

Second-Class Daughters

A legacy of the transatlantic slave trade, Brazil is home to the largest number of African descendants outside Africa and the greatest number of domestic workers in the world. Drawing on ten years of interviews and ethnographic research, the author examines the lives of marginalized informal domestic workers who are called “adopted daughters” but who live in slave-like conditions in the homes of their adoptive families. She traces a nuanced and, at times, disturbing account of how adopted daughters, who are trapped in a system of racial, gender, and class oppression, live with the coexistence of extreme forms of exploitation and seemingly loving familial interactions and affective relationships. Highlighting the humanity of her respondents, Hordge-Freeman examines how *filhas de criação* (raised daughters) navigate the realities of their structural constraints and in the context of pervasive norms of morality, gratitude, and kinship. In all, the author clarifies the link between contemporary and colonial forms of exploitation, while highlighting the resistance and agency of informal domestic workers.

Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman is Associate Professor of Sociology, Senior Advisor to the President and Provost for Diversity and Inclusion, and Interim Vice President for Institutional Equity at the University of South Florida. She received a Fulbright grant to Brazil and Ruth Landes Memorial Fellowship to conduct this research. Her first book, *The Color of Love*, won three book awards, including two from the American Sociological Association (Sections on Emotions and Bodies and Embodiment).

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*Black Brazilian Women and Informal Adoption
as Modern Slavery*

ELIZABETH HORDGE-FREEMAN

University of South Florida



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*This book is dedicated to the mulheres escravizadas, mucamas,
filhas de criação, and empregadas domésticas across the African
Diaspora, including my grandmother, the late Maggie
Ruth Hordge.*

Contents

<i>Figure</i>	page	ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>		xi
Introduction: “An Iron Chain around Your Soul”		I
1 Adopting Modern Slavery: Pathways into and Discourses of <i>Criação</i>		36
2 “ <i>Quase da Família</i> ” (Almost Family): Affective Ambiguity and Family Theater as Strategies of Domination		58
3 Prisoners of Love: Affective Captivity and Ruptures in the Family Ideology		88
4 Depths and Debts of Gratitude: The Moral Code of <i>Criação</i>		116
5 Family Bonds and Bondage: Generational Relationships and the Persistence of <i>Criação</i>		138
6 Home Sick: Health, Disability, and Exploitation of Adult <i>Filhas de Criação</i>		161
7 Freedom to “Live Her Own Liberty”: From Existence to Resistance among <i>Filhas de Criação</i>		187
Conclusion: “The Last of Our Kind?”		219
<i>Appendix A: Biographical Data on Interviewees</i>		239
<i>Appendix B: Research Methods, Emotions, and Ethics</i>		243
<i>Works Cited</i>		249
<i>Index</i>		263

Figure

I.1 Map of Brazil

page 8

Cambridge University Press
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Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Acknowledgments

A long-term project of this sort would have been, simply put, impossible without the women who generously agreed to participate in this research. Some of the participants agreed to surreptitious interviews, tolerated my questions for nearly ten years, and demanded little in return except that I share their stories. As much as I problematize the notion of family in this research, my interviewees welcomed me into their lives in a way that was overwhelming, in part because we developed our own family-like ties. I am grateful to them for sharing their truths and I can only hope that this work honors their narratives.

The seed of this research was planted in 2010, when I was conducting research not on labor exploitation but on racial socialization in Black families in Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. Early on in this research, when I had just begun to meet *filhas de criação* (informally adopted daughters), Dona Nancy de Souza e Silva, a brilliant griot and oral historian at the Pierre Verger Cultural Foundation, walked me through the Pierre Verger library and pulled books off the shelves to show me visual examples that captured the idiosyncrasies of enslavement and racial domination in Brazil.

When I returned from the field interested in shifting my research to focus on the handful of informally adopted daughters whom I had met, my dissertation chair at Duke University, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, promptly rejected this request. Though in the moment I was devastated, he assured me I could do it later, but only after writing my first book, *The Color of Love*. This was the best advice that I could have received. But I did not know it then; and so, I never stopped researching *filhas de criação*. An intellectual accomplice who cheered me on as I pursued this project, John French (Duke historian), forwarded an endless supply of

useful citations and articles with the goal of advancing this project. As I culled through the long list of references for this work, there has always been one researcher whose work has been a model for inspiration and theoretical grounding. A trailblazer of race, class, and gender in Brazil and beyond, France Winddance Twine opened the door to the generation of US scholars among whom I situate my work. This cadre of scholars is comprised of many, but of most significance for my work include Kia Lilly Caldwell, Keisha-Khan Perry, Gladys Mitchell-Walthour, Tianna Paschel, Jaira Harrington, Tiffany Joseph, Chinyere Osuji, Reighan Gilliam, Erica Williams, and Christen Smith.

What has been the most exhilarating part of this project has been the amount of transnational collaboration that it has allowed and, in fact, demanded. With support from a Fulbright postdoctoral fellowship, in 2016, I returned to Brazil in partnership with the Federal University of Bahia (Dr. Paula Barreto) and the Instituto Cultural Steve Biko (Jucy Silva) to collect additional data on *filhas de criação*. Supplemented by the McKnight Junior Faculty Fellowship, USF Women in Leadership & Philanthropy... and the American Sociological Association Fund for the Advancement of the Discipline grant, I extended my studies into the Amazon region of Brazil. Most significantly, the Ruth Landes Fellowship (administered through the Reed Foundation) offered me generous funding to travel throughout Brazil, conduct research and observations in several states, and transcribe, translate, and analyze hundreds of pages of data. During these research trips, colleagues across several universities in Brazil welcomed me and allowed me to present my preliminary data to their community, including my Fulbright collaborator the Federal University of Bahia (Cor da Bahia), Federal University of Paraíba, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (Black Feminist Collective), Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Federal University of Sergipe, and PUC Rio Grande do Sul. As this work developed, there were several individuals who participated in research meetings, offered their assistance with conducting interviews, and served as collaborators and supporters in this project. In Brazil, these individuals include Claudia Fonseca, Fernanda Bittencourt, Marianna de Quieroz Araujo, Suelen Aires Gonçalves, Fernanda Oliveira, Giovana Xavier, Roberto Lacerda, Solange Rocha, Evanilda Carvalho, Felipe Communello, Maria Isabel Mallman, Antonio Alberto Lopes, Elenoura Santos, and Edna Araújo.

As I traveled to different cities in Brazil, the home of my dear friends Michel Chagas and Ecylla Moreira Borges (and the rooftops of their extended family) was my home away from home. For months,

Acknowledgments

xiii

I shuttled in and out of their home as I took trips around Brazil and back to Salvador, Bahia. A PhD-trained psychologist in her own right, Ecylla respected the confidentiality of my research, but also always listened when I return from research trips physically exhausted and emotionally anxious. Likewise, my friendship with Javier Escudero (*Brazil Cultural*) and Patricia Burgos paved the path for this research to become a reality and in profound and sustained ways, including with translation and editing assistance.

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Even with such strong collaborators in the research field, what any qualitative researcher knows is that, at some point, she must return home. My five siblings (Theresa, Larry, Jenifer, Jeanette (Jamar), and Christina), their spouses, and my parents not only read my book draft during the COVID-19 pandemic, but they each presented on select chapters during our Friday family virtual meetings. My husband, McArthur, motivated me through the research trips, soothed my pregnancy aches, and spoiled me with the world's best oatmeal. Not to be outdone, our son Nathaniel, an inquisitive seven-year-old, traded his Harry Potter books to cuddle up with me as I read passages of my manuscript aloud to him at bedtime. A precocious reviewer, he offered constructive feedback, even while he laughed at himself as he fumbled to pronounce *filhas de criação*. And then, like a lightning rod of inspiration, Janelle's birth was a miracle that, unexpectedly, guided the Muse to my side. Pouring into me the insights that come with postpartum apprehensions, the Muse reminded me that most of the *filhas de criação* in this book were once also Black girls, as tiny

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as my Janelle. And they, too, had adoring mothers who gazed anxiously into their eyes and made decisions and sacrifices with their survival in mind. I offer this book in gratitude to the Muse and, most importantly, to the women of flesh, bone, and blood whose lives should not simply be remembered for their struggles, but for their defiance and triumphs.