



Carnival: Struggle for Black Identity or Commercialisation?

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Brazilian Carnival – Between Celebration and Resistance

In the beating heart of Brazilian streets, amidst the contagious rhythms and smiles that overflow with joy, Carnival stands as one of the most emblematic and multifaceted events in national culture. But behind the revelry and festivities, a silent battle unfolds, fought between popular tradition and the elitist appropriation of the festival.

Over the years, Carnival has been subject to a subtle yet persistent process of whitewashing and camarotization, which threatens to erase the Afro-Brazilian roots and undermine the authenticity of the celebration. In this scenario of dispute, resistance movements emerge that call for the preservation of traditions and the appreciation of cultural diversity.



On this journey through the soul of Brazilian Carnival, we will explore the intricacies of this clash between tradition and modernity, between inclusion and exclusion, and between popular celebration and elitist entertainment. Through an in-depth and thought-provoking analysis, we will delve into street groups, samba schools, Candomblé temples and the voices of Afro-descendant artists who fight to keep the essence of Carnival alive.

Whitening and Camarotization: The Appropriation of the Popular Festival

The process of whitening and camarotization of Brazilian Carnival represents a significant transformation in the essence of the festival, which has historically been a cultural expression of the working classes and Afro-descendant communities. Whitening refers to the gradual loss of the ethnic and popular characteristics of the festival, as it becomes increasingly influenced by the aesthetic and behavioral standards of the white elite. On the other hand, camarotization refers to the creation of segregated and elitist spaces, where popular culture is spectacularized and commercialized to serve the interests of a privileged minority.

The appropriation of the popular festival by the white elite occurs at different levels. Initially, there is a transformation of traditional cultural manifestations into superficial entertainment shows, aimed at consumption and tourism. The music, dances, and rituals that once reflected the identity and resistance of the communities are diluted into standardized and stereotypical performances intended to appeal to a heterogeneous audience far removed from the festival's popular origins of Carnival.

Furthermore, the white elite appropriates Carnival by creating exclusive and luxurious spaces, such as VIP boxes, where people can enjoy the party in comfort and safety, away from the crowds and cultural diversity of the streets. These boxes, often sponsored by large companies and luxury brands, become symbols of status and power, where entry is restricted to a financially and socially privileged elite.

This appropriation of the popular festival by the white elite has profound social and cultural implications. On the one hand, it contributes to the marginalization and erasure of Afro-Brazilian traditions, which have historically been the backbone of Carnival. On the other hand, it reinforces social and racial inequalities by creating segregated and exclusionary spaces that reproduce the hierarchies of power and privilege present in Brazilian society.

Given this scenario, it is essential to resist the process of whitewashing and camarotization of Carnival, and to fight for the preservation of the popular and Afro-Brazilian traditions that make the festival a unique expression of Brazilian diversity.



and culture. This resistance can be expressed through the appreciation of traditional street blocks, which keep alive the authenticity and creativity of local communities, and by promoting inclusive and accessible spaces that guarantee the participation of all, regardless of their social class or skin color.

Resistance Movements: Preserving Afro-Brazilian Traditions

In the face of the whitening and commodification of Carnival, resistance movements have emerged that seek to preserve Afro-Brazilian traditions and rescue the popular and inclusive essence of the festival. These movements represent a response to attempts to appropriate and distort Carnival culture, promoting the appreciation of cultural manifestations of black and peripheral communities.

A striking example of resistance are the traditional street blocks, which resist commercial influences and keep the authenticity and creativity of Carnival celebrations alive. These blocks, often organized by the community itself, are spaces for meeting and cultural expression where Afro-Brazilian traditions are celebrated and passed down from generation to generation.

Another form of resistance is the appreciation of samba schools and Candomblé temples, which represent important spaces of resistance and affirmation of black identity. Samba schools, in particular, play a fundamental role in preserving Afro-Brazilian traditions, through their parades and themes that portray the history and culture of black people.

Furthermore, it is important to highlight the role of Afro-descendant artists and intellectuals in promoting diversity and fighting racism during Carnival. Musicians, writers, activists and community leaders have used their voices and platforms to denounce the injustices and inequalities present in the festival, and to demand a more inclusive Carnival that represents all identities and cultures in Brazil.

In summary, resistance movements represent an important response to the whitening and whitewashing of Carnival, and aim to preserve Afro-Brazilian traditions and promote equality and diversity in the festival. By recognizing and valuing the contribution of black and peripheral communities to Carnival, we can build a fairer, more inclusive and representative festival that celebrates the richness and plurality of Brazilian culture.

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