Final Reflections

The book closes with some final reflections from three artists or groups of artists who kindly agreed to offer some thoughts on art and anti-racism and on their experiences with the CARLA project. The text from Arissana Pataxó – the Indigenous Brazilian artist who features in Chapter 2, who contributed to CARLA's online exhibition and who worked with Felipe Milanez as a research assistant in Brazil – was edited and translated from a conversation between her, Lúcia Sá and Jamille Pinheiro Dias. The contribution by Miriam Álvarez, Lorena Cañuqueo and Alejandra Egido – the Mapuche and Afro-Cuban people behind the Argentine theatre companies Mapuche Theatre Group El Katango and Teatro en Sepia, and co-authors of Chapter 6 – was written by them and translated and edited by Peter Wade. The piece from Wilson Borja – the Afro-Colombian graphic artist who features in Chapter 1 and who contributed to the online exhibition – was edited and translated by Peter Wade from audios recorded by Borja.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE CARLA PROJECT AND INDIGENOUS ART

Arissana Pataxó

I'm always on tenterhooks when it comes to university-related projects because, ever since the expeditions of the nineteenth century, universities have been institutions that go into communities to extract knowledge. In the nineteenth century, naturalists went to find geological riches, medicines and knowledge that they could exploit. In the same way, today the

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university often seeks out knowledge that already exists in communities in order to transform it into concepts that it presents as new.

When I took part in the first online meetings of the CARLA project, I confess that I didn't really understand the project's objectives. I mean, I knew it had to do with racism, anti-racism and Indigenous art, but it wasn't clear to me what they wanted to do. I also knew that we were going to organise a meeting here in Salvador, and Felipe [Milanez] had invited me to be part of that organisation. With the pandemic, we couldn't organise the meeting, so we decided to use the resources in another way. And then, in the conversations to decide what to do, we felt the need to organise Indigenous artists to move art forward here in Bahia. There was a lot of participation by Indigenous artists, even those from Bahia, in exhibitions in the southeast of Brazil, but there was no such participation in the northeast, especially here in Bahia. That's why we decided to re-articulate the project to include more artists from Bahia, and the way that Felipe found to circumvent the university bureaucracy was to add them as researchers, since these artists were not linked to the university. So for four months, we had this presence of research artists at UFBA [Universidade Federal da Bahia] whose aim was to carry out some artistic work and plan an exhibition in Salvador that would bring the discussion of anti-racist art to the city. The idea was also that we could interact and create a collaborative network of conversations and dialogues. And it happened – what we did made it possible for the artists to work together: me, Glicéria Tupinambá, Yacunã Tuxá, Juliana Xukuru, Ziel Karapotó, Olinda Yawar Tupinambá.

It was from this articulation that we managed to organise the exhibition *Hãhãw: Anti-Racist Indigenous Art*, bringing the project's own concept of anti-racism to the exhibition at UFBA's Museum of Sacred Art, in Salvador, in November 2022, with the participation of artists who had links with UFBA as researchers, as well as others who had already taken part in the CARLA project, such as Denilson Baniwa, Naine Terena and Gustavo Caboco.[1] At first, we didn't call it an exhibition, but simply anti-racist Indigenous art, because we wanted to occupy other spaces, not just the museum. For example, we occupied the cinema of UFBA's Geological Museum, showing films by Denilson, Naine and Ziel, and the public space of the UFBA library, where Glicéria created a mural. We also occupied spaces by means of talks, bringing Juliana Xucuru and Ziel Karapotó to speak at UFBA. We spent six months organising these occupations.

[1] For the exhibition *Hãhãw: Arte indígena antirracista*, see https://arteindigena.ufba.br/.

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It was only when the exhibition was ready that we were able to see everything that had been produced, despite the short time we had to organise it. Some of us finished some of our artworks the day before, and the dialogue with the museum was very difficult, because they wanted to see the photos of the works before the exhibition, and we had to say 'Calm down, the photos don't exist yet'. For me, that's normal, but they wanted to have the works three months in advance, so they could decide what would go in and what wouldn't, and for them it was a problem to have things at short notice. But we were sure about what we were going to do, what was going to be there. Of course, we also had a lot of uncertainties. Initially, the museum had given us a very small space, because an exhibition by an individual artist was scheduled for the same date. But suddenly they called us to say that the artist had cancelled the exhibition and the space would be open. That's when we occupied it. In other words, when everything seemed like it was going to go wrong, everything worked out and we ended up with this larger exhibition space. At that moment, I thought we wouldn't have enough works, so Yacunã and I brought some more.

After the exhibition was finished, the idea arose that it needed to circulate, to go to other places, and so it did. Under Ziel's curatorship, it travelled to Fortaleza, adding several local Indigenous artists, and from there to the Centro Cultural do Cariri [in Ceará state], where even more artists were added. Then came the proposal to bring it back to Salvador, to the Solar do Ferrão in Salvador, this time curated by Yacunã and with even more artists. If memory serves me right, there were more than twenty Indigenous artists in this final version. A much larger network of artists was created as a result of these circulations. What emerged was a kind of movement, with the younger artists taking on the curatorship of subsequent versions of the exhibition, nominating artists who became part of the group, and everyone, especially the younger ones, learning a lot from this process. Working together, we got know each other's abilities and inclinations, and this is very important because the art system depends on those who make referrals, on collaborative networks.

It was also important that the Brazilian arm of the project focussed exclusively on racism against Indigenous people, because there is already a lot of discussion in Brazil about racism against Black people and little discussion of racism against Indigenous people. And because there is little discussion, there is still the idea that there is no racism against Indigenous people. Even some Indigenous people end up not seeing everything that happens, not seeing the discrimination against a certain group or people

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as racism, and giving it other names. Over the last few years, I've seen a change and now this discussion about racism comes up more often, but we still need to do more. We suffer racism all the time. I remember, for example, one time when we were demonstrating in Porto Seguro [Bahia state] against one of the PECs.[2] My husband and I were in the bank [making a withdrawal]. We weren't wearing traditional clothing, but outside some people were coming from another village to board the river ferry, dressed [in traditional clothes] and singing. As we were leaving, a man who was also in the bank said: 'They've opened the corral'. My husband asked: 'What did you say?' I held onto my husband and the woman [who was with the man] realised that we hadn't liked the expression he had used and pulled him by the arm. There is a lot of fear on both sides. This is just one example. I could mention many more. We hear a lot of things all the time, and sometimes we swallow and keep quiet, and sometimes we speak.

Through the exchange with other artists from Latin America, promoted by the CARLA project in Manchester, I was able to see that the racism that happens to us is everywhere, and it happens almost always in the same way, with the question of territory being a central issue. Felipe Tuxá makes the point that the denial of our existence – that is, denying that this or that people exists, or denying that a people or an individual is Indigenous because of cultural transformations that are often imposed – is a way of guaranteeing a political monopoly over a territory, over a place. I saw these same issues in the presentations given in Manchester, mainly from the MCs, but also the performance of the women from the Mapuche theatre.[3] These are topics that we often discuss here in schools and communities. Often we don't call it racism or anti-racism, but these are discussions that are always in our midst, this question of the denial of identity and how people see us.

The event [in Manchester] also allowed me to think about other arts. I'd already had a lot of contact with rap. But I hadn't had any experience with theatre and I was very taken with it because I hadn't seen it before, although there are cultural activities in the communities that can be considered theatrical performances, but not in the more academic way that the Mapuche women did it. The use of memory in their work is very

[2] *Proposta de emenda à Constituição* (PEC): a proposed constitutional amendment, such as the ones to limit Indigenous land rights discussed in Chapter 2.

[3] Presentations and performances (by Eskina Qom, Teatro en Sepia and Grupo de Teatro Mapuche El Katango) given in CARLA's Festival of Anti-Racist and Decolonial Art in Manchester's Contact Theatre, 22 March 2022.

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important, because although we think we always have to look to the present or the future, the memory of the past, of who we are, strengthens us and makes us better understand our common history.

I don't think that we, as artists, are going to provide any solutions to concrete problems, but I believe that art collaborates with discussions in the theoretical field, helping to break down the racist view that non-Indigenous society has of us. With this, it contributes to making changes in future policies. For example, in textbooks today I have seen a change in the way non-Indigenous schools have dealt with the whole question of the arts, and this has happened through Indigenous arts. And thanks to this, the way of talking about Indigenous people has changed. Textbooks are obliged to address this issue, and they have done so through the works of Indigenous artists, Indigenous writers, Indigenous filmmakers and Indigenous musicians.

Some teachers from pre-school to high school have also sought me out, and through my works, they end up addressing the theme of the Pataxó people and Indigenous themes in general. I think this will create young people with a new way of thinking about Indigenous peoples, who will no longer think that the Indigenous person is the one in [the stories about] Pedro Álvares Cabral [the European 'discoverer' of Brazil], but who will be able to imagine that they will study with Indigenous people, that they can, in the future, have a consultation with an Indigenous doctor, and know that we are part of society, not something excluded. I think art has changed this since we started participating in the circuit [of the art world]. Of course, there is a bubble of people who attend and have access to those spaces, but at the same time the circuit ends up creating visibility, and this visibility leads to discussion in other places, such as schools. So I think that the more we, as artists, create articulations like the one we created with the CARLA project, the more we are together in these collaborative networks, the more power we have to bring these discussions to the arts.

Another change I've seen is the presence of Indigenous art in universities. When I started at university, Indigenous art was unheard of, so when I now see professors inviting me and other Indigenous artists to read texts by Davi Kopenawa and Ailton Krenak, I realise how much the university has changed in the ten years since I started my degree. Before, Indigenous issues were only dealt with in the field of anthropology.

That's why I think education is still a fundamental tool, especially in relation to children. I've noticed, for example, that children are asking more sophisticated and elaborate questions, and are no longer asking

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such racist questions as we used to get when we visited schools. Today I see kids asking more critical and less racist questions.

The articulation that led us to work together at UFBA to organise the exhibition was important in breaking down our individualities and strengthening us as a group around common actions to promote anti-racist art. Although our works discuss particular themes related to each of our peoples, almost everything we do can be summarised around the territorial question: the murders, the struggles of leaders, the violence and changes our communities have to face – all of this is linked to the question of land. The territorial issue is at the centre of discussions about racism against Indigenous peoples, and this is what the exhibition *Hãhãw: Anti-Racist Indigenous Art* showed.

CARLA: FINAL REFLECTIONS

Miriam Álvarez, Lorena Cañuqueo and Alejandra Egido

While discussing among ourselves what we wanted to say in these final reflections, we came across a photograph (see Figure C.1) that resonated with us. We saw in it a possible hint of the relationships between the Mapuche population and the Afro-descendant population that existed



FIGURE C.1 Photo of Mapuche women and children by Cristián Enrique Valck (1826–1899); probable date 1870; probable location Valdivia, Chile (source: Carlotta database, Swedish Museums of World Culture).

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at various historical moments, relationships that we reactivated in the collaborations and dramatic texts that we created for CARLA. The photo was taken in about 1870 by Cristián Enrique Valck (1826–1899), a German immigrant to Chile, who established a studio in the southern city of Valdivia. The image caught our attention due to the very dark skin of the child in the centre. What might explain it? History relates that in colonial times Valdivia had a substantial Afro-descendant presence, made up of Black prisoners and soldiers, brought from areas further north, including Peru, and forced to work as labourers constructing fortifications in the city. A 1749 census reveals the coexistence in Valdivia of Black and Mapuche people and, while the authorities paid Mapuche people to hand over captured Black escapees, it is quite possible that intimate relations existed as well.[4] We also know that research is being done on how Afro people escaped enslavement by fleeing to Indigenous and Mapuche communities (Carmona 2024; Edwards 2020). Although in the case of this photo, it is a speculative theory that needs investigation, it helps us to stay connected, thinking together. This image for us is a sign of those alliances and relationships and above all it allows us to reconstruct that past and activate other chosen relationships.

To put Black and Indigenous bodies on the stage in Argentine theatres, as we did during the CARLA project, is to propose the representation of a corporeality made invisible by the constructions of whiteness in this country. The widespread discourse that Argentinians 'descended from ships' (foregrounding only migrants from Europe) has been reproduced over many years by different presidents and personalities. A large part of society is convinced that Argentina has no Indigenous population. They also affirm that there are no Blacks in the country, because 'they all died of yellow fever', as Alejandra Egido, director of the Teatro en Sepia company, jokingly says. These statements, although ridiculous and lacking any basis in history, are not usually questioned and form part of recurrent stereotypes within the Argentine racist imaginary. In the present, this imaginary even forms part of the government's own agendas.

The CARLA Project, in which the members of the Mapuche Theatre Group El Katango and the Teatro en Sepia company participated between 2020 and 2022, was a framework that led to a novel encounter for both teams. Although we belong to racialised and strongly stigmatised groups, our work agendas had not come into contact until we were

[4] See Museo de Sitio Castillo de Niebla, 'Historia', www.museodeniebla.gob.cl/643/w3-propertyvalue-42964.html?_noredirect=1.

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invited to come together by our colleague, Dr Ana Vivaldi, researcher of the CARLA team. Although the beginning of our relationship was marked by the COVID-19 pandemic that led to quarantines and lockdowns, this did not prevent us from communicating and even creating dramatic texts together, such as 'Como dos gotas de agua', about two women, one Mapuche, the other Black, both displaced from their homes, who encounter one another in transit; and *Fuego amigo*, which features a Mapuche woman and a Black woman working alongside each other as city employees.[5]

Sustained over many months by virtual means, these encounters led us, with jokes, stories and anecdotes, to reflect among the four of us – two Indigenous women from Río Negro province (Patagonia), an Afro-descendant woman who is also a migrant in the city of Buenos Aires, and a white Latina woman from Argentina who lives in Canada – on racism, anti-racism and possible ways of dealing with it poetically in the theatre. We were full of similar stories that spoke of dispossession, forced displacement, invisibilisation and the ways in which our peoples related to their territories, which we shared in conversations in each virtual meeting, and we all thought: why didn't we get together before?

Navigating between terror and tenderness, by telling our stories we conjured up our ancestors, some of them quite remote. Enquiring into these relationships and links allows us to bring them into the present. In this way, the past and the present blend together, or rather, they interrelate, because they are in permanent communication. In our narratives, the 'sad stories' that our own families repressed – the forced relocations, the loss of land, the silencing of our ceremonies and ancestral knowledge – appeared and still appear. This happened and continues to happen to us because we are Mapuche and Afro-descendants, justification enough in the coloniser's view. We would come to this conclusion and burst out laughing, because we could not find a better way to cope with the 'sad stories'. They are traces that remain in our souls and in our bodies, but which have also generated new ways of understanding ourselves and formulating our desires.

Alejandra explained to us about *palenques* and what the *quilombos* mean for Afro-descendants, and Miriam and Lorena told of the

[5] See Chapter 6. For *Como dos gotas de agua* (Like Two Peas in a Pod), see also www.digitalexhibitions.manchester.ac.uk/s/carla-en/page/the-katango; and for *Fuego amigo* (Friendly Fire), see www.digitalexhibitions.manchester.ac.uk/s/carla-en/page/teatro-en-sepia.

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deportations of Mapuche people of all ages from Patagonia to Buenos Aires.[6] Each shared idea led us to enquire into the representations that organise common-sense understandings. For example, in Argentina, the notion of *quilombo* does not refer to those spaces built by the enslaved Blacks who fled to live in freedom and in an organised way. On the contrary, the word *quilombo* is used often in a derogatory way to refer to disorder and chaos. What would happen if we knew that they were actually socio-political spaces of freedom? Alejandra told Miriam and Lorena that 'the first escaped slaves must have been owners of territories here in Argentina'. Miriam and Lorena shared stories of journeys of thousands of kilometres on foot and massive deportations of Indigenous people who were taken from their territory and forced to serve those who now hold the economic power in this country. And we also talked about how absurd it is that every time we claim rights, people say: 'the Mapuche are Chileans'. As if, before this time, borders had existed and as if this historical aberration could erase the violence committed against the Mapuche people. The conversation came to an end when Alejandra said: 'This is going to need another cup of coffee.' And yes, we could go on for hours and hours over coffee or *yerba mate*, because this long history of family and community relations runs through us, but it also allows us to generate a 'we' today, in the present. It is a way of generating a sense of belonging in this country that marks us from time to time as not being part of it, despite the fact that, in the case of Miriam and Lorena, we were born in this territory. It is like living in diaspora within one's own territory. As Alejandra put it in her script for *Fuego amigo*: 'I don't know how I can be moved by the anthem of a country that doesn't recognise me. How ridiculous, please!'

We reflected together on the political conjunctures that affected us before and during our journey in the project. Far from abating, there were acts of intense violence against our collectives, some of them promoted by the state itself, which reactivated a long memory of wounds, but also of struggles. But we also critically analysed our spaces of activism. We saw that our peoples, or the Indigenous and Afro-descendant organisations and political movements that fight for our rights within the institutions of the Argentine state, were each moving along their own path, without any alliance or link that we were aware of. Until our participation in the CARLA project, we had not had the opportunity to reflect on an anti-racist agenda linking Mapuche and Afro-descendants

[6] For discussions of *palenques* and *quilombos*, see Chapters 1, 4 and 7.

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in Argentina. Each of us, Alejandra, Lorena and Miriam, participated in these political activisms. However, always being attentive to the problems of our own collectives had prevented us from observing the realities of other people who are also racialised.

We believe that this is the great contribution that the CARLA project has given us by allowing us to meet, to dialogue, to bring to light our pain and share the possibility of reversing it through laughter and creativity; and to propose approaches, albeit incipient, within our spaces that can mobilise projects to denaturalise and challenge racism in our country.

SOME THOUGHTS ON ART, ANTI-RACISM AND CARLA

Wilson Borja

Something that has stayed with me ever since I read his work is what the African-American artist Romare Bearden called the dilemma of the Black artist.[7] He asks whether, if we are in fact artists, do we have to be talking all the time about problems of race and discrimination? It was always a disjuncture for him. But in the end he says: If not us, then who? I think that's always echoing in my head and, in fact, I think this also emerged in the CARLA project. And the reason is that these issues actually traverse our bodies. So the main way of manifesting this as artists is simply through what we do. I think that the conversations we had in CARLA always revolved around these themes – or at least I saw them from this point of view – because racism penetrates us, it mistreats us, it murders us. We have to talk about these things, yes, but what would happen if we didn't? If it wasn't us, who would do it? This is precisely what the painter Romare Bearden talks about, having been part of the civil rights movement in the United States: If not us, then who? Who has the power, who has the right, who has the will to talk about these things?

These things are deeply uncomfortable and painful, but at the same time, extremely important and relevant, if we think about the current global context, where fascism, which has never ceased to exist, is now rampant and brazen across the planet. I believe that work that tackles anti-racism through art is more important than ever, and that it will always be there, unleashing the forces of struggle. Whether we like it or not, consciously or not, we artists decide how to show racism up and confront it. It is a form of struggle, it is a way of fighting for the fundamental

[7] On Bearden, see National Gallery of Art (2003).

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rights of many people on the planet. I don't know if an image or an artistic project will change things, but it does mean that there is resistance, a way to fight against this structure that eats people alive.

In terms of the relationship between art and anti-racism and the project that we have been developing with the Aguaturbia Collective – the IRA Archive – I think that CARLA's project generates via its portal, its web page, its archive, a way of being able to record and effectively share this information with all the people who didn't know or don't know and don't understand.[8] They think racism is just a local thing and I guess this is the same in different countries. From the conversations we were able to have and the meetings we had with the rest of the people in the project, it's about being able to visualise a problem that crosses borders or rather that is not defined by borders. In fact, this colonial phenomenon crosses all of our lives, it crosses the entire globe. When one can effectively materialise, condense, archive or put in one place the various projects that address these issues, it is a very important tool. It has been very useful for me precisely in my role as an educator, because then it is not just me telling a story, me talking about a problem, and instead I can provide a tool, so that anyone who is interested in understanding a little more about these issues has some grounding.

I suppose surely this would have been considered when the project was designed, but it would have been very interesting to be able to hear voices from Ecuador, from Peru, from different countries in Latin America, Central America, and hear how the nuances of these issues effectively transgress borders. But I think that one of CARLA's important contributions is precisely to have condensed and generated a platform where people can learn about different experiences, which together give much more strength to what could be thought of as an anti-racist movement from the point of view of artistic practices.

Another aspect of the relationship between art and anti-racism that is very clear to me is that, if we look at the practices of artists who occupy racialised bodies, we are always effectively questioning and challenging oppressive structures. From our practices, we find tools that effectively allow us to engage in such conversations. During the process of working on the CARLA project, the conversations I have had with different people have been enriched by the fact that I can talk not only about my experience, the local experience, what happened to me, the anecdotes,

[8] On Aguaturbia and IRA (Imaginación Radical Afro), see Chapter 1. See also www.digitalexhibitions.manchester.ac.uk/s/carla-en/page/agua-turbia.

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the trauma, the problems of growing up with these structures, but also by the fact that I can show them that this is a reality that crosses the borders of different countries. I think that one of the most relevant contributions of the project has been precisely this: for us, or for me in particular, to be able to weave these networks that started out being very local, understanding that in other places there are other kinds of struggles. Being able to see them, talk about them, discuss them first hand with the people who are actually doing them was very interesting and very important. I think it was a driving force, it was something that gave fuel to what we were already doing, to what we were doing in the Aguaturbia Collective, and in conversations with Liliana [Angulo Cortés] and in various projects. It effectively adds other dimensions to everything I'm doing.

In conversations with Liliana and with other artists in the Aguaturbia Collective – with Paola [Lucumi], with Natalia [Mosquera Valencia], with Loretta [Moreno] – the question often arises that if we didn't have to talk about the problems of racism on the planet, what would we actually be doing in our practices? Because we are not only elaborating or working on anti-racist projects. But in a way, it has become an effective and reliable tool that allows us, on the basis of our practices, to question and challenge the structures of racism, to generate conversations, to present the issues to people who had no idea that these things even exist. In my case, I have tried to do this using images. But I think that the CARLA project adds to those projects that were already in development by giving them a boost, like a push, a more solid base, precisely by thinking about the meeting of people from different countries, different places. It shows that racism is a global problem and not an anecdote that happens to one person, who suffers, but ends up talking about the problem in isolation. I think that weaving these networks and these dialogues strengthens what we do and allows us to continue working, and to continue generating these discussions.

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