

REPRESSION, INDIFFERENCE, AND CONTRADICTIONS

Between 1920 and 1974, homosexuality was criminalized and same-sex relationships were often treated with contempt or violence by the state. Many of the cases found—such as those of the Judicial Police in the 1940s or those of the PIDE in colonies such as Mozambique—show strategies of surveillance and repression of dissident bodies.

However, not all episodes fit the model of systematic repression. The case of journalist Virginia Quaresma, for example, suggests a more ambiguous scenario, of possible indifference or even state protection, especially among white urban elites.

These nuances reveal that Portuguese territories during the dictatorship presented different ways of being homosexual, not all of which were based exclusively on persecution, but also intersected with class, race, geographical context, and political connections.



Virginia Quaresma

*The exhibition **Cadê Elas? – Black LGBTQIA+ People and the Portuguese Dictatorship**, by the Afrontosas Collective, proposes a deep dive into the invisible and silenced histories of Black LGBTQIA+ people during Portugal's dictatorial regime.*

Through the analysis of historical archives and period documents, the project reveals the complex layers of repression, invisibility, and resistance that shaped the experiences of these individuals during times of censorship and social control.

RACIAL AND SEXUAL INVISIBILITY: THE SILENCE OF SOURCES

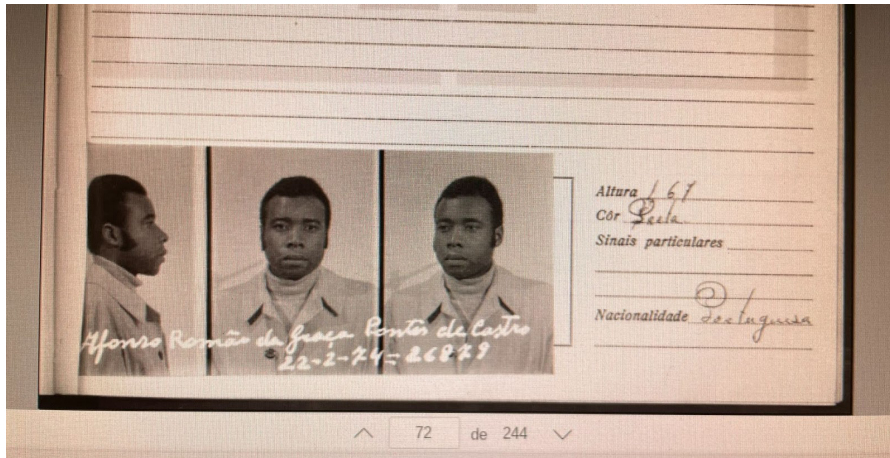
The absence of data, however, does not imply an absence of stories. It is in the gap in the archives that the need to seek other forms of interpretation emerges. Photographs from the period, for example, can now be reinterpreted as portraits of LGBTQIA+ people, even when not intended for that purpose. The artistic production of José de Almada Negreiros, present in the collection of the Modern Art Center, is an example of how art can preserve traces of dissident bodies, even under heavy censorship.

Similarly, it is necessary to consider that the black population at the time often found themselves at the extremes of the colonial experience: either in situations of extreme precariousness or occupying spaces of intellectual privilege and anti-colonial militancy. This condition also influenced the ways in which the state and society dealt with their sexualities.

At the same time, the research confronts the intersecting prejudices of the time. Within the white homosexual community itself, racism was clearly manifested in the way interracial relationships were perceived. On the other hand, historical data also reveal expressions of homophobia within black communities, especially under the colonial and religious values imposed on them.

THE DIFFICULT PATH OF RESEARCH

During the project, 1310 criminal records were read of individuals who suffered political and social persecution under the dictatorial regime. Of this total, only 13 files recorded people identified as black, reflecting the scarcity and marginalization of information about black people in the context of the dictatorship. Of this total, only 13 files recorded people identified as black, giving us clues about the participation of black people in revolutionary movements and reflecting the scarcity and marginalization of information about black people in the context of the dictatorship.



The small number of records on black individuals raises questions about the visibility and representation of these people. The absence of more detailed documentation reflects the exclusion of their identities, gender issues, and sexuality in the construction of historical archives. In many cases, for example, documents from the Judicial Police or the PIDE (Portuguese secret police) make no reference to the color or ethnicity of those charged, making it difficult to reconstruct these stories.

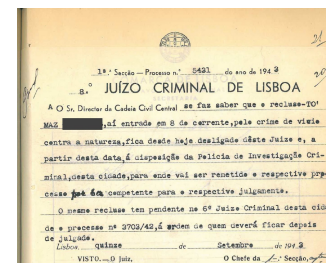
Furthermore, it is necessary to confront the contrast that still persists today between the visibility of white LGBTQIA+ people, present in the media, publications, interviews, and cultural productions, and the systematic erasure of the experiences of black LGBTQIA+ people. This inequality also echoes in the field of memory and history: while white trajectories tend to be recognized, documented, and celebrated, black histories often remain absent or marginalized, if not totally forgotten.

A SURVEY CONDUCTED BY MANY HANDS

The project involved an intense collective effort of research, listening, and memory reconstruction. The methodological approach included:

- Conversations with researchers, teachers, activists, history experts, and civil society members of various nationalities (Sao Tomé, Cape Verde, Angola, Portugal, and Brazil);
- Visits to public and institutional archives such as the Judicial Police, Torre do Tombo, the 25 de Abril Documentation Center (Coimbra), the Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon Municipal Archive, National Library of Portugal, Portuguese Film Archive, National Republican Guard, Lisbon Municipal Newspaper Library, Aljube Museum, and Lisbon Museum;
- Reading and analysis of newspapers from the period, documentaries, interviews, academic articles, and dissertations, such as that of Francisco Paolo Vieira Miguel (2019), which is one of the only sources on interracial same-sex relationships between black and white people during that period;
- Consultation of historical cases, such as that of Valentim de Barros, and PIDE documents in Mozambique, which reveal clues about the repression of these relationships.

However, the documentation has not been fully processed and is not available in a structured form to researchers, which requires constant “digging,” interpretation, and reading between the lines.



Judicial Police Documentation Center