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## Celebridades brasileiras, *standing* e o movimento #EleNão

### **Resumo**

Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar o papel das celebridades brasileiras no movimento #EleNão – que foi construído em oposição à candidatura de Jair Bolsonaro nas eleições presidenciais de 2018 no Brasil. Revisito os conceitos de *standing* e *footing* para discutir sua proficuidade para a compreensão do papel que as celebridades podem desempenhar na política. A análise discute alguns valores que orientam as ações das celebridades para apreender sua inserção na política, bem como seu papel nas lutas feministas, na defesa dos direitos humanos e na democracia contemporânea.

**Palavras-chave:** Celebridades, *Standing*, Brasil, #EleNão.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the role of Brazilian celebrities in the movement called #EleNÃO (#NotHim), which was built in opposition to Jair Bolsonaro's candidacy in the 2018 presidential elections in Brazil. The aim is not to measure the effectiveness of the celebrities' role in the political field, but to understand the ideas they supported against Bolsonaro's candidacy.

To this end, the text is divided in four parts: (1) First, I briefly introduce the field of celebrity studies, highlighting the pragmatist approach to which I subscribe; (2) Next, I revisit the concept of standing – and how it can be related to the sociological notion of footing – to discuss its fruitfulness for the comprehension of the role celebrities can play in politics; (3) I, then, briefly present the #NotHim movement and its insertion in the Brazilian political context; and (4) Lastly, I discuss the methodology and present the analysis from some categories of footing taken by Brazilian celebrities to justify their adherence to the movement.

In order to analyze these positions, I collected 62 videos posted by celebrities who joined the movement. They were collected from digital social networks (YouTube and Instagram) from a keyword search on the Internet. Then, the data were analyzed from five categories of footing since these celebrities position themselves as citizens; as women; as mothers; as lesbian or transgender; as black women. With this, it is possible to grasp some values that guide celebrities' actions to apprehend their insertion in politics, as well as their role in feminist struggles, in the advocacy for human rights, and in the construction of contemporary democracy.

### Celebrity Studies: Different perspectives

There are many ways to study celebrities in social sciences. We can identify at least four perspectives which have been developed in recent years: 1) *historical*; 2) *subjectivist*; 3) *structuralist*; 4) *poststructuralist*. The first one is concerned with the historical dimension in the analysis of fame. In the organization of the *Companion to Celebrity*, Marshall and Redmond (2016) speak of a *celebrity genealogy*, revisiting Michel Foucault's reflections, to think about how the phenomenon is discursively linked to power formations. The proposal is to think of celebrities as a discursive formation. Inglis (2016), Glass (2016), and Studlar (2016) focus on this historical dimension of fame by discussing the *sequence of brief lives* (Inglis, 2016), the *literary celebrity* (Glass, 2016) and *the emergence of motion picture stardom* (Studlar, 2016). A historical perspective can also be found in the classic work of Leo Braudy (1986), which addresses fame from the association of four elements: a person, an accomplishment, their immediate publicity, and their permanence in posterity. Peter Burke's work on the construction of the public image of Luis XIV can also be included in this perspective (Burke, 1994).

The second approach is centered “on the putative singularity of personal characteristics. In these accounts, celebrity is explained as the reflection of innate talent. [...] Talent is understood to be a unique, inexplicable phenomenon” (Rojek, 2001:29). In this perspective, named by Rojek as *subjectivism*, the scholar upholds Weber's classic reflection on charisma, understood as a set of specific gifts of body and spirit not accessible to every person (Weber, 2003). Whether or not centered on the concept of charisma, subjective approaches to celebrities focus on the profile and biography of personalities, emphasizing their performance and the issues of private life.

The marketing dimension of celebrity is a constituent element of the third approach, named by Rojek as *structuralism*: here “celebrities are conceptualized as one of the means through which capitalism achieves its ends of subduing and exploiting the masses” (Rojek, 2001:33). The Critical Theory approach, with Leo Lowenthal's classic study of production and consumption idols, can be situated in this perspective (Lowenthal, 1984). The work of Daniel Boorstin (1992) on the production and consumption of celebrities which would have led, in his view, to the disappearance of the hero, is also situated in this perspective.

The fourth approach – named *poststructuralism* (Rojek, 2001) – looks at the relationship between celebrities and the historical, cultural, and socioeconomic contexts in which they emerge. For Rojek, “Post-structuralist accounts concentrate on the omnipresent celebrity image and the codes of representation through which this image is reproduced, developed and consumed” (Rojek, 2001:43). This is what Richard Dyer (1998) does by proposing an *intertextual analysis* of celebrities.

These are some of the approaches that can be taken to reflect on celebrities in contemporary times. The purpose here is not, however, to deepen the discussion of the various types of perspectives,

which I have done in previous works,<sup>1</sup> but to emphasize the many ways in which famous personalities can be studied. In what follows, I would like to show how I have sought to investigate celebrities.

Without denying the historical, subjective, and market dimensions of celebrities, and paying attention to their contextual insertion, I have sought to develop a *pragmatist perspective* of public figures, due to reflections coming from both classic authors such as John Dewey (1954, 2005) and George Herbert Mead (1934) as well as from more recent approaches such as those of Hans Joas (2000, 2013). A pragmatist perspective focuses on the insertion of the phenomenon in the domain of *experience*, understood as an interaction between subject and world in a process of mutual affectation. The experience involves an action that triggers consequences that affect the subjects' lives, which, in turn, (re)act in the face of this affectation.

In this sense, a *pragmatist approach to celebrities* looks at the actions they perform in the world, at their performances, at the way they stand in relation to others, affecting people's lives and calling them to sustain a position on topics discussed.

How do celebrities act in the world? In many ways. They act in the performance of their professional activities: on a soccer field or a fashion catwalk; they make video clips to release a new album; they post videos on their YouTube channel or play certain roles in a movie or soap opera. They also act in their private lives, often made public on TV screens, gossip magazines or digital social networks: dating, traveling, getting married, divorcing, having children, and bringing kids to school or to the beach are examples of actions taken by celebrated people in everyday life – ordinary actions that bring them closer to anonymous persons, who also perform them in their practical experience. Whether looking at work or private life, what I seek is to grasp the values that guide the actions analyzed.

I understand that the values embodied by a celebrity can build public adherence (or rejection) toward it. Values are evidenced and/or criticized in a process that acts to update the universe of values of a society at a given moment. Thus, understanding the actions of celebrities undertaken in the Brazilian political scenario can help us to grasp the values that are defended and pointed by certain celebrated personalities in their public positions.

This interest in the political role of celebrities has been growing in recent years – and it is important to discuss some of these ideas here. Richey and Budabin (2016) are interested in the celebrities' role in international affairs, and they have pointed out that “celebrities have become recognized for acting as diplomats, experts, and humanitarians, reflecting the expanded scope of practices and sites of engagement” (Richey and Budabin, 2016:4).

These celebrities' practices are also analyzed by Wheeler (2013) to think about *celebrity politics*: he highlights a process of *politicization of celebrities* alongside a *celebration of politicians*. The author recovers a distinction made by John Street (2004) between *celebrity politicians*, politicians who incorporated the principles of fame to pursue electoral achievement, and *politicized celebrities*, famous people who became activists of particular causes. Paying attention to celebrity politicians, Wheeler (2013:87) examines, for example, Barack Obama's 2008 presidential campaign, highlighting how the candidate incorporated “performance, personalization, branding, and public relations issues at the heart of his political representation”. These are issues that integrate the so-called *image politics* discussed by Wilson Gomes (2004) in the construction of the *public image* of politicians (and institutions) in contemporary times.

Thinking about politicized celebrities, Wheeler highlights how they can provide credibility for campaigns around particular issues within political agendas by drawing public attention to such causes. Among the examples, the author mentions the engagement of actor George Clooney, who “emerged as the strongest liberal voice in Hollywood” (2013:117) from a television program to raise funds for the families of the victims of the September 11 attacks in 2001 in the US. Among these politicized celebrities, he highlights those famous who take advantage of fame to gain public office in the elections, such as in the election of actor Ronald Reagan for governor of California and later for president of the United States.

<sup>1</sup> Simões (2009); França; Simões (2020).

Wheeler emphasizes the controversies in reading this process of celebrity politicization. The author points out that it is not a matter of incorporating celebrity activism in an uncritical manner, but rather of considering the “impact of celebrity politics in order to assess the worth of this activity in an ever-widening political culture” (2013:25). These impacts arising from the articulation between celebrities and politics are also discussed by Kamradt (2019), Paixão-Rocha and Simoes (2021) and França and Leurquin (2022). Kamradt (2019) proposes a research agenda that can account for the phenomenon in the Brazilian context – which is in line with the proposal developed in this article. One of the ways to analyze this phenomenon is by looking at the action of celebrities. This is done by Paixão-Rocha and Simões (2021) when analyzing Anitta's political dimension in relation to her audiences and also by França and Leurquin (2022) when analyzing the youtuber Felipe Neto as a *political celebrity* in Brazil.

Thus, activating the beforementioned pragmatist perspective to analyze the actions developed by celebrities in the Brazilian political context, the concept of standing seems promising for the investigation of the performance of celebrities.

### Standing and Footing

The concept of standing can be understood as “a socially constructed legitimacy to engage publicly in a particular issue” (Meyer; Gamson, 1995:190). In law studies, standing “refers to the right of a claimant to file a case and be heard in a courtroom” (Meyer; Bourdon, 2019:7). In this sense, it can be thought of as the legitimacy that a person has to be heard in a given case or as its capacity to influence a decision and make claims. Meyer and Bourdon have taken this legal concept of standing and translated it to social movements’ theory in order to discuss the gun debate in the United States. As they point out,

Standing in the legal system is dichotomous: one is in or out. A judge makes decisions about what additional information is relevant and thus admissible, and how to weigh particular claims and claimants against a formal articulated standard of law. In the political arena, the process is less routinized, obviously unregulated, and far more uncertain. Standing is not dichotomous, but gradated and relational. One who gains a hearing is attended to with more or less seriousness by different listeners, and the degree of attentiveness can vary over time (Meyer; Bourdon, 2019:16).

The authors draw attention to how in the public sphere there are multiple hearings available for those who claim standing to defend a particular cause. Unlike in courts, standing in the political sphere is more segmented into venues and audiences. “Additionally, in an increasingly fragmented political arena, claims of standing need to be reargued constantly, and are subject to renegotiation” (Meyer; Bourdon, 2019:16). In addition, in the public sphere, “groups make claims to standing based on personal experience, and also based on expertise” (Meyer; Bourdon, 2019:46).

Thus, when looking at those who claim standing in the public arena, Meyer and Bourdon (2019) highlight the victims (those who suffer the consequences of firearms, for example), the specialists (such as physicians and educators), and the celebrities:

Celebrities enjoy immediate and routine access to public attention as a result of their public renown. [...] Their notoriety enables them to draw attention to their views on matters of public concern. Sometimes, this is good for the causes they endorse, but celebrities can also enhance their own visibility in hooking into a current political cause (Meyer; Bourdon, 2019:58).

As noted by Marshall (2006:X), fame gives a person a certain *discursive power*, placing his/her voice above others and making him/her emerge as legitimate and significant in media systems. This process is not, however, unambiguous. Meyer and Gamson (1995) analyze two movements involving celebrity participation (Walden Woods and Colorado Amendment) and point out that they “offers a number of clear advantages and constraints” (Meyer; Gamson, 1995:181). In any case, celebrities can be seen as important actors in supporting certain ideas for the discursive power they assume in the public scene.

From this understanding, one may think that the standing of celebrities is derived from their visibility and public recognition. But it is important to know not only whether or not a celebrated

person has the legitimacy to talk about a particular topic, but what kind of position she takes on the public scene. In this sense, the sociological concept of *footing* discussed by Erving Goffman may be very fruitful. Goffman discusses this concept in *Forms of Talk* (1981) to think about how one person places herself in relation to other people in a social interaction. For the author, a change in the *framing* of a situation – that is, in answering the question “what is happening here?” – implies a change in the *footing* of the people engaged in that interaction. Footing, then, is understood as posture, alignment, positioning.

I would like to think about how a celebrity uses her legitimacy to build positions on different issues. In other terms, how their standing in public scene fosters footings which might open a place of speech for other people position themselves. In this sense, I would like to answer the questions: Celebrities support their standing in the name of what ideas? What is their stance and what values are revealed in this process?

These concepts direct my view towards the actions of celebrities and allow for developing the pragmatist analysis as presented earlier. By looking at the actions of Brazilian celebrities in the 2018 electoral context, I seek to grasp what kinds of footings were sustained by them and what such a political position might reveal about the context of contemporary Brazil. The goal is to grasp the meanings that emerge with the positions assumed by celebrities when joining the #NotHim movement, which will be presented below.

### **#NotHim: A Brief Presentation of the Movement and the Brazilian Context**

The 2018 elections in Brazil were very polarized: there was the emergence of a right-wing candidate who was opposed to the left-wing candidacy of the Workers' Party, which had been in power for 13 years (from worker Lula's election in 2002 to President Dilma Rousseff's controversial impeachment in 2016). Jair Messias Bolsonaro (currently without a party) was elected with more than 57 million votes in October of 2018 and is a representative of the rise of right-wing politicians in the world.<sup>2</sup>

A former Army captain, Bolsonaro worked as a congressman for 27 years (between 1991 and 2018) and he had only two bills approved in his seven mandates as a member of congress. He became known for his aggressive speeches, especially the ones supporting dictatorship and torture. A good sampling of his stances can be found in Jon Lee Anderson's text for *The New Yorker*:

Jair Bolsonaro, who was elected President of Brazil on promises to end crime, right the economy, and “make Brazil great,” has spent his career gleefully offending women, black people, environmentalists, and gays. “I would be incapable of loving a homosexual son,” he has said. “I would prefer that my son die in an accident than show up with some guy with a mustache.” As a national legislator, he declared one political rival, Maria do Rosário, “not worth raping.” Immigrants are “scum.” The United Nations is “a bunch of communists.” He supports the torture of drug dealers, the use of firing squads, and the empowerment of a hyper-aggressive police force. “A policeman who doesn't kill,” he has said, “isn't a policeman” (Anderson, 2019).

In the beginning of the electoral campaign, he was considered to have low chances of winning. Meanwhile, he kept rising in the polls. One month before the first round of the election, he was filmed being stabbed during an act of campaign, an event of which he took advantage as to present himself as the one who would take Brazil out of chaos. So, it was in this context that the #NotHim movement emerged in opposition to Bolsonaro's candidacy to the presidential elections in Brazil.

The #NotHim movement should also be situated in a context of feminist political effervescence – or “feminist explosion” (Hollanda, 2018) – which has been taking place in Brazil (and in other countries of the world), building what both the media and researchers<sup>3</sup> named as the *Feminist Spring*. In October 2015, a feminist group (ThinkOlga) launched the hashtag #PrimeiroAssédio (#FirstHarassment), calling on women to report their first sexual harassment. In the same month,

<sup>2</sup> It is important to point out that in the 2022 elections Bolsonaro was defeated by Lula. The hashtag #Not Him was used, but not with the same intensity as in the 2018 elections.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Nascimento (2018); Arruzza; Bhattacharya; Fraser (2019).

thousands of women took to the streets to protest against a project that would undermine the access to abortion for women who are victims of rape – which is guaranteed by law in Brazil. In 2016, other hashtags carried on such feminist actions on social networks: #EstuproNuncaMais (#RapeNeverAgain), started after the collective rape of a 16-year-old girl in Rio de Janeiro; #NãoéNão (#NoIsNo), launched in preparation for the 2017 Carnival; #AgoraÉqueSãoElas (#NowItsTheirTurn), where women claimed space in opinion columns in Brazilian newspapers; #MeuAmigoSecreto (#MySecretFriend), which encouraged reports of harassment by close (unidentified) men. The #MeToo movement, which started in the USA in October 2017, also had a great impact in Brazil and can be included among the feminist campaigns that marked the Brazilian context before the 2018 elections.

It is in this context that we see the emergence of the #NotHim movement in the 2018 election campaign. The movement was initiated by women who opposed the candidacy of Jair Bolsonaro for the Presidency of the Republic. The group was created on a Facebook page (*Women United against Bolsonaro*), a group described as the

OFFICIAL Group for gathering women from all over Brazil (and those living outside Brazil) against the advances and strengthening of sexism, misogyny, racism, homophobia, and other types of prejudice. We believe that this scenario that threatens our achievements and rights is a great opportunity for us to reaffirm ourselves as political persons and rights holders. This is a great opportunity to act together! To have our strength recognized! Recognition of the strength of the unification of women can direct the future of this country! Welcome those who identify with the growth of this movement.<sup>4</sup>

The call for the unification of women against the candidate reached more than four million members on the Facebook page.<sup>5</sup> It then overcame digital social networks and people went to the streets across the country on September 29th, 2018. Demonstrations occurred in several cities in Brazil and around the world, building, according to Pinto (2019), “the largest demonstration of women in the history of the country”.<sup>6</sup> Several celebrities joined the movement and released videos on their social networks calling their audiences to participate in the protests.

The engagement of Brazilian celebrities in the #NotHim movement can be understood as a form of *action* of these personalities in the public scene. An action that displays some footings and is guided by the values assumed by them when justifying their insertion in the movement. Thus, to analyze such positions, my view focuses on videos posted by celebrities who joined the movement.

To proceed with the data collection, Internet searches were done in three platforms: 1) YouTube; 2) Instagram; 3) Google. The idea, when looking for testimonials on the three platforms, was to bring forth a diverse set of positions, which do not represent the totality of the celebrities who joined the #NotHim but can provide significant evidence.

On YouTube, a search was done using “celebridades + #EleNão” (Celebrities + #NotHim) and the first video in the results was selected, a compilation of the testimonials of 20 celebrities who joined the movement (18 women and 2 men). On Instagram, the search was done through the hashtag #desafiounidasnasruas (##unitedinthestreetschallenge), used by the movement to mark posts in adhesion to it. The search found 1551 publications on September 30th, 2019, and the first 100 results were selected. Posts that did not feature celebrities and those that were repeated were excluded, leading to 10 videos (9 women and 1 man). Thus, a total of 27 videos of women celebrities from YouTube and Instagram.

In many of these positions, celebrities call on their friends to join the movement. Finally, I searched Google for the “challenged celebrity name + #NotHim” and selected another 46 videos to compound the qualitative sample collected for the development of this analysis.

After computing the 73 videos, I researched the number of followers for each celebrity in order to evaluate the extent of the reverberations of such positions. Admittedly, there is no exact measure

<sup>4</sup> Available at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/499414607198716/>. Access: 15 March 2019.

<sup>5</sup> On 15 March 2019, the group had around 2,5 million of members and was renamed *Women United with Brazil*.

<sup>6</sup> Available at <https://www.bbc.com/portuguese/brasil-45700013>. Access: 15 March 2019.

of whether an actress or singer is a celebrity or not, but the number of followers on a digital media like Instagram can provide a clue as to whether their ideas can penetrate the audiences.

I then focused on videos of celebrities who had more than 100,000 followers. Two actresses – Malu Mader and Renata Sorrah – did not have social media profiles, but remained in the sample due to their widespread recognition in Brazilian culture (having played memorable characters in soap operas on the country's largest TV station). So, the final sample was made up of 62 videos of famous women who joined #NotHim, as shown below.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 1. Number of followers of celebrity on Instagram on Nov. 06, 2019**

<b>Celebrity</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Followers</b>
Alessandra Negrini	Actress	523 thousand
Alinne Moraes	Actress	2,8 million
Anitta	Singer	42,2 million
Astrid Fontenelle	Television Presenter	838 thousand
Bruna Linzmeyer	Actress	1,9 million
Camila Pitanga	Actress	2,3 million
Caroline Abras	Actress	112 thousand
Céu	Singer	137 thousand
Chandelley Braz	Actress	226 thousand
Cláudia Abreu	Actress	535 thousand
Cláudia Leite	Singer	19,4 million
Cláudia Raia	Actress	5,9 million
Daniela Mercury	Singer	738 thousand
Débora Bloch	Actress	428 thousand
Débora Falabella	Actress	949 thousand
Dira Paes	Actress	645 thousand
Elza Soares	Singer	387 thousand
Fernanda Abreu	Singer	109 thousand
Fernanda Lima	Television Presenter	4,1 million
Fernanda Paes Leme	Actress	3,5 million
Gisele Itié	Actress	537 thousand
Glória Groove	Singer	1,4 million
Gretchen	Singer	1,8 million
Julia Dalavia	Actress	723 thousand
Júlia Lemmertz	Actress	434 thousand
Juliana Alves	Actress	3 million
Leandra Leal	Actress	2,2 million
Letícia Colin	Actress	3,4 million
Letícia Sabatella	Actress	609 thousand
Letícia Spiller	Actress	3,3 million
Liniker	Singer	578 thousand
Linn da Quebrada	Singer	186 thousand
Louise D'Tuani	Actress	262 thousand
Malu Mader	Actress	-
Manuela d'Ávila	Ex-congresswoman	1,5 million
Maria Casadevall	Actress	1,3 million
Maria Flor	Actress	312 thousand
Maria Gadú	Singer	806 thousand
Maria Padilha	Actress	133 thousand

<sup>7</sup> Several of the celebrities who were summoned did not join the movement – or their placements were not found in Google search.

Maria Ribeiro	Actress	734 thousand
Mariana Aydar	Singer	95 thousand
Mariana Lima	Actress	115 thousand
Marília Mendonça	Singer	23,5 million
Marina Person	Television Host	120 thousand
Mart'nália	Singer	145 thousand
MC Carol	Singer	247 thousand
Monica Iozzi	Actress	4,1 million
Nátaly Neri	Digital Influencer	393 thousand
Nathalia Dill	Actress	3,3 million
Pablo Vittar	Singer	9,4 million
Patrícia Pillar	Actress	732 thousand
Paula Burlamaqui	Actress	287 thousand
Paula Lavigne	Actress	213 thousand
Preta Gil	Singer	7,3 million
Renata Sorrah	Actress	-
Samara Filippo	Actress	968 thousand
Sarah Oliveira	Television Host	199 thousand
Sonia Guajajara	Indigenous Leader	207 thousand
Sophie Charlotte	Actress	2,9 million
Tainá Müller	Actress	1 million
Tulipa Ruiz	Singer	176 thousand
Vanessa da Mata	Singer	1,2 million

### Celebrities and Their Standing in #NotHim

While computing the collected data, I tried to understand some categories of footing taken by Brazilian celebrities to justify their adherence to the movement. They position themselves: as citizens; as women; as mothers; as lesbian or transgender; as black women. These identity markers are mobilized to give legitimacy to celebrities and their footings. These postures reinforce celebrities' standing to be part of the movement and raise important issues related to democracy, feminism and the promotion of human rights – as I discuss while presenting the results of the analysis.

#### As Citizens

As citizens, the celebrities claim their constitutional right to freedom of thought and expression to manifest. Many have stood in defense of democracy. That was for example the stand taken by actress Leandra Leal: “As a Brazilian citizen, I make use of my right to position myself. #NotHim because I can't accept hate, violence, torture, a denial of history.” She criticizes Bolsonaro's performance as a congressman who has done nothing significant for the state of Rio de Janeiro. And she also says he is not honest and does not respect democracy.

The public figures analyzed also argue that politics should be used as a way out of the crisis and not to aggravate it through hatred, as former deputy Manuela D'Ávila<sup>8</sup> stressed. Or that it is not with violence that the problems of a country will be solved, as actress Leticia Sabatella said. Actress Bruna Linzmeyer pointed out the need for dialogue, as well as laws that “diminish our social inequality,” and singer Maria Gadú underlined the need to take a stand against any backward steps in our democracy and rights already accomplished.

In this position in favor of democracy, a contrast also emerges between humanity and barbarism beyond the distinction between right and left in the electoral polarization, as actress Maria Ribeiro

<sup>8</sup> It is important to highlight that Manuela D'Ávila was the candidate for vice president on Fernando Haddad's ticket in the 2018 elections.

stressed. According to her, Bolsonaro voters were on the side of barbarism as they endorsed torture and torturers and denied the atrocities of the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964-1984), as well as denied the country's own history. For Bolsonaro, the 1964 coup is a moment to be celebrated.<sup>9</sup>

Several celebrities referred to the anger, hatred, and violence incited by the candidate – who said on a podium during the election campaign in a Northern state that he would shoot his opponents, cheered by his audience.<sup>10</sup> He has also threatened to shoot former President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. By intimidating his opponents with death threats, Bolsonaro makes them enemies to be destroyed – which is not fit for a truly democratic system. According to Mouffe,

Envisaged from the point of view of “agonistic pluralism”, the aim of democratic politics is to construct the “them” in such a way that it is no longer perceived as an enemy to be destroyed, but as an “adversary”, that is, somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question. This is the real meaning of liberal-democratic tolerance, which does not entail condoning ideas that we oppose or being indifferent to standpoints that we disagree with, but treating those who defend them as legitimate opponents (Mouffe, 2000:101).

Contesting his expressed desire for the annihilation of opponents, celebrities claimed for dialogue, love, and affection as values to be opposed to those embodied by the Bolsonarist political group. For actress Alessandra Negrini, if you believe in democratic values, you must join the #NotHim movement. Digital influencer Nátaly Neri made a long video outlining all the Bolsonaro government's threats on democracy. She talked about the withdrawal of labor rights (provided in his government plan), the proposed privatization of public assets, and the risks to the environment.

What we would like to stress from the standings shown here is that the values of freedom, equality, honesty, competence, and life itself emerge as a right for all – not just those who share our ideas. If democracy can be thought of – more than as a system of government – as an idea or a way of life, as Dewey (1954) suggests, we understand that the democratic way of life advocated by these celebrities cannot include the election of Bolsonaro to the presidency of Brazil. The analyzed celebrities stood for a way of life based on freedom, equality, and respect, which are central values in the construction of democracy.

### As Women

A second category identified refers to the position of celebrities as women. That is, they claim their legitimacy to contest Bolsonaro's candidacy by bringing forth their experience as women. To understand this kind of positioning, it is necessary to remember some of the candidate's quotes regarding women: He said that he would not rape congresswoman Maria do Rosario (Workers' Party) because she was ugly and did not deserve it; that he had four sons and, after a weakness, a girl was born<sup>11</sup>; in an interview, he said that he would not employ a woman with the same salary as a man, because women get pregnant and therefore should earn less<sup>12</sup>; and he also confessed to have hit a woman.<sup>13</sup>

It is against the sexism and misogyny in the speeches of Jair Bolsonaro that the celebrities analyzed stand. They claim for equal pay for men and women, and criticize the ideas that women should earn less because they get pregnant and that having a female daughter is “a weakness”. They evoke women's unity and strength to make a difference in the 2018 elections.

<sup>9</sup> Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/mar/27/brazil-bolsonaro-military-coup-1964>. Access in: 26 Nov. 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0eMLhCcbYQ>. Access in: 26 Nov. 2019.

<sup>11</sup> Available at: <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/10/29/brazil-election-jair-bolsonaros-most-controversial-quotes.html>. Access in: 26 Nov. 2019.

<sup>12</sup> Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-45579635>. Access in: 26 Nov. 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Available at: [https://www.huffpostbrasil.com/2017/09/15/a-entrevista-mais-sincera-de-bolsonaro-revela-zoofilia-violencia-contra-mulher-e-frisa-homofobia\\_a\\_23209457/](https://www.huffpostbrasil.com/2017/09/15/a-entrevista-mais-sincera-de-bolsonaro-revela-zoofilia-violencia-contra-mulher-e-frisa-homofobia_a_23209457/). Access in: 26 Nov. 2019.

Singer Marília Mendonça, for example, used her own experience as a singer of country (or *sertanejo*) music to break down sexism in the Brazilian context.<sup>14</sup> She called on women to consider whether they deserve this setback in their lives and stood against prejudice and in favor of love. Actress Camila Pitanga highlighted the candidate's lack of respect to women in his defending of fascist values. In the speech of actress Leticia Sabatella, emphasis is given to “women's unity, which can make a difference in these elections to prevent a racist, sexist, fascist, homophobic candidate from winning.” And actress Dira Paes joined the movement by drawing attention to the voice of women: “#NotHim because he doesn't represent us, because he judged us so badly, he thought he could say whatever he wanted and we were going to be quiet. No, we won't shut up”.

Television host Fernanda Lima explicitly evokes the feminist movement to challenge Bolsonaro's ideas and positions: “It is very easy for a woman to say that she is not a feminist while she is working, voting, coming and going, and being a free woman. But we can't forget how many women have died fighting so we can be here today, surrounded by rights”.

Implicitly or explicitly, these celebrities speak in defense of the rights of women, threatened daily by patriarchal society and, at that time, by Bolsonaro's candidacy. They used their *discursive power* (Marshall, 2006) to reverberate the many agendas of the feminist movements, which address the plurality of women's experience. It is in this sense that we can subdivide this category of standing into three others, because celebrities stand as 1) mothers; 2) lesbians and/or trans women; 3) black women. This reveals the interconnectedness of oppressions experienced by countless women and the need to think about “a feminism for the 99%,” as Arruzza, Bhattacharya and Fraser (2019:29) suggest. That is, a feminism capable of paying attention to women's plural existences and to the heterogeneity of the movements themselves and their claims.

### As Mothers

The celebrities also mobilize their experience as mothers to stand against Bolsonaro. By engaging in this social role, they claim equality between girls and boys and between men and women, defending acquired and at the same time threatened rights. Actress Samara Filippo stood in her role as mother and wife and expressed the wish that her daughters “grow up in freedom in an environment without repression, violence, truculence.”

Then congresswoman Manuela d'Ávila justified her adhesion to the movement: “#NotHim because as a mother and stepmother of a girl and a boy, I want them to live in a Brazil with equal opportunities. I want my daughter to have the possibility to walk the streets without fear of being raped and that she grows up in a country that does not [...] pay women and men differently for the same job”. Actress Tainá Müller said she cannot support a candidate who stands against maternity leave – it must be remembered that the candidate, when he was a deputy, voted in favor of reducing the 120-day maternity-leave, a right guaranteed by the Brazilian Constitution of 1988.

It is important to highlight that, by acknowledging motherhood to mark their stance, they are also reiterating their position as women. The separation between these axes was done here for didactic purposes and to show the intersection between various forms of oppression experienced by women.

### As lesbian women, as trans women (or LGBT supporters)

Another axis that can be perceived in the footing of the celebrities analyzed concerns LGBT causes. Some of them evoke their experience as lesbian women to denounce the threat posed by Bolsonaro. This is the case of actress Bruna Linzmeyer, for instance: “#NotHim because my body of a woman and a dyke deserves to walk on the streets without being raped, and I deserve to earn the same salary as a man who has the same profession as me”. Trans artist Linn da Quebrada also highlights her gender identity to justify joining the movement: she says that she would never support a candidate who, besides having bad government planning, supports violence and “preaches hatred to bodies like mine”. Trans singer Liniker denounces that the candidate “violates all human rights

<sup>14</sup> It is worth remembering that Marília Mendonça died in an air accident in 2021. For an analysis of her death as an event, see Carneiro (2021).

laws” because he is “racist, misogynist, transphobic, sexist”. As a trans-black woman, she places herself in pursue of a “country of rights and respect” – signaling the overlapping of oppressions experienced by her and so many other women.

Many celebrities, even if they do not identify themselves as lesbians or trans women, denounced the then candidate Bolsonaro as homophobic to justify their participation in the movement. One must remember here that he had said he would rather his son to be dead than to be gay<sup>15</sup>; that he defended violence to “cure” homosexuals<sup>16</sup>; that he declared that “minorities have to bow to majorities; minorities fit in or simply disappear” and that “Brazilian society does not like homosexuals,” among other homophobic statements.<sup>17</sup>

### As black women

One last category of footing that was evidenced by the analysis concerns standing as black women. Actress Camila Pitanga stands against the candidate “who thinks that racism is normal, who stands against affirmative actions and social projects that give dignity to people”. Actress Juliana Alves says that the candidate “represents the genocide of the poor and black people”, as well as the massacre of indigenous people and the persecution of women. She denounces the violence presented in the speech of the candidate who does not seem interested in solving the serious problem of social inequality in Brazil – which mainly affects the black population.

Singer Preta Gil also took a stand against the candidate, saying that she had been #NotHim for seven years already. When asked by Preta on a TV show about what he would do if one of his sons fell in love with a black woman, Bolsonaro said: “I will not discuss promiscuity with anyone. I am not at that risk. My children were very well educated and did not live in an environment such as, unfortunately, yours”.

It is important to point out that non-black celebrities also denounced Bolsonaro’s racism – in solidarity with the people affected by the candidate’s speech. Thus, in denouncing this and other prejudices of Bolsonaro – in relation to black people, homosexuals, women – celebrities reiterated the values of respect, equality, and dignity of people as integrating the #NotHim movement. Some of them explicitly evoke the defense of human rights when joining the movement – which is an important theme that passes through all of the previous categories and is useful to conclude the analysis.

### The advocacy of human rights

For actress Chandelly Braz, Bolsonaro “subverts the meaning of human rights, he makes a population believe that human rights are at the service of impunity, which is very serious”. Actress Maria Casadevall stood “against a candidate who represents all forms of setbacks, of indifference to human rights and the threat to our already acquired rights”. Actress Mariana Lima stated that “Brazil should be a place of shared human rights, where people can live out the splendor of their differences”.

By stating the advocacy of human rights to justify their adherence to the #NotHim movement, celebrities look at the very foundation of those rights, which would be threatened by the election of Jair Bolsonaro. As Hans Joas (2013:19) argues, the grounding of human rights is linked to the need to recognize human dignity as a universal value:

I propose that we understand the belief in human rights and universal human dignity as the result of a specific process of sacralization – a process in which every single human being has increasingly, and with ever-increasing intense motivational and sensitizing effects, been viewed as sacred, and this understanding has been institutionalized in law.

<sup>15</sup> Available at: [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/j53wx8/jair-bolsonaro-elected-president-brazil](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/j53wx8/jair-bolsonaro-elected-president-brazil). Access in: 26 Nov. 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Available at: <https://revistaladoa.com.br/2016/03/noticias/100-frases-homofobicas-jair-bolsonaro/>. Access in: 26 Nov. 2019.

<sup>17</sup> Available at: <https://revistaladoa.com.br/2016/03/noticias/100-frases-homofobicas-jair-bolsonaro/>. Access in: 26 Nov. 2019.

By denouncing sexism, misogyny, racism, and homophobia, and advocating for respect, equality, and dignity as some of the founding values of social relations, these celebrities acted in defense of the sacredness of the human person, as discussed by Joas (2013); therefore, in the defense of human rights. It is not my aim here to measure the effectiveness of this personalities' performances, but to emphasize that they shed light on human rights, rendering visibility to the issue and, eventually, triggering reflections on the *practices, values and institutions* capable of guaranteeing its universalization (Joas, 2013).

### Concluding remarks

This paper sought to analyze the positionings of Brazilian celebrities in joining the #NotHim (#EleNãO) movement, created in opposition to Jair Bolsonaro's candidacy in the 2018 presidential election. My analysis articulated the concepts of standing and footing to think not only of the legitimacy celebrities have to defend certain causes, but of how they construct their stances in relation to such causes, as well as of how their standing in the public scene fosters footings which might open a place of speech for other people to stand for themselves. In this sense, I tried to unravel: Celebrities support their stance in the name of what ideas? What is their position and what values are revealed in this process?

The analysis showed that these celebrities sought to present themselves as citizens who protected democracy, and who conceived of politics as a way out of the crisis and the huge inequalities of the country; as women, they stood against sexism and misogyny, advocating for women's rights and tackling feminist struggles; they also stood as mothers, concerned about their children's future; as lesbian or trans women, they condemned homophobia; as black women, they stood against racism and for affirmative actions and social projects that contribute to the recognition of the dignity of all people. In this sense, celebrities upheld values such as equality, freedom, respect, love, peace, dignity, sharing the ideas supported by the nearly four million women who joined the *Women United against Bolsonaro (Mulheres Unidas contra Bolsonaro)* group on Facebook.<sup>18</sup>

Based on the analysis I have presented here, it is important to highlight the process of *politicization of celebrities* (Wheeler, 2013) in the Brazilian electoral context of 2018. Personalities who had never publicly positioned themselves in an election decided to join the #NotHim movement. Certainly, as Mark Wheeler (2013) warns, this engagement cannot be read uncritically. Celebrities may have joined the movement in order to gain visibility and fans, but this is very difficult to measure. At the same time, it is undeniable that they have acted in amplifying the movement – by posting videos online and participating in protests on the streets. In any case, it is important to highlight the ambiguity that marks the participation of celebrities in a movement such as the #NotHim.

In the Brazilian electoral context of 2018, celebrities used their prestige and their visibility to promote the movement. As Meyer and Bourdon have pointed out, the celebrities' notoriety “enables them to draw attention to their views on matters of public concern” (Meyer; Bourdon, 2019:58). In other words, celebrities use their *discursive power* (Marshall, 2006:X), placing their voice above others and making them emerge as legitimately significant in media systems. In this sense, Brazilian celebrities have used their discursive power to stand up for women's rights and human rights more broadly, highlighting their commitment to democracy. By doing so, they opened the possibility of a place of speech for other women who may also stand for themselves.

Thus, by asserting their voice to echo feminist agendas, celebrities can be seen as active in the process of popularization of feminism and can participate in the struggle for “a feminism for the 99%” (Arruzza; Bhattacharya; Fraser, 2019:29), a feminism attentive to the diversity of women's experiences, which can stand for democracy in many ways – as can be seen from the analysis presented here. They identify themselves as citizens, as women, as mothers, as lesbians, as transgender, as black, and bring forth the plurality of existences that drove the #NotHim movement to the public scene.

<sup>18</sup> The group remained active after the 2018 elections under the name *Women United with Brazil* and had, on September 29, 2020, nearly 2.4 million members.

The celebrities that compose the research sample also engaged in the defense of human rights, that is, in the claim that the dignity of people – of all people, regardless of race, gender, social class – must be respected. It is an inviolable *sacredness*, to use the terms of Joas (2013). By triggering their *discursive power* (Marshall, 2006) in their defense of human rights, celebrities claimed for equality, respect, and love as important values in building a fair society.

While embodying such struggles – for the rights of women, black people, LGBTQI+, in short, the right to the sacredness that guarantees respect for all existence – celebrities may play an important role in defending and sustaining a democratic way of life. If democracy should be thought of as a way of life, as suggested by Dewey (1954), it is a way of life grounded in freedom, equality, and respect, which was being defended in the standings analyzed.

Certainly, there are many limits to the role of celebrities in promoting certain causes. My goal is not to exalt the performance of celebrities in the public scene in a naive and uncritical way, but to point out that we cannot neglect their *discursive power*, which can be guided to the promotion of important public issues.

In the Brazilian context, joining the #NotHim movement and acting in its promotion, celebrities played an important political role, rendering visibility to feminist struggles and the defense of human rights and democracy. Judging by the outcome of the Brazilian presidential election of 2018, with the victory of Jair Bolsonaro, one could say that the movement and the celebrities have failed. But despite the electoral defeat, the ideas that these celebrities and the movement itself propagated persist in the Brazilian context and drive daily resistance to the rising authoritarianism and to the threats to previously conquered rights in contemporary Brazil.

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