

## Postscript

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When we finished writing this book, on October 31, 2022, Jair Bolsonaro had just lost the presidential election to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva by a thin margin of 2 million votes. A story familiar to U.S. Americans of voter suppression tormented many Brazilians, as Bolsonaro had used institutions such as the Polícia Rodoviária Federal, or the Federal Highway Police, to prevent people in Brazil's poor Northeast, who mostly voted for Lula, from reaching the voting booth. His administration also adopted measures such as using the public bank Caixa Econômica Federal to offer loans to people on low incomes – one of the segments which was mainly pro Lula – with hardly any guarantees of repayment. Many other extralegal means of keeping Bolsonaro in power were rehearsed by his administration and supporters. On January 8, 2023, just one week after the inauguration of Lula in his third term as president, Bolsonaro's supporters invaded the Palácio do Planalto, the seat of the Brazilian Parliament, and the Supreme Court – vandalizing works of art and public property, clearly imitating the storming of the U.S. Capitol by Donald Trump supporters on January 6, 2021.

Due to the depredation of the iconic buildings housing the executive, legislative, and judicial powers and the investigations that followed, the inauguration of Anielle Franco and Sônia Guajajara as ministers for racial equality and Indigenous peoples, respectively, had to be postponed for a few days. Nevertheless, it is meaningful for us to write in this afterword that a close relative of Marielle Franco – her own sister – is currently practicing in institutional politics the hope that the former councilwoman has metaleptically taught legion of activists in Rio de Janeiro and across the world. Marielle was vicariously present at the combined inauguration of Anielle, a Black woman, and Sônia Guajajara, an Indigenous woman from the Guajajara/Tentehar people. Several times during Anielle's inaugural speech as minister of state, the mantra “Marielle, *presente*” – which epitomizes much of the pragmatic strategies and semiotic models described in this book – was intoned, and the audience would rise to their feet and cheer Marielle's memory fists clenched. Like Marielle, Anielle recognized and revered the Black women who came before her – a bond through the pain and resilience of those surviving the legacy of the world's largest and longest slavery regime during the colonization of the

Americas. Like her sister, Anielle also calibrated portions of her talk into the *papo reto* activist register. For example, at one point in her speech, Anielle said:

Combater o racismo e o fascismo parte também da luta por justiça e reparação e por democracia. Precisamos identificar e responsabilizar quem insiste em manter essa política de morte e encarceramento de nossa juventude negra, comprovadamente falida – assim como estamos identificando e responsabilizando quem executou, provocou e financiou a barbárie que vimos no último domingo. Precisamos enquanto sociedade ter uma conversa franca e honesta que países no mundo inteiro já estão fazendo. Encarar a realidade de que essa política da guerra nas periferias e favelas nunca funcionou. Pelo contrário, apenas segue dilacerando famílias e alimentando um ciclo de violência sem fim. Se o mundo em que queremos viver é um mundo onde todas as pessoas tenham o igual direito de serem felizes com sua liberdade, respeitando uns aos outros em paz, em harmonia, com justiça e dignidade, já passou da hora de pararmos de repetir as fórmulas fracassadas que não entregam nada disso.

Fighting racism and fascism is also part of the struggle for justice and redress and for democracy. We need to identify and hold accountable those who insist on upholding this demonstrably failed policy of death and incarceration of our Black youth – just as we are identifying and holding accountable those who executed, provoked, and financed the brutality we saw last Sunday. We as a society must have a frank and honest conversation that countries around the world have already been doing. We must face the reality that the policy of war in the peripheries and favelas has never worked. On the contrary, it just keeps breaking up families and feeding a never-ending cycle of violence. If the world we want to live in is a world where all people have the equal right to be happy with their own freedom, respecting each other in peace, in harmony, with justice and dignity, it is about time we stop repeating the failed formulas that don't deliver any of this.

The current minister for racial equality regarded the attack on the seat of Brazil's governmental, judicial, and legal institutions as a fascist act. She was also explicit that the executive and other institutions ought to adopt *papo reto* (and other cohering registers) in order to address demands for justice from social movements, opposing the incarceration of the Black population and the so called war on drugs: "We as a society must have a *frank and honest conversation* that countries around the world have already been doing." In further enunciating that it is necessary to "face the *reality* that the policy of war in the peripheries and favelas has never worked," Anielle invoked the valorized indexical tropism (Agha, 2015) of *papo reto* – that is, she dismisses discourses that embrace tropes like the "war on drugs" as a solution to urban violence. Furthermore, she says that if the ultimate aspiration of a society is social and racial equality, "it is about time we stop repeating the *failed formulas* that don't deliver any of this" – in other words, it is time to replace registers of speech and action that insist on discursive formulas like "merit," "war," and "incarceration," in favor of tropes like "redress" and "fighting the extermination of the Black population," which stand as central referential objects in the *papo reto* activist register. In closing her inaugural address, Anielle quoted verses by the

writer Conceição Evaristo and the human rights activist Lúcia Xavier, iconic Black women. She hastened to add that – “we, Black people, will not retreat and we will no longer bow our heads.” In Anielle’s terms, therefore, the time for hope is now – “we will not retreat.”

In other words, an important stance to effect such hope is not “bowing our heads.” This is one way to embrace the reflexive semiotic models of defiance that the activists and social movements described in this book have been teaching us.

Marielle, *presente*, because hope cannot wait.