

# Anticolonialism in Early Twentieth-Century Portugal: The Ambivalences of Race and Transnationalism in *O Negro* (1911)

Richard Cleminson<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

The short-lived publication *O Negro* (1911) was a journal created and written by a group of individuals who came mainly from the colonized islands of São Tomé and Príncipe, off the west coast of Africa. This article argues that the publication constituted the first, although ephemeral, Black-owned journal to question the colonial status quo in Lisbon in the twentieth century. By means of a powerful, albeit often ambivalent discourse on exploitation, racial injustice, and economic hardship, *O Negro* articulated a transnational focus for a reassessment of the colonial relationship in Lusophone territories. It thereby provided the foundation for later attempts struggling for racial justice up to the establishment of the Salazar dictatorship.

## Keywords

Anticolonialism, São Tomé and Príncipe, transnationalism, Portugal

## Resumo

A publicação *O Negro* (1911), de curta duração, foi um jornal criado e escrito por um grupo de indivíduos que eram principalmente das ilhas colonizadas de São Tomé e Príncipe, na costa oeste da África. O argumento deste artigo é que esta publicação constitui o primeiro, embora efêmero, periódico da propriedade de pessoas oriundas da África a fornecer uma reavaliação da relação colonial em Lisboa no século XX. Por meio de um poderoso e às vezes ambivalente discurso sobre a exploração, a injustiça racial e as dificuldades económicas, *O Negro* articulou um enfoque transnacional para aqueles que questionavam a relação colonial nos territórios lusófonos. Assim, forneceu a base para tentativas em épocas posteriores a favor da luta pela justiça racial até o estabelecimento da ditadura de Salazar.

## Palavras-chave

Anticolonialismo, São Tomé e Príncipe, transnacionalismo, Portugal

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<sup>1</sup> Spanish, Portuguese and Latin American Studies School of Languages, Cultures and Societies, University of Leeds, United Kingdom. E-Mail: [R.M.Cleminson@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:R.M.Cleminson@leeds.ac.uk)

## Introduction

On 9 March 1911, the “*efémera mas significativa publicação*” [ephemeral yet significant publication] *O Negro* exploded onto the political scene in Lisbon (Andrade 1997: 79). Riding on the wave of the promise of a more liberal and democratic regime inaugurated by the Republic in October 1910, the journal’s editors seized what at first sight appeared to be the ideal opportunity to plead in favor of a more sympathetic hearing for the cause of Black Africans under colonial rule (Marques 1980; Gallagher 1983; Torgal 2012). Although only three issues of *O Negro* were printed, the four-page paper became the first Black-owned publication of the twentieth century to do battle with the iniquities of colonialism and to provide a sophisticated discourse on the significance of “race” in Portugal. It did so, however, from a position that was highly mediated and which arose from the relatively privileged socio-economic background of the paper’s protagonists as members or descendants of the land-owning classes or economic elites on the archipelago of São Tomé and Príncipe. Such a positioning meant that the paper often occupied an ambivalent space with respect to the republicanism that it hurried to evoke and even towards the ongoing relationship between Portugal and the colonies, combining elements of political radicalism with conventional or conformist demands. Underlying its discourse, nevertheless, was an acute sense of place, both physical and discursive, articulated as part of a broad internationalist sentiment. *O Negro* is understood here as a foundational initiative in Black movements that sought to address the colonized status of Africans in early twentieth-century imperial Portugal.

Most of those centrally involved in *O Negro*, including the director, the engineering student José Cunha Lisboa, Ayres de Menezes, Arthur (often written Artur) Monteiro de Castro, Alberto José da Costa, and Pedro Gambôa, had journeyed to the metropole to take up their studies. They formed part of what Augusto Nascimento (2005: 66) has called an “*elite expatriada em Lisboa*” [expatriate elite in Lisbon] whose origins in the upper socio-economic echelons of the islands, whether as plantation owners, descendants from these, or members of the well-off middle classes, meant that they occupied a space in between the wealthy and the much poorer indigenous farmers. They also occupied a position between white European plantation owners, the colonial machine and the “uneducated” indigenous, and thus formed part of the assimilated elite in the colony. The paper’s editor, Ayres de Menezes, descended from a *roça*-owning family and went to medical school in Lisbon (Andrade 1997: 200–201). Artur Monteiro de Castro was a member of a family dedicated to African politics and the brother of the activist João de Castro, who would take up significant

positions in the Black African movement in the 1910s and 1920 (Hill 1995: 636 n. 4). Their father was a landowner, chief clerk and later cashier at the Banco Nacional Ultramarino and evidently the family had enough money to send both Artur and his brother Heliodoro to Lisbon to study. Their mother was also a plantation owner (Andrade 1997: 191).

Their educated and relatively privileged backgrounds led them to establish the Liga Académica Internacional dos Negros and the Associação dos Estudantes Negros, of which *O Negro* was also the mouthpiece. Although little is known about either (Roldão, Pereira, and Varela 2021: 3), it is probable that both were based at the paper's address, Rua Maria 47, r/c, near Avenida Almirante Reis. Although *O Negro* was intended from its second issue in May 1911 to be a fortnightly affair, it ceased publication after its third appearance in October that same year. The platform it offered, despite its short existence, was nevertheless unique and had it not been for the trenchant opposition to the newspaper and its principal supporters' erratic presence in Lisbon, exemplified by the departure of its director to Manchester, it might have become consolidated as a long-lasting publication.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the space that *O Negro* offered for discourses that critiqued colonial relations and the conditions in which colonized peoples lived, it provided a distinctly transnational vehicle for raising awareness about the plight of Black people not only in those territories which formed part of the Portuguese Empire, but elsewhere across the globe. It achieved this through a strong commitment to the dissemination of news from different countries, combined with the overt attempt to seal connections between anticolonial struggles across a wide range of geographical spaces. It appealed to Black communities in Portugal, Africa, and elsewhere, thereby forging an incipient associational tie between Portuguese-speaking Africans and other Black communities across the world. This transnational approach was cemented by its direct connection to ongoing events in São Tomé and Príncipe and the close relations it established with individuals and groupings in the archipelago. Africa and the politics of race were thus transported directly to the heart of the old colonial capital, decentering Europe as a site of struggle and re-centering it as a locus of Black affirmation and contestation (cf. Chakrabarty 2000).

A strident stance that combined anticolonialism, a demand for racial justice, anti-militarism, circumspection towards religion, and support for progressive education as an

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<sup>2</sup> In issue number two, Anon (1911a) noted that numerous anonymous threats had been received by the paper. *O Negro* also noted that José Cunha Lisboa had departed from Lisbon on the *Antony* in order to complete his engineering studies in Manchester (Anon 1911b). He was listed in that same issue as a correspondent in this city. It was reported in addition that Ayres de Menezes would be leaving Lisbon to travel to his homeland, São Tomé, for a few months (Anon 1911c). Anon (1911d) wrote that Menezes had subsequently returned to Lisbon. Another key figure, José Alberto da Costa, was also recorded as having arrived back in Lisbon after an absence.

emancipatory tool all placed *O Negro* among vanguard movements seeking change. Never precisely revolutionary, however, the paper coincided with what Reis Torgal would identify as a characteristic of the later Liga Africana (1919), that is, in its adoption of a “via iluminista, ou racionalista” [enlightened or rationalist approach] with respect to its core issues (Torgal 2012: 15), based on a set of arguably just demands. Its main claims were apparently assimilated quickly and endorsed, as *O Negro* itself reported, by a range of contemporary publications from *A Capital* (Lisbon), to *Vida Livre* (Coimbra) and *O Sindicalista* (Lisbon), thereby displaying connections and a sympathetic reception with a variety of political tendencies from radical republicanism to anarchism and syndicalism (Anon 1911e). The newly established Lisbon-based republican daily, *A Capital*, for example, “cordially saluted” *O Negro* a day after its appearance (Anon 1911f). The paper was publicly available in the center of Lisbon, being offered for sale at various tobacconists’ and kiosks, including those located in the Rossio, Rua do Príncipe, and the Praça Dom Pedro V (Anon 1911g).

### “A nossa escravidão é secular”: A Radical Transnational Perspective

The first issue of *O Negro* set out in militant style the parameters of its specific claim for justice. From a deeply historicized Black perspective, it charted the injustices of the colonial system and, more broadly, the fallacy of rigidified notions of “race” and nationality. From its very first words, *O Negro* positioned itself as a publication that was fully integrated into international discourses on race and the prejudices that surrounded it. Under the first issue’s masthead, in an article inviting the reader to reflect on the current state of affairs in which Black people found themselves, *O Negro* pointed to the suffering of and the crimes committed against Africans: “A nossa escravidão é secular” [Our slavery is centuries-old], the piece read, noting that the current generation, parents and grandparents, had suffered “todos os vexames e tirannias” [all forms of denigration and tyranny] with impunity (Anon 1911h).<sup>3</sup> Further, it declared that “não queremos continuar a ser enganados” [we do not want to continue being deceived], that the time was over for saviors and that it was necessary to learn to “orientar as nossas ideias e a libertar-nos de todas as fórmulas de tirannia e exploração com que nos teem escravizado” [direct our own ideas and free ourselves from all the forms of tyranny and exploitation through which we have been enslaved] (Anon 1911h).

In what may be read as the publication’s manifesto, “A nossa Orientação” [Our Orientation], the paper drew a clear line between the paternalistic and ultimately racist

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<sup>3</sup> The original Portuguese orthography is retained throughout this article.

approach adopted by European states to colonized Africa and the values of true education, emancipation, and social transformation (Redacção 1911). The essay by the French parliamentary deputy, Lucien Hubert, *Le Devoir de l'Europe en Afrique* (Hubert c. 1910),<sup>4</sup> was cited as an example of the “simplesmente irrisorio” [simply ridiculous] argument of some European philanthropists whereby “um systema completo de garantias juridicas, servido por austeras instituições e especialmente a do trabalho livre e a sua remuneração, e alguns elementos de instrucção” [a complete system of legal guarantees, especially those including the right to work with proper pay and basic instruction, overseen by responsible institutions], would serve to raise the moral, political and educational standing “das populações negras, indigenas d'África” [of the Black populations, the indigenous of Africa] (Redacção 1911).

The editors displayed a remarkably incisive critique of the colonial legal system and the ways in which it reflected the particular interests of the groups behind its creation. Authors in *O Negro*, from a position that combined familiarity with ideas on racial emancipation and economic freedom in accordance with their elevated social position, argued that the law on its own was not capable of raising the moral tone of a population given the fact that it was fundamentally compromised as “o arbitrio dos fortes” [the weapon of the strong] (Redacção 1911). In tune with what Raewyn Connell would later call “southern theory” from a subaltern position (Connell 2007), the editors argued that the law was a product of the “consciencia colectiva das categorias sociaes dominantes” [collective conscience of dominant social categories] (Redacção 1911) and that it had been created as part of a system that obeyed the conditions set down by those dominating the economic structures of society. While the radical dimension of such an appreciation was somewhat tempered by their own relatively privileged socio-economic position, their protestations did not merely aim for greater advantage for native landowners. The authors argued that a *modus vivendi* between labor and capital would not provide a solution to these age-old problems. In addition to this class-inflected interpretation, they argued from a racial perspective that nothing less than a revolutionary rebellion of oppressed peoples would remedy the present state of affairs in which certain races were “victimas e martyres” [victims and martyrs] (Redacção 1911). The path advocated by *O Negro*, more generally, coinciding with Pan-Africanists such as Du Bois and, later on, other Black activists such as Marcus Garvey, was dedicated to “modificar e engrandecer as condições de toda a natureza do meio sociologico

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<sup>4</sup> Georges Froment, in his introductory words to the Ardennes deputy Lucien Hubert's essay, signalled that the latter had proposed a European congress to discuss how to “fixer les règles générales dont la colonisation moderne doit s'inspirer pour la sauvegarde et l'éducation des indigènes” [establish general rules upon which modern colonization can be inspired in order to safeguard and educate the indigenous] (Hubert c. 1910: 3).

em que elle [o homem] vive” [modifying and ennobling all natural conditions of the sociological milieu in which he [man] lives] (Redacção 1911). The only way of achieving this was the expropriation of the property that had been robbed from the indigenous “em detrimento dos seus legitimos donos” [to the detriment of the legitimate owners] (Redacção 1911): Africa had to be returned to Africans.

How would such an ambitious objective be achieved? The editorial in this first issue of *O Negro* advocated the creation of a body that would unite all across the educational divide; an international “Partido Africano” that would put an end to both economic and social, that is, racial, slavery. Such a party would be created in 1921 in the shape of the Partido Nacional Africano (Pélissier 1968: 224). Just as there was a struggle between one race and another in more “civilized” societies, so there was a struggle between classes and between nationalities. In order to confront the belief that some races and civilizations were destined to rule over others—the persecution of Jews in Austria and of the Armenians by Turkey were cited as cases in point—it was necessary that each race fought for its own emancipation. All obstacles impeding fraternization should be swept aside in tune with an exhortation that echoed the *motif* of the workers’ First International: “a emancipação de cada raça só póde e deve ser o resultado dos seus proprios esforços” [the emancipation of each race can only and must be the product of its own efforts] (Redacção 1911).

This internationalist perspective, which coincided with other bodies set up around the world in the early years of the twentieth century such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP, established in 1908 by WEB Du Bois), ran through all three issues of the paper. Although Du Bois was not mentioned, the perspective of *O Negro* was, in the aspects discussed above, more radical than the former’s National Association, which wavered in respect of its political outlook. The same can be said of Marcus Garvey’s later Universal Negro Improvement Association (established in 1916), whose leader at times praised Hitler and demonstrated a convoluted approach to communism (Martin 1976: 60–61, 221–272) as well as opposing miscegenation. *O Negro* sought its own ideological masthead, and this reflected, broadly, a leftist stance, although, as we will see, this was also tinged with conformism. Internationalism, nevertheless, was a permanent trait. In its third issue, the possibility of an organization to take up the defense of the Black race in London was received positively. Set up by “enlightened Europeans” who had lived in the Americas, Africa, and Australia, the society aimed to establish schools in various parts of the world and to promote the interests of the Black race in all lands (Anon 1911i).

The possession of an extraordinarily extensive range of correspondents from Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, São Tomé, Angola, Cape Town, Mozambique, England, Germany, Russia, France, and the United States—where Booker T. Washington was listed as a correspondent—would no doubt have aided the paper’s international mission (Anon 1911j). Such a network enabled reports on a range of events from the uprising of the Rio de Janeiro fleet against corporal punishment (Anon 1911k) to the lack of proper education in Mozambique (Anon 1911l). In the European area, the paper’s Paris correspondent, listed as W. C. Thompson [Thompson?] celebrated the collapse of the repressive Briand government in France while describing as a betrayal his volte face against socialism. A report on an interview given by Booker T. Washington, published in the Parisian *Le Journal*, provided an informative piece on the “questão da raça negra” [question of the Black race] and Black people’s struggles in America and South Africa in the same issue (Anon 1911m).<sup>5</sup>

### Colonial Tensions, Republican Disappointments

The territory that received most detailed analysis in *O Negro* was, unsurprisingly, given the background of the publication’s main authors, São Tomé. In contrast to the expectations created by the Republic in respect of altering the socio-economic order operating in the colonies, the paper unremittingly attacked the failings of the new regime. This disappointment connected with broader disillusionment across all the Portuguese colonies as a response to the unkept promises of the Republic (Zamparoni 2014).

The punitive and restrictive laws of the Portuguese Empire regarding the colonies and indigenous populations were examined in detail. In the first issue, the continuing exceptionality of a range of nineteenth-century laws was a phenomenon described as one more of the “mil vexames” [thousand indignities] imposed on the population (Anon 1911n). Among these was the decree of 20 February 1894, which allowed for misdemeanors by members of the local population to be punished through forced labor instead of prison. Other parts of the existing legislation conferred the title of “indigenous” on those who had been born in the colonies from a mother and father resident in the territory and who did not differ in respect of their education and customs from other members of their race.<sup>6</sup> This, ultimately, condemned them to second-class status. These were the laws, the article satirically

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<sup>5</sup> This was probably the interview printed in late August 1910 in *Le Journal* (Anon 1910).

<sup>6</sup> On the dynamics of Portuguese colonialism and the legal frameworks for the indigenous, see Jerónimo (2012a), and for the Indigenous Statute (the so-called *Indigenato*) of 1926, see Cahen (2012).

remarked, that the “enorme coração humanitário” [generous humanitarian heart] of the Portuguese had bestowed upon the populace (Anon 1911n). The article finished with a robust warning: “Mas reparai; será breve esta vossa orgia, gozada em detrimento da nossa liberdade que nos roubastes, e que saberemos reconquistar” [But behold; your luxuriousness, derived in detriment to our freedom stolen by you from us, will be short-lived. We know how to take it back] (Anon 1911n). A further piece on the colonial situation by the University of Coimbra law expert Ruy Ennes Ulrich (1911) did not mince words either and declared that the system followed by the Portuguese, particularly in Brazil in the past, had been one of “sujeição excessiva” [excessive oppressiveness]. The twentieth century had brought little progress and even though there were some voices in favor of greater autonomy for the colonies, Ulrich argued, the system should begin to prepare the colonies for self-governance.

News from the Portuguese colonies was conveyed in the three issues, with an emphasis on the conditions pertaining in each setting, and, in the case of Angola and São Tomé, the steps taken towards incipient political organization. The first of these, the “province” of Angola, as *O Negro* put it, “se começa a interessar com o seu destino futuro” [has begun to take an interest in its own future destiny] by means of the organization of the Partido Reformista d’Angola (PRA), whose statutes were reproduced for the reader (Anon 1911o). The PRA initially began as the Junta Revolucionária de Luanda and constituted one of the many different manifestations of the republican kaleidoscope in Angola that sought greater justice and autonomy for the colony (Rodrigues 2003: 26). While not initially independentist in its aims, the PRA became highly critical of regime policy. A similar critical and eventually independentist stance was adopted in São Tomé in the early 1920s by certain manifestations of republicanism under the auspices of figures such as Augusto Gambôa and António José de Almeida (Nascimento 1994: 169).

The limitations of the in-between position adopted by *O Negro* are evident, however, when the situation in Guinea was discussed in the final issue of the paper. In a letter signed by “C. B.” from Cacheu, Guinea, printed under the rubric of “The People’s Tribune” (C. B. 1911), the author praised the existence of *O Negro* for its role in the struggle against injustice and the sufferings of the Guinean population. The article cited cases of ill treatment by the authorities and hope was placed, despite other authors’ acerbic criticism of the new regime, on the Republic for a change in circumstances. Schools were demanded as well as identity documents, as promised, in order that Guineans could undertake public roles. The poor educational and labor situation in Guinea was contrasted to that of Cabo Verde where at least one high school operated. The right of Guineans to become military officers, currently



prohibited, was also demanded—hardly a radical objective, but an issue that, for the author, showed once more, the failure of the Republic to live up to its progressive spirit: “Se fosse no tempo da monarchia, não admirava! Agora, no tempo da igualdade e fraternidade, faz arripiar os cabelos!” [If we were under the monarchy, I wouldn’t be surprised. But now, in the time of freedom and fraternity, it makes my hair stand on end!] (C. B. 1911).

### Portugal, “pequena nação continental”

Racial discrimination and the dire situation of most of the local population and those who came to work on the São Tomé and Príncipe cocoa and coffee plantations, the so-called *serviçais* or contract workers, were core issues for *O Negro*. The paper’s correspondent, Pedro Gambôa, reported how racial prejudice was often at the heart of the resulting conflicts. During the recent electoral campaign, Gambôa reported, a local military officer, Major Nicolau Reys, had presented himself as a candidate for governor. Reys, however, had made disparaging remarks about the island’s people, which had resulted in unrest and the provisional take-over of power by Captain Henrique de Oliveira (Gambôa 1911a). Gambôa made it clear that few of the abuses suffered under the monarchy, including police violence and repression, had evaporated under the new republican regime.

In a further incident of discrimination, *O Negro* reported that a publication founded just after the advent of the Republic, *A Voz de S. Thomé*, had made racial slurs against the locals. The *Voz* had declared in its inaugural issue that it was necessary to raise the province out of the mire and, specifically, free white people from the “promiscuity” in which they lived with the Black population. A new district of the capital had been proposed as a European-only quarter. The irony that it was the liberal Republic that had permitted local whites to discover the terrible living conditions of most Blacks was not lost on *O Negro*.

Running through many articles, in addition to comments on labor and living conditions, was an account of the steps taken towards enduring and effective political organization. Rather than advocating independence or a formal end to the exploitative colonial relationship, however, this sometimes encapsulated a form of nationalism, leaving both concepts of nation and colony intact. A demand, drawn up in 1908 on the representation of the indigenous population, had been delivered to the Provisional Government of the Republic in 1910 (Anon 1911p). Framed as part of a “justa rebeldia” [just rebellion] against the conditions of slavery imposed on the islands and their lack of representation in Lisbon, the text argued that instead of the “pequena nação continental”

[small continental nation] that Portugal currently was, if careful administration of the colonies had been followed, it could have been a great country and its colonies could have been rich. Instead, Portugal had managed to “implantar o regime colonial mais absurdo do mundo” [establish the most absurd colonial regime in the world].

This theme continued into the next issue of *O Negro*. Drawing on insights taken from the official bulletin of São Tomé and Príncipe from December 1910, the penury of the people in Príncipe was put down to a variety of causes, including exploitation by Europeans, the tax regime, terrible working conditions, and poor health care. In contrast to imperial representations, a regime of enforced labor endured on the islands. Presented by the colonial state as a “civilizing” necessity providing discipline for the indigenous, such a regime was signed into legislation in a November 1899 decree (Jerónimo 2012b: 168–169). Opposition by the owners of the cocoa plantations, the *roceiros*, to the introduction of better working conditions merely conserved “o estigma da escravidão” [the stigma of slavery] (Anon 1911q1; cf. Clarence-Smith 1993; Macedo 2012; Cahen 2015).

The labor situation in the cocoa plantations on the islands was, to say the least, highly problematic. Cocoa production reached its height in São Tomé in the first decade of the twentieth century. It required ever higher inputs of labor, and an average of 4,000 laborers a year had to be imported, mainly from Angola, to maintain a workforce of between 30,000 to 40,000 (Hodges and Newitt 1988: 36–37).<sup>7</sup> Under 1903 legislation, workers’ contracts, drawn up by a local recruitment officer or *curador*, were for five years and could be renewed. Part of the workers’ wages, in theory, were to be used for the eventual repatriation of the *serviçais*. Those from Cape Verde were offered one- or two-year contracts and expected to return home as their engagement ended (Hodges and Newitt 1988: 36–37); other nationalities remained for longer. The working conditions on the islands and the high death rate, as well as the inefficiencies of the repatriation policy, had reached an international audience following concerns about the inhumane conditions prevailing in King Leopold’s Congo Free State and recruitment practices in South Africa (Hodges and Newitt 1988: 37).

Although the article did not go into more details about the workers on the *roças*, it did state that many locals, at least in São Tomé, had refused to work on them given the terrible conditions. Reports for the British chocolate manufacturers Cadbury and Fry, alerted

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<sup>7</sup> Kiesow (2017: 59) notes by drawing on the São Tomé Emigration Society’s statistics: “Between 1901 and 1928, plantation owners and administrators recruited a total of 100,821 African workers on the islands. The majority originated from Angola (50,444) and Mozambique (44,053), fewer from the Cape Verde Islands (6,305), and only nineteen people from other countries. Further evidence for the constant lack of workers is represented by numbers from recruited *serviçais* in Angola: in 1899, 7,363 official contracts were signed within the country and half of these laborers went to São Tomé and Príncipe.”

to possible abuses, pointed out that *serviçais* were indeed in theory contracted for five years and then permitted to return home. In reality, the regime was so strict and punitive that it was difficult to do so, and many fugitive workers were captured and forced to continue on the farms (Higgs 2014: 58). One report writer, Henry Nevinson, remarked that conditions could be described at the very least as “a mild form of slavery” (Higgs 2014: 66).<sup>8</sup> Historians concur. Clarence-Smith (1993: 149) would define the labor system as “almost identical to slavery.” Only in 1911 did the republican government introduce legislation to the effect that contracts would be for two years; it took until 1913 for the governor of Angola to enforce the law (Higgs 2014: 68) and it was only in 1912 that Angolans began to return to work on the islands (Clarence-Smith 1990: 154).

Such complaints about working conditions were broadened out to criticize the funding received by the armed forces in comparison to social causes such as education and justice (Anon 1911q2). In a long article, the lack of respect shown towards the indigenous population by certain military figures, as expressed in a report published in the local São Tomé *Boletim Oficial*, was highlighted as yet another example of racial injustice (Anon 1911r). The words of the report writers, Capt. Alfredo Pedreira Martins de Lima and Lt. Manuel de Souza Brazão, only served to “desprestigiar e amesquinhar os nativos” [ridicule and besmirch the natives] of São Tomé (Anon 1911r). A “distinção odiosa” [odious distinction] had been traced by the authors between the Europeans present on the island and the locals, an attitude deemed anomalous with the spirit of the new republican regime supposedly guided by liberty, equality, and fraternity (Anon 1911r). Among the many assertions contained in the original report was the admittance that no Black police officers had been appointed because all previous attempts had not turned out well. Rather than identifying the indigenous population as being at fault, the fact that trained locals had not been allowed to take on such a role was seen as evidence by *O Negro* of “um nojento odio de raça” [a revolting racial prejudice] (Anon 1911r). This contrasted with the situation in British India where “natives” undertook extensive policing roles. To add insult to injury, the report writers had argued that policemen recruited from Cape Verde and Mozambique were more reliable and conscientious than the locals. The existence of this kind of prejudice was defined as one of many “vices” that had grown out the specific despotic conditions prevalent in the colonies of West Africa.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> On Nevinson’s and others’ reports, see Jerónimo (2012b: 172); Oliveira (2017: 132).

<sup>9</sup> Poverty in Cape Verde was also signalled as an important issue in the paper. See the letter addressed to the Provisional Government of the Republic by Cape Verde residents in Anon (1911s), containing the statement “Nós temos o direito de que a metropole, quando aqui o povo corre o perigo de morrer de fome, pelo menos nos pague o que d’aqui nos levou o que d’aqui levantou n’outras épocas” [We have the right that the metropole,

Such wording coincided with a sharp yet uneasy differentiation being drawn between certain bodies and organizations that defended the status quo, whether racial or economic (or both), and those that outlined an assertive route for potential contestation against the empire's power base. In a short piece in the news section of *O Negro*, the creation on 27 April 1911 of the União Colonial Portuguesa was reported upon (Anon 1911t). Presided over by Magalhães Lima in Lisbon, the Union's stated aims were explicitly progressive, declaring that justice and humanity would be their watchwords "para o preto, para o branco, para o amarelo" [for black, white, and yellow] (Anon 1911t). The proof of these noble principles, however, would be in how they were put into practice. Perhaps just as the Republic was seen to be failing in its progressive promise, so would the União Colonial.

This circumspection displayed towards an organization created in the metropole was not articulated by *O Negro* when it came to combative associations that were established in the colonies. In a bid for the representation of the colonies in the Lisbon government, one organization, the Liga Ultramarina, denounced the continuing marginalization of these territories in regards to decision making (Anon 1911u). The Liga pointed to the fact that the colonies had saved the country from bankruptcy in the early 1890s (Santos 2001). Because of this reality, the colonies should enjoy representation in Lisbon and should have a hand in the new colonial statute that was being debated by the new regime. If a regime of complete subjection had continued, the paper argued, it was logical for the colonies to have no representation. If the colonies enjoyed a regime of autonomy, it was likewise clear that no representatives should be sent since laws would be made locally. Neither case, however, prevailed. Other organizations, including the Liga dos Interesses dos Indigenas, based in São Tomé and formed in 1910, made similar incipient demands (Andrade 1997: 87–88). The Liga's statutes were promptly outlined in *O Negro*, not least by the Liga secretary, Manuel da Trindade Franco e Lagos (Lagos 1911).

Such comments came in the context of *O Negro's* continued support for the creation of a transnational Partido Africano. In a strongly worded editorial in the paper's second issue, it declared that freedom was the alpha and the omega of modern times. The irony of the Portuguese civilizing project, referred to in the previous article on the Liga Ultramarina, which despite its supposedly noble motivations did not allow for its populations to speak, was plainly articulated in an article that refused any limitations on liberty: "Nada de grilhões,

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when the people here are at risk of dying from hunger, at least pays us for what it took away from us from here in previous periods].

ainda mesmo que elles sejam de oiro” [No prison bars even if they are made of gold].<sup>10</sup> The reference to modern times and to discourses of liberty show how in tune *O Negro* was with the expectations and the disappointments, not to speak of the deceptions, arising during the modern period. Rather than rejecting the central premises of modernity, however, *O Negro* effectively articulated an alternative vision of modernity, or a form of what Appadurai has termed grassroots globalization, as a vehicle for protest and for the self-realization, although perhaps not quite independence, of the subaltern subject (Appadurai 2001).

In the editorial, “Fartae villanagem!” (Anon 1911v), which followed the statement on the colonial regime’s auriferous prison bars, the situation of “the sons of Africa” was likened to the broader “social question” of the late nineteenth century. This issue, as pressing and legitimate as matters of the health of the population or the dispute between labor and capital, arose as a result of the “violenta exclusão da posse e usufructo dos bens da terra” [violent theft of the ownership and benefits to be derived from the wealth of the earth] (Anon 1911v) originally belonging to Africans. The violation of natural law merited the utmost derision on the part of the newspaper and justice was demanded from the possessing powers. This would not come, however, from a mere change in law, which, as noted above, was rejected as a tool of those “nações que nos roubaram a terra natal” [nations that stole our native land] (Anon 1911v). As a reinforcement to these power structures, the native populations had been denied access to the administration of their own territories and had been deprived of education and access to intellectual pursuits. Now, however, the forces of plunder (those behind the “villanagem” in the article’s title) had been sent a warning: the hopes for social redemption were completely divorced from the increased desire for economic gain, which, in turn, acted against indigenous honor and dignity. Such antagonism, *O Negro* hoped, would give birth to a Partido Africano composed of guilds, associations, and cooperatives whose realization would constitute the application of the Monroe Doctrine *par excellence*. Despite the fact that such a party would raise “inimigos irreductiveis” [indefatigable enemies] and would stoke the ire of “adversarios colericos” [rabid adversaries] (as, in fact, *O Negro* had), it would triumph in the name of humanity. Such was the confidence of this movement that it asked rhetorically, “Quem poderá deter o raio refulgente que serpeia pelas nuvens?” [Who will be capable of deflecting the lightening blow that is gathering in the clouds?] (Anon 1911v).

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<sup>10</sup> These words appeared in bold above the editorial in Anon (1911v).

## Eclecticism as an Ideological Vehicle

Despite some writers for *O Negro* articulating demands that were ambivalent in respect of their radicalism, such as indigenous access to the (colonial) police and armed forces, there were traces of the positive reception of certain leftist ideologies from socialism through to anarchism.<sup>11</sup> Antimilitarism in the newspaper was accompanied by a strong critique of religion, defined in one article as a plague (Anon 1911w), while threats to health, such as the consumption of alcohol, were highlighted. Alcohol was also thought to be responsible for the creation of “degenerate” offspring (Anon 1911x). All these attitudes were common currency within turn-of-the-century progressive and labor movement organizations. Hostility to the church, for example, defined by Birmingham as “the anti-clerical backbone of republicanism,” was prominent in political discourse at the time (Birmingham 2003: 152).

Nevertheless, in the case of *O Negro*, there seems to have been a closer affinity, at least on the part of some of its writers, with some radical nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century figures who were named as inspirational for the struggle. The emancipatory élan of international agitators such as Peter Kropotkin, for example, graced the pages of *O Negro* (P. K. 1911) in respect of the political capacity of the youth. The educational background of those animating the paper no doubt encouraged the exploration of new pedagogical techniques and programs. Of these, *O Negro* highlighted the progressive educational model of the Catalan anarchist and founder of the “rationalist” Modern School, Francisco Ferrer (Anon 1911y). It was here that the paper’s antimilitarism and anti-religiousness coincided. Ferrer’s main ideas were presented in a homage piece two years after his execution by the Spanish state for his supposed involvement in the July 1909 riots in Barcelona against the call-up for men to fight in the Moroccan war. The philosophical connections between Ferrer and other left-leaning libertarians such as Odón de Buen, Élisée Reclus, and Anselmo Lorenzo were traced, as well as the modern, harmonious, and progressive nature of his school curriculum. The anti-religious tenets of the article were reinforced by the use of terms such as “clericalha” [vile priesthood] and the newspaper also identified the need to free children from the “preconceitos de raças, das tradições do passado” [prejudices of race and of past traditions] (Anon 1911y), showing how anticlericalism,

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<sup>11</sup> As Roldão, Pereira, and Varela note (2021: 2), Arthur Monteiro de Castro would also collaborate with the anarcho-sindicalist *A Batalha*. See Castro (1926). That *O Negro* appeared to be sympathetic to anarchism in particular is also intimated by the publicity carried for the Lourenço Marques-based anarchist paper *Os Simples*, directed by M.J. de Sousa Amorim. See the advertisements page of *O Negro*, 1 (3) (1911): 4.

educational radicalism, and anti-racism were mobilized by *O Negro* in order to galvanize opposition to restrictive colonial rule and racial prejudice.

This paean to the inhabitants of a world without racial distinctions was articulated comprehensively in an article in the paper's second issue written by the São Tomé correspondent, Pedro Gambôa, precisely on the subject of "race" (Gambôa 1911b). Reflecting on a speech he had given in São Tomé on the occasion of the visit of Prince Luiz Filipe in July 1907 in which he had argued that "Não ha raças, ha homens e ha civilizações" [There are no races, only men and civilizations] (Gambôa 1911b), Gambôa expanded on his thoughts in April 1911 for publication in *O Negro* later that year. The author began with a critique of Europe's conquest and the feelings of racial superiority that reigned in this part of the world; this continent acted as the "maior entrave que hoje existe para a emancipação rapida das raças incultas" [main brake that exists today for the speedy emancipation of the uninstructed races] (Gambôa 1911b). At the heart of this impediment was a false conception of law, which had enslaved native populations. While some local leaders, *O Negro* argued, had found a degree of privilege within the colonial set-up, most inhabitants were subject to brutal rule. The history of Europe itself, nevertheless, had continually been turned back on the very structures of the colonial system and, where despots had once ruled—whether in the case of Napoleon or in the Spanish take-over of Portugal—liberty had eventually triumphed. An identical fate, the paper continued, awaited oppressed Blacks who would, sooner or later, overthrow their lords. In seeking emancipation, however, violence should not be pursued; instead, progress and evolution would lead to freedom. Once such justice had been restored, Africa would then be for Africans just as Europe would be for Europeans.

### **Concluding Remarks: Foundations for Future Anticolonial Struggle**

The short-lived *O Negro* constituted a combative and articulate voice against the inequities of colonialism. Although it only survived for three issues, and clearly did not speak with one voice, it laid down the groundwork for later developments in five principal ways. First, like other publications that would follow, such as *A Voz d'Africa* (1912-1913) and *O Correio de Africa* (1921-1924), *O Negro* questioned the colonial relationship from diverse perspectives. Like many publications of the time, although these perspectives were complementary, they were not necessarily entirely compatible. As Pinto de Andrade (1997: 184) has argued, ambivalence was one of the defining characteristics of the Black-led publications (termed "proto-nationalist" by this author) that came to light in Lisbon up to the 1930s. Some of

these were completely opposed to colonialism and sought independence for the colonies; others argued for a more representative or just relationship between colony and metropole with a reform of the fiscal and labor regime. This ambivalence arose partly as a result of the socio-economic position occupied by the animators of such periodicals (Nascimento 2005). As Eugénia Rodrigues has argued in the case of Angola, organizations that sprung up in the 1910s responded to discontent among the *mestiço* or local elites in respect of the economic and political subordination of the colony to the metropole (Rodrigues 2003: 9–11). Oliveira has argued further that “the core constituency of [oppositional] groups was an intermediary class of creole or ‘assimilated’ Africans who had a long past of collaboration with the Portuguese” (Oliveira 2017: 140). It is only when this background is recognized that it is possible “to make sense of the ambivalence of their attitudes and trajectories” (Oliveira 2017: 140). The figures behind *O Negro* acted, at least in part, in accordance with the position of those groups marginalized by centers of power in non-European localities (Connell 2007: 14); they contested elements of colonialism in no uncertain terms, but also reproduced some oppressive structures. This is evident from arguments in favor of a “fairer deal” within the colonial model and support for an economic relationship with Portugal that did little to alter the fundamentals of either colonialism or notions of the nation, from demands for indigenous access to policing and the armed forces. Despite a somewhat compromised position, nevertheless, *O Negro* served to voice contestations from the heart of the empire, to circulate knowledge on the situation of other Black populations, and to garner resistance from what Boehmer has termed a site of “potentially productive inbetweenness” (Boehmer 2005: 21).

Second, *O Negro* was important because the protagonists that cut their teeth within its pages resurfaced in later movements and publications throughout the 1910s and 1920s. This continuity was encapsulated by figures such as Castro and Ayres de Menezes. Ayres de Menezes, for example, went on to join the Junta de Defesa dos Direitos d’África (established in 1912) and performed a fundamental role in its publications, *A Voz d’Africa* and *Tribuna d’África. Órgão da Junta de Defesa dos Direitos d’África*.<sup>12</sup> Cunha Lisboa and Artur Monteiro de Castro reappeared in the second phase of the by then unaffiliated *Tribuna d’África* as late as 1931–1932 (Varela and Pereira 2020: 10). We can therefore consider *O Negro* to be foundational in its establishment of the networks and trajectories of Black activism that would inform the anticolonial movement until the 1930s before their eclipse under the Salazar dictatorship.

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<sup>12</sup> See the table on the principal figures for each publication in Varela and Pereira (2020: 9).



Third, the paper functioned as a networking space by creating ideological overlaps between disparate movements. These ranged from radical republicanism to the new ideologies of the left. The fact that *O Negro* made reference to theories in favor of a redistribution of the land and the sharing of the profits of work placed many of its writers in a long segue of radical thought from Proudhon to Marx and Bakunin. While this does not convert *O Negro* into a journal of revolutionary socialism or anarchism, the borrowings and the affective connections afforded by such references evidently struck a chord with these *saotomenses* who were keen to link Black emancipation with radical republicanism and revolutionary socialism. While the stance of *O Negro* and the later Liga dos Interesses Indigenas based on the islands was hamstrung by their failure to break fully from what Andrade (1997: 184) termed the “parâmetros fixados” [fixed framework] of republican legality, the connections they forged are suggestive for they change our understanding of early anticolonialism and its ideological permeations in the Lusophone world in the 1910s.

Four, the doctrine and practice of internationalism from São Tomé to Angola reflect the dynamics of the early transnational twentieth-century anticolonial struggle, from the United States to West Africa, and they are testimony to the organizational power of the Portuguese language and colonial condition. The degree to which Portuguese was a vehicle of mobilization and dissent, however, must be questioned. While it served to bind movements together and enabled the transfer of insights from one colony to the next in publications like *O Negro*, it must be borne in mind that only a small percentage of these populations could read and write and, more specifically, it was mainly the educated, so-called “assimilated” elite, including most readers and writers connected to *O Negro*, who knew Portuguese.

A fifth way in which *O Negro* was significant for later developments was in its establishment of associations, which were in turn internationalist and embryonic of the new federalism that anticolonialism sought. Although the Liga Academica Internacional dos Negros and the Associação dos Estudantes Negros were most likely to have been short-lived, the networking effects afforded by such groupings showed the potential of Black associational ties for future developments. It is worth noting that the Association drew up a lively program of meetings on Thursday and Saturday evenings (Direcção 1911) and a short notice in the paper reminded readers about the meetings, allowing us to suppose that Black students had been meeting even before *O Negro* was established. Details about the league were less specific, but it was remarked in issue two of *O Negro* that it continued to meet in the same place as it had done before (Anon 1911z). The associational and affective

continuities forged by *O Negro* suggest that the journal established an important fulcrum around which the construction of the anticolonial movement in Portugal took place in the early twentieth century. Its significance for the global Black and anticolonial movement, furthermore, far outweighs its ephemeral existence over a period of little more than seven months.

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### **Bionote/Nota Biográfica**

RICHARD CLEMINSON is Professor of Hispanic Studies. He has published on scientific and sexological theories of sexuality, particularly with respect to the cultural and scientific construction of male homosexuality in Spain, hermaphroditism in Iberia and the reception of eugenics in Spain and Portugal. He is currently working on colonialism and anticolonialism in Portugal in the early twentieth century.

RICHARD CLEMINSON é Professor de Estudos Hispânicos. Tem publicado sobre teorias científicas e sexológicas da sexualidade, particularmente no que diz respeito à construção

cultural e científica da homossexualidade masculina em Espanha, ao hermafroditismo na Península Ibérica e à recepção da eugenia em Espanha e Portugal. Actualmente trabalha sobre colonialismo e anticolonialismo em Portugal, no início do século XX.