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UFRGS' doctoral student wins award dedicated to black people with her dissertation

PPGAS / UFRGS' doctoral student Pamela Íris Mello da Silva is one of the winners of the first Lélia Gonzalez Award. On Black Awareness Day, the award-winning research deserves, in addition to the recognition it obtained, visibility and repercussion

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With extensive experience in the area of public policies and social projects, [Pamela Íris Mello da Silva](#) joined the Graduate Program in Social Anthropology at UFRGS (PPGAS) in 2018, bringing to her studies her experiences and concerns as a black woman and rethinking her political practices. Her rich journey and discoveries throughout the master's course along with her research are exposed in the introduction of Pamela's dissertation thesis "[Negras, nós](#)": entre eleitas, candidatas e não candidatas na Região Sul do Brasil, ("Black women, us": among elected, candidates and non-candidates in the Southern Region of Brazil"). Her work was recently awarded the first Lélia Gonzalez Award, which is dedicated to the recognition of scientific and academic works by black people. Pamela is one of the winners of the award's first edition, which was created from the mobilization of black researchers from the Brazilian Association of Anthropology in 2018, in the context of the 31st Brazilian Meeting of Anthropology (RBA), held in Brasília. In 2020, the first winners were announced at the 32nd edition of the RBA, which took place online in early November.

With Professor Ceres Gomes Victora as her supervisor, Pamela produced an ethnographic study with seven black women from the three states of the South Region of Brazil (Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina, and Paraná), unraveling their stories and struggles both in the political scenario and in the electoral processes. According to Pamela, the initial idea was to concentrate the research on the election of Tânia Terezinha da Silva, who was re-elected mayor in the city of Dois Irmãos, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul in 2016. "At that time, I had already got acquainted with some of [Antonietta de Barros](#)' story, the first woman to become a congressperson in Brazil, a black woman from Santa Catarina," she says. The researcher wanted to understand why, since the achievement of Antonietta de Barros in the 1930s, so few black women have held government positions. In her first fieldwork, Pamela realized that, to understand some of the reasons for such low representativeness, it was necessary to expand the focus beyond the final application process of the candidates. "It was necessary to take a step back and understand what were the motivations for the acceptance or refusal of black women that presented themselves as candidates," she explained. In addition to mayor Tânia Terezinha, councilors Karen Santos, Jeruse Romão, Marilu Oliveira, Edenice Fraga, Valdeonira dos Anjos, and Alaerte Leandro Martins participated in the research as respondents.

It was in the backstage of decision-making narrated by the seven women that the researcher could identify the types of "us" presented in the dissertation: the "us" of the plural first person, which refers to the socio-political and historical dimension of black women; "us" that are the merging points of their stories, of joining their lives with work in politics; and also the "us" as obstacles, tensions, difficulties and obstructions that they face in their political careers, both in terms of financial difficulties and racism.

Currently a doctorate student at PPGAS, Pamela highlights the importance of affirmative actions in graduate programs that provide opportunities and expand the possibilities for more people to occupy academic spaces and produce knowledge. About winning of the award, the researcher says that she gladly shares it with the seven women who have participated in the study and summarizes her feelings: "I am overjoyed for the recognition of my dedication to the study of a theme so necessary for raising awareness and advances in a society founded on sexism and racism, especially in the southern region of Brazil".

Translated into English by Jonas Augusto Fagundes, under the supervision and translation revision of Elizamari R. Becker (PhD) – IL/UFRGS.



Marcha das Mulheres Negras (March of the Black Women) 2015 - CCBY 2.0

