

PORTRAIT ON THE WALL

Alyane Almeida

October 2020 – Rosario's Party of Caicó, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil

The memory of my childhood has the procession of Rosario's Party by the black people. The drum, the spear, the dance... everything seemed to have existed forever. Until one day I went to live far away and, on one of the returns, I was curious to know the history of this party.

The year 1864 is on top of the Rosário church. In 1889, one year after the abolition of the slave regime, José Ezelino da Costa was born, a black photographer whose story is told on the wall at the entrance to the parish hall. Son of an ex-slave woman, Bertuleza Maria da Conceição, he photographed his family members in aristocratic clothes.

Today, the portraits of Rosário's brotherhood of black people are present in their homes and in their speeches. The old photographs are in the oral descriptions about what was seen and lived. Between the portrayed reality and the experienced reality, we can still find the oral transmission of the story, but always accompanied by a portrait on the wall.

With the camera in hand and the desire to access my own memories of the party, I met several people at the association of Rosário's black brotherhood, at Pedro Mariano and Davane Costa dos Santos house, at Fátima Santos house, at the parish house, at church and at Rosário's square.

I walked physical and imaginary paths. The black monarchy was narrated by kings and queens, clerks, judges, masters and practitioners of batuque and dance. Everyone I could find to photograph chose to tell their story in front of the portraits nailed to the wall. Despite all the difficulties and challenges, the portraits are there. The revelations contained in the stories meet the portraits, as if they were concrete proof of a real past.

The walls and the words. The portrait of the past, the version of the present. And what will become of the portraits that still await the revelations to be registered by the lens of the camera? Revealing what can be seen, felt and,

literally, portrayed at the Rosário de Caicó party is an act of continuity and discovery. May the walls of tomorrow keep the memories alive.

Alyane Almeida de Araújo, born in Caicó, Brazil. Law graduate from University Federal do Rio Grande do Norte in Natal, Brazil (undergraduate, specialization and master's degree in law). Took courses in the post-graduate program in anthropology at the same university. Currently doing doctoral research in law at the University of Lille, France.