

## The spread of serophobia within brazilian political discourse



<https://doi.org/10.56238/Connexpemultidisdevolpfut-095>

### Evandro Alves Barbosa Filho

Social worker. PhD in Social Work. Collaborating professor at the Graduate Program in Social Work of the Federal University of Pernambuco. (UFPE, Recife, Brazil). Scholarship PNPD-CAPES/FACEPE.

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2944-3388>

E-mail: [evealves85@yahoo.com.br](mailto:evealves85@yahoo.com.br)

### Ana Cristina de Souza Vieira

Social worker. PhD in Social Work. Full Professor of the Department of Social Work of the Federal University of Pernambuco. (UFPE, Recife, Brazil).

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8844-5375>

E-mail: [anacvieira12@gmail.com](mailto:anacvieira12@gmail.com)

### ABSTRACT

The article analyses the spread of serophobia within Brazilian political discourse. The research is qualitative and used discursive formulas for the treatment of the corpus. The analysis is based on works by Wendy Brown and Melinda Cooper. Serophobia, understood as the set of irrational and discriminatory practices and beliefs against HIV-positive individuals and groups vulnerable to HIV and AIDS, has been identified as a central element within the discourse of the Brazilian extreme right, who are committed to dismantling the National HIV/AIDS programme and advancing an agenda for affirming morality and traditional gender hierarchies. The scenario is one of attacking sexual and reproductive rights and universal access to HIV/AIDS treatment.

**Keywords:** Serophobia, Far right, HIV/AIDS.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This article analyzes the expansion of serophobia in Brazilian political discourse. To this end, the scenario of production of these discourses is problematized: the attack on the political agenda of gender equity and sexual and reproductive rights, as well as dismantling the Brazilian experience of the National HIV/AIDS Program.

Serophobia can be understood as the set of irrational, discriminatory beliefs and unfounded fears about HIV/AIDS that result in episodes of institutional, physical, psychological and political violence not only against HIV-positive populations, but also against social groups considered more vulnerable to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Serophobia is sustained in discourses and devices of power ranging from tutelage, interdiction, segregation, punishment and control over HIV-positive bodies to the extreme of reducing human lives to the condition of expenses that must be avoided by the State, through measures that articulate a symbiosis between moralism, populism, individual blame, meritocracy and neoliberal austerity. It was produced in the discursive arsenal of neoliberal and conservative responses to HIV/AIDS, having manifested itself in Brazil since 2012, when there was a conservative turn in the government's political discourse, with the dismantling of some of the main strategies to confront the HIV/AIDS pandemic and censorship of campaigns and programs based on



the pedagogy of prevention. Since then, serophobia has been radicalized by political subjects of the extreme right.

But why have serophobic political discourses gained legitimacy in Brazil? How has a country that in the context of its redemocratization consolidated itself as a global reference in the fight against the HIV and AIDS pandemic become the scene of a serophobic political agenda?

For the construction of this work, of a qualitative nature, documents and discourses that materialize the expressions of serophobia in political discourses between the years 2002 and 2021 were used. In a non-Cartesian, non-linear and critical genealogical organization, Brazilian political decisions and bills were raised. The research corpus was identified, classified and categorized through the analysis of discursive formulas, a strategy of critical discourse analysis, formulated by Alice Krieg-Planque (2011). According to this author, in pronouncements made by government agents, which engender the political discourse, verbal sequences with expressive political-ideological content may emerge, relatively stable from the point of view of linguistic description, functioning in the discourses produced in the public space as a sequence as shared as questionable. Employed in public uses that invest it with socio-political meanings/directions, this verbal/linguistic sequence then knows a discursive order that makes it a discursive formula. The discursive formulas are describable objects in the categories of language and whose destiny within the discourses is mediated by the intentions of political agents and determined by the power relations that structure society, reinforcing or questioning hierarchies of class, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

In the process of identification and classification of the corpus, two discursive formulas assumed significant relevance in the political discourse: the war on sexual and reproductive rights and governmental serophobia that crystallize as determining forces of the dismantling of the Brazilian experience of coping with the HIV/AIDS pandemic, evidencing the relationship between discourse, history and the action of social subjects. To analyze the meanings and meanings of these political discourses, understood as fundamental social practices to the process of social reproduction, the works of Wendy Brown (2019) and Melinda Cooper (2017) were used. It was not necessary to submit to a research ethics committee.

It is worth mentioning that the HIV/AIDS pandemic, as well as any Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI), is not a peculiarity of any group or social class, being a risk real for everyone. But the relations and projects of domination/exploitation that structure, not without resistance, the reproduction of capitalist sociability make the most subalternized classes and social groups vulnerable. These are trans men and women, transvestites, men who have sex with men (MSM), gays, immigrants, drug users, populations deprived of liberty and sex workers, who, due to their social vulnerability to the pandemic, form the key populations for coping with HIV and AIDS (ROCHA et al., 2019). Even though they are very heterogeneous groups, these populations have HIV prevalences ranging from 7%



to 35%, against 0.5% of the Brazilian population in general, concentrating the burden of morbidity and mortality and stigmas related to HIV (BARBOSA FILHO; ROCHA, 2018).

## **2 OUTLINING THE LANDSCAPE OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS UNDER ATTACK**

The AIDS pandemic exposes the exploitation and social inequalities in health inherent in capitalist sociability, which is intersectionally classist, patriarchal and racist (ROCHA et al., 2019). After all, HIV prevention and the quality of life of HIV-positive people depend on access to health, social security and social assistance services, antiretroviral drugs and the deconstruction of sexist, homophobic, transphobic cultural values, etc. Therefore, it is linked to social processes that are antagonistic to the ultraconservative and neoliberal project defended, currently, by groups and parties, mostly of the extreme right (COOPER, 2017).

Ultra-neoliberalism or the process of neoliberal radicalization represents both continuity and changes in the trajectory of neoliberalism, being one of the regressive results of the capitalist crisis of 2008. This structural crisis resulted not only in a deepening of the commodification and destruction of collective rights of citizenship and the capture of the State by governments apologists for the free market, as had already occurred since the 1980s, but also fostered the election and strengthening of authoritarian governments, averse to substantive democracy, and in the approximation of significant portions of the population to old and new racist ideas, sexist, classist, authoritarian, irrationalist, violent etc (BROWN, 2019, COOPER, 2017). Therefore, ultra-neoliberalism has produced more robust imbrications and convergences between free-market orthodoxy and conservative morality.

In this scenario, what should have been a universal right since the emergence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic has been transformed into a commodity. In addition to commodification, the agenda of the new right promotes the reactualization of discourses on sex and sexuality that aim to normalize legitimized sexual behaviors, identities and practices: cisgender and heterosexual, pathologizing and stigmatizing those who do not follow the parameters of dominant morality (BROWN, 2019).

Since the neoliberal wave of the 1980s, the promises of late capitalism and its cultural expression – postmodernity (JAMESON, 2006) – related to secularism and individual freedoms, which would emancipate individuals, their identities and subjectivities from a supposed risk of totalitarian tyranny of collective projects and value human diversity have proved fallacious (BROWN, 2019). In the decades since, the anti-gender crusade around the world, undertaken by far-right groups, has made evident the sexist, anti-democratic and moralistic nature of capitalism in its late phase.

Nativist, racist, homophobic, sexist, anti-Semitic, Islamophobic sentiments, as well as anti-secular Christian sentiments, have acquired political bases and legitimacy unimaginable a decade ago. Opportunistic politicians surf in this wave, while more principled conservatives seek to submerge and wait for it to pass; the political agendas of both often converge more to



plutocracy than to the raging passions of a base that demands the criminalization of immigrants, abortion and homosexuality, the preservation of monuments to the slave past, and that nations rededicate themselves to whiteness, whiteness, and to Christendom (BROWN, 2019, p. 11).

In Brazil and in countries such as Turkey, Russia, China and India between 2003 and 2014, the neo-developmental experience exposed that the attempt of populist and left-wing governments to balance the neoliberal agenda with the confrontation of the refractions of the social issue took place with a series of concessions to the most conservative and reactionary sectors of society (VIEIRA et al., 2016).

In Latin America, a region that is both the target and one of the producing centers of anti-gender campaigns and against sexual and reproductive rights, a significant expression of the political strength of these projects was registered in 2011 in Paraguay, when the term "gender" was widely contested by the Catholic right and by far-right groups during discussions in the National Congress, about the National Education Plan. Since 2014, these attacks have intensified, even setting up massive demonstrations in countries such as Colombia, where they had a negative and decisive impact on the referendum on the peace accords in 2016. The Latin American crusade against gender and its scholars culminated, in November 2017, in the violent attack suffered by philosopher and theorist of gender and queer theory Judith Butler at Congonhas Airport, in São Paulo (CORRÊA; PATERNOTTE; KUHAR, 2018).

The following year, in July 2018, constant threats made by Christian fundamentalist groups resulted in the exile and interruption of Débora Diniz's teaching career at the University of Brasília (UnB). The anthropologist had a vast scientific production in gender studies, human rights and abortion. Going against the current of neoconservative and reactionary political agendas on the rise in Brazil and contesting bills (PL) such as the so-called Statute of the Unborn, the researcher became the target of threats of aggression and death and media persecution by extreme right-wing groups of various matrices, which resulted in her inclusion in the Program for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders of the Federal Government.

Years earlier, in 2015, university professor and feminist scholar Lola Aronovitch was included in this same Program, for having been the victim of hate attacks and death threats through a website of antifeminist, homophobic and racist content, and the action of far-right groups that worked mainly in universities. The seriousness of Lola's case, the emergence of similar situations and the absence of adequate legislation for this type of crime, resulted in the creation of Law No. 13,642, of April 3, 2018 (BRAZIL, 2018), which assigned to the Federal Police the responsibility of investigating crimes of a misogynistic nature on the Internet, understood as those that propagate hatred or aversion to women.

To characterize this political scenario of visibility and legitimation of the neoconservative forces of the extreme right, one of the most discussed bills in recent years is the Family Statute, PL



No. 6,583/2013 (FERREIRA, 2013), authored by Federal Deputy Anderson Ferreira, of the Liberal Party (PL - PE). This project aims to create public policies that value and strengthen the family, which is already provided for by the Constitution

Federal 1988. However, in the second article of the PL, it defines that the family entity is formed from the union between a man and a woman, whether in marriage or in the stable union, in addition to the single-parent family, composed of any of the parents and their descendants. This bill proposes to segregate and make invisible the existence of homoparental families, polyamorous unions, creates margins for affective and patrimonial exclusion of children and partners in relationships not recognized by the State and does not contemplate the diversity of Brazilian family arrangements and configurations.

At the same time, it normalizes/normalizes heterosexual and nuclear families as priority beneficiaries of public policies, according to the *modus operandi* of conservative discourse. If approved, the Family Statute will further restrict the coverage of public policies, in line with neoliberal rhetoric. Still in this sense, the project reinforces the familism, leaving to the families much of the obligations of provision of social welfare that constitutionally must be carried out by the State.

In 2019, Federal Deputy Pastor Eurico (Partido Patriota - PE) presented Bill No. 4590, with text similar to that drafted by Deputy Anderson Ferreira, under the justification that:

Faced with a contemporary context of extreme confusion and social and family disarray, it is necessary to reaffirm the millennial understanding of the family, which is the entity constituted from the union of a man and a woman, called respectively father and mother, through marriage or stable union, with or without the existence of children (BRAZIL, 2019, p. 02).

According to Melinda Cooper (2017), often the strange combination between neoliberalism, the extreme right and the new conservatism is present in projects and political discourses that intend to save traditional families from fictitious threats of disintegration, supposedly caused by policies that promote equality or social justice, the recognition of diversity and wish to make political correctness a new common sense. Still for Cooper and Wendy Brown (2019), the war on so-called political correctness functions as a political-ideological technology to cover up the real determinations of the worsening of the living conditions not only of traditional families, but of all families of the subalternized classes and groups: the anti-democratic process of creative destruction of late capitalism.

The nuclear and heterosexual family, an institution commonly evoked by far-right politicians as the only legitimate social regulator and the most efficient provider of protection and care (BROWN, 2019) needs to be debated in the universe of strategies aimed at ending the stigma related to seropositivity and overcoming serophobia. In this regard, the survey *Stigma Index in Relation to People Living with HIV/AIDS in Brazil* (2019) identified that more than 41% of HIV-positive people suffer prejudice and discrimination related to serology by their family groups. This is aggravated when



they are considered seropositive and also belong to other subalternized groups: 45.9% of those who identify themselves as sex workers suffered from discriminatory comments by family members, and 29.7% of them reported having been excluded from family activities as a result of sex work. Among the research participants, men who identified as gay, bisexual or MSM, representing 59.2% suffered verbal violence within the family and 34.1% reported exclusion from family activities due to homophobia. These data show how family experiences in Brazil are sources of suffering and violence for the majority of HIV-positive people, especially for those who belong to the populations. key, also evidencing that family-centered policies can mean more social vulnerability for HIV-positive men and women.

This raises concerns when the leaders of the current composition of the Ministry of Health support and finance with resources of more than three million reais from the Ministry of Health the sexual abstinence program launched in early February 2020, by the Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights (MMFDH), led by Minister Damares Alves, which intends to transform it into public policy. It is necessary to record that at the launch event of the Campaign, held in Brasilia, there were posters on the walls with illustrations of condoms, informing that in these prevention inputs there were pores allowing the passage of the HIV virus. These posters, even with the presence of representatives and technicians of the Ministry of Health, were only removed on the initiative of a group of priests, disturbed by the restlessness of part of the audience around the material, openly anti-scientific. The government campaign that supports the sexual abstinence of adolescents and young people in their decision-making autonomy has deep similarities with the religiously based sex education programs implemented in the U.S. and Uganda, funded and/or supported by far-right Protestant religious institutions, the field of origin of Minister Damares Alves, who is also an evangelical pastor.

Other projects illustrate this restrictive scenario for the sexual and reproductive rights of women, a group that in Brazil is affected by two major pandemics: HIV/AIDS and violence, such as the so-called Statute of the Unborn, PL No. 478 of 2007 (BASSUMA; MARTINI, 2007), authored by federal deputies Luiz Carlos Bassuma, of the Workers' Party (PT-BA), and Miguel Martini, of the Humanist Party of Solidarity (PHS-MG), who defends the amendment of the Brazilian Penal Code to consider abortion a heinous crime, prohibiting it in all cases provided for by law: rape, risk to the life of the woman and anencephalic fetus. This bill, contrary to scientific evidence, assumes that life begins at conception and proposes, according to Article No. 28, that even if speeches considered as apology to abortion, they be criminalized, receiving a penalty of six months to one year and a fine. This would create the possibility of criminalizing the political action of feminists and advocates of sexual and reproductive rights. In addition, by placing the right of the unborn child as superior to that of the woman, the Statute would create the possibility of criminally punishing HIV-positive women who do



not follow the clinical protocols for the prevention of vertical transmission of the HIV virus, which occurs from woman to baby during pregnancy, childbirth or breastfeeding.

Even though it is recommended in the prenatal process, testing for HIV/AIDS should be authorized by the pregnant woman and, if so, adherence to treatment should come from the woman, after being informed about the treatment options and clinical and social support. But for politicians and far-right groups, women's health is reduced to a reproducivist logic of maternal and child health, attributing centrality to fetal development during pregnancy, regardless of whether pregnancy or the experience of motherhood is desired (BARBOSA FILHO; ROCK, 2018; COOPER, 2017).

Given the above, it is possible to verify that violence against minorities and women is not a secondary effect, it is a fundamental part of the project of power, which articulates neoconservatives, neoliberals and reactionaries to institute an authoritarian democracy.

### **3 THE GENEALOGY OF THE DISMANTLING OF THE EXCELLENCE OF THE HIV/AIDS PROGRAM**

The emergence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, with the first case identified in 1981 by the Center of Disease Control, occurred at a juncture of the so-called crisis of the Welfare State, an issue that, according to the dominant narrative, the neoliberal, would be solved if the State left the role of provider of social services, enabling the total commodification of social services and public goods to be realized (COOPER, 2017). These political processes, oriented to capitalist restoration, extend to the present day, complexified by new determinations and transformations of the process of social reproduction, such as the constitution of increasingly expressive symbolic bridges between neoliberalism, extreme right, anti-democracy, conservatism, etc.

In this sense, principles of classical neoliberalism, such as individual liberty and opposition to collective tyrannies and norms, were conditioned to conservative morality. Not because neoliberals have become *stricto sensu* defenders of this moral model, but because they have realized how neoconservative ideas can be instrumentalized to control and obtain consent among the subalternized classes (BROWN, 2019). The neoliberal thought spread by intellectuals and politicians of the right and extreme right has profoundly and unevenly altered, in time and space, the notions of individual, body and sexuality, culture and community, social classes, social justice and the State (COOPER, 2017). As a globalized pandemic, AIDS synthesized these fundamental changes around issues of individuality, sexuality, and gender and crossed virtually every cultural context. In other words, the intersections between neoliberal globalization and the expansion of the AIDS pandemic and the far right have created a global logic, a political-discursive order around global responses to AIDS guided by the neoliberal perspective of health.



The unity between neoliberal globalization and the expansion of the AIDS pandemic has been expressed in the creation of the social and economic conditions for the growth of the pandemic in countries of peripheral capitalism through the commodification or elimination of social services infrastructure. According to the neoliberal perspective of health, individuals are the only or main responsible for responding to their social needs in health, and the market is elevated to the status of ideal provider and regulator in the relationship between individual or family search for health services (COOPER, 2017). In coping with the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the neoliberal perspective of health, in addition to promoting the total or partial commodification of antiretroviral treatment, is oriented to its depoliticization, promoting the biologization of bodies, ignoring the importance of economic, political, gender and sexuality determinations, etc. (BARBOSA FILHO; ROCK, 2018; ROCHA et al., 2019).

Brazil reported its first cases of HIV in 1982, registered among gay men, reinforcing the stigmas and the discourse about the so-called risk groups and the so-called gay plague or gay cancer that, for many conservative fractions of society, especially Catholic religious leaders, was configured as a divine response to the growing tolerance of free sexual orientation, ongoing since the 1960s. In another pole, the mostly progressive movement of civil society, saturated with the economic and social model in crisis of the Military Dictatorship, and some progressive governmental subjects promoted an expressive and organized national resistance to the neoliberal discourse of appeal to the commodification of HIV/AIDS treatment and the adoption of conservative ideologies in the elaboration of preventive programs.

Even before the creation of the Unified Health System (SUS), supported by the ideals of the Health Reform Movement, the defense of human rights and free sexual orientation, partnerships between the State, NGOs and progressive sectors of civil society resulted in the creation of State HIV/AIDS Programs throughout the country, still in the 1980s. The State's leading role in HIV/AIDS research and in the free distribution of antiretroviral drugs through Law No. 9,313 of 1996 went against the neoliberal guidelines of the World Bank, for whom gratuity and universality should be restricted only to prevention programs.

The neoliberalism of the governments of Fernando Henrique Cardoso positioned itself as a defender of a minimal State, as evidenced in the Master Plan for State Reform (PDRE). However, pressured by activists, movements and political leaders in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, he expanded the National Program, which recognized sexual and reproductive rights as human rights and citizenship, where there would be no justification for the implementation of prevention programs centered on abstinence or prohibitionist perspectives.

The extreme right groups and subjects did not find in the scenario of the late 1980s and in the 1990s windows of opportunity for the diffusion of serophobia through the government and had to live with the protagonism of the social movements of HIV/AIDS and with campaigns, projects and





programs of progressive orientation, produced and implemented from partnerships between the State, NGOs and Social Movements. This political-pedagogical experience, known as the pedagogy of prevention, combined elements of Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed with the feminist approach to sexual and reproductive rights, the political empowerment of HIV-positive people through awareness groups, and the defense of the decommodification of the right to health.

However, since the last decade the installed capacity and emancipatory perspectives of prevention and treatment in HIV/AIDS began to be systematically dismantled, during the Governments of the Workers' Party (PT), which in order to build political legitimacy, expanded the coalition policy and alliances with political subjects of extreme right, markedly conservative and reactionary (ROCHA et al., 2019).

The political rise of far-right representatives, observed since the 2000s, has mischaracterized a fundamental part of the HIV/AIDS Program. For example, the major campaigns of prevention, testing and adherence and return to treatment, aired even in prime time have been withdrawn from TV since 2012. This was due to pressure from far-right politicians linked to religious groups, especially evangelicals. Prevention actions aimed at the most vulnerable populations have also assumed a very small scale of funding and coverage. In addition, the open approach on free sexual orientation and human rights has lost ground to the centrality of the biomedical discourse, focused on the correct use of the male/external condom, mechanically normalizing the trinomial cisgender identity – safe sex – heterosexual, even though the HIV/AIDS pandemic is significantly concentrated in key populations, dissidents of this model.

Ten years before the last major prevention campaign at Carnival, in 2002, the health education campaign entitled Bell, of the National STD/AIDS Program, had its exhibition discontinued by pressure from evangelical religious leaders with the Government and the National Council for Advertising Self-Regulation (CONAR). Catafalque The campaign dramatized the situation of a young gay man, recognized and accepted by his family, which dismayed far-right political subjects opposed to the normalization of homosexuality.

Far-right conservatives, according to Wendy Brown (2019), feed nostalgia for a past in which gays, lesbians, blacks, prostitutes, immigrants had no public visibility and knew their places. For these regressive or reactionary subjects, the democratic State, from the commitment to the collectivization of what they call political correctness and social justice, tyrannized society and, above all, families, by committing itself to reparatory actions to historically exploited and stigmatized groups.

An example of the implications of the advance of the extreme right on the HIV/AIDS Policy in Brazil, in the name of a political sanitization of the Ministry of Health, was the dismissal by pressure of extreme right-wing politicians, in June 2013, of the director of the Department of Surveillance, Prevention and Control of Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome and



Viral Hepatitis of the Ministry of Health, Dirceu Greco, after campaign disclosure with the message I am happy being a prostitute. This campaign sought to strengthen the self-esteem of sex workers to bring them closer to testing, treatment and political organization services, since the prevalence of HIV among female sex workers in Brazil is significantly high: they are mostly black and brown, with an incidence of HIV/AIDS of 7%, and with 13 to 15 times more chances of being infected by HIV than women in other work activities (BARBOSA FILHO; ROCHA, 2018). The physician Alexandre Padilha, Minister of Health in office at that time, justified the cancellation of this program on the grounds that HIV/AIDS campaigns should only inform about ways to prevent STIs, and there is no room for debate beyond that.

The first Minister of Health of the Bolsonaro Government, also a doctor Luiz Henrique Mandetta took a stand on the issue of prevention, stating that it would be up to families and not the State to promote actions to prevent HIV/AIDS. Even so, in the short period in which he was in charge of the Ministry of Health, Mandetta established partnerships with Minister Damares Alves to promote through the State, sexual abstinence and prevent early pregnancy of adolescents and young people. Other sex-affective possibilities, such as homo or bisexuality are not even discussed by these campaigns.

This silent convenience (ROCHA, 2011) of Brazilian governments in the last two decades with campaigns and educational programs of HIV/AIDS that make invisible and exclude key populations, causes these social groups to be deprived of the condition of subjects of the responses to the pandemic, concentrating the actions in the populations that conservative governments consider amenable to tutelage/control: women, pregnant women, adolescents and young people.

President Jair Messias Bolsonaro, elected by the Social Liberal Party (PSL), is openly defending classist, racist, sexist positions, having produced hate speeches against HIV-positive people. Before being elected, in an interview with the CQC TV Program held in 2010, the then Federal Deputy for the Progressive Party (PP) of Rio de Janeiro stated that "The State should deal with sick misfortunes and not with vagabonds who take drugs or acquire AIDS by loitering" (CQC, 2010, not paginated). Ten years later, the now President, defender of orthodox neoliberalism and the dismantling of citizenship rights, reaffirmed its serophobia, when it manifested itself on the controversial and unfounded campaign of the MMFDH and the Ministry of Health that encourages sexual abstinence as a method of preventing early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. As he left the Alvorada Palace on February 5, 2020, the President told a delegation of journalists that "[...] a person with HIV, in addition to being a serious problem for him, is an expense for everyone here in Brazil" (PUTTI, 2020, not paginated).

The President related the permanence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic to the moral licentiousness, according to him, created in the PT Governments. Even oriented to the political left, these governments



began to mischaracterize the approach of the National HIV/AIDS Program, yielding to the various conservative and reactionary pressures of the extreme right. The reduction of seropositive to their serology or their guilt, reducing men and women to the status of undesirable expenses is an extreme form of political violence that reinforces stigmas that hinder prevention, permanence in treatment and reproduce serophobia.

In April 2021, during a speech at an event held by the City Hall of Chapecó-SC, President Bolsonaro, in order to promote the so-called early treatment of Covid-19, defended the use of drugs without proven preventive efficacy for the treatment of this new pandemic and compared the use of these drugs to the first antiretrovirals in the fight against HIV/AIDS, in the 1980s. According to him: "[...] because HIV was more aimed at a specific class, who had different sexual behaviors" (PUTTI, 2021, not paginated), there was no resistance to the use of medication without scientific proof. This is an anti-scientific argument, considering that HIV/AIDS impacts all human populations, in addition to the fact that the first antiretrovirals are used for the treatment of AIDS and not for prevention, already presenting proven scientific efficacy at the time of the beginning of use. Nevertheless, the president's serophobia extends to his most fervent allies.

On the occasion of censorship of a magazine at the Rio de Janeiro Book Biennial, in 2019, in which there was an illustration of two young men kissing, questioned by progressive sectors of civil society, Federal Deputy Carla Zambelli, elected by the PSL of São Paulo, one of the main voices of the extreme right, made a post on her social networks relating access to material with homoaffective content to the growth of HIV among young homosexuals, during the PT Governments (2003-2016). This mechanical relationship between the normalization of homosexuality and the growth of exposure to the HIV virus is one of the most common ways for far-right politicians to take a stand on the issue (COOPER, 2017).

The novelties, with the arrival of Bolsonaro to the Federal Government and several far-right leaders assuming the government of states and municipalities are: the scale of the serophobic discourse, which now comes from subjects of the first echelon of the Federal Government and its allies in the National Congress; the retraction of the social functions of the State, directly enabling the privatist project and the dismantling of the public-state SUS, based on moralistic criteria, ignoring the various forms of exposure and contagion to HIV; And finally, unlike the irrational, fear-based discourse of the unknown that the virus and disease aroused in the early 1980s, now accumulated scientific knowledge is intentionally denied. As Wendy Brown (2019) points out, the political restoration of the ultra-neoliberal far right, expanding since the 2010s, is also essentially anti-democratic, irrationalist, and anti-scientific.

Perhaps the fact that most crystallizes this regressive conjuncture to sexual and reproductive rights and the consolidation of governmental serophobia is Decree No. 9,795, of May 17, 2019



(BRASIL, 2019), which modified the structure of the Ministry of Health. Through this, the Department of STIs, AIDS and Viral Hepatitis was renamed the Department of Diseases of Chronic Conditions and Sexually Transmitted Infections. The note published on May 22, 2019 by the Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association (ABIA) summarizes the seriousness of this fact:

It is not just a question of nomenclature: it is the end of the Brazilian AIDS Program. The government, in practice, extinguishes in an unacceptable and irresponsible way one of the most important AIDS programs in the world, which was for decades an international reference in the fight against AIDS. More than a program, this decree ends a democratic experience of governance of an epidemic based on social participation and intersectoriality. Proof of this is that just over a month ago, at the meetings of the National Commission on STI, HIV/AIDS and Viral Hepatitis (CNAIDS) and the National Commission for Articulation with Social Movements (CAMS), absolutely nothing was said about the Decree and no clarification was provided about its potential consequences. The symbolic milestone of having a government structure focused on confronting AIDS is indicative of the importance given to the epidemic. As much as it is said that "nothing will change", what remains is the neglect of a disease that kills about 12,000 people a year and that, far from being controlled, continues to grow, especially among impoverished and stigmatized populations, already traditionally excluded and that with this act become more invisible and disrespected (BRAZILIAN INTERDISCIPLINARY ASSOCIATION OF AIDS, 2019).

Since 2019, the Ministry of Health has also deleted all social networks of the HIV/AIDS Program, concentrating the information on the Ministry of Health's website and dismantled the communication team that, for decades, was dedicated to the production of campaigns and programs considered to be of international reference. Within the new organizational structure that erases, not only at the formal level, the responses to HIV/AIDS, human and financial resources will have to be shared with other teams and pathologies, creating more vulnerability in a country where AIDS annually makes thousands of victims.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

In a global scenario in which the coalitions between the extreme right, neoconservative and ultraneoliberal groups are increasingly expressive (BROWN, 2019; COOPER, 2017), Brazil, once a reference in policies to confront the HIV pandemic, has experienced an escalation of serophobia led by far-right politicians. The obscurantist bills, the programs to promote abstinence and prevent early pregnancy, the serophobic speeches of high-ranking government politicians and ministers, and the silence on the serious situation of attention to key populations, make it clear that ultraconservative and neoliberal radicalism, crystallized in the Bolsonarist discourse, was not only an electoral strategy to seize state power, It was (and still is) a project of power and has been unfolding in government policies, programs and guidelines that significantly increase the vulnerability of HIV-positive people, key populations and the general population.

The hate speech issued by the Head of the National Executive Branch against HIV-positive people, blacks, women, LGBTIQI, immigrants, etc. finds an echo not only among his supporters of the



Christian fundamentalist caucuses and among his voters. It reflects and echoes throughout a complex of restoration of power of late capitalism, which to consolidate itself demands the suppression of all the civilizing possibilities of capital, denying: democracy, modern reason, secularism, freedom, the welfare state and human rights. It is not without resistance that this process has been occurring, and in these resistances, still diffuse, lies the hope of a world without AIDS and without serophobia.



## REFERENCES

ASSOCIAÇÃO BRASILEIRA INTERDISCIPLINAR DE AIDS (Rio de Janeiro). Política de morte: o fim do departamento de AIDS. Associação Brasileira Interdisciplinar de Aids (Abia), 22 maio 2019. Não paginado. Disponível em: <http://abiaids.org.br/politica-de-morte-o-fim-do-departamento-de-aids/32852>. Acesso em: 05 mar. 2020.

BARBOSA FILHO, Evandro Alves; ROCHA, Solange. Três décadas de neoliberalismo e de lutas contra a epidemia de HIV e Aids na periferia capitalista: uma análise crítica da África do Sul, Brasil e Moçambique. In: ROCHA, S.; VIEIRA, A. C. de S.; BARBOSA FILHO, E. A. HIV AIDS e as teias do capitalismo, patriarcado e racismo. África do Sul, Brasil e Moçambique. Recife: EDUFPE, 2018.

BASSUMA, L.; MARTINI, M. Projeto de Lei n.º 478, de 19 de março de 2007. Dispõe sobre o Estatuto do Nascituro e dá outras providências. Brasília (DF): Câmara dos Deputados, 2007. Disponível em: [https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/prop\\_mostrarintegra;jsessionid=B44CA223BCCF8AB5F77C5F7498D093A1.node2?codteor=447598&filename=Avulso+-PL+478/2007](https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/prop_mostrarintegra;jsessionid=B44CA223BCCF8AB5F77C5F7498D093A1.node2?codteor=447598&filename=Avulso+-PL+478/2007). Acesso em: 2 fev. 2020.

BRASIL. Lei n.º 13.642, de 3 de abril de 2018. Altera a Lei n.º 11.340, de 7 de agosto de 2006 (Lei Maria da Penha), para tipificar o crime de descumprimento de medidas protetivas de urgência. Brasília: Diário Oficial [da] República Federativa do Brasil: seção 1, Brasília (DF), ano 155, v. 64, p. 1, 4 abr. 2018. Disponível em: <https://pesquisa.in.gov.br/imprensa/jsp/visualiza/index.jsp?jornal=515&pagina=1&data=04/04/2018&totalArquivos=184>. Acesso em: 2 fev. 2020.

BRASIL. Presidência da República. Decreto n.º 9.795, de 17 de maio de 2019. Aprova a Estrutura Regimental e o Quadro Demonstrativo dos Cargos em Comissão e das Funções de Confiança do Ministério da Saúde, remaneja cargos em comissão e funções de confiança, transforma funções de confiança e substitui cargos em comissão do Grupo-Direção e Assessoramento Superiores - DAS por Funções Comissionadas do Poder Executivo - FCPE. Brasília (DF), 2019. Disponível em: [http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil\\_03/\\_ato2019-2022/2019/decreto/D9795.htm](http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2019-2022/2019/decreto/D9795.htm). Acesso em: 2 fev. 2020.

BRASIL. Projeto de Lei n.º 4590, de 20 de agosto de 2019. Institui o Estatuto das Famílias. Apensado ao PL 3369/2015. Disponível em: <https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/fichadetramitacao?idProposicao=2216200>. Acesso em: 20 maio 2021.

BROWN, Wendy. Nas ruínas do Neoliberalismo: a ascensão da política antidemocrática no ocidente. São Paulo: Editora Filosófica Politeia, 2019.

COOPER, Melinda. Family values: between neoliberalism and the new social conservatism. New York: Zone Books, 2017.

CORRÊA, Sonia; PATERNOTTE, David; KUHAR, Roman. The globalisation of anti-gender campaigns: transnational anti-gender movements in Europe and Latin America create unlikely alliances. IPS Journal, Democracy and Society, 31 maio 2018. Disponível em: <https://www.ips-journal.eu/topics/human-rights/article/show/the-globalisation-of-anti-gender-campaigns-2761/>. Acesso em: 03 fev. 2020.



CQC. Bolsonaro ao programa CQC sobre casos de AIDS e tratamento de HIV. Brasília (DF), 2010, 1 vídeo (1min. 36seg). Disponível em: <https://tenhohiv.com/noticias/bolsonaro-e-contra-medicamento-gratis-para-hiv/>. Acesso em: 2. fev. 2020.

FERREIRA, Anderson. Projeto de Lei nº 6.583, de 16 de outubro de 2013. Dispõe sobre o Estatuto da Família e dá outras providências. Brasília (DF): Câmara dos Deputados, 2013. Disponível em: <https://www.camara.leg.br/proposicoesWeb/fichadetramitacao?idProposicao=597005>. Acesso em: 2 fev. 2020.

JAMESON. Fredric. A virada cultural: reflexões sobre o pós-moderno. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2006.

KRIEG-PLANQUE, Alice. Fórmulas e lugares discursivos: propostas para a análise do discurso político. In: MOTTA, Ana Raquel; SALGADO, Luciana (org.). Fórmulas discursivas. São Paulo: Contexto, p. 11-40, 2011.

PUTTI, Alexandre. “Uma pessoa com HIV é uma despesa para todos aqui no Brasil”, diz Bolsonaro. São Paulo: Carta Capital, São Paulo, 5 fev. 2020. Disponível em: <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/politica/uma-pessoa-com-hiv-e-uma-despesa-para-todos-aqui-no-brasil-diz-bolsonaro/>. Acesso em: 12 fev. 2020.

PUTTI, Alexandre. Bolsonaro compara Covid-19 com HIV: ‘Era voltado a uma classe com comportamentos sexuais diferenciados’. São Paulo: Carta Capital, São Paulo, 7 abr. 2021. Disponível em: <https://www.cartacapital.com.br/politica/bolsonaro-compara-covid-19-com-hiv-era-voltado-a-uma-classe-com-comportamentos-sexuais-diferenciados/>. Acesso em 07 abr. 2021.

ROCHA, Solange et al. O Tempo é Hoje: interseções entre neoliberalismo e a epidemia da aids na periferia capitalista. In: DÍAZ, Marinilda Rivera; FRANCH, Mónica; SACRAMENTO, Octávio; ROJAS, Patria (comp.). VIH, migraciones y derechos humanos perspectivas internacionales. Buenos Aires: Clacso, 2019. p. 1-280. Disponível em: <http://biblioteca.clacso.edu.ar/clacso/gt/20191202102019/VIH-Migraciones-y-Derechos-Humanos.pdf>. Acesso em: 05 mar. 2020.

ROCHA, Maria Solange Guerra. Silenciosa conveniência entre transgressão e conservadorismo: trajetórias feministas frente à epidemia de Aids no Brasil. 2011. Tese (Doutorado) – Curso de Serviço Social, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Recife, 2013.

VIEIRA, Ana Cristina de Souza et al. HIV/AIDS e desafios para BRICS: política de saúde e direitos no Brasil, África do Sul e Moçambique: relatório final de pesquisa. CNPq Processo 408662/2013-1, Recife, 2016.