a lawsuit or *tutela*¹⁰ demanding the protection of the black community’s rights, the recognition of black identity and black culture, and the right to prior consultation. In its decision, the Colombian Constitutional Court not only recognized La Toma as an area historically occupied by black people but also protected their right to prior consultation. It banned large-scale mining in ethnic territories without prior consultation and determined that black communities’ rights and their territories could not be violated. Despite the decision, illegal and legal mining exploitation and violence continued and included threats to and murder of community leaders by paramilitaries called the *Aguilas Negras* (Black Eagles). This became a racist mode of regulating, controlling, and governing the social lives, bodies, and cultural practices of ethno-racial communities.

INTERSECTIONALITY AND BLACK/DECOLONIAL FEMINISM

Black feminist scholars argue that black feminism as a movement emerged simultaneously with second-wave white feminism in the United States in the late 1960s to challenge “white feminist movements for ignoring economic and survival issues common to the black community, and failing to examine personal [and structural] racism” (Roth, 2003: 49). Black feminism has produced a political theorization of the everyday personal experiences of black women and

revealed the “overlapping, mutually constitutive nature of oppressions of race, class, gender, and sexuality” (Roth, 2003: 47). Black feminists individually and collectively create spaces that aim at challenging racism, classism, patriarchy, sexism, and violence.

While black feminism develops an “understanding of interlocking oppressive systems” (Roth, 2003: 46–47), decolonial feminism emerged to question the absence from hegemonic feminism of an intersectional analysis of multiple forms of oppression against nonwhite women and the scholarly work led by Latin American men on coloniality and modernity. Hegemonic feminism has furthered the historical and theoretical exclusion of nonwhite women, ignoring the intersectionality of race, class, gender, and sexuality and the fact that women of color have been victims of both the coloniality of power and the coloniality of gender (Lugones, 2008). María Lugones (2008; 2010) introduced the concept of the “modern/colonial system of gender” to break with the binary assumption embedded in modern Western logic. An understanding of Western logic and its gendered regime entails the comprehension of gender as a racialized system of power that promotes the dehumanization and subjectification of subaltern people and “the attempt to turn the colonized into less than human beings” (Lugones, 2010: 745). Decolonial feminist intellectuals argue that it is necessary to expand the modern/colonial analytical matrix of male-dominated decolonial studies to understand the way power operates in gender norms (Lugones, 2008) and the “everyday practices of racialized violence” (Fabricant and Postero, 2013: 205). Black women and women of color have criticized Western/white feminisms and their tendency to ignore and misrepresent them.

Hazel Carby (2007) contends that white feminists have misunderstood black women’s life experiences and struggles, portraying them as simply “objects of research” or as “passive recipients of colonial oppression.” While most “contemporary feminist theory does not begin to adequately account for the experience of black women” (Carby, 2007: 111), blacks, Asians, Latinas, and many women of color have openly “criticized Western feminism for being racist and overly concerned with White, middle-class women’s issues” (Collins, 2000a: 5). Thus, Western/white feminists have represented only themselves rather than all women (Carby, 2007; Collins, 2000b).

Following the knowledge production of women of color, Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2016: 17) asserts that the dominant culture and knowledge production have sought to construct subaltern women as “subjects without the capacity for autonomy and self-determination.” Black and indigenous women have in fact demonstrated that they are historically subjects of resistance in the Americas “who simultaneously face multiple oppressions [and] are in a position to re-imagine emancipatory politics, produce and embody difference, and create and experiment with new subjectivities” (Seppälä, 2016: 4).

I adopt both black feminist and decolonial feminist theories and praxis critically to examine black women’s resistance and to question the invisibilization of black women as political thinkers and actors in historical nation-state formations in the Global South. Black and decolonial feminist theories and praxis emphasize that to avoid essentialism about black, indigenous, and other non-white women it is necessary to capture the way they use their subjectivities politically, strategically, discursively, and textually (Collins, 2000a; Crenshaw,

1991; hooks, 1992; Lugones, 2008; 2010; May, 2015). By focusing on experience-based epistemologies of black women (Collins, 2005), black/decolonial feminism contributes to affirming black women's self-definition and self-determination, which entails the production of a situated "oppositional knowledge" (Collins, 2000a; Crenshaw, 1991; hooks, 1992; Roth, 2003) that does not require legitimation by male voices.

For me as a black anthropologist and black/decolonial feminist and activist, it is imperative to avoid concealing black women's voices. Thus, a black/decolonial feminist approach and praxis disrupts the ongoing processes of misrepresentation of subaltern women's stories, subjectivities, political thinking, and knowledge production. Black feminist scholars criticize the absence of emotions from the research process, arguing that emotions are not separate from intellect (Collins, 2000a; hooks, 1992). Patricia Hill Collins (2000a: 263) asserts that "the ethic of caring suggests that personal expressiveness, emotions, and empathy are central to the knowledge validation process." Thus theorizing the everyday experiences of black women from a black/decolonial feminist perspective begins from their historical and geographical location in recording their stories and experiences of resistance.

Following bell hooks (1992), I conceptualize black women's struggles as an exercise of radical and oppositional consciousness that allows us to contest, negotiate, and challenge power relations tactically. Understanding black women's activism and its patterns of resistance (May, 2015) helps us to comprehend the historical rejection of Afro-Colombian women as political thinkers within the mainstream academy. Afro-Colombian women's struggles cannot be understood through fragmented viewpoints that delink their past from their present. This erasure of history is often the result of hegemonic epistemological projects through which elites are portrayed as the exclusive owners of the past, leaving Others invisible in history (Scott, 2012). By situating myself spatially and politically as an insider, I seek to weave alternative discursive practices that disrupt the hegemonic epistemologies that permanently objectify subaltern people who are "outside" Western logic. Thus I aim not only to contribute to "the demand to decolonize feminism" (Seppälä, 2016: 12) but also to *ennegrecer* (darken) (Carneiro, 2014) decolonial feminism through an Afro-diasporic feminist epistemology and praxis.

NEOCOLONIAL EXTRACTIVISM AND RACIALIZED CAPITALISM IN COLOMBIA

After the collapse of colonialism in many African countries, the crisis of globalized capitalist projects led to the neocolonial turn toward extractivism in South America (Picq, 2014) and in Africa to maintain former colonies "under the control of the capitalist-imperialist forces composed of the developed countries in the North . . . through international trade, aid and investment policies tailored to sustain the movement of resources from the developing countries" (Bbaala, 2015: 101). Since the adoption of neoliberal economics in the late 1980s and 1990s, many Latin American governments have focused their economic agendas on extractivism and agroindustry (Escobar, 2008; Picq, 2014; Pulido,

2017). Thus productive regimes of mining have been based on the exploitation of black and indigenous people's labor force and lives and the expropriation of their lands (Fabricant and Postero, 2013: 205).

Capitalism and neoliberalism have meant "the commodification and privatization of land and the forced expulsion of populations" (Harvey, 2007: 159). Under this logic, extractive economies "have benefitted primarily foreigners and their local partners, condemning South America's largely indigenous [and black] population . . . to live in poverty and suffer from a legacy of environmental contamination" (Kohl and Farthing, 2012: 225). Thus capitalism and neoliberalism as means of accumulation by dispossession have reinforced the destruction of alternative forms of production and consumption (Harvey, 2007: 159), maintaining colonial and imperial economic projects through the appropriation of assets. Far from reversing historical dependencies, recent Latin American governments have exacerbated the commodification of nature as state-sponsored extractivism is promoted as the ideal model for achieving economic growth. Neoliberal extractive projects have been framed by "the consolidation of a military presence in order to maintain the necessary social control—through repression and threats" (Bernasconi, 2014: 94) as well as the military securitization of local mining settings for the control of underground resources (Vélez-Torres, 2014: 72).

Between 2001 and 2005, the Colombian Congress passed several laws (among them Law 685/2001 and the Mining Code, 963/2005 [Vélez-Torres, 2014]) that fueled the participation of white foreign investors. Mining exploitation laws established the main principles safeguarding stockholders instead of protecting ethnic communities' rights, furthering accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2007; Motta, 2011) as an expression of contemporary "racial capitalism," through which "the development, organization and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions" (Robinson, 2000: 2).

According to Clayton (2016: 445), state and paramilitary violence in Colombia has played a fundamental role "in the expansion of the extractive economy over the past decades, acting as a guarantee for territorial control and allowing capital to penetrate areas of the country where previous conditions limited accumulation." As a result, a confluence of illegality, counterinsurgency, and regional marginality produces and reproduces the militarization of social life in many rural territories afflicted by armed conflict (Ramírez, 2019). Following Clayton and Ramirez, I identify the militarization of social life as the process through which the state uses violence to control territory, bodies, and everyday lives to guarantee foreign investment and private capital. In La Toma and other poor rural areas, "the presence of the State is overall military and oppressive" (Bernasconi, 2014: 98). The building of the Salvajina Dam and military base and extractivism, poverty, and inequality in northern Cauca illustrate "normalizing and racializing violence" (Fabricant and Postero, 2013; Melamed, 2011: xi). They also display the logic of modernity/coloniality, which fosters expropriation and exclusion (Maldonado-Torres, 2016: 17).

The political economy of modern South American countries has consisted of "the reproduction of colonial patterns of landownership" (Motta, 2011: 4). Through "neocolonial governmentality projects" (Machado, 2010: 25) states have been reconfigured to guarantee greater participation of private capital in

public affairs. Under these projects rural communities become obstacles to the pursuit of the national interest in more exploration and exploitation of nature (Fabricant and Gustafson, 2014). In Colombia, accumulation by dispossession is visible in conflicts over land, the weakness of collective rights, and the production and reproduction of racism and classism alongside armed and structural violence. Extractivism produces not only “the commodification of racial identity” (Leong, 2013: 2152) but also the historical undervaluing of black bodies. The continued unfolding of Western modernity and coloniality focused on gold mining, water privatization, and oil exploitation without prior consultation are “reflected in contemporary ‘development’ policies . . . [and] the increasing concentration of resources in the hands of the few” (Maldonado-Torres, 2016: 1).

BLACK WOMEN’S RESISTANCE TO NEOCOLONIAL EXTRACTIVISM AND DISPOSSESSION

Accumulation by dispossession is always accompanied by popular resistance (Gordon and Webber, 2008: 63). In Colombia, subaltern and oppressed women have been active in forming movements that contest neoliberal development and neocolonialism (Seppälä, 2016: 12). The political agenda of subaltern groups is promoting “alternative forms of development and politics,” rejecting “extreme forms of dispossession, poverty and inequality” (Motta, 2011: 2) During the March of the Turbans, black women carried *bateas* (wooden pans or trays) and drums to dance and sing to. Black artisanal miners have been using trays to separate gold in the mines since the colonial period. For black women miners the trays are both tools for sustenance and powerful symbols of resistance. Slogans such as “*Bateas* yes! Backhoes no!” and “Fears are overcome by walking together, singing together” are decolonizing and political expressions of resistance and of understanding and loving (Maldonado-Torres, 2016: 24).

Afro-Colombian women occupied the Casa Giralda to pressure the government into negotiating their political agenda, seeking to subvert the “peaceful” space of the city. During the mobilization, black women said, “We do not want to be afraid to walk along our roads. . . We want the backhoes out of Cauca and all the titles granted without prior consultation repealed” (Black Women’s Political Statement 3, November 2014). They took this message to public universities to talk about their struggles and received the solidarity and support of many students (Black Women’s Political Statements 1 and 2, November 2014). The agreement they negotiated with the government, however, remained unfulfilled (Francia Márquez, interview, November 29, 2015). Mining grants to foreign corporations increased. The expropriation of land for mining today can be viewed as “the continuation of the ‘Doctrine of Discovery’ that conceptualized the New World as ‘terra nullis’ or ‘wastelands’ (Picq, 2014: 30), and “the processes of appropriation and access to land are racialized” (Pulido, 2017). Black women’s emotional expressions expose the way black territories are viewed by the government (Black Women’s Political Statement 4, November 2014):

Today, the possibilities for Afro-descendant communities are very small because we are threatened with both bodily and cultural death! We are being threatened through the processes of dispossession furthered by the mining locomotive of President Santos, who grants concessions and mining titles to multinationals and white/mestizo elites, violating our rights to prior consultation and informed consent. We are threatened with illegal mining and its backhoes that are destroying the environment and territory that we have cared for centuries. We are threatened by armed groups who accuse us of opposing the development policies of the government.

This example shows how black women understand the intersectional nature of the racialized commodification of land and devaluation of black bodies in Colombia. It shows how the modernity/coloniality project is being used to foster the appropriation and representation of Others (Vázquez, 2012). According to Vázquez (2–3), a decolonial critique, “as a form of epistemic struggle, aims to foster spaces in which listening to what has been relegated to oblivion becomes possible.”

Thousands of black women displaced by paramilitary groups and illegal mining have been forced to move to various cities and “end up living either in legal or illegal slums,” losing their connection with their communities and families (Seppälä, 2016). Many end up as domestic workers, which often involves exploitation and commodification of their labor (Collins, 2000b). The lack of the political will to solve environmental problems, structural racism, and socioeconomic inequality are constitutive of oppression and racial capitalism through which the state becomes a producer of dispossession and “racial violence in the form of death and degraded bodies and environments” (Pulido, 2017: 525).

BREAKING THE SILENCE: BLACK WOMEN’S DISCOURSE AND RESISTANCE PRACTICES

Black women miners argue that ancestral mining is an important economic activity that strengthens communal forms of living for Afro-Colombian families (Jazmin Mina, interview, quoted in PBS’s *Women, War and Peace II: The War We Are Living*, 2011). Mining for black women goes beyond extracting gold to include solidarity and communal living. Black miners in La Toma promote “mutual aid” as a collective system through which they share and “maintain a constant social interaction among the different family groups, reinforcing ties of friendship and solidarity” (Bernasconi, 2014: 56). In 2010, when 12 backhoes and equipment arrived in La Toma to extract gold, the members of the community organized to resist. Approximately 500 members of black communities blocked the road, but in retaliation they were threatened with eviction. By the end of 2012 the government had granted more than 271 licenses for mining exploitation in northern Cauca. At one point there were at least 652 claims for licenses in the department and almost 50 percent of Cauca lands were in the hands of private investors (Centro de Estudios Interculturales, 2013). In 2013 the people of La Toma went en masse to the Oveja River and formed a human chain to stop the backhoes. On November

27, 2015, two congressmen from the leftist Polo Democrático Alternativo called a public hearing in northern Cauca to listen to the communities' demands and find out what the local authorities were doing to solve their problems. Francia Márquez (interview, November 29, 2015) described the meeting: "The public hearing brought together over 500 people including peasants, blacks, and indigenous people to oppose inequalities and structural and armed violence in our territories, demonstrating our capacity for resistance. Our meeting and articulating a defense of the territory and the life of our communities was resistance."

While the economic model in Colombia is fostering social unrest as the result of the disruption of the sociocultural dynamics of Afro-Colombian rural communities, black women are proposing alternative ways of thinking about "development": "For us, territory is not just a material space. It is the spiritual, the cultural, and the way of producing and relating among us as black people" (Francia Márquez, interview, November 29, 2015). For black women their lands and rivers represent their parents, and they feel sad and offended when the state takes their ethnic territories away in order to benefit private interests and corporations (Bernasconi, 2014).

For black women, farming, singing, and dancing make them happy and help to alleviate the exclusion they face daily (Francia Márquez, remarks at University of Massachusetts, Amherst, symposium, April 5, 2016). Emotions are central to their understanding of political actions and social life (Farthing and Kohl, 2013; Flam and King, 2005; Jasper, 1998). Jasper (1998) asserts that emotions are "part of a movement's own dynamics." According to him, "It is almost impossible to imagine mobilization in the absence of strong emotions. . . . In an injustice frame, the passion for justice is fueled by anger over existing injustice" (Jasper, 1998: 414). Flam (2005) argues that emotions are "social, cultural, and political constructs that operate in micro and macro political spaces. Power and oppression at the institutional level force the production of in social movements of "subversive counter-emotions" (19–20). Black people "are concerned about defending the territory, because without the territory they will be nobody" (E3, interview, quoted in Bernasconi, 2014: 139, 152). Black women claim that their love of life is greater than their fear of death and say, "Our ancestors first and then our mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers have spilled a lot of blood to get these lands" (Black Women's Political Statement 4, November 2014). These powerful narratives demonstrate black people's subversive counter-emotions and their disaffection (Flam, 2005: 20). Anger is experienced "as a 'real emotion' when we are confronted with power that seriously limits our autonomy and we attribute the blame for the loss of autonomy to the power-holder" (Flam and King, 2005: 22). This understanding of anger in connection with historical experiences of marginalization was part of the black women's protest. During the meeting between officials and black women held at the Casa Giralda, Francia Márquez expressed her anger: "We are not willing to accept the Colombian government's being the one that determines whether we are formally black communities or not. We are black communities, and the government has to recognize our rights and fulfill them. That is what we demand." Love, rage, fear, and courage are more than "motivations and explanations" (Jasper, 1998: 398) in black women's struggles. They are catalysts for the expression of black women's lived experiences in the material world.

Black women's mobilization has made legible their political and cultural traditions, preserving the collective and reviving the social bonds of black communities as key mechanisms. The lived experiences, struggles, and political subjectivities of black women are expressed in a material world in which a feminization of poverty is contested by "a feminization of resistance that is reconfiguring and reimagining the nature, meaning, and subjects of political resistance and social transformation" (Motta, 2013: 36). Since poverty in Latin America has been not only feminized but also racialized, a feminist theory of resistance must embrace an intersectional analysis of patriarchal regimes of power to better capture the political subjectivities and experience-based epistemologies of black women and subaltern people. Black women's resistance practices entail passion, rage, bravery, and hope as well as political efforts to achieve social and racial justice. Love is at the heart of black women's struggles and politics, intimately tied to their revolutionary visions of human freedom. Given that emotions are shared ways of life that bring together the historical and contemporary experiences of political subjects (Portwood-Stacer, 2013), expressions of love and anger through struggles are examples of the intertwining of the personal and the political in black women's activism.

AFRO-AESTHETIC POLITICS AND BLACK WOMEN'S ACTIVISM

Under slavery, black women wore turbans to cover their heads and their braids, which mapped the roads of freedom and transported the seeds essential for the survival of the maroon communities living in the new palenques (Navarro and Rebolledo, 2017). "Protest events involve ritual practices, symbolic gestures, and shared experiences of empowering, collective effervescence which affect the move from framed emotion to action" (Flam and King, 2005: 4–5), and the March of the Turbans was a space for highlighting and performing the practices and gestures of African heritage and black women's aesthetics. Arriving in Bogotá wearing turbans and escorted by the Maroon Guard (the group of young men that manages internal conflict and protects the community from outside threats) was a powerful symbol of black aesthetics and resistance. Wearing turbans together reflects sociability and solidarity (Navarro and Rebolledo, 2017) and symbolizes a subversive narrative counter to Western hegemonic imaginaries of beauty. It is part of the Afro-aesthetic politics that connects Afro-Colombian women to the African diaspora's legacy around the world. Wearing turbans contributes to feminine confidence and the reimagination of political freedom.

CONCLUSIONS

Black women's struggles make visible the social costs and negative impacts of a gendered and racialized commodification of land and the devaluation of black women's bodies. This commodification is a response to a systematic destruction of collective forms of living that impacts ethnic-racial communities unequally because it is combined with a historical rejection of blackness, collective rights,

and the knowledge production of black people that supports the political economy of racism and the rationalities of racialized capitalism (Leong, 2013). Extractivism is a racist mode of regulation, control, and governance of the social lives, bodies, and cultural practices of members of Colombia's ethno-racial communities. Black feminism holds that the personal is political because black women's bodies and everyday life experiences are situated in historical contexts of marginalization and exclusion and of resistance and struggle (Combahee River Collective, 2014). Black/decolonial feminism opens up new possibilities for understanding black women and subaltern people from their historical and geopolitical locations. It is a tool for rethinking the world and challenging power relations, racial capitalism, extractivism, racism, patriarchy, sexism, violence, and classism. It is a political commitment and an insurgent mode of acting, writing, thinking, and producing knowledge. It questions the legitimacy of neocolonial/modern power relations controlled by transnational corporations, state-neoliberal policies of exclusion, and racialized capitalism that promote the denaturalization of nature and the dehumanization of the Other. Black women's passion, anger, courage, love, and hope are mechanisms for producing alternative practices of liberation and feminist Afro-epistemologies providing Afro-Colombian communities with meaning and a sense of belonging to African diaspora culture.

NOTES

1. The Ministry of the Interior was emblematic because it housed the Ethnic Affairs Office and the Observatory of Racial Discrimination.

2. <http://mujeresnegrascaminan.com/movilizacion/comunicados/>.

3. Márquez received the 2015 National Human Rights Award and the 2018 Goldman Prize for South and Central America. Both the interview and the symposium excerpts quoted are my translations from the original Spanish.

4. Law 70 recognized Afro-Colombians as a distinct ethnic group and provided a legal foundation for the defense of Afro-Colombian territorial rights. Its purpose was "to establish mechanisms for protecting the cultural identity and rights of the black communities of Colombia as an ethnic group and to foster their economic and social development" (Chapter 1).

5. Africans who escaped slavery in the Americas and formed independent settlements and their descendants.

6. Soweto was founded by university students in Pereira (Pardo, 2008).

7. The collective work of black organizations contributed to the breakdown of the long-standing project of concealing ethno-racial diversity in the country (see Agudelo, 2005; Escobar, 2008; Grueso, Rosero, and Escobar, 2003; Lao-Montes, 2009; Paschel, 2016; and Valderrama, 2014).

8. PCN has been struggling for the defense of black collective territories, the protection and control of natural resources, and the strengthening of black culture and identity in the Pacific region (see Escobar, 2008; Hernández-Reyes, 2010; Paschel, 2016).

9. For many of them mining is simply a traditional means to supply some basics, but some practice it at a profit (Bernasconi, 2014).

10. A juridical mechanism through which members of Colombian society demand the protection of fundamental rights that are being affected by institutions or persons with a certain level of power.

REFERENCES

- Agudelo, Carlos E.
2005 *Retos del multiculturalismo en Colombia: Política, inclusión y exclusión de poblaciones negras*. Bogotá: La Carreta Editores/ICANH.

- Alimonda, Héctor
2011 "La colonialidad de la naturaleza: una aproximación a la ecología política latinoamericana," pp. 21–58 in Héctor Alimonda (ed.), *La naturaleza colonizada: Ecología política y minería en América Latina*. Buenos Aires: CLACSO.
- Ararat, Lisifrey, Eduard Mina, Axel Rojas, Ana Mara Solarte, Gildardo Vanegas, Luis Armando Vargas, and Anibal Vega
2013 *La Toma: Historias de territorio, resistencia y autonomía en la cuenca del Alto Cauca*. Bogotá: Observatorio de Territorios Etnicos-Pontificia Universidad Javeriana/Consejo Comunitario Afrodescendiente del Corregimiento de La Toma.
- Asher, Kiran
2004 "Texts in context: Afro-Colombian women's activism in the Pacific lowlands of Colombia." *Feminist Review*, no. 78, 38–55.
- Bbaala, Phineas
2015 "Emerging questions on the shifting Sino-Africa relations: 'Win-Win' or 'Win-Lose'?" *Africa and Development /Afrique et Développement* 40 (3): 97–119.
- Bernasconi, Attilio
2014 "Afro-descendant resistance: a strategy of territorial self-determination in Colombian northern Cauca." Master's thesis, Institute of Geosciences, University of Fribourg.
- Carby, Hazel
2007 "White woman listen! Black feminism and the boundaries of sisterhood," pp. 753–774 in Ann Gray, Jan Campbell, Mark Erickson, Stuart Hanson, and Helen Wood (eds.), *CCCS Selected Working Papers*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Carneiro, Sueli
2014 "Ennegrecer el feminismo." <http://www.bivipas.unal.edu.co/bitstream/10720/644/1/264-Sueli%20Carneiro.pdf> (accessed March 5, 2018).
- Centro de Estudios Interculturales
2013 "Análisis de la posesión territorial y situaciones de tensión interétnica e intercultural en el departamento del Cauca." Universidad Javeriana. https://www.javerianacali.edu.co/sites/ujc/files/node/field-documents/field_document_file/analisis_posesion_territorial_-_tensiones_interetnicas_e_interculturales_en_el_cauca_1.pdf (accessed January 4, 2019).
- Clayton, Richard
2016 "Might the keys to peace open the doors to extractivism? Reflections on Colombia's post-conflict extractive economy," pp. 444–470 in Fredy Cante and Hartmut Quehl (eds.), *Handbook of Research on Transitional Justice and Peace Building in Turbulent Regions*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global.
- Collins, Patricia Hill
2000a *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. 2d edition. New York and London: Routledge.
2000b "Gender, black feminism, and black political economy." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 568 (1): 41–53.
2005 "Black women and motherhood," pp. 149–159 in S. Hardy and C. Wiedmer (eds.), *Motherhood and Space*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Combahee River Collective
2014 "A black feminist statement." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 42 (3/4): 271–280.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle
1991 "Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color." *Stanford Law Review* 43: 1241–1299.
- Escobar, Arturo
2008 *Territories of Difference: Place, Movements, Life, Redes*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
2015 "Territorios de diferencia: la ontología política de los 'derechos al territorio.'" *Cuadernos de Antropología Social* 41: 25–38.
- Fabricant, Nicole and Bret Gustafson
2014 "Moving beyond the extractivism debate: imagining new social economies." *NACLA Report on the Americas* 47 (4): 40–45.
- Fabricant, Nicole and Nancy Postero
2013 "Contested bodies, contested states: performance, emotions, and new forms of regional governance in Santa Cruz, Bolivia." *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 18 (2): 187–121.

- Farthing, Linda and Benjamin Kohl
2013 "Mobilizing memory: Bolivia's enduring social movements." *Social Movement Studies* 12 (4): 361–376.
- Flam, Helena
2005 "Emotions map: a research agenda," pp. 19–40 in Helena Flam and Debra King (eds.), *Emotions and Social Movements*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Flam, Helena and Debra King (eds.).
2005 *Emotions and Social Movements*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Fundación del Sinú, Fundación Punta de Lanza, and Fundación Oscar Arnulfo Romero
1985 *Historia gráfica de la lucha por la tierra en la Costa Atlántica*. Montería, Colombia: Fundación Punta de Lanza/Fundación Oscar Arnulfo Romero.
- Gordon, Todd and Jeffery R. Webber
2008 "Imperialism and resistance: Canadian mining companies in Latin America." *Third World Quarterly* 29 (1): 63–87.
- Grueso, Libia and Leyla Andrea Arroyo
2002 "Women and the defence of place in Colombian black movement struggles." *Development* 45 (1): 60–67.
- Grueso, Libia, Carlos Rosero, and Arturo Escobar
2003 "The process of black community organizing in the Southern Pacific coast region of Colombia," pp. 430–477 in M. C. Gutmann, F. V. Rodríguez, L. Stephen, and P. Zavella (eds.), *Perspectives on Las Américas: A Reader in Culture, History, and Representation*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Harvey, David
2007 *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York and London: Oxford University Press.
- Hernández-Reyes, Castriela
2010 "Convergencias y divergencias en las agendas políticas de las organizaciones afro-colombianas Movimiento Nacional Cimarrón, Proceso de Comunidades Negras (PCN) y Conferencia Nacional de Organizaciones Afrocolombianas (CNOA)." B.A. thesis, Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas.
2018 "Aproximaciones al sistema de sexo/género en la Nueva Granada en los siglos XVIII y XIX," in Aurora Vergara-Figueroa and Carmen Cosme Puntiel (eds.), *Demando mi libertad: Mujeres negras y sus estrategias de resistencia en la Nueva Granada, Venezuela y Cuba, 1700–1800*. Cali: Universidad Icesi/El Centro de Estudios Afrodiaspóricos.
- hooks, bell
1992 *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press.
- Jasper, James
1998 "The emotions of protest: affective and reactive emotions in and around social movements." *Sociological Forum* 13: 397–424.
- Kohl, Benjamin and Linda Farthing
2012 "Material constraints to popular imaginaries: the extractive economy and resource nationalism in Bolivia." *Political Geography* 31 (4): 225–235.
- Lao-Montes, Agustin
2009 "Cartografías del campo político afrodescendiente en América Latina." *Universitas Humanística* (Bogotá) 38 (68): 207–245.
- Leong, Nancy
2013 "Racial capitalism." *Harvard Law Review* 126: 2151–2227.
- Levien, Michael
2012 "The land question: special economic zones and the political economy of dispossession in India." *Journal of Peasant Studies* 39: 933–969.
- Lugones, María
2008 "Colonialidad y género: hacia un feminismo descolonial," pp. 13–54 in Walter Dignolo (ed.), *Género y descolonialidad*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones del Signo.
2010 "Toward a decolonial feminism." *Hypatia* 25: 742–759.
- Machado Aráoz, Horacio
2010 "El agua vale más que el oro': grito de resistencia decolonial contra los nuevos dispositivos expropiatorios," in Gian Carlo Delgado Ramos (ed.), *Ecología política de la minería en América*

- Latina*. Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Centro de Investigaciones Interdisciplinarias en Ciencias y Humanidades.
- Maldonado-Torres, Nelson
 2011 "Thinking through the decolonial turn: post-continental interventions in theory, philosophy, and critique, an introduction." *Transmodernity: Journal of Peripheral Cultural Production of the Luso-Hispanic World* 1 (2).
 2016 "Outline of ten theses on coloniality and decoloniality." Frantz Fanon Foundation. <http://frantzfanonfoundation-fondationfrantzfanon.com/article2360.html> (accessed December 16, 2018).
- May, Vivian M.
 2015 *Pursuing Intersectionality: Unsettling Dominant Imaginaries*. New York: Routledge.
- Melamed, Jodi
 2011 *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Motta, Sara C.
 2011 "Social movements and/in the postcolonial: dispossession, development and resistance in the Global South," pp. 1–31 in S. C. Motta and A. G. Nilsen (eds.), *Social Movements in the Global South*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
 2013 "'We are the ones we have been waiting for': the feminization of resistance in Venezuela." *Latin American Perspectives* 40 (4): 35–54.
- Navarro, Erelis and Angelica Rebolledo
 2017 *Los turbantes y peinados Afrocolombianos: Una alternativa pedagógica*. n.p.
- Pardo, Mauricio
 2008 "Entre la autonomía y la institucionalización: dilemas del movimiento negro colombiano." *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 7 (2): 60–84.
- Paschel, Tianna S.
 2016 *Becoming Black Political Subjects: Movements and Ethno-Racial Rights in Colombia and Brazil*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Perreault, Tom
 2015 "Performing participation: mining, power, and the limits of public consultation in Bolivia." *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 20: 433–451.
- Picq, Manuela
 2014 "Self-determination as anti-extractivism: how indigenous resistance challenges world politics," pp. 26–33 in Marc Woons (ed.), *Restoring Indigenous Self-Determination: Theoretical and Practical Approaches*. Bristol, UK: E-International Relations.
- Portwood-Stacer, Laura
 2013 *Lifestyle Politics and Radical Activism*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA.
- Pulido, Laura
 2016 "Flint, environmental racism, and racial capitalism." *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* 27 (3): 1–16.
 2017 "Geographies of race and ethnicity II: Environmental racism, racial capitalism and state-sanctioned violence." *Progress in Human Geography* 41: 524–533.
- Ramírez, María Clemencia
 2019 "Militarism on the Colombian periphery in the context of illegality, counterinsurgency, and the postconflict." *Current Anthropology* 60 (forthcoming). <https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdfplus/10.1086/699970>
- Robinson, Cedric J.
 2000 *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
- Roth, Benita
 2003 "Second-wave black feminism in the African diaspora: news from new scholarship." *Agenda: Empowering Women for Gender Equity*, no. 58, 46–58.
- Scott, James
 2012 *Decoding Subaltern Politics: Ideology, Disguise, and Resistance in Agrarian Politics*. London: Routledge.
- Seppälä, Tiina
 2016 "Feminizing resistance, decolonizing solidarity: contesting neoliberal development in the Global South." *Journal of Resistance Studies* 2 (1):12–47.

Valderrama, Carlos Alberto

2014 "Black politics of folklore: expanding the sites and forms of politics in Colombia." Master's thesis, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Vázquez, Rolando

2012 "Towards a decolonial critique of modernity: buen vivir, relationality and the task of listening." *Capital, Poverty, Development, Denktraditionen im Dialog: Studien zur Befreiung und interkulturalität* 33: 241–252.

Vélez-Torres, Irene

2014 "Governmental extractivism in Colombia: legislation, securitization and the local settings of mining control." *Third World Thematics* 1 (2): 235–248.

Verdad Abierta

2009 "El Naya." <https://verdadabierta.com/los-cuatro-dias-que-estremecieron-el-naya/> (accessed November 15, 2018).

Wade, Peter

1996 "Identidad y etnicidad," in Arturo Escobar and Álvaro Pedrosa (eds.), *Pacífico ¿desarrollo o diversidad? Estado, capital y movimientos sociales en el Pacífico Colombiano*. Bogotá: CEREC/ECOFONDO.