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REFLECTIONS ON THE AFROGOTH HASHTAG ON TIKTOK: STRATEGIES FOR HACKING THE DISPOSITIVE OF RACIALITY IN DIGITAL MEDIA TECHNOLOGIES

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Introduction

This paper aims to analyze the term *afrogoth*, created by Black goth people, through the social network TikTok, from Afrocentric perspectives on digital technologies. The central question of the research is: *how do Black goths use technology to create spaces of existence and resistance on social networks?*

Goth Subculture expresses itself through music, clothing, behavioural rituals, and language that value the dark, the mysterious, and suffering. In more than four decades, the subculture has become translocal, receiving influences from different cultures and adapting to their socio-cultural contexts (Thornton, 1995; Goodlad, Bibby, 2007; Gunn, 2007; Brill, 2008; Kipper, 2023).

In this work, the book “Griots e tecnologias digitais” (2023), organized by Thiane Neves Barros and Tarcízio Silva, was used as a theoretical basis to analyse the phenomenon, using the concepts of Technological Pretuguês (Gonzalez, 2020; Gomes, Nunes, Santiago, 2023), algorithmic racism (Silva, 2021; Gomes, 2024; Gomes, Brandão, 2024), hacking the dispositive of raciality (Carneiro, 2005; Guimarães-Silva, 2023), self-definition and self-evaluation (Collins, 2016, 2019), Internet governance (Soares, 2023) and cyber-quilombismo (Nascimento, A., 2002; Nascimento, B., 2021; Franco, 2023).

As a methodology, I entered “#afrogoth” into TikTok's search bar so the platform's algorithm wouldn't influence the search results based on the products I consume. I

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aimed to look at the first 10 results that contained the hashtag and the captions on the videos.

Therefore, the research is relevant because it seeks to use the Afrocentric perspective to analyze a current cultural phenomenon and intersectionality to analyze the forms of resistance that Black goth people have found to resist algorithmic racism and gain visibility in TikTok and in the Goth Subculture.

Research Literature

The Goth Subculture began to emerge in the late 1970s in the United Kingdom, with fashion, music, and audiovisuals as its main pillars, bringing together elements and signs from different periods and cultures, developing a spectacular, heterogeneous, and coherent style, as well as maintaining an anti-capitalist and anti-elitist ideology. As a spectacular subculture, appearance is used for self-expression, with common pieces worn by people of all genders and agenders.

Although it has the ideology of being a subculture free of preconceptions, this can be considered a utopia (Goodlad, Bibby, 2007), as goths participate in and have been socialized into the dominant culture. There is a social imposition of standards for a person to be considered goth, such as the idealization of bodies with white/pale skin, thin, with long straight hair, and fine facial features. Thus, it is possible to observe that the beauty standard imposed on goths does not align with the phenotype of Black people, which can be an obstacle to their entry into and permanence in the Subculture. In the case of Black goth women, their experiences are marked by racism, misogyny, and transphobia, and by exclusion, objectification, and sexualization, since this intersectional dynamic is not limited only to the Subculture or the dominant culture. However, with social media, it is becoming more common to find the active presence of Black people, especially women, creating content about the Goth Subculture, and they are a source of inspiration and representation for the Brazilian goth scene (Gomes, 2025).

Firstly, it is important to consider that “All languages are epistemic. Our language must contribute to the understanding of our reality” (Asante, 1988 apud Gonzalez, 2020, p. 136). From Lélia Gonzalez's (2020) Pretuguês (Pretuguese/Blackguese), Technological Pretuguês is developed as “[...] an exercise in imagination to develop another computer language loaded with ancestry”. Technological Pretuguês is necessary because, although new digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AIs), come to automate certain aspects of human life, and can generate invisibilities, relegations, marginalization, and social exclusions. After all, they can both learn and reproduce oppression and violence, shaping the perceptions and behaviors of the person who uses them (Silva, 2021; Gomes, 2024; Sobral-Gomes, Brandão, 2024).

Considering what and who is behind these digital technologies, it is interesting to reflect on the concept of Internet governance, which refers to the processes, principles, and

institutions that coordinate and regulate the functioning and development of the internet, guaranteeing its use as a global resource. It involves the participation of various actors, including governments, international organizations, the private sector, civil society, academia, and the technical community, who collaborate to decide issues such as accessibility, security, privacy, digital rights, infrastructure, and technical standards. Soares (2023, p. 180) points out that most of the people responsible for Internet governance in Brazil are male, cisgender, white, young, non-disabled, and from the Southeast, and it is these people who are responsible for diversity in companies and technologies.

Because of this, it is necessary to subvert it. The hacking of the dispositive of raciality (Carneiro, 2005; Guimarães-Silva, 2023) occurs when racialized people find ways to speak publicly about their experiences, such as denouncing racism, valuing Blackness, and creating self-definitions¹ and self-evaluations²(Collins, 2019).

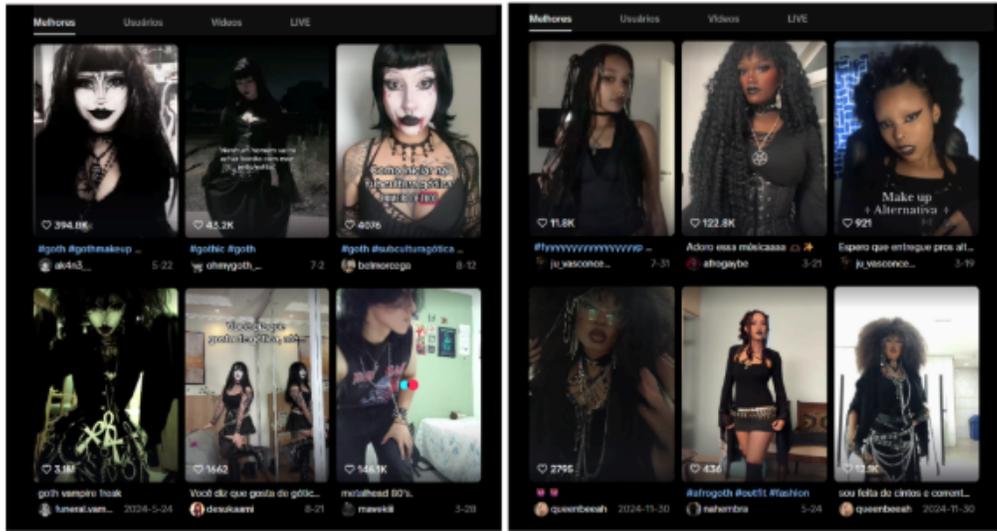
This hacking can be understood as a form of cyber-quilombismo. Firstly, Quilombismo, temicide, and necropolitics since European colonization. It proposes Afrocentricity (placing Black people at the center), being a political movement of Black Brazilians who organize themselves politically and socially based on the Black and Indigenous experiences, to act in an anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti-sexist way, and against other social injustices: “In this way, cyber-quilombismo, which I conceive as spaces of Black organization in the networked digital environment, is a space for affirmation, (re)existence, resistance, denunciation, and articulation to address the demands of Black people” (Franco, 2023, p. 49).

Initial Results

The research is still in progress, with the stage of collecting and analyzing the videos. But, in the 10 selected videos for this paper, what can be observed is that Black people have created the term *afrogoth* to value Black goth content creators, using elements of clothing socially constructed as feminine, such as dresses, skirts, make-up, and corsets. The hashtag has around 9.870 publications on TikTok (Figure 1).

¹ Self-definition can be understood as challenging stereotypes, or controlling images, about Black people, and proposing authentic images that seek to value individual and, consequently, collective diversity and complexity.

² Self-evaluation, on the other hand, critically examines the images created in self-definition to reflect on their authenticity and whether they go against stereotypes

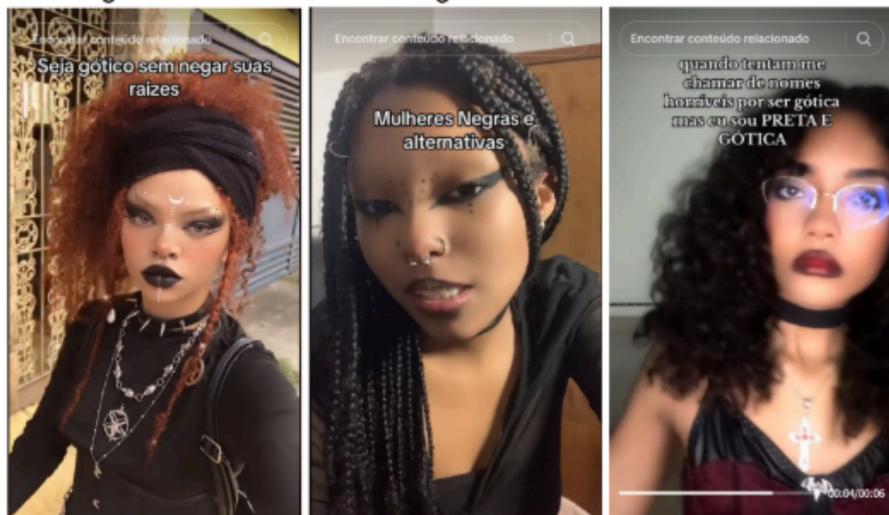


Source: TikTok (2025)

Figure 1 – #goth and #afrogoth on TikTok Source: TikTok (2025)

This is a powerful strategy of Black resistance because *#afrogoth* addresses and seeks to counteract racism, misogyny, social exclusion, and other intersectional forms of violence, since much of the audience that produces content with this hashtag is Black women. The creation and use of the term *afrogoth* is a form of Technological Pretuguês, and self-definition, in which technology itself is used to go against white supremacy, creating a language that refers to Blackness, and striving for greater equality in goth and digital spaces (Figure 2). In the images, the people say: “Be goth without denying your roots”, “Black and alternative women”, and “When they try to call me horrible names for being goth, but I'm BLACK AND GOTH”, respectively.

Figure 2 – Black Goths talking about race and the subculture



Source: TikTok (2025, @nebulosa.__, @kalttine e @ju_vasconcelos1, respectively)

Finally, the *#afrogoth* is a way for Black goths to connect on social media, follow each other, unite, and value their history and Black ancestry (Figure 3).

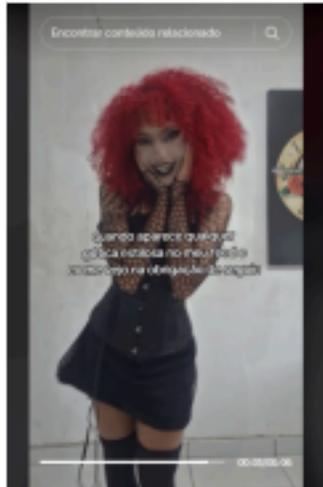


Figure 6 – Afrogoth as Cyber-quilombismo Source: TikTok (2025, @cyberskitie).

In Figure 3, the girl says, “When any stylish goth girl appears on my feed and I feel obligated to follow her”, creating a community of Black goth women.

Conclusion

The term afrogoth was created and used on social media as a way to generate visibility for Black goths so that they would also appear in searches related to the Goth Subculture. This is a way of hacking the raciality dispositive, creating a language that subverts algorithmic racism. With the use of the hashtag, it is possible to create a digital cyber-quilombismo, so that Black people who identify with goth can get to know, strengthen, and inspire each other, creating self-definitions and self-assessments.

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