

The “triduum of madness”: Campos Elyseos and the african-diasporic carnival¹

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Abstract

This article aims to recover aspects of São Paulo carnival in the first decades of the 20th century, centered on the trajectory of one of the São Paulo blacks' artistic-cultural expressions: the Campos Elyseos Carnival Group. In a context in which blacks were subordinated socially and politically, the *cordão carnavalesco* took on an affirmative sense, becoming a means of promoting this racial sector. In addition to providing diversion and entertainment to its members, the association circulated notions of belonging, equality, and citizenship.

Keywords: blacks; carnival; popular party.

O “tríduo da loucura”: Campos Elyseos e o carnaval afro-diaspórico

Resumo

O artigo procura reconstituir aspectos do carnaval de São Paulo nas primeiras décadas do século XX, centrado na trajetória de uma das manifestações artístico-culturais dos afro-paulistas: o Grupo Carnavalesco Campos Elyseos. Num contexto em que o negro ficou subalternizado social e politicamente, o cordão carnavalesco assumiu um sentido afirmativo, convertendo-se num meio de promoção desse segmento racial. Além de garantir diversão e entretenimento aos associados, a agremiação colocava em circulação noções de pertencimento, igualdade e cidadania.

Palavras-chave: negros; carnaval; festa popular.

El “triduo de la locura”: Campos Elyseos y el carnaval afro-diaspórico

Resumen

El artículo tiene como objetivo reconstruir aspectos del Carnaval de São Paulo en las primeras décadas del siglo XX, centrada en el camino de las manifestaciones artísticas y culturales de afropaulistas: Grupo Campos Elyseos Carnaval. En un contexto donde el negro era subordinado social y políticamente, el carnaval tomó en una cadena de sentido así, convertirse en un medio de promover este segmento racial. Además de garantizar diversión y entretenimiento a los miembros, el gremio de poner en circulación las nociones de pertenencia, la igualdad y la ciudadanía.

Palabras clave: negro; carnaval; fiesta popular.

Le Triduum de folie: Champs Elyseos et le carnaval de la diaspora africaine

Résumé

Cet article cherche à reconstruire aspects du Carnaval de São Paulo dans les premières décennies du 20^e siècle, mettant l'accent sur la trajectoire des expressions artistiques et culturelles des Afrodescendants à São Paulo: le groupe de Carnaval Champs Elysees. Dans un contexte où le noir était subordonné socialement et politiquement, le carnaval a acquis un sens positif et est devenu un moyen de promouvoir ce segment raciale. En plus d'assurer plaisir et de divertissement pour ses membres, le groupe a mis en circulation des notions d'appartenance, d'égalité et de la citoyenneté.

Mots-clés: noires; carnaval; parti populaire.

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*He left
There is no bronze plaque
There is no history
The composer dies with no glory
After all the joy he gave us
Like that
A fact happens again
Composer of the street
Artist of the people and
He is another one who left without a goodbye
"Silence in Bexiga" (Geraldo Filme)*

On June 23, 1928, the newspaper *Progresso* reported the anniversary of Campos Elyseos, the carnival group which held the most victories in carnival contests that took place in the city of São Paulo in the early decades of the 20th century:

To talk about the trajectory of the 'white-purple' (colors of the group) in almost one decade of life would mean to describe the numerous triumphs accomplished in the ephemeral kingdom of party days. Acquired applauses, in ethereal days like these, proficiently state the excellence of those who own them. They certainly do.

Campos Elyseos was qualified as a "legitimate affirmation of the street carnival". "In a theater where it is all transitory and transient", published the paper, "at times we are touched by the progress of a comedy or the closure of a drama". For nine years, Momo (the king) has held "the scepter so that he could, together with his court, scare sadness away from Earth, since it cannot stand laughter". And when he goes, tottering, "sounding his bells, he leaves in memorable ears the songs with which Campos Elyseos ends the monotony of carnival in São Paulo".

Lads of sound souls, buffoons, not abiding by circumspection, with which they enter the triduum of madness, decided, at a happy time, to organize a carnival group, whose anniversary we celebrate today. There were so many founders, so many. Let's enumerate them, fearing to omit some: Argentino Celso Wanderlei, Antenor Ferreira, Benedicto de Oliveira, Cezino de Oliveira, José Francisco, Luís Camillo, João de Andrade, João Ricardo, Ismael de Oliveira, Guilherme de Oliveira, Luís Gonzaga, Saturnino de Oliveira and Euclides dos Santos.

In order to conclude the story, the newspaper informed the special schedule the carnival group had prepared for the ephemerides:

Tonight, to celebrate its anniversary, Campos Elyseos will organize the following celebrations: at 22 hours, the festival during

which the awards achieved in carnival will be delivered by Mr. Oscar de Andrade and Miss Hemínia do Nascimento will begin.

For its “brilliant” work in sports rounds,

on the same day, C. Elyseos will offer São Geraldo [a soccer team] an artistic cup. After these ceremonies, the ball will begin, cadenced by the jazz of Mr. Benedicto dos Santos.¹

As observed, Campos Elyseos was celebrated by *Progresso*. Seen as a synonym of rapture, “excellence”, relaxation, “triumphs”, the popular “white-purple” would be remarkable for the carnival in São Paulo. With its participation in street theater, parading with its scepter and all of its court in the kingdom days of Momo, sadness would be banished from the land of *bandeirantes* (*bandeirantes* were descendants of the first and second generation of Portuguese colonizers in São Paulo, and they hunted and slaved indigenous local people), so joy would reign, followed by good mood, songs, claps and apothetic parades. Anyway, the “triduum of madness” would not be the same with the entrance of Campos Elyseos. And the trajectory of this carnival group is the theme of this article.

No one doubts that carnival is filled with a ludic sense, not to say a Dionysian one. In fact, strata from African groups in São Paulo went further. They took the “triduum of madness” to break (or try to break) the monotony of routine, of obedience to social and racial norms, so they could have the most of fun, without, however, forgetting to show their wishes, expectations and self-assessment projects in the Piratininga plateau. Considering this premise, it is convenient to know: is it the white-purple”? How did the group appropriate the carnival and its correlate activities in the 1920s? At the point of view of some experts, black people did not participate in formal political structures in the First Republic period. If this argument is correct, it is worth to argue that even then they occupied public space, worked with the scope of civil society and developed multiple proactive actions. In a republican order that repelled them (or included them marginally), this carnival *cordão* (or group) in São Paulo created a dialogue channel between them and the power agencies, and, when possible, their parades were used as a mean to promote equity.

¹*Progresso*, São Paulo, 23 Jun. 1928, p. 2. *Progresso* was part of what was called the “black press”: newspapers and magazines published by and for “colored men” in São Paulo after the slavery abolition. For the production of this article, the following were consulted: *O Menelik, ARua, Alfinete, A Liberdade, Kosmos, Getulino, O Clarim d’Alvorada, O Auriverde, O Patrocínio, Evolução* e, obviamente, *Progresso*. About the African-Brazilian journals, see Roger Bastide, “A imprensa negra do Estado de São Paulo”, *Boletim da Faculdade de Filosofia, Ciências e Letras da Universidade de São Paulo. Sociologia*, vol. CXXI, n. 2, São Paulo, 1951, p. 50-78; Miriam Nicolau Ferrara, *A imprensa negra paulista, 1915-1963*, São Paulo, Ed. FFLCH-USP, 1986; Kim D. Butler, *Freedoms given, freedoms won: afro-brazilians in post-abolition São Paulo and Salvador*, New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 1998, p. 210-227; Petrónio Domingues, *A nova abolição*, São Paulo, Selo Negro, 2008, especially the first chapter; Micol Seigel, *Uneven encounters: making race and nation in Brazil and The United States*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 2009, p. 179-205 and Paulina L. Alberto, *Terms of inclusion: black intellectuals in 20th century Brazil*, Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2011, p. 23-68.

The main reference of most of the work concerning carnival, at the end of the 19th century and in the first decades of the 20th century, was the carnival of Rio de Janeiro,² and the production in this matter was relatively scarce in relation to its manifestation in other fields. Concerning the carnival of the blacks and their groups, the situation is also unequal. Besides the experience in Rio, research is limited.³ Among the first ones who were dedicated to the theme in the city or the State of São Paulo there were folklorists, memorialists and journalists.⁴ The interest of the academic world for the carnival of African groups in São Paulo is recent. In 1986, the anthropologist Iêda Marques Britto published the book *Samba na cidade de São Paulo (1900–1930)*, which approached the birth and development of carnival *folguedos* (popular parties) of the blacks;⁵ in 1990, José Carlos Gomes da Silva concluded a master's thesis in Social Sciences which investigated the routine and leisure activities of African groups in São Paulo from 1900 to 1930, and designed a succinct sketch of carnival *cordões*;⁶ in 2004, the anthropologists Vagner Gonçalves da Silva *et al.* wrote an article about two important black characters, whose trajectories are mixed with the

²About carnival in Rio de Janeiro, see, among others, Roberto da Matta, *Carnavais, malandros e heróis: para uma sociologia do dilema brasileiro*, Rio de Janeiro, Zahar Editores, 1979; Ana Maria Rodrigues, *Samba negro, espoliação branca*, São Paulo, HUCITEC, 1984; Eneida de Moraes, *História do carnaval carioca*, Rio de Janeiro, Record, 1987; Maria Isaura Pereira de Queiroz, *O carnaval brasileiro: o vivido e o mito*, São Paulo, Brasiliense, 1992; Leonardo Affonso de Miranda Pereira, *O carnaval das letras*, Rio de Janeiro, Secretaria Municipal de Cultura, 1994; Sérgio Cabral, *As escolas de samba do Rio de Janeiro*, Rio de Janeiro, Luminar, 1996; Maria Clementina Pereira Cunha, *Ecos da folia: uma história social do carnaval carioca entre 1880 e 1920*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2001; Rachel Soihet, *A subversão pelo riso: estudos sobre o carnaval carioca, da Belle Époque ao tempo de Vargas*, 2.ed., Uberlândia/MG, EDUFU, 2008.

³For the carnival of the blacks and their groups in Rio Grande do Sul, in the first decades of the 20th century, see Íris Graciela Germano, *Rio Grande do Sul, Brasil e Etiópia: os negros e o carnaval de Porto Alegre nas décadas de 1930 e 40*, Dissertação de Mestrado em História, UFRGS, Porto Alegre, 1999; Beatriz Ana Loner e Lorena Almeida Gill, "Clubes carnavalescos negros na cidade de Pelotas", *Estudos Ibero-Americanos*, vol. 35, n. 1, Porto Alegre, 2009, p. 145-162. Já para Salvador, ver Peter Fry *et al.*, "Negros e brancos no carnaval da Velha República", In: João José Reis (org.), *Escravidão e invenção da liberdade - estudos sobre o negro no Brasil*, São Paulo, Brasiliense, 1988, p. 232-263; Raphael Rodrigues Vieira Filho, "Diversidade no carnaval de Salvador: as manifestações afro-brasileiras (1876-1930)", *Projeto História*, n. 14, São Paulo, 1997, p. 217-230; Kim D. Butler, *Freedoms given, freedoms won: afro-brazilians in post-abolition São Paulo and Salvador*, New Brunswick, NJ, Rutgers University Press, 1998, p. 168-209; Wlamyra R. Albuquerque, *O jogo da dissimulação: abolição e cidadania negra no Brasil*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2009, p. 195-240. For Pernambuco, see Leonardo Dantas Silva e Mário Souto Maior (orgs.), *Antologia do carnaval do Recife*, Recife, Ed. Massangana, 1991; Rita de Cássia Barbosa de Araújo, "Festas públicas e carnavais: o negro e a cultura popular em Pernambuco", In: Luiz Sávio de Almeida *et al.*, (orgs.), *O negro e a construção do carnaval no Nordeste*, Maceió, Edufal, 2003, p. 23-54. Para Alagoas, ver Bruno César Cavalcanti, "Bons e sacudidos: o carnaval negro e seus impasses em Maceió", In: Suassuna Fernandes *et al.*, (orgs.), *Kulé Kulé- visibilidades negras*, Maceió, Edufal, 2006, p. 26-40.

⁴For literature produced by folklorists, memorialists and journalists concerning the carnival of the blacks and their groups in São Paulo, in the early decades of the 20th century, see José Muniz Júnior, *Do Batuque à Escola de Samba: subsídios para a história do samba*, São Paulo, Símbolo, 1976; Wilson Rodrigues de Moraes, *Escolas de samba de São Paulo - Capital*, São Paulo, Conselho Estadual de Artes e Ciências Humanas, 1978; Nelsinho Crecibení, *Convocação geral, a folia está na rua: o carnaval de São Paulo tem história de verdade*, São Paulo, O Artífice Editorial, 2000; Maria Aparecida Urbano, *Carnaval e samba em evolução em São Paulo*, São Paulo, Plêiade, 2005; Maria Aparecida Urbano *et al.*, *Arte em desfile: escola de samba paulistana*, São Paulo: Edicon, 1987.

⁵Iêda Marques Britto, *Samba na cidade de São Paulo, 1900-1930: um exercício de resistência cultural*, São Paulo, FFLCH-USP, 1986.

⁶José Carlos Gomes da Silva, *Os sub urbanos e a outra face da cidade. Negros em São Paulo: cotidiano, lazer e cidadania, 1900-1930*, Dissertação de Mestrado em Ciências Sociais, Unicamp, Campinas, 1990, p. 60-72. From the same author, see "Negros em São Paulo: espaço público, imagem e cidadania", In: Ana Maria de Niemeyer, Emília Pietrafesa de Godói (orgs.), *Além dos territórios: para um diálogo entre a etnologia indígena, os estudos rurais e os estudos urbanos*, Campinas, Mercado de Letras, 1998, p. 65-96.

process of legitimating carnival and samba in São Paulo;⁷ in 2007, the anthropologist Olga Von Simson brought to light a book — originally presented as a PhD Thesis in Anthropology, in 1989 — about “whites and blacks in the popular carnival of São Paulo (1914-1988)”⁸ Concerning the domains of *Clio*, José Geraldo Vinci de Moraes alluded to the history of *cordões bandeirantes*, in 1995,⁹ and Zélia Lopes da Silva published a book, in 2008, in which there is a special topic to describe street carnivals and black clubs in the city of São Paulo, from 1923 to 1938.¹⁰ Even though these analyses provide a broad scenario of the carnival of African groups in São Paulo in the first decades of the 20th century, there are not enough specific studies about groups. Altogether, the studies function both as reference and starting point, but they do not systematize or analyze the subject to be approached: the trajectory of the carnival group Campos Elyseos.

In the evaluation by Von Simson, the *cordões* went through two distinct phases. In the first one — the phase of implantation and development —, there were no “institutional parades, therefore, no official support”. This phase lasted from the mid-1910s to the late 1920s. The second stage, called by the author as “the phase of progressive institutionalization”, corresponds to the time of consolidation of the parades, when *cordões* were encouraged by radio stations or newspapers. Afterwards,

some commercial and industrial companies, and, eventually, the city hall, started to organize and finance parades. This second phase culminated in the formalization of popular carnival in 1968, which, however, led to the progressive disappearance of *cordões*.¹¹

Considering this periodization, it is important to say: it is not about reviewing the whole story of Campos Elyseos, but to circumscribe it to the first phase of the popular parties of Africans in São Paulo.

The carnival in São Paulo

However, before bringing to light the story of Campos Elyseos, we will mention brief notes concerning carnival in São Paulo. In the second half of the 19th century, the *entrudo* — old-fashioned way to have fun during carnival brought by Portuguese colonizers, in which buffoons wore grotesque masks and made noise and pranks; threw water, lemons and oranges, powder and mud and other not

⁷Vagner Gonçalves da Silva *et al.*, “Madrinha Eunice e Geraldo Filme: memórias do carnaval e do samba paulistas”, In: Vagner Gonçalves da Silva (org.), *Artes do corpo*, São Paulo: Selo Negro, 2004, p. 123-187 (Memória afro-brasileira; vol. 2).

⁸Olga Von Simson, *Carnaval em branco e negro: carnaval popular paulistano, 1914-1988*, Campinas, Editora da Unicamp; São Paulo, Editora da Universidade de São Paulo; Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo, 2007.

⁹José Geraldo Vinci de Moraes, *Sonoridades paulistas: a música popular na cidade de São Paulo - final do século XIX ao início do século XX*, Rio de Janeiro, Funarte, 1995, p. 104-118.

¹⁰Zélia Lopes da Silva, *Os carnavais de rua e dos clubes na cidade de São Paulo: metamorfoses de uma festa, 1923-1938*, São Paulo, Editora Unesp; Londrina, Edel, 2008.

¹¹Olga Von Simson, *Carnaval em branco e negro: carnaval popular paulistano, 1914-1988*, Campinas, Editora da Unicamp; São Paulo, Editora da Universidade de São Paulo; Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo, 2007, p. 170.

so hygienic substances — began to be identified by the Brazilian elite as a synonym of colonial heritage, delay and ignorance, thus not being adequate for the project of a civilized, prosperous and modern nation. The carnival idealized by the elite, with the attempt to banish the “savage” and “primitive” *entrudo*, was inspired by the spectacular celebrations in Paris, Venice and Nice. Masquerade balls, with fine and elegant clothes, buffet and different attractions in the private space of clubs, theaters and carnival groups became more and more the official model of the party. Battles of confetti, serpentine and poppers, as well as the luxurious parades, were the fun with which the “cult” and “refined” people of the cities used to salute the “party god”.¹²

It seems that, in São Paulo, the scenario was not different. The “first modern carnival” that was held in the city happened in 1857 — as pointed out by the chronicler Antonio Egydio Margins —, “and people in São Paulo, until then, did not know this type of entertainment, since they only knew the traditional *entrudo*”.¹³ This date pointed out by Egydio Martins as the “first carnival” of São Paulo is questionable.¹⁴ But what matters for us is to know that masquerade balls in hotels, theaters, clubs and private ranches were multiplying during the second half of the 19th century.¹⁵

*The blacks invested in the creation and recreation
of popular forms of carnival: caiapós, zé-pereiras,
blocks and, later, ranchos and cordões*

There were also carriage and float parades — in the “triduum of madness” —, in the events of major carnival societies, and also the presentation of blocks, such as *Os Zuavos* (referring to the soldiers of the Algerian infantry), formed by a large number of merchants, several public employees and important land owners. Its members went through the streets of downtown being the target for the confetti and serpentine thrown by the people watching from their homes. At the beginning of the 20th century, the societies kept organizing these events — such as *Clube dos Pindaíbas* — referring to people who have no money and live in misery; *Clube dos Fenianos* — referring

¹²See, among others, Afonso Antonio de Freitas, “Do carnaval dos tempos coloniais ao cateretê moderno paulistano”, *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico de São Paulo*, vol. 33, 1937; Rita de Cássia Barbosa de Araújo, “Carnaval do Recife: a alegria guerreira”, *Estudos Avançados*, vol. 11, n. 29, São Paulo, 1997, p. 203-216; Cunha, *Ecos da folia: uma história social do carnaval carioca entre 1880 e 1920*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2001

¹³Antonio Egydio Martins, *São Paulo antigo, 1554-1910*, São Paulo, Paz e Terra, 2003, p. 155.

¹⁴The chronicler Silva Bruno, for instance, presents a different date than that declared by Egydio Martins: “The first modern carnival in São Paulo seems to have happened in 1855, and until then the people of São Paulo did not know other carnival but the primitive *entrudo*, which had been fought by the city hall for long”. Ernani Silva Bruno, *História e tradições da cidade de São Paulo: burgo de estudantes, 1828-1872*, vol. 2, Rio de Janeiro, Livraria José Olympio, 1953, p. 794.

¹⁵Raimundo de Menezes, *São Paulo dos nossos avós*, São Paulo, Saraiva, 1969, p. 82.

to the Irish revolutions; and *Clube Tenentes de Plutão* – Pluto’s lieutenants¹⁶ — in the central triangle (streets 15 de Novembro, Direita and São Bento), however, the most prestigious carnival activity was called *corso*, an afternoon parade with embellished open cars, developed by elite families in the most elegant avenue of the city: the Paulista Avenue. Frederico Branco participated in one of these carnivals as a child and, in a memorialistic text, reports he never forgot about the experience.

Dressed as a harlequin and sitting on the back seat of a convertible Ford, with his brother and little cousins, he would have surrendered, “charmed to the universe of singing and colors of the *corso*”. From the neighborhoods Paraíso to Consolação, Paulista Avenue was filled with open cars that moved slowly amongst clouds of confetti and serpentine,

with people standing together on the steps, mudflaps, safes and bumpers of cars, singing, jumping, playing, and teasing each other with long sticks adorned with paper flowers.¹⁷

In the parade of Paulista, blacks were accepted only as mere spectators. Go figure. The white elite and the thousands of immigrants, especially Italians, prospered in São Paulo with the idea of “color discrimination” and intolerance against blacks. The latter, by the way, were usually seen as inferior, and they were not hired by several companies, nor served to at certain bars, hotels, restaurants and barbershops in the cities of the State. Their access to parks and public squares was limited.¹⁸ Their cultural ludic activities — such as drumbeats, *samba-lenço*, *jongo*, *tambu*, *congada*, *moçambiques*, *capoeira* and *tiririca* — were restricted, let alone persecuted. And their religious manifestations — especially *macumba* — were forbidden. Therefore, carnival reflected the broadest racial contradictions. Without accepting to be expelled from the official celebration and accumulating the ancient African-diasporic experiences, the blacks invested in the creation and recreation of popular forms of carnival: *caiapós*, *zé-pereiras*, blocks and, later, *ranchos* and *cordões*.

According to Von Simson, *caiapós* constituted the “genesis of the carnival *folgedos* of the blacks” in São Paulo. They consisted of a dramatic act, in form of dance, which preceded a colonial procession. They narrated the “story of the death of a *cacique* (indigenous leader), hit by a white man, who could return to life thanks to the arts of a shaman, for the joy and satisfaction of the tribe”. To denounce the repression suffered from the white slave owners, the

poor blacks in São Paulo in the 18th and 19th centuries, in these manifestations, emphasized the repressive character of the

¹⁶Ernani Silva Bruno, *História e tradições da cidade de São Paulo: metrópole do café, 1872-1918*, vol. 3, 4. ed., São Paulo, Hucitec, 1991, p. 1230.

¹⁷Frederico Branco, *Postais paulistas*, São Paulo, Maltese, 1993, p. 97.

¹⁸George Reid Andrews, *Negros e brancos em São Paulo, 1888-1988*, Bauru, SP, EDUSC, 1998, p. 216-217.

Portuguese people and, at the same time, symbolically repressed it by the arts of those who were dominated themselves.¹⁹

In the last decades of the late 1800s, the *caiapós* were forbidden to accompany religious pageants and began to be part of a new space in the calendar of festivities of the city: the carnival. The memorialist Jorge Americano remembers that, as a child, he came across a group of *caiapós*. They were wearing rustic clothes and, around the neck, necklaces made of knick knacks. "On chairs, shins, and fists, there were feather dusters. On the head, a headdress of feather dusters. Faces had red scratches on them". Half the group had improvised instruments: a giant bamboo knot served as a resonance box, wooden sticks of all sizes that, when blown into, resulted in musical notes, and calabashes to be shaken, filled with small stones. The other half of the group was

armed with bows and arrows. The ones of the music began to play, stomping their feet. The ones of the arrows performed war dances. The sounds got louder, the crowd drummed and the sound radiated to a distance.²⁰

Caiapós paraded until approximately 1910, even though it was possible to find some "ladies and girls" dressing up as "Apache women" in 1919.²¹

Zé Pereira was another thing blacks did for fun, during the reign of Momo. According to Jorge Americano, *Zé Pereira* consisted of a group of four or five men in costumes, wearing "cheap farm pants and coat, in several colors, and poorly designed hillbilly hats". Their faces were painted red; eyebrows and moustaches were reinforced with "burned cork. One of them brought the bass drum". Everybody screamed: "Zé Pereira!" *Zabumba*, the man of the bass drum. "Zé Pereira", boom, boom, boom. And people jumped. "Zé Pereira", boom, boom, boom. They jumped and went about their business.²² The musical chorus of *Zé Pereira*, described by Americano, reminds the one publicized by the newspapers *A Rua*, in the carnival of 1916, and *O Clarim*, in the carnival of 1924: "Ta-rá! Ta-rá! Ta-rá! Ta-tá! Ta-tatá - tatatá - tará!... Dzigue - dzigue-boom! Dzigue-boom! Dzigue-boom, boom, boom! Zé Pereira!"²³ At the same time, *bloco de sujos* ("block of the dirty") came along, who called themselves "ragged" and "patched". It gathered from five to ten boys

¹⁹Olga Von Simson, *Carnaval em branco e negro: carnaval popular paulistano, 1914-1988*, Campinas, Editora da Unicamp; São Paulo, Editora da Universidade de São Paulo; Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo, 2007, p. 96-97. About *caiapós*, see also Afonso Antonio de Freitas, "Folganças populares do velho São Paulo", *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico de São Paulo*, vol. 21, São Paulo, 1924, p. 7-31. For a group of blacks who dressed as indigenous in the party of Mardi Gras, in New Orleans (USA), and organized actions centered on the challenge principle, webs of identity and solidarity, similar to *caiapós* in São Paulo, see Reid Mitchell, "Significando: carnaval afro-creole em New Orleans do século XIX e início do XX," *In: Maria Clementina Pereira Cunha (org.), Carnavais e outras f(r)estas: ensaios de história social da cultura*, Campinas, SP, Editora da Unicamp, 2002, p. 41-70.

²⁰Jorge Americano, *São Paulo naquele tempo, 1895-1915*, 2. ed., São Paulo, Carrenho Editorial; Narrativa Um; Carbono 14, 2004, p. 226-227.

²¹*O Alfinete*, São Paulo, 09 Mar. 1919, p. 1.

²²Jorge Americano, *São Paulo naquele tempo, 1895-1915*, 2.ed., São Paulo, Carrenho Editorial; Narrativa Um; Carbono 14, 2004, p. 227.

²³*A Rua*, São Paulo, 24 Fev. 1916, p. 3; *O Clarim*, São Paulo, 02 Mar. 1924, p. 1.

— some of them wearing torn clothes, patched dresses, purses and scarfs —,²⁴ and crossed the streets of popular neighborhoods singing, dancing, improvising, and playing with each other with no purpose other than fun. Some of them stood out, such as *Grupo dos Teimosos* (“The stubborn group”), in the neighborhood Bixiga, and *Bloco dos Boêmios* (“The Bohemian block”), in Barra Funda. These blocks have grown year after year in the early 20th century, and were the base for the birth of carnival *cordões* and ranches, in 1910 and 1920, such as *Diamante Negro* (“Black Diamond”) and *O Mimoso Girassol* (“Dear Sunflower”). The latter, constituted of “black ladies,” stood out for its characteristics and public performances, becoming the subject of a story in the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*, in 1927.²⁵

An important character for this whole process was Dionísio Barbosa. Around 1909, this African living in São Paulo moved to Rio de Janeiro, where he established some contacts with people from Engenho de Dentro, Catumbi, and Morro; he narrowed his friendship bonds with the brothers of João da Bahiana and lived with bigwigs, soccer players and capoeira fighters, besides watching military parades and getting involved in carnival blocks and ranches.²⁶ These friendships and experiences were remarkable for Barbosa, so that, when he definitely returned to São Paulo, he brought not only clothes and material items, but also cultural wealth — African-diasporic narratives, styles and symbols. He got together with Luiz Barbosa, his brother, Comélio Aires, his brother-in-law, and with his play mates and — influenced by local *folguedos*, especially *caiapós*, by parties and cultural traditions of the Africans in São Paulo and by musical or military bands — founded the carnival group Barra Funda, in 1914.

Very relaxed, there went the ten components of the first carnival *cordão* of São Paulo, occupying the streets of Barra Funda. Dressed with cool clothes, they improvised games, sang their own songs — *choros* and samba —, accompanied by guitars, tambourines and cowbells made of beer lids, and called their relatives, neighbors and acquaintances to come and have fun with them. In the following year, the Barra Funda group gathered the largest number of blacks in the neighborhood and, little by little, became more structured: it defined uniforms and decorations, emblems, their own central office, rehearsals, format of the parade in relation to script, musical instruments, distribution of sections, evolution etc. White shoes and pants, straw hats and green shirt were chosen as uniform; so, the audience began to call them “*Camisa Verde*” (“Green Shirt”). According to *A Liberdade*, Barra Funda had a “ball room on the street Brigadeiro Galvão”, and sponsored celebrations filled with confetti, serpentine and poppers during the “triduum of madness”. On the Sunday of carnival, 1920, the schedule was breathtaking: after the “laid-back” party, with the contest of “nice misses and ladies and gentlemen of the neighborhood”, in one of the moments when hearts were beating with happiness,

²⁴*A Liberdade*, São Paulo, 07 Mar. 1920, p. 6.

²⁵Zélia Lopes da Silva, *Os carnavais de rua e dos clubes na cidade de São Paulo: metamorfoses de uma festa, 1923-1938*, São Paulo, Editora Unesp; Londrina, Eduel, 2008, p. 74.

²⁶Statement of Dionísio Barbosa, in São Paulo, in 1976. Archive of *Museu da Imagem e do Som* (MIS) - SP. Son of a former slave, Barbosa was born in Itirapina, countryside of São Paulo, in 1891, and was the founder of the first carnival *cordão* in the capital of the State. He passed away in 1977.

as an enchantment, a car appeared conducting an orchestra with a flag being part of this set of many ladies of our beautiful gender who sang the anthem of carnival.

The journalist of *A Liberdade* reported

it was the 'green shirt' *cordão* coming to salute the people from the [block] Floresta. The ball, which was always exciting, lasted until very late.²⁷

When Momo installed his throne in 1924, *O Clarim* (newspaper) proclaimed to its readers:

Life is so short; death is the most certain thing in the world, and the demonic god of binge is right there... So, let there be balls and hooray for Momo!²⁸

Several clubs and recreational societies of the African community in São Paulo were working during the three days offered to the “noisy tributes” to the “god of binge”. The societies *Centro Paulistano* — São Paulo Center; *Smart; Grêmio Brinco de Princesa* — community known as ‘Princess earrings’; *15 de Novembro* — November 15th; *Kosmos, Clube 13 de maio* — Club May 13th; *Auri-Verde* — Yellow-green, *28 de Setembro* — September 28th and others used to promote “resounding carnival balls” and costume contests, to salute and worship Momo, the “supreme god of pleasure”.²⁹ Concerning the *cordões*, they still occupied public space to celebrate carnival in the 1920s and — with many negotiations and years of resistance in a city inhabited mostly by whites and European immigrants — the African community in São Paulo became fond of them, so they multiplied. Originating from the former blocks of the “ragged” and “patched”, or being born spontaneously, some were consolidated, others were not, merged, disappeared or were transformed, taking new forms, shapes and dimensions.

*“S. Paulo counts on another carnival society. Evohé!
People from São Paulo deserve a truce from
their duties. They need to laugh”*

This is what happened to *Nova Aliança Lira da Madrugada* — the New Alliance of the Dawning band; *Miséria e Fome* — Misery and Hunger; *Angu da Baiana* — *angu* refers to a typical Brazilian dish prepared with cornmeal; *dos Camponeses* — countrymen; *Bando das Estrelas* — Band of the Stars; *Os Soberanos* — the sovereigns; *Os Desprezados*— the unwanted ones; *As Caprichosas* — the capricious ones; *o Pavilhão Paulista* — the São Paulo Pavillion; *o Flor da Mocidade* — the

²⁷*A Liberdade*, São Paulo, 07 Mar. 1920, p. 4.

²⁸*O Clarim*, São Paulo, 02 Mar. 1924, p. 4.

²⁹*O Clarim d'Alvorada*, São Paulo, 21 Mar. 1926, p. 3.

flower of youth, to which belonged Grande Otelo —,³⁰ *Vai-Vai* and many other *cordões*. It was the blacks getting together and managing themselves with diacritical signs in the urban perimeter, expressing collectively, betting on cultural and ludic activities, confronting with the other groups in the public sphere and realizing their specificity. Therefore, they came up as buffoons and citizens.

The meanings of “god Momo”

In the issue of February, 1924, a columnist of *O Clarim* wrote effusively:

Let's be prepared, amongst all of the parties we celebrate, this is the most brilliant and exciting one. It is the party of freedom in honor of god Momo.³¹

For some Africans in São Paulo, carnival was the “party of freedom”, the most important celebration of the year. So, preparations began early. When a reporter of *O Progresso*, nicknamed Sacy, went through carnival groups in December, 1930, he observed that “in the last days of the year”, it was possible to

hear something about the buffoon Momo-god. Revelers are ready. Each of them had their own expectations. Jumping with the only leg we have, we went around the roosts. Nice!³²

Carnival mobilized the “colored population”, filling thousands of teenagers and adults, men and women, with anxieties and enthusiasm. Nonetheless, how did this population conceive carnival and its correlated activities?

“Of all the celebrations performed in this cosmos of bitterness”, pointed out the *Elite*,

there is no doubt that carnival is the winner. It is a very ancient institution which is, amongst all, the youngest one, the most attractive one, the most excessively wild one. Good sense stored throughout the year flies like ether in these crazy days.³³

The African community in São Paulo attributed different senses and several meanings to carnival. For many voices, the “kingdom of party” was a relief to social sufferings, or also a moment of ritual inversion of the daily labor — an escape valve from the heavy work routine. When it notified the foundation of the Congress of *S. Carnavalesco*, *Progresso* emphasized: “S. Paulo counts on another carnival society. *Evohé!* People from São Paulo deserve a truce from their duties. They need to laugh”.³⁴ Memorialist Jorge Americano ironically tells an episode related to the family's washerwoman. In the morning of Saturday, in carnival, she came to the house asking for her payment in advance to buy some medicines, because her son was sick. At night, however, he saw her in front of

³⁰Sérgio Cabral, *Grande Otelo: uma biografia*, São Paulo, Editora 34, 2007, p. 43.

³¹*O Clarim*, São Paulo, 03 Fev. 1924, p. 2.

³²*Progresso*, São Paulo, 30 Dez. 1930, p. 6.

³³*Elite*, São Paulo, 02 Mar. 1924, p. 5.

³⁴*Progresso*, São Paulo, 19 Ago. 1928, p. 3.

the carnival *cordão*, “dancing samba, with a satin-like blouse and holding a red ribbon”. On Tuesday, the washerwoman showed up at the house “useless”, sleeping on her feet. She said her “child’s disease had gotten her. She needed more money for medicines”!³⁵

In a specific issue, *Progresso* analyzed:

the god of party will dominate the square for three days, making so that serious men, like Argentino [Celso Wanderlei] and Euclides [dos Santos] and other big shots lose their way home.³⁶

For others, carnival meant days of madness, when everything was possible: no boundaries, brakes or moral controls. According to *A Liberdade*, there was a

veteran habit of previous years according to which a lady, in the street, without the power to act, [...] saw herself being persecuted [by revelers] with immoral jokes,

so that “*cordões* were nothing but a pretext for squeezing and pushing, making opportunities for the practice of their intentions.”³⁷ Days of gallantry, alcohol, transgressions, excesses and non-stop happiness:

sadness, thanks God, will be stopped. It will be sent far away. Far, far away. Happiness and joy are on their way, so that the god of party, amongst crazy laughter, is welcome,

signed the columnist.³⁸

There were also those voices who knew that carnival meant a moment of symbolic, burlesque and satiric subversion of the established order, when everything was upside down; so, *Clarim* stated: “may good sense give us a 72-hour enfranchisement, which is, in the entire year, the very short term destined to unmasking our face!”³⁹ In the same issue, the newspaper confirmed:

he [god of mockery], our humoristic guest, malicious and mythic character, supreme god of joke and king of the epigram and satire, is already amongst us.⁴⁰

In a society surrounded by racial tensions in the post-enfranchisement period, carnival became the time to resound them by means of this varied ludic and satiric repertoire. But did the “god of joy”, “god of mockery”, “buffoon-god”, “god of binge” anyway, the “super god of babel” assume senses and meanings strictly recreational to the African community in São Paulo, as an escape facing the reality of inequalities and racial hierarchy? To answer that question, it is worth to accompany the trajectory of Campos Elyseos.

³⁵Jorge Americano, *São Paulo naquele tempo, 1895-1915*, 2. ed., São Paulo, Carrenho Editorial; Narrativa Um; Carbono 14, 2004, p. 103-104.

³⁶*Progresso*, São Paulo, 15 Fev. 1930, p. 6.

³⁷*A Liberdade*, São Paulo, 07 Mar. 1920, p. 1.

³⁸*Progresso*, São Paulo, 31 Jan. 1930, p. 6.

³⁹*O Clarim*, São Paulo, 02 Mar. 1924, p. 2.

⁴⁰*O Clarim*, São Paulo, 02 Mar. 1924, p. 1. For the analysis of the comic and burlesque aspect of popular cultural manifestations, see the classic work by Mikhail Bakhtin, *A cultura popular na Idade Média e no Renascimento: o contexto de François Rabelais*, São Paulo, Hucitec; Brasília, Editora da UnB, 1987.

The “white-purple”

Camisa Verde (green shirt) motivated the birth of other *cordões*, out of which the most important one was, without a doubt, the carnival group Campos Elyseos. Originating from *Bloco dos Boêmios* — which, since 1913, got together at Alameda Glette, partying with Momo in the neighborhood Barra Funda —, the *cordão* was idealized by Argentino Celso Wanderlei, who was helped by Alcides Marcondes and José Euclides dos Santos, especially. It is not strange that Campos Elyseos was formed in Barra Funda. At the time, the neighborhood constituted what has been known as the “black territory”, due to the meaningful concentration of the African-descendent population.⁴¹ Besides the low price to rent basements, Barra Funda attracted blacks due to job opportunities. And this is because the neighborhood was close to the noble regions of the city, like Campos Elíseos, Higienópolis and Santa Cecília, so it was easy for women who worked as housekeepers to get to their jobs (washerwomen, cooks, cleaning women etc.) in the houses of rich families of the city. Also, the railway station of Barra Funda was in the neighborhood, where a commercial coffee warehouse worked. In the large warehouses that skirted the railway line, products from the countryside were stored. Load and unload activities demanded workforce, thus constituting a job option for black men who arrived to the metropolis.

In Barra Funda, several families with connections and cronyism, people coming from the rural zone and blacks from São Paulo, each of them with a specific background, but all of them connected by African-diasporic bonds, be them social and cultural, would find “common traditions and costumes”.⁴² The neighborhood was marked by a lot of work and sounds. The sound of trains from the São Paulo Railway. The sound of wagons, “with their endless axis creak and animal cowbells”. But a stronger and louder sound and rhythm came from the blacks, the samba,

which would become a hegemonic sound in Barra Funda. A mixture of protest and self-affirmation of the group. Therefore, the sound became a kind of metalanguage in the most musical neighborhoods of the city.⁴³

⁴¹Raquel Rolnik, “Territórios negros nas cidades brasileiras (Etnicidade e cidade em São Paulo e no Rio de Janeiro)”, *Estudos Afro-Asiáticos*, n. 17, Rio de Janeiro, 1989, p. 29-41.

⁴²E. P. Thompson, *Costumes em comum: estudos sobre a cultura popular tradicional*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1998.

⁴³José Carlos Gomes da Silva, *Os sub urbanos e a outra face da cidade. Negros em São Paulo: cotidiano, lazer e cidadania, 1900-1930*, Dissertação de Mestrado em Ciências Sociais, Unicamp, Campinas, 1990, p. 52. About samba in São Paulo in the first decades of the 20th century, see Mário de Andrade, “O samba rural paulista”, *Revista do Arquivo Municipal*, vol. XLI, São Paulo, 1937, p. 37-116; Muniz Júnior, *Do Batuque à Escola de Samba: subsídios para a história do samba*, São Paulo, Símbolo, 1976; Iêda Marques Britto, *Samba na cidade de São Paulo, 1900-1930: um exercício de resistência cultural*, São Paulo, FFLCH-USP, 1986; José Geraldo Vinci de Moraes, *Sonoridades paulistanas: a música popular na cidade de São Paulo - final do século XIX ao início do século XX*, Rio de Janeiro, Funarte, 1995, p. 104-118; Eloíza Maria Neves Silva, *Histórias de vidas de mulheres negras: estudo elaborado a partir das escolas de samba paulistanas*, Dissertação de Mestrado em História, USP, São Paulo, 2002; Marcelo Simon Manzatti, *Samba Paulista, do centro cafeeiro à periferia do centro: estudo sobre o Samba de Bumbo ou Samba Rural Paulista*, Dissertação de Mestrado em Ciências Sociais, PUC, São Paulo, 2005; Márcio Michalczuk Marcelino, *Uma leitura do samba rural ao samba urbano na cidade de São Paulo*, Dissertação de Mestrado em Geografia Humana, USP, São Paulo, 2007.

It was in Barra Funda that, likewise, several “African aunts with their clans” lived, practicing *jongo*, *macumba* or samba as an extension of family life itself. One of the most popular aunts was Aunt Olímpia, a “good looking black woman, with a noble aspect”, who organized parties and sounds in a terrain by her house, on street Anhanguera.⁴⁴ Aunt Olímpia and the other African aunts were important for germinating the embryo that originated the first carnival *cordões* in São Paulo.

Campos Elyseos was founded at Argentino Celso Wanderlei’s house, in the core of Barra Funda, next to Largo da Banana, a traditional meeting point for blacks in the area. There, teenagers who lived of small activities around the railway station would meet daily. They played songs and organized sambas, performed *tiririca* (a variation of capoeira in São Paulo), played snooker, drank *cachaça* and were fond of fighting. If the foundation of Campos Elyseos took place in the house of Celso Wanderlei, its office was established on street Jaguaribe, in the house of Euclides dos Santos.⁴⁵ During its existence (1919–1960), the carnival *cordão* had many offices: Largo do Arouche, on street Florêncio de Abreu, 20; Largo Riachuelo, 36; street Quintino Bocaiúva; always close to downtown or near Barra Funda. The first parade happened in 1920, with about 30 members, and there was a picture as their insignia — a mixture of eagle and serpent — with their official colors — purple shirt and white pants. Their basic structure was not different from the other *cordões*: in front of the pageant were the *balizas* (member who juggled and opened the path to the carnival group), and one of the most famous ones was Saturnino de Oliveira;⁴⁶ after them came the *batedores*, with sticks on their hands; afterwards, came the members and in the middle, came the *porta-bandeira* (standard-bearer) and the evolution. There was no *mestre sala*; however, he was the precursor of the use of a flag as a distinctive symbol and the image of the *porta-bandeira*, with who he appeared for the first time.

In terms of pioneering, *cordão* “baptized” the first carnival pavilion in São Paulo, built for the confection and storage of costumes. “It happened on December 20”, said *Clarim d’Alvorada*, “the baptism of the pavilion of C.C. Campos Elyseos”, in the residence of Argentino Wanderlei.

To the paranymphs, guests and associates, after this solemn act, an abundant table of sweets was served. During these acts, the orchestra, commanded by Mr. Quintino, played several musical pieces.

⁴⁴Wilson Rodrigues de Moraes, *Escolas de samba de São Paulo - Capital*, São Paulo, Conselho Estadual de Artes e Ciências Humanas, 1978, p. 17.

⁴⁵Statement of Zezinho da Casa Verde (pseudonym of José Narciso Nazareth) in São Paulo, in 1978. Archive of *Museu da Imagem e do Som* (MIS) - SP. Zezinho was born in the State capital in 1911 and was active in samba, *cordões*, popular parties and street soccer. He passed away in 1988.

⁴⁶*Progresso*, São Paulo, 31 Dez. 1929, p. 4; *O Clarim d’Alvorada*, São Paulo, 03 Fev. 1929, p. 3. The testimony of Zezinho da Casa Verde coincides with the information publicized by the black press in the 1920s: “Saturnino was an outstanding baliza: very elegant, tall. A tall black man, but very elegante. He worked with the *baliza* better than the National Marine. He worked well, it wasn’t like that; he didn’t throw the *baliza* up there, he threw everything in the fingers, very elegant, he was very elegant!”. Testimony of Zezinho da Casa Verde in São Paulo, in 1978. MIS - SP.

Mr. Benedito Florêncio said some words, as well as the official orator, Mr. José M. Monteiro, concluding the festivity in harmony”.⁴⁷ One of the attractions of “Campos” or the “white-purple” — nicknames of Campos Elyseos —⁴⁸ were the drums. Even though there were many percussion instruments — side drums, *surdo* and different bass drums, there was also a set of *choro*, with piccolo, clarinet, trombone, guitar, banjo, cowbell, cymbals, cymbals with drumsticks. Musical instruments were divided in the *cordão*: clarinet in the front, side drums in the middle and, in the end, the people of *choro*, right in front of the discreet drums, which concluded the parade. The division aimed to make sure sound was distributed, so that everyone could hear and sing along to the songs of their own authors, among them, Alcides Marcondes, João de Souza and Benedito Gabriele, “Camelinho”. Here is the chorus of one of the songs of Campos Elyseos, whose author is not identified:

O nosso cordão vai sê
o roxo-e-branco, as nossas cor até morrê
Depois da eternidade
Campos Elyseos vai deixá muita saudade⁴⁹
*Our cordão will be
the white-and-purple, our colors until death
After eternity
Campos Elyseos will be missed*

Campos Elyseos did not make the plot, but chose the theme as a reference for the costumes. Its parade was made walking, and had no pre-established destination. However, it was preferable to go through some paths and streets. It was common to leave Barra Funda towards the avenue São João all the way to downtown, in Largo São Francisco. It passed by the central triangle, and in this place police authorities, who were on duty in Pátio do Colégio, were greeted; finally, the apotheosis took place in Praça do Patriarca. During the journey, the *cordão* was embraced by those who were passing by,⁵⁰ but, since there were more people in Praça do Patriarca, this was the place for a special exhibition. Until at least the middle of the 1920s, the pageant would happen on Sunday during carnival.⁵¹ It began late and ended around midnight, and then the *cordão* would return to its office, and the parties of Momo would continue until dawn. Monday was a normal labor day — and also destined to hangover. On Saturday and Tuesday, there were costume balls and contests of carnival

⁴⁷*O Clarim d'Alvorada*, São Paulo, 24 Jan. 1926, p. 6.

⁴⁸*Progresso*, São Paulo, 31 jan. 1930, p. 6.

⁴⁹Wilson Rodrigues de Moraes, *Escolas de samba de São Paulo - Capital*, São Paulo, Conselho Estadual de Artes e Ciências Humanas, 1978, p. 27.

⁵⁰At least the testimony of D. Risoleta — a daughter of slaves who was born in 1900 — suggests how the parades of *cordões*, through the streets of São Paulo, created euphoria amongst black expectators: “When I was a bit older, in carnival we went to the streets, passed in the *cordão*, [...], were on the sidewalk playing. Carnival was on the street. [...] I danced, sang, pulled the *cordão*, painted the cups. I grabbed a broom and everybody followed me.” Ecléa Bosi, *Memória e sociedade: lembranças de velhos*, 3. ed., São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 1994, p. 379.

⁵¹Testimony of Dionísio Barbosa, em São Paulo, em 1976. MIS -SP.

groups. According to Iêda Marques Britto, Campos Elyseos was the “most important *cordão*”, considered to be

insuperable by the remnants of the time. From this group came the most important samba writers, such as Inocência ‘Mulata’, Alcides Marcondes and others, who participated in the foundation of other *cordões*.⁵²

Indeed, Campos Elyseos was thought of with a mixture of nostalgia and admiration by other samba writers who, even if still young, were contemporary: “At the time of *cordões*”, declared Pé Rachado, “no one could beat Campos Elyseos. It was the best”. “In Campos Elyseos”, stated Eunice do Lavapés, “there were the best ones.”⁵³ And it was a fact. This *cordão* collected titles in parades destined to the black people, and it was celebrated by other groups and by the mass media,⁵⁴ not to mention that it cherished the creation of a homonymous group in the city of Rio Claro.⁵⁵ Campos Elyseos stood out by the beauty of its costumes, by the perfection, rhythm and fluidity of its evolutions; by the musical cadence, by the contagious vibration of its revelers, but also by its administrative structure. Organized as a recreational society, it was ruled according to a statute, and in this document there were its goals, organogram, functioning rules, criteria to select the board, as well as rights and duties of the associates. José Ferreira Pena, Manoel de Paula Camargo (Caneca), Benedito Luís da Silva and Augusto Pereira were some of the presidents of the group. However, it was Luís Mendes who held the position the longest, being reelected more than once. Argentino Celso Wanderlei — the founder and the main public figure of the *cordão* — was the treasurer until July 1929, when he left the position after holding it for ten years.⁵⁶

Campos Elyseos stood out by the beauty of its costumes, by the perfection, rhythm and fluidity of its evolutions, but also by its administrative structure

And who was Argentino Celso Wanderlei? An important leadership in the African community in São Paulo. Married to Maria Isabel Wanderlei and father of many children (the “beautiful child” Amélia, the “gallant” Yolanda, the “little”

⁵²Iêda Marques Britto, *Samba na cidade de São Paulo, 1900-1930: um exercício de resistência cultural*, São Paulo, FFLCH-USP, 1986, p. 78.

⁵³Testimonies of Pé Rachado and Eunice do Lavapés, in São Paulo, on November 21, 1980. *Apud Iêda Marques Britto, Samba na cidade de São Paulo, 1900-1930: um exercício de resistência cultural*, São Paulo, FFLCH-USP, 1986, p. 99-100.

⁵⁴*Progresso*, São Paulo, 24 Mar. 1929, p. 5.

⁵⁵*Progresso*, São Paulo, 28 Abr. 1929, p. 2.

⁵⁶*Progresso*, São Paulo, 31 Ago. 1929, p. 5.

Sérgio, the “intelligent” José, the “favorite” Ruth, the “boy” Roberto and the “little girl” Maria de Lourdes),⁵⁷ he worked for the Telephone Company. As a young man, he attended balls, parties, evening parties, musical groups, and carnival blocks of the “colored men” class, and became closer to recreational and charity associations, such as 15 de Novembro⁵⁸ and Clube 13 de Maio, until he was experienced enough to lead the movement to build Campos Elyseos. From the point of view of black associations, he was an idealist who believed in the ability of union, in the ingenuity and the potential of their “brothers of color”. Argentino was a “restless organizing spirit”, said his admirers.

When his attention is not turned to one or another charitable project, when his ideas are not addressed to the principle of collective defense, [...], we see him in the middle of several associations, struggling for the moral strengthening of his race, from which he is an authentic element.⁵⁹

Apart from exaggeration, Argentino Celso Wanderlei turned into a strong positive reference in the African community of São Paulo. Thanks to his “restless organizing spirit”, power of negotiation and skills to gather people around “causes that focus on the well-being of the group”, he “was respected by everyone who met him”⁶⁰ and was honored by the black community several times.⁶¹

It is hard to define the social composition of the members of Campos Elyseos. It is known that Luís Mendes and José Ferreira Pena, two ex-presidents of the carnival *cordão*, were “working for the Court of Justice” and “as an assistant at Standard Oil”, respectively;⁶² Manoel de Paula Camargo, who used to be the vice-president, was “working for the Telephone Company”;⁶³ Alcides Paulino de Moura, who was the “first secretary”, was a bank clerk, “working for the Bank of Commerce and Industry”⁶⁴ and Luis Camilo, the “proficient-*mestre-sala*”, was the “attorney” of the newspaper *Progresso*.⁶⁵ From this simple sample, it is possible to imagine that the carnival group gathered exclusive black people from the occupational field, and that many of them were in privileged

⁵⁷*Progresso*, São Paulo, 28 Jul. 1929, p. 2; *Progresso*, São Paulo, 07 Set. 1928, p. 4; *Progresso*, São Paulo, 15 Nov. 1928, p. 5; *Progresso*, São Paulo, 16 Dez. 1928, p. 5; *Progresso*, São Paulo, 13 Jan. 1929, p. 7; *Progresso*, São Paulo, 23 Jun. 1929, p. 5; *Progresso*, São Paulo, 20 Abr. 1930, p. 7.

⁵⁸In a specific story, *Progresso* mentioned the “entrepreneur spirit” of Argentino Celso Wanderlei, pointing him out as one of the founders, in 1907, of the “noble” Clube 15 de Novembro. *Progresso*, São Paulo, 22 Jul. 1928, p. 3.

⁵⁹*Progresso*, São Paulo, 15 Nov. 1928, p. 2.

⁶⁰*Progresso*, São Paulo, 30 Nov. 1930, p. 5.

⁶¹*O Clarim d'Alvorada*, São Paulo, 24 Jan. 1926, p. 2. In November, 1929, *Progresso* paid an homage to Argentino Celso Wanderlei because he was one of the leaders of the movement that preconized the construction, in a public square, of the statue of Luiz Gama: “The blacks of São Paulo, who owed him some services, certainly will be grateful for the creation of the statue of Luiz Gama in a public space. This homage will lift the moral, not only in S. Paulo, but all over Brazil, of all of those who were slaves in the free lands of America”. *Progresso*, São Paulo, 24 Nov. 1929, p. 7. In April, 1930, Celso Wanderlei, after the “unanimity of votes” of the board of Campos Elyseos, received the title of “honorary president” of the carnival *cordão*. *Progresso*, São Paulo, 20 Apr. 1930, p. 3.

⁶²*Progresso*, São Paulo, 28 Jul. 1929, p. 2; *Progresso*, São Paulo, 19 Ago. 1928, p. 3.

⁶³*Progresso*, São Paulo, 15 Nov. 1928, p. 2.

⁶⁴*Progresso*, São Paulo, 07 Set. 1928, p. 5.

⁶⁵*Progresso*, São Paulo, 12 Out. 1928, p. 3.

positions. Also, Olga Von Simon states that the name Campos Elyseos was chosen because of the homonymous neighborhood, whose aspect was aristocratic, exactly to emphasize the difference of the founding group, in terms of social and economic status, in relation to *Camisa Verde*.⁶⁶ Indeed, there is not enough data and information to confirm such statement. The blacks who were part of Campos Elyseos were mostly subordinates, let alone informal employees. Their activities ranged from carriers, street vendors, wheelers, operators, assistant mason, workers, public employees, besides those who performed household and bureaucratic chores in low positions. Artur de Oliveira Soares, for instance, was a letter writer; José Domingues Justino Leite was a “traffic employee at Light”, and Jorge de Almeida, “a commerce assistant”.

It seems that *bambas da Glette* — a group of blacks who lived in cheap houses or slums in Barra Funda and got together at the end of Alameda Glette, almost in Bom Retiro, to play in the soccer field and promote ecstatic songs, in sambas accompanied by *umbigadas* and *pernadas* (moves of capoeira) — also participated in the *cordão*.⁶⁷

Campos Elyseos kept several ludic and cultural activities throughout the year, be it to forge bonds of identity and sociability in the African community in São Paulo, be it to gain the adhesion of new members for the *cordão* or to raise funds to pay for carnival expenses.⁶⁸ Among these activities, the most common ones were parties (*soirées* or afternoon balls), conducted periodically in the office or in rented ball rooms and clubs, and the most important one was the room located in the old Largo do Riachuelo, number 36:

to celebrate the date of our political emancipation, that is today, [Campos Elyseos] offers its uncountable admirers an afternoon ball. This meeting, which will certainly gather a select number of people, will begin at 19 o'clock and end at midnight.⁶⁹

The afternoon balls called the attention of the black community, especially teenagers. In these gatherings, non-associates of the *cordão* had to pay an entrance fee. With the money from the tickets and from the bar, the organization had some savings to put the parade together. As to the calendar, the parties had an eclectic pattern. There were parties on Independence day, on the anniversary of the *cordão*, in Easter, in June (day of Saint John), on the day of the proclamation of the republic, on New year's day (January 1st), besides fairs, evening and tea parties:

⁶⁶Olga Von Simson, *Carnaval em branco e negro: carnaval popular paulistano, 1914-1988*, Campinas, Editora da Unicamp; São Paulo, Editora da Universidade de São Paulo; Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo, 2007, p. 105.

⁶⁷As pointed out by José Carlos Gomes da Silva, the presence of those blacks in bars at the end of Alameda Glette, in Barra Funda, and “certainly the fights they sponsored gave them the generic term of *bambas da Glette*”. José Carlos Gomes da Silva, *Os sub urbanos e a outra face da cidade*. Negros em São Paulo: cotidiano, lazer e cidadania, 1900-1930. Dissertação de Mestrado em Ciências Sociais, Unicamp, Campinas, 1990, p. 69.

⁶⁸Campos Elyseos charged a financial contribution from the associates, but it was not enough to cover its expenses. It is true that, in the books of 1928, it was declared that the *cordão* had raised about 4:580\$000 (four *contos* and five hundred eight *réis*), but had 12:680\$000 (twelve *contos* and six hundred eighty *réis*) in expenses. *Progresso*, São Paulo, 13 Jan. 1929, p. 7.

⁶⁹*Progresso*, São Paulo, 07 Set. 1928, p. 4. See also *Progresso*, São Paulo, 16 Dez. 1928, p. 1.

followed by an excellent orchestra, the carnival group Campos Elyseos presents a tea party today [November 15]. This meeting, which celebrates the date, will certainly take a large number of guests and associates to the international room.⁷⁰

When carnival was getting close, the “white-purple” intensified its rehearsals — which occurred in the office on Sundays, beginning at the end of the day and going on until late at night — and the cycle of parties and balls. In these occasions, musicians played for free, that is, with no charge. All of the collected money was destined to carnival expenses. Other resources came from the *Livro de Ouro* (“Golden Book”, which was passed by the vendors in the neighborhood, and the Rose Ball, in which

a flower was sold according to bids in cash and offered to one of the women in the room, who should then dance with the person who had bought the rose.⁷¹

Concerning the options of entertainment, picnics and tours were also common, in the cities of Santos or in the countryside, like Sorocaba, Jundiaí, Rio Claro, Bom Jesus de Pirapora and Campinas. “Last Sunday, Campinas received”, notified the publication *O Auriverde*,

the nice carnival group Campos Elyseos, which promoted a picnic to its associates and friends, and this moment was very pleasant. Its return was competitive, and there were representatives of several [black] societies in *Estação Campineira*.⁷²

In 1924, “the champion of carnival clubs in the State capital” spent the last Sunday of April in the land of Carlos Gomes. According to the story from *Getulino*, “there were many ladies and gentlemen”, who were in the railway station, “willing to greet one of the most important members of the São Paulo society”. Finally, at 8h10, the train arrived with the revelers, “whose arrival was accompanied by claps”. After the greetings, Campos Elyseos paraded around Campinas, being “applauded by all of the population”. In front of the house of Benedito Florêncio, visitors stopped to hear the “warm salute” that black leader did to the “happy youth of São Paulo”. On behalf of the visitors, João Teodoro de Souza spoke and his speech was “very much appreciated”. By singing the “march with songs in tune”, he followed the “champion of São Paulo” into Bosque dos Jequitibás, where, after a brief break, began the dances and more entertainment; like “a single family”, black people from Campinas and São Paulo got together, “giving life to that moment of fun, which was filled with people”. At 12h00, in the restaurant room, “nicely managed by Higino Leme”, a “delicious feast was served”, and there was a considerable number of

⁷⁰*Progresso*, São Paulo, 15 Nov. 1928, p. 5.

⁷¹Iêda Marques Britto, *Samba na cidade de São Paulo, 1900-1930: um exercício de resistência cultural*, São Paulo, FFLCH-USP, 1986, p. 81.

⁷²*O Auriverde*, São Paulo, 15 Abr. 1928, p. 2. On the visit of Campos Elyseos to Campinas, in April 1928, see also *O Patrocínio*, Piracicaba, 07 Abr. 1928, p. 4 e *O Clarim d'Alvorada*, São Paulo, 01 Abr. 1928, p. 4. For the visit of cordão to Sorocaba, see *O Clarim d'Alvorada*, São Paulo, 20 Jun. 1926, p. 3.

guests. João Teodoro de Souza spoke and offered that lunch to the people of Campinas, and Benedito Florêncio answered and thanked him, and, “as usual, declared a beautiful prayer”. After the meal, the “dance inside the ball and outdoors continued, accompanied by Campos Elyseos”. Before the visitors left the place, Euclides Silvério dos Santos, “instructor of the group”, asked the revelers to follow him and sing the song “*Tristeza do Jeca*”, to greet Campinas, “land of the palm trees”. At 17h00, the “white-purple shirts” went to town, “greeting the several societies on the way”. The homage to Carlos Gomes touched “the soul” of the citizens of Campinas, “and such homage consisted of evolutions in different styles”. Always singing, be its official anthem or carnival songs, the champion “went to the station, where it boarded back to the State capital at 18h15”, leaving the “most graceful impression” in the city of Campinas. To finish the story, *Getulino* celebrated:

We wish that such visits can always reproduce, more and more, the bonds of friendship that gather the [black] people of Campinas and São Paulo every day, that is our wish.⁷³

The “champion of carnival clubs” gained certain insertion in São Paulo, because many times the group moved to other cities of the State to establish, not to mention to narrow, political and cultural exchanges with the local African community. On Sunday of Easter, 1929, about 80 members of Campos Elyseos travelled to Rio Claro, where they celebrated the victory of carnival that year. “There were many people in the station Princesa d’Oeste waiting for the club of Argentino, who arrived to the sound of claps”, notified *Progresso*. When they left the train, members of the “white-purple” paraded through the city, greeting authorities, associations and the press. Afterwards, they went to the club-*Variedade*, where they ate, drank and danced until they had to get back — at 18h00. The clubs *Livro de Ouro* and *União Fás à Força* paid “significant honors to Campos Elyseos”.⁷⁴

Even though the carnival was the reason for its existence, the *cordão* was concerned about the moral, social, cultural and intellectual rise of “colored men”. In the 1920s, the “festivals” stood out, which combined a “solemn session” — with speeches from black leaderships —, a “varied act”, music, dancing and much excitement. On December 19th, Campos Elyseos promoted its first festival, which occurred “with great competition and admirable precision”. There was a solemn session, a varied act and a “reverberating” dancing *soirée* that ended late at night, accompanied by the orchestra of Benedicto Vianna. Both the attractions of the “varied act” and the orators of the black associations were

very much applauded; amongst all, Mr. Benedicto Florêncio stood out, excellent politician, journalist known from the traditional land of Carlos Gomes who knew how to catch the attention of all of the people with his nice words.⁷⁵

⁷³*Getulino*, Campinas, 01 Maio. 1924, p. 2.

⁷⁴*Progresso*, São Paulo, 28 Abr. 1929, p. 2.

⁷⁵*O Clarim d’Alvorada*, São Paulo, 27 Dez. 1925, p. 4.

On December 24 of the following year, the *cordão* prepared a “festival” in the room Itália Fausta, on street Florêncio de Abreu, number 45. At 22h00, the “solemn session” began, after the arrival of the “commission of friendly societies”. At that time, Veiga dos Santos spoke for the Auri-Verde Club; Gervário de Morais, for Centro Cívico Palmares; Waldomiro Fleury was representing *Clarim d’Alvorada*;

Mr. Santana and Mrs. M. Floriano, João Paiva and A. Rosa, orators from Rio de Janeiro, the latter on behalf of Cia. Bataclan Preta, and the first on behalf of carnival followers from Rio de Janeiro, who know how to get some applause.

For Campos Elyseos, José Monteiro spoke, an “eloquent orator who had expressive and well-connected words”. He thanked the black associations that were represented in that moment. At the end of his statement, he was saluted. The second part of the festival had an “act of varieties”. Afterwards, “the pompous ball began accompanied by an admirable orchestra. A nice buffet”.⁷⁶ On November 15, 1928, *Progresso* announced another “official party” of the carnival group Campos Elyseos in the “vast” room of building 5, on street Conceição. The program would be divided into three parts: theater play, solemn session and ball. The show would consist of the representation of a comedy by João Francisco de Araújo — *A Desonra reduzida a sainete*. The solemn session would be offered by Mr. Francisco Juvêncio Cruz, president of the Auri-Verde Club. And excellent jazz music would set the tune of the ball: people should dress formally to the parties of Campos Elyseos.⁷⁷

Cultural, artistic and recreational activities of the “white-purple” were not dissociated from militancy. Actually, the *cordão* was seen as a tool in the struggle for the valorization of black people. Besides the “festivals”, it celebrated the abolition of slavery on May 13, 1988, and participated in processions to celebrate the memory of abolitionists;⁷⁸ it was involved in the campaign to build the sculpture of Luiz Gama, invested in the production and diffusion of African-diasporic repertoire, rites and symbols and tried to establish alliances and partnerships with organs to defend colored men in the capital or in the countryside. In June 1926, for example, Campos Elyseos promoted a “dancing festival in the benefit of” the newspaper *O Clarim d’Alvorada* in its office. The event was a

⁷⁶*O Clarim d’Alvorada*, São Paulo, 15 Jan. 1927, p. 5.

⁷⁷*Progresso*, São Paulo, 15 Nov. 1928, p. 5.

⁷⁸In a memoir book, José Correia Leite — a legendary black leadership — remembers that the newspaper *O Clarim d’Alvorada* organized, on May 13, 1927, a “procession to the tombs of abolitionists in the cemetery of Consolação. Maybe this is the first procession organized with the support of several black groups. Leaving from Largo do Riachuelo, with the national flag in front and the flags of the groups C. C. Campos Elyseos, C. R. Auri Verde, G. R. União Mocidade and others, the procession went on excited by the enthusiasm and its festive character”. In the cemetery of Consolação, the procession stopped in front of the tomb of Luiz Gama, when Vicente Ferreira delivered a “shocking” poem. He talked, “sobbing, and those who heard him crie dor were struggling not to cry. [...] He declared, in bitter retaliation, the injustices, crimes, abandonment and degradation to which the black race had been submitted to”. José Correia Leite, *E disse o velho militante José Correia Leite: depoimentos e artigos*, org. Cuti, São Paulo, Secretaria Municipal da Cultura, 1992, p. 295-296. About the “civic procession to the tombs of extinct abolitionists”, of which Campos Elyseos participated, see *O Clarim d’Alvorada*, São Paulo, 18 Jun. 1927, p. 4, which corroborates the memoirs of José Correia Leite.

success and, at that time, a “struggler famous to the class”, Jayme B. Camargo, the main director of the Federation of Colored Men, made a presentation. “We deeply thank”, stated *Clarim d’Alvorada*, “all of those who assisted us with their lovely presence and, once again, to the worthy directors of Campos Elyseos, who know of the difficulties of those who work for their brothers”.⁷⁹

Without a doubt, the main militant initiative of the “white-purple” was *Progresso*, a journal published from 1928 on who worked as a spokesperson, publicizing facts concerning the routine, the activities, the demands and the ideals of the carnival group.

To celebrate its ninth anniversary [...], Campos Elyseos started publishing the weekly *Progresso*, directed by Lino Guedes, the famous poet of *Canto do Cisne Preto*.

The newspaper,

which belongs to Mr. Argentino C. Wanderlei”, is well done [...] and is dedicated to matters concerning the moment of the organization of associations of colored men; and other problems related to the life of black Brazilian men.⁸⁰

On the tenth anniversary of Campos Elyseos, *Progresso* celebrated:

To talk about the work of the white-purple in this decade would be to repeat the series of triumphs it has been accomplishing in the carnivals of São Paulo.

Not satisfied with publishing the “happy note in Momo’s triduum”, the *cordão* organized “Sunday rehearsals”. The picnics carried out in several cities were nothing more than a factor to “gather good and cult people from the countryside and from the capital”. Its artistic session put together “a large number of intelligent amateurs who let go easily of the most difficult roles they had been given”. For all of these “merits in favor of the black person in São Paulo, we cannot forget to sincerely greet the board of the carnival group Campos Elyseos”.⁸¹ The magazine *Evolução* was another publication of the black press that lauded the importance of Campos Elyseos to the “colored people”:

This traditional *cordão*, which for long has been lending its great contest to the festivities of King Momo, is also one of the associations that always support the noble accomplishments of our people. So our sincere homage is fair.⁸²

There was the perception that the “white-purple” played a proactive role in *Pauliceia desvairada* (nickname given to the city due to a collection of poems by Mario de Andrade, published in 1922), and that its actions in the artistic, cultural and recreational fields promoted the “colored population”, thus

⁷⁹O *Clarim d’Alvorada*, São Paulo, 24 Jun. 1926, p. 4.

⁸⁰*Progresso*, São Paulo, 22 Jul. 1928, p. 2.

⁸¹*Progresso*, São Paulo, 23 Jun. 1929, p. 2.

⁸²*Evolução*: revista dos homens pretos de São Paulo, São Paulo, 13 Maio. 1933, p. 12.

contributing to the resignification of the public image of this group in society. Instead of reinforcing the negative image of the black person — as someone who is incapable, unskilled and inferior —, the *cordão* made it positive, and showed their entrepreneur talents and cognitive attributes. If the formal political instances were refractory to black people, the languages of art (music and dance), culture and leisure worked as trenches for them.⁸³ More than an end in itself, carnival and its correlate activities were adopted by Campos Elyseos as an instrument to raise the “colored population”. It is true that the *cordão* did not openly declare war to the system, but its resistant character is undeniable; when establishing its position in the public sphere, it (re)elaborated and made identity boundaries positive, publicized racial rhetoric and exhibited African-diasporic obliterated performances, symbols and artifacts, if not denied, in São Paulo in the first phase of the Republican regime, from 1889 and 1930.

According to Iêda Britto, until 1921 carnival groups did not accept women, not even in parades. And even after this date, resistance would have remained from some black families, so the directors of the *cordão* had to convince the parents to allow their daughters to participate.⁸⁴ Is this supposition true? Historian

The leisure sphere would give space to the idea of redeemer utopia. Maybe this was why the African community in São Paulo put so much energy in carnival

Zélia Lopes da Silva, in recent research, analyzed the “remarkable” presence of the black women in street carnival, incorporated to the “existing *cordões*, as was the case of G.C. Barra Funda, who had the area of the amateurs since 1922”. In these carnival blocks, women cheered up parties, disputed costume parties and “launched the role of *portaestandarte*, which was afterwards known as *porta-bandeira*, in its official parades”.⁸⁵ In relation to Campos Elyseos, female participation was also proven — and not in a despicable proportion. Davina de Oliveira, Maria Isabel Wanderlei, Maria Conceição, Sebastiana Barreto Muniz, Benedicta Alves de Lima, Mercedes de campos and other women produced the costumes, performed organizational and logistic tasks of the balls, teas, parties

⁸³About this matter, see Paul Gilroy, *O Atlântico negro: modernidade e dupla consciência*, São Paulo, Editora 34, 2001, especially the third chapter.

⁸⁴Britto, *Samba na cidade de São Paulo, 1900-1930: um exercício de resistência cultural*, São Paulo, FFLCH-USP, 1986, p. 97.

⁸⁵Zélia Lopes da Silva, *Os carnavais de rua e dos clubes na cidade de São Paulo: metamorfoses de uma festa, 1923-1938*, São Paulo, Editora Unesp; Londrina, Eduel, 2008, p. 220. In its edition dedicated to the festivities of King Momo, of 1928, *O Clarim d'Alvorada* confirmed that the carnival group Barra Funda had a “group of female amateurs”. They would be the “right arm” of the group, as their “legal strength: — They give the most beautiful carnival proof and in all of the different parties of this society, using their efforts”. *O Clarim d'Alvorada*, São Paulo, 05 Fev. 1928, p. 4.

and festivals, assisted the rehearsals of the children and paraded in the *cordão*. Also, a “female board” was known to exist, being presided by Stelita Arruda, with pre-established terms and everything else.⁸⁶ In February, 1929, *Progresso* paid her an homage for the nine years of “dedication” to Campos Elyseos:

For nine years, D. Stelita has been dedicating her best efforts to the white-purple, and this is why she became the president of G.C. Campos Elyseos three times. With organizing spirit, worthy of respect and honors that mean high reward to her undeniable talent, Stelita Arruda and her gentle figure harmonically exhibits the grace and elegance of those who descend from the glorious heraldry. [...] Luis Mendes Filho, orator of Campos Elyseos, after a beautiful speech, gave the honoured one the dear scroll, which meant she was the first honorary president of that carnival society. On behalf of the couple Serafim de Arruda, Mr. Euclides dos Santos spoke and mentioned how happy D. Stelita was for receiving this homage, which encouraged her to work even more for the glory of the already glorious Campos Elyseos.

Stelita was one of the most impetuous female staff of Campos Elyseos. Married to José Euclides dos Santos, one of the founders of the “white-purple”, and proud of her racial origins, she did not miss a chance to attract new women to be part of that affirmation journey of the black. However, she did not expect such expressive recognition; so, having received the title of “first honorary president” of Campos Elyseos made her very happy and flattered, and such fact renewed her disposition to work hard in favor of the development of the *cordão*.⁸⁷ The role of the women, working side by side with men, was essential for the triumphs of the white-purple, triggered by the “permanence of the main black manifestation of carnival in São Paulo”.⁸⁸ Concerning the children, Campos Elyseos created *Os Desprezados* (the unwanted ones), a carnival children’s group. Directed by Manoel Conceição and Luiz Camilo, *Os Desprezados* paraded the streets of Barra Funda and, eventually, it also participated in the disputes related to the festivities of Momo. In 1928, the group won the contest of children’s “*farandulas e cordões*”, and “solemnly” received the premium cup.⁸⁹ With time, the members of *Os Desprezados* became teen-

⁸⁶On January 13, 1929, *Progresso* notified the event in which the new board of Campos Elyseos was formed, and informed that, at the time, the “female board” also took on, and was formed as follows: “Stelita S. Arruda, president; Benedicta Alves de Lima, vice; Gina Cabral and Adelaide Alves Lima, secretaries; Maria José Arruda and Elza de Souza, treasures; Sebastiana Felipe and Maria Catulina, general director and assistant, respectively; Maria de Lourdes Arruda e Brasília Alves Lima, fiscais e Amélia Conceição, procuradora”. *Progresso*, São Paulo, 13 Jan. 1929, p. 7.

⁸⁷Another woman who later stood out in Campos Elyseos was Mrs. Cecília. She was called by Inocência Tobias of a “great rehearser”, while, for Pé-Rachado, she was the base of carnival: “Campos Elyseos only ended because this woman died. She was strong! She had supreme authority there. Her authority! Alone, in the avenue, she dominated the whole *cordão* in a way that, really, it was difficult to beat Campos Elyseos during that time...”. In: Wilson Rodrigues de Moraes, *Escolas de samba de São Paulo - Capital*, São Paulo, Conselho Estadual de Artes e Ciências Humanas, 1978, p. 28.

⁸⁸Olga Von Simson, *Carnaval em branco e negro: carnaval popular paulistano, 1914-1988*, Campinas, Editora da Unicamp; São Paulo, Editora da Universidade de São Paulo; Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo, 2007, p. 182.

⁸⁹*Progresso*, São Paulo, 23 Jun. 1928, p. 4.

agers and adolescents and decided to express themselves, therefore leaving Campos Elyseos. So, Declovis de Oliveira, the “scenic director” of this *cordão* began to coordinate a new “children’s group”.⁹⁰

As pointed out by Von Simson, exclusively blacks could participate in the parades of carnival *cordões* until the mid-1930s. White people, were them neighbors or coworkers, could help financially, without, however, having a more direct participation. “It is not that they were not accepted: they were just not interested in participating in this ‘black thing’”.⁹¹ That was the carnival manifestation coming from a “black territory” in São Paulo, which gained popular acceptance throughout the years and became official in 1968. From a “black thing”, it became something respected, applauded and celebrated by the mass media, by State institutions and by members of the cultural identity of the city. Until then, many parades were conducted, too much confetti and serpentine was thrown and sambas were sung under the bridge of this story.

Even experimenting the condition of an “almost-citizen”⁹² and facing a difficult “prejudice of color” in São Paulo in the first decades after the abolition, the blacks did not surrender to the adversities of life and, as much as they could, they tried to dig alternative spaces of political participation, sociability, culture and leisure, which pointed out to an arena of equality, rights and citizenship. This was possible thanks to the collective actions (and the proposals) of the African community in São Paulo, which resulted in the creation of its own newspapers, clubs and carnival associations. In a republican system whose interlocution channels between the average citizen and the State were mostly manipulated by the dominant groups, or simply did not exist, cultural manifestations gained an affirmative character, of conflict negotiation with the power instances, so the carnival *cordões* — with the ability of organization, skills, creativity, glow, irreverence and good mood — constituted a response of the black community to the current system. Each parade was an aesthetic, plastic and symbolic counterpoint to the difficulties of racism in São Paulo. If the attitude was intolerant, the stage in the streets lit up to life.

Campos Elyseos was a group that aimed to catalyze the yearnings, the expectations and the motivations of the African community in São Paulo in the so called “triduum of madness”, in the 1920s. It provided its associates with moments of leisure, to play amongst “equals”, with calmness, irreverence and so much joy. These were days to forget about the daily social and racial tensions, to violate the current rules and to commit excesses and be delirious, as if there was no tomorrow — the end of carnival, Wednesday (*quarta-feira de cinzas*).

⁹⁰*Progresso*, São Paulo, 20 Ago. 1930, p. 6.

⁹¹Simson, *Carnaval em branco e negro: carnaval popular paulistano, 1914-1988*, Campinas, Editora da Unicamp; São Paulo, Editora da Universidade de São Paulo; Imprensa Oficial do Estado de São Paulo, 2007, p. 132.

⁹²Olívia Maria Gomes da Cunha; Flávio dos Santos Gomes (orgs.), *Quase-cidadão: histórias e antropologias da pós-emancipação no Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, Editora FGV, 2007.

Nonetheless, for the *cordão*, the “triduums of madness” meant more than the “mere” playing, enjoying the moment. Redefining carnival and its correlate activities from actions connected to the diaspora, Campos Elyseos provided the blacks with an important ethnic and racial space of realization. By sponsoring ludic activities and artistic-cultural programs throughout the year, and by adopting *Progresso* as its “official organ,”⁹³ the carnival group led its members to feel important and skilled — that is, able, capable and competent —; to interact proactively, exchanging experiences, traditions and common habits”; to forge bonds of sociability, belonging and elective affinity, establishing interchange with the emerging network of associations defending the “colored men,” from the capita and the countryside; to invent and reinvent African-diasporic performances, allegories, emblems and narratives; to sum up, Campos Elyseos contributed for the process of formation and development of racial identity and consciousness of black people in São Paulo.

The “white-purple”, however, was not seen as the only defender of the cause. It is important to know that *Progresso* mentioned Barra Funda, this carnival group which, “for an endless series of two years”, would be providing the “niceties” of the fun São Paulo. Dionísio Barbosa, Cornélio Aires and “others, whose names we do not remember right now” were founded. At the time, its president would be Tibúrcio de Almeida.

To talk about what ‘Camisa Verde’ (name of Barra Funda) has been until now is not necessary. Its rehearsals, parties and excellent presentation in the carnival of São Paulo prove that the group from the street Lopes Chaves works to improve the moral of the black people.⁹⁴

The leisure sphere would give space to the idea of redeemer utopia. Maybe this was why the African community in São Paulo put so much energy in carnival, using this popular manifestation to mobilize the “colored population”, to concede projection to its talents and potentials and to give visibility to its self-affirmation yearnings. Carnival *cordões* became tools through which blacks could demonstrate their creative initiatives, developing their artistic and cultural qualifications and raising their African-diasporic flags, rituals and symbols, thus enabling, on one hand, the strengthening of union, self-love and solidarity bonds between “brothers of color” and, on the other hand, the dialogue with the agencies of civil society and the State. To sum up, carnival *cordões* worked to “raise the morals of the black people”.

⁹³*Progresso*, São Paulo, 22 Jul. 1928, p. 2.

⁹⁴*Progresso*, São Paulo, 28 Jul. 1929, p. 5.