

## Theoretical Essay

# Afro-entrepreneurship beyond neoliberalism: Quilombismo as a theoretical-practical basis for black emancipation in Brazil

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## Abstract

**Objective:** This theoretical-conceptual essay aims to suggest Abdias do Nascimento's Quilombismo as a theoretical-practical alternative to Afro-entrepreneurship, given the limitations of prevailing neoliberal approaches, and to propose a framework based on three key pillars: network support, financial self-organization, and Afro-centered education. **Dilemma/problem or Thesis:** The study departs from a critique of the reliance on short-lived cycles of anti-racist awareness driven by events between 2018 and 2021 — such as the Black Panther film, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the Black Lives Matter movement — which tend to generate reactive, episodic, and unsustainable responses in the field of Afro-entrepreneurship. **Relevance/originality:** By shifting the focus from reactive responses to exogenous events toward endogenous and long-term construction, the article breaks with neoliberal approaches and introduces Quilombismo as the theoretical-practical foundation for Afro-entrepreneurship. **It advances an Afro-centered and emancipatory perspective that remains underexplored in management and entrepreneurship literature.** **Results:** A framework was developed that articulates network support, financial self-organization, and Afro-centered education to strengthen collective action and the economic sustainability of Black communities, reducing vulnerability to conjunctural and short-term movements. **Theoretical/methodological contributions:** The study provides an analytical model that expands academic debate on Afro-entrepreneurship and challenges the dependence on neoliberal perspectives. **Social/managerial contributions:** It offers insights for public policies and community-based initiatives aimed at Black economic emancipation, transforming Black culture into a sustainable political and economic asset and fostering more structural racial inclusion.

**Keywords:** Afro-entrepreneurship; Quilombismo; Structural Racism; Collective Autonomy; Black Economy.

## Afroempreendedorismo além do neoliberalismo: Quilombismo como base teórico-prática de emancipação negra no Brasil

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** Este ensaio teórico-conceitual tem como objetivo sugerir o Quilombismo de Abdias do Nascimento como alternativa teórico-prática ao afroempreendedorismo, diante das limitações das abordagens neoliberais predominantes, e propor um framework baseado em três eixos fundamentais: suporte de rede, auto-organização financeira e educação afrocentrada. **Método:** O estudo adota uma abordagem teórico-conceitual sustentada em epistemologias negras e na ancestralidade, partindo da crítica à dependência de ciclos efêmeros de conscientização antirracista impulsionados por eventos entre 2018 e 2021 — como o filme Pantera Negra, a pandemia de COVID-19 e o movimento Black Lives Matter. **Originalidade/Relevância:** Ao deslocar o foco das respostas reativas a eventos para uma construção endógena e de longo prazo, o artigo rompe com abordagens neoliberais e introduz o Quilombismo como base teórico-prática do afroempreendedorismo, propondo um olhar afrocentrado e emancipatório ainda pouco explorado na literatura de gestão e empreendedorismo. **Resultados:** Foi desenvolvido um framework que articula três eixos — suporte de rede, auto-organização financeira e educação afrocentrada — para fortalecer a atuação coletiva e a sustentabilidade econômica das comunidades negras, reduzindo a vulnerabilidade a movimentos conjunturais e pontuais. **Contribuições teóricas/metodológicas:** O trabalho oferece um modelo analítico que amplia o debate acadêmico sobre afroempreendedorismo e emancipa a discussão da dependência de perspectivas neoliberais. **Contribuições sociais / para a gestão:** Fornece subsídios para políticas públicas e iniciativas comunitárias voltadas à emancipação econômica negra, transformando a cultura negra em ativo político-econômico sustentável e promovendo inclusão racial estruturante.

**Palavras-chave:** Afroempreendedorismo; Quilombismo; Racismo Estrutural; Autonomia Coletiva; Economia Preta.

## INTRODUCTION

Since 2018, cultural and academic productions on blackness have gained prominence, addressing topics ranging from the structural barriers faced by black entrepreneurs to afrofuturism and the growth of antiracist social movements. The success of the film *Black Panther* (2018) symbolized a milestone in black empowerment and the expansion of media representation. Subsequently, the COVID-19 pandemic and the murder of George Floyd catalyzed a global debate on structural racism, driving public and private initiatives focused on racial inclusion and the strengthening of Black entrepreneurship (Wallace, 2018; Griffin, 2012).

However, much of the literature on black entrepreneurship remains anchored in a neoliberal perspective that emphasizes individual achievement, meritocratic logic, and adaptation to formal market structures. This approach tends to obscure the historical and structural conditions of racism, turning Black entrepreneurship into a strategy of subordinate inclusion rather than social transformation (Cordeiro & Mello, 2006; Mancebo, 2019).

Within this context, studies show that the Black Lives Matter movement had measurable impacts: for example, after 2020, crowdfunding campaigns led by black entrepreneurs in the restaurant sector became nearly four times more successful (Koh et al., 2023). In Brazil, although there are still no scientific articles systematizing the direct impact of these events on black entrepreneurship, applied studies and market diagnostics indicate a significant growth of black-led businesses between 2020 and 2021. According to the “Afroempreendedorismo Brasil” survey promoted by Think With Google (2022), 16% of black entrepreneurs started their businesses during the pandemic, and 20% reported growth during this period. The absence of academic systematization of these data reinforces the importance of critical and theoretical approaches that deepen this phenomenon from an emancipatory perspective.

These events placed the racial question at the center of public debate, pressuring companies and governments to adopt antiracist measures such as diversity and inclusion (D&I) programs, training on structural racism, and partnerships with black organizations (Yancey & Krome, 2021). The year 2020 marked a peak of media visibility for racial agendas, driven by the murder of George Floyd in the United States and the global mobilization of the #BlackLivesMatter movement — a phenomenon evidenced in Brazil through the analysis of millions of tweets and journalistic reports (Santos & Reis, 2022). Nationally, the case of João Alberto Freitas, beaten to death by security guards in a supermarket, gained political repercussion and reinforced the debate on structural racism (Gonçalves, 2024). These episodes contributed to strong pressure for corporate commitments to racial equity, particularly in the private sector (De la Parra et al., 2023; Koh et al., 2023; Brookings Institution, 2023).

However, studies indicate that by 2021 many of the announced initiatives had been reduced, reformulated, or hollowed out in response to the global economic crisis and cost-cutting imperatives (Koh et al., 2023; Hyrynsalmi et al., 2025; Santos et al., 2025). Research shows that mentions of diversity in corporate conferences peaked in 2020 but progressively lost prominence in subsequent years (De la Parra et al., 2023), indicating that many responses were reactive and conjunctural. The spread of woke washing — in which companies express symbolic support for sociopolitical causes without concrete commitments — and the absence of transparency mechanisms regarding their impact underscored the structural fragility of these initiatives (Ahmad et al., 2024). In addition, the advance of the far right and conservative agendas in several countries contributed to the delegitimization of antiracist agendas (Hyrynsalmi et al., 2025).

The visibility and support for black entrepreneurship between 2018 and 2021, particularly in 2020, did not consolidate structurally. Although this period was marked by an increase in institutional interest around racial equity, to date there are no

academic studies systematizing the effects of the subsequent withdrawal of support from companies and governments for black entrepreneurs in Brazil. Internationally, there has been a retreat of diversity and inclusion investments by large corporations due to economic, political, and social pressures. Recent studies show that after the peak of 2020, many companies reassessed or downsized their diversity programs, especially in the technology sector, in a movement described as corporate backlash (De la Parra et al., 2023; Brookings Institution, 2023; Hyrynsalmi et al., 2025; Santos et al., 2025).

Historically marked by precarization, black entrepreneurs saw in 2020 and 2021 an opportunity for growth under more favorable conditions. However, from 2021 onward, the slowdown of investments reflected economic challenges, political shifts, the weakening of the ESG agenda, and the decline of racial inclusion debates, undermining the strengthening of black businesses.

Given this scenario, this article addresses the following question: How can Quilombismo offer a theoretical-practical alternative to Black entrepreneurship, given the limits of neoliberal approaches and the ephemerality of institutional responses to racial issues? The objective is to propose the Quilombismo of Abdias do Nascimento (1980) as a theoretical-practical pathway for Black entrepreneurship. The resulting contribution is the proposition of a framework structured around three interdependent axes: network support, financial self-organization, and Afrocentric education.

Although there are relevant contributions in the international literature on Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship, Social Entrepreneurship, and Entrepreneurship in Institutional Voids, these approaches mostly reflect experiences anchored in Eurocentric epistemologies, particularly centered on the realities of the Global North. Focused on adapting racialized subjects to existing structures, these perspectives often neglect the historical, cultural, and spiritual dimensions shaping forms of resistance and economic organization among black populations in the Global South. This study proposes an alternative, decolonial pathway grounded in Abdias do Nascimento’s (1980) Quilombismo, shifting the axis of analysis from integration into the dominant system to the construction of autonomous models of black emancipation anchored in ancestry, community solidarity, and collective self-management.

The contribution of this article lies in: (1) articulating a theoretical model that challenges neoliberal entrepreneurship (Dardot & Laval, 2016); (2) demonstrating the viability of autonomous collective action; and (3) supporting public policies and community initiatives. By proposing a framework grounded in Quilombismo, this study seeks to contribute both to theoretical advancement in the field of entrepreneurship and to the development of emancipatory strategies within the Brazilian context.

## AFRO-ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND STRUCTURAL RACISM

Before advancing to the racialized perspective, it is important to highlight that, within the field of management and the applied social sciences, entrepreneurship is classically understood as the process of identifying, evaluating, and exploiting opportunities to create value and generate innovation (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). For Hisrich et al., (2009), it is an intentional effort to create something new, assuming financial and social risks in pursuit of profit or impact. Schumpeter (1934) already associated the entrepreneur with creative destruction — someone capable of disrupting market equilibrium by introducing new combinations of factors. Drucker (1985) reinforces this view by linking the entrepreneur to the systematization of innovation as a practical discipline.

Although these approaches are central to mainstream literature, they overlook the historical, racial, spiritual, and collective dimensions of Black economic practices, which motivates the epistemological shift proposed in this article.

The literature on Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship (Light & Gold, 2000; Ram et al., 2017), Social Entrepreneurship (De Carolis & Saporito, 2006; Dana, 2007), and Institutional Voids (Khanna & Palepu, 2010; Smith & Tang, 2013) has sought to understand the challenges faced by entrepreneurs from racialized or marginalized groups, particularly in contexts of institutional inequality. Although these studies make important contributions to understanding the structural barriers minorities face, they often adopt a functionalist framework focused on adapting individuals to existing market and institutional structures. For example, Light and Gold (2000) describe minority entrepreneurship primarily as a strategy for insertion into already-structured markets, while Khanna and Palepu (2010) address “institutional voids” as barriers to be overcome through entrepreneurs’ adaptation to dominant rules of the game. Similarly, Smith and Tang (2013) analyze how companies adjust their strategies in contexts of institutional gaps, reinforcing adaptation rather than transformation of structures. These works, although relevant, illustrate the predominance of a functionalist bias that justifies the epistemological shift advanced in this article.

Propomos, portanto, um deslocamento epistemológico: em vez de adotar as lentes do empreendedorismo de minorias ou do empreendedorismo social no marco ocidental, recorremos ao Quilombismo de Abdias do Nascimento. We therefore propose an epistemological shift: rather than adopting the lenses of minority entrepreneurship or social entrepreneurship within the Western framework, we draw on Abdias do Nascimento’s (1980) Quilombismo, a counter-hegemonic and decolonial model that articulates cultural resistance, collective solidarity, and economic emancipation grounded in Black epistemologies. This approach does not seek to integrate black entrepreneurs into neoliberal capitalist logics but instead proposes the strengthening of autonomous community networks as a way to confront structural racism and build black economic sovereignty.

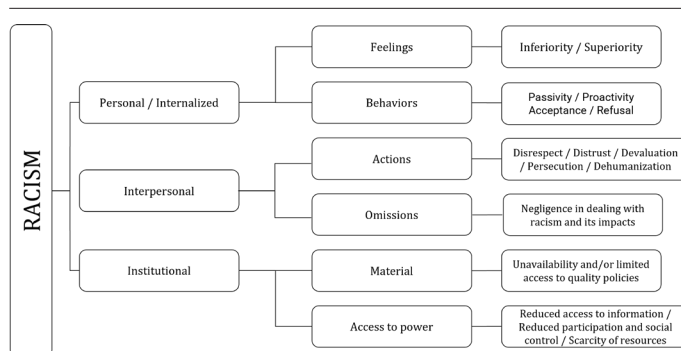
There are various concepts and typologies of racism. Almeida (2019) prompts reflection on racism as a foundational element structuring social relations, such that it can be said to have always existed, given that throughout history, black people have occupied the lowest economic and political positions.

Jones (2000) presents three levels of manifestation of racism: **internalized** (or personal) **racism**, **interpersonal racism**, and **institutional racism**. (Figure 1). The first refers to the acceptance, by racialized individuals, of stigmas and negative beliefs about themselves. The second occurs in direct social interactions, manifesting through discriminatory and prejudiced attitudes. The third — institutional racism — unfolds in social and organizational structures that systematize the exclusion of racialized groups. Despite this analytical typology, Silvio Almeida (2019) argues that **all racism is structural**; that is, it underpins the functioning of society and organizes relations between social groups. Therefore, even though it manifests at distinct levels, racism operates as **the foundation of inequality**, not as an occasional or individual deviation.

Personal or internalized racism, according to Jones (2000), occurs when individuals assimilate racist patterns, incorporating stigmas and prejudiced views. Bujato and Souza (2020) add that individual racism imposes racializing marks, ranging from physical traits to questions about character, perceived as negative labels. Interpersonal racism, also as defined by Jones (2000), manifests in prejudice and discrimination — explicit or implicit — within interactions between individuals. Finally, institutional racism expresses itself both in everyday workplace practices and in institutional norms and policies that reinforce the disadvantage of racialized groups.

Figure 1

## Typologies of Racism



Nota: Adaptado de Jones, C. P. (2000). Levels of racism: A theoretic framework and a gardener's tale. *American Journal of Public Health*, 90(8), 1212-1215. <https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.90.8.1212>.

According to López (2012), institutional racism refers to the ways in which institutions function, contributing to the naturalization and reproduction of racial inequality. By invoking this concept, the goal is to shed light on processes of indirect discrimination occurring within institutions, resulting from mechanisms that operate, to some extent, beyond individual intent. For this to occur, internal rules or regulations are not necessary — only formal obstacles embedded in social relations themselves (Werneck, 2016).

During the period of Black slavery in Brazil (1530–1888), there were situations in which enslaved people engaged in parallel labor activities as a means of supplementing subsistence or saving money to buy their freedom (Gomes, 2019; Munanga, 2004). Although such practices became more frequent with urban development and closer to abolition, it can be cautiously stated that this period marks the “embryo of Brazilian Black entrepreneurship.”

These activities — and consequently street commerce — gained momentum in Brazil after the arrival of the royal family in 1808, being practiced mainly by enslaved Black people, especially women. Even after the institutionalization of free labor, most of the Black population remained in informality and was disproportionately affected by precarious work mechanisms following productive restructuring. Through “entrepreneurship,” this population found a way to survive, overcome structural and social barriers, and maintain a connection with ancestry.

The phenomenon of Black entrepreneurship emerges with multiple economic, political, and social dimensions, encouraging the Black population to develop entrepreneurial activity (SEBRAE, 2023). Author Eliane Nascimento uses the term Black entrepreneurship to describe activity “carried out by Black people who produce from and for Black culture,” that is, establishing commercial relationships that give visibility to and rely on this culture, forming a network of businesses that compose an ecosystem of production and consumption by and for Black people.

Nogueira (2013), in *Desenvolvimento e empreendedorismo afro-brasileiro*, describes various authors who address the theme without clearly distinguishing terms. Authors such as Eliane do Nascimento and Maria Angélica Santos have played a significant role in consolidating the field of Black entrepreneurship in Brazil. Nascimento (2019) defines Black entrepreneurship as economic activity carried out by Black people producing from and for Black culture, creating economic ecosystems rooted in ancestry. In earlier and later works, the author emphasizes both how structural racism shapes the trajectories of Black entrepreneurs (Nascimento, 2018) and the centrality of Black women’s leadership as a form of resistance and creation of economic alternatives (Nascimento, 2020). Santos (2019), in turn, proposes a distinction between *lato sensu* Black entrepreneurship — encompassing all entrepreneurial activity led by Black people — and *stricto sensu* Black entrepreneurship, aimed at structural transformation of the productive chain



through an antiracist logic. In collaboration with Silva, Santos also highlights the importance of support networks and social capital as structuring dimensions of Black entrepreneurial practice (Santos & Silva, 2021).

Although the field presents multiple definitions of Black entrepreneurship, this article aligns primarily with the perspective proposed by Santos (2019), distinguishing between *lato sensu* Black entrepreneurship — encompassing all entrepreneurial activity led by Black people — and *stricto sensu*, oriented toward the structural transformation of the productive chain within an antiracist logic. By emphasizing this transformative dimension, we also engage with Nascimento's (2019) understanding of Black entrepreneurship as an economic practice rooted in ancestry and oriented toward collectivity. Based on this conceptual foundation, the Quilombist framework proposed here reinforces the centrality of Black entrepreneurship as a tool for Black emancipation, moving beyond functional market adaptation to prioritize the construction of structural alternatives grounded in Quilombismo.

This perspective resonates with what Gonzalez (1988) previously emphasized in highlighting the importance of a Black political praxis that rejects subalternity, as well as with Munanga's (2004) reflections on how racism permeates the economy, education, and politics, hindering social mobility for the Black population.

The supposed “freedom” to undertake entrepreneurship in a context of historical and ongoing inequality in Brazil does not guarantee Black entrepreneurs financial autonomy or the full development of their talent and potential. The pandemic exposed systemic racial inequality in sectors such as healthcare, delivery industries, and access to digital spaces (Francis & Robertson, 2021). Regarding small businesses, Pereira and Patel (2022) stress the urgent need for targeted measures to support the recovery of enterprises affected by COVID-19, especially among self-employed workers from racial minorities in developing countries. They highlight how these professionals are impacted by structural barriers and advocate for the implementation of long-term policies to support them.

Thus, entrepreneurship — which could be a tool for independence and financial freedom for this population — under precarious conditions can reproduce the same “freedom” experienced after abolition, leaving the Black population in an equal or even worse situation than before.

### QUILOMBISMO BY ABDIAS DO NASCIMENTO

The release of the film *Black Panther* in 2018 symbolized more than cinematic representation: it activated in the global Black imagination the possibility of a future centered on ancestry, sovereignty, and Afro-referenced technology. According to Asante and Pindi (2020), Afrocentric cultural and aesthetic production serves as a means of shaping collective consciousness and strengthening identity. The concept of Afrofuturism, present in the film, articulates art, resistance, and politics as a way of reclaiming narratives alternative to colonization and neoliberalism. Although ephemeral as a media phenomenon, *Black Panther* became a symbolic catalyst for debates on empowerment, demonstrating the power of envisioning futures grounded in African and Afro-diasporic traditions. This “radical imagination” thus connects to the theoretical effort of this article: to recover counter-hegemonic models — such as Quilombismo — to rethink Black entrepreneurship as a project of collective emancipation.

The term *aquilombar-se* (to “quilombo oneself”) refers, for the Black population, to a social technology of self-protection, mutual aid, resistance, and self-development. The term originates from quilombo, which, according to Batista (2019), is a resource of resistance that fosters “being together” to expand and strengthen ancestral knowledge, culture, identity, and stories.

In the Brazilian context, the quilombo functioned as a refusal to accept the norms imposed by slavery, aimed at eroding the prevailing system through escapes, abortions, suicides, poisonings, and the killing of plantation owners and their families. According to Gomes (2019), in *Escravidão* (Vol. 1), the word *kilombo* — translated into Portuguese as *quilombo* — comes from Kimbundu, one of the languages spoken in Angola, and means camp, encampment, union, or hut. According to Carneiro (2005):

*There, black people built a separate society “as a form of struggle against slavery, as a human settlement, as a social organization, as a reaffirmation of the values of african cultures; in all these aspects, the quilombo reveals itself as a new, unique, and peculiar fact — a dialectical synthesis” (p. 19).*

The Quilombo of Palmares, located in the Serra da Barriga in the state of Alagoas — so named due to the abundance of palm trees of various species in the region — was the largest and most important refuge for fugitive enslaved people in colonial Brazil (Gomes, 2019). According to Gomes (2019), historical documentation about Palmares is scarce, consisting of some military campaign diaries, correspondence exchanged between colonial authorities and the Portuguese Crown, as well as memories and testimonies from officers, soldiers, and residents — though always from a white perspective. Abdias do Nascimento understood the Quilombo of Palmares as an example of the implementation of a “traditional african communalism,” where there would be neither exploiters nor exploited. This model would awaken afro-brazilian consciousness and proclaim its right to power (Nascimento, 1980, pp. 14-27).

Abdias do Nascimento (1980), in his book *O Quilombismo* — the work chosen as the object of our analysis — discusses the degradation of western culture, which has produced tensions in contemporary humanity, with peoples facing and confronting one another in increasingly fragmented and hostile ways. On the other hand, the author emphasizes that another layer of the global black african population and its descendants, until then marginalized and forgotten, has emerged as a liberating and progressive unity, critically chosen, sustaining and structuring pan-african culture, which serves as the basis for the concept of Quilombismo.

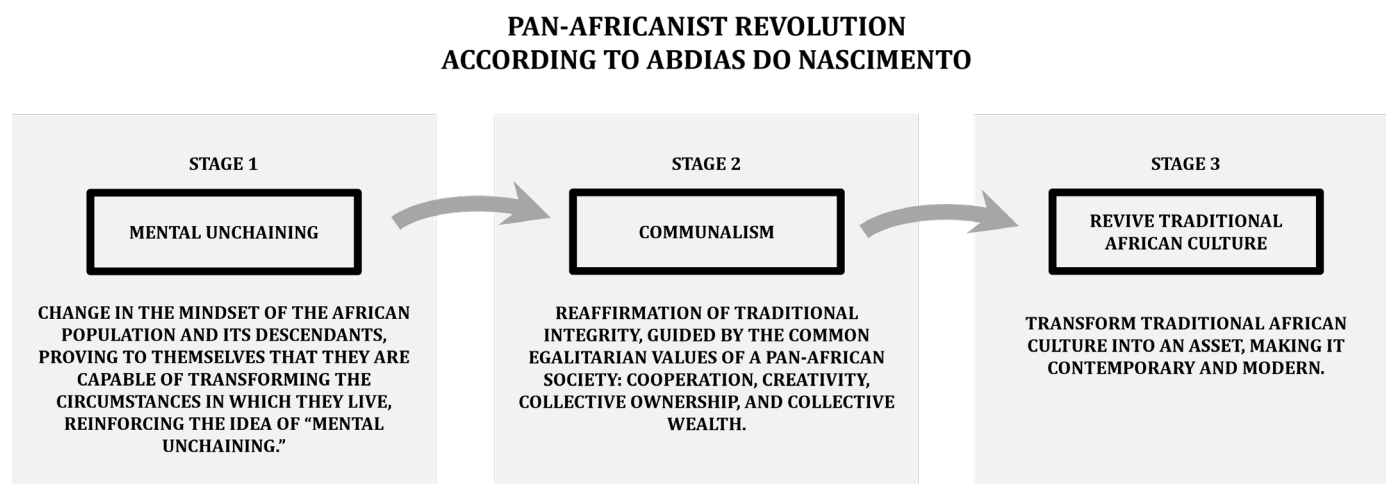
Nascimento (1980) seeks to outline what he calls the pan-africanist revolution, which would precede the implementation of Quilombismo. He begins by defending the need for a change of mentality among the african population and its descendants — proving to themselves that they are capable of transforming the circumstances in which they live — reinforcing the idea of “mental unchaining” or decolonization. As a subsequent action, the author advocates for the reaffirmation of traditional integrity, guided by the common egalitarian values of a pan-african society (referred to as communalism): cooperation, creativity, collective property, and collective wealth. Finally, the author proposes that it is imperative to transform traditional African culture into an asset, making it contemporary and modern.

Below, Figure 2 outlines the elements necessary for the pan-african revolution, according to Nascimento (1980).

According to Nascimento (1980), Quilombismo has proven to be a factor capable of mobilizing black masses in a disciplined way due to its profound psychosocial appeal, whose roots are deeply embedded in afro-brazilian culture and lived experience. In other words, Abdias explains that the afro-brazilian population — because of its historical trajectory of struggle and resistance — possesses a predisposition to *aquilombar-se* (to form quilombos or self-organizing black communities). According to Batista (2019), after the abolition of slavery, Black people continued to *aquilombar-se* by occupying hillsides, vacant lands, and through religious-territorial spaces such as *terreiros* of Candomblé. Understanding this history of the *quilombo* is crucial, as it allows us to draw from the strategies and tools used by our african ancestors and their descendants to overcome and resist a racist state.

Figure 2

Revolução Pan-Africanista Segundo Abdias do Nascimento



Nota: Extraído de Nascimento, A. (1980). \*O Quilombismo\*. Petrópolis, RJ: Editora Vozes.

Abdias do Nascimento (1980), in his work *O Quilombismo*, presents a set of 16 fundamental principles for the construction of a Quilombist National State. These principles articulate political, economic, cultural, ecological, and spiritual dimensions, composing a civilizational project that offers an alternative to the western and capitalist model. Below is a brief synthesis of the 16 principles described by Nascimento:

1. Quilombismo as a political movement based on the model of the Republic of Palmares.
2. Radical egalitarianism in all spheres of society.
3. Human happiness as a fundamental goal, with a community-cooperative economy.
4. Collectivization of land and means of production.
5. Work as both a right and a social duty.
6. Absolute priority for the protection of black childhood.
7. Free and afrocentric education at all levels.
8. Encouragement of human creativity and appreciation of the arts.
9. Equality among all religions.
10. Elimination of the elitist bureaucratic apparatus.
11. Rejection of racism, capitalism, large landholdings, imperialism, and neocolonialism.
12. Gender parity in public offices and institutions.
13. Social transformation through nonviolent means.
14. Creation of autonomous, community-based financial institutions.
15. Defense of life and environmental preservation.
16. Commitment to combating racial discrimination and promoting international cooperation with the United Nations.

For the purposes of this study, 11 of the 16 principles were selected (1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 e 16), based on **two main methodological criteria**:

1. **Relevance to the reality of contemporary black entrepreneurship in Brazil**: the principles that directly address the challenges faced by black entrepreneurs in the country were prioritized, such as unequal access to credit, fragile support networks, institutional racism, and the lack of afrocentric educational support.

2. **Alignment with the three structuring axes of the proposed framework**: network support, financial self-organization, and afrocentric education. The selected principles were mapped and organized according to their direct relationship with these axes.

This selection made it possible to adapt the original quilombist project — state-centered and macro-social in nature — to the meso- and micro-social scale of community-based economic organization, enhancing its applicability in the field of Black entrepreneurship. It is important to note that the principles not included in the analysis — such as those related to ecology (15) and the state bureaucratic apparatus (10) — remain relevant but go beyond the scope and practical objectives of this study.

### THEORETICAL CONFLUENCES: AFRO-ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND QUILOMBISM

The axes proposed here — **network support, financial self-organization, and afrocentric education** — were defined based on the main challenges identified in the literature on afro-entrepreneurship in Brazil, such as unequal access to credit, the structural isolation of black entrepreneurs, and fragile training in critical and racialized content (Nascimento, 1980; Almeida, 2019; Santos apud SEBRAE, 2023; Souza, 2021). These challenges also emerge in reports of practical experiences and in actions led by Black organizations and community support networks, reinforcing the need for a model that transcends individualizing neoliberal approaches and places collectivity at the center.

Quilombism, proposed by Abdias do Nascimento (1980), provides a solid conceptual foundation for this transition. Its principles operate as ethical-political guidelines for building collective, autonomous, and afrocentric alternatives aligned with the history of resistance and self-management of black populations in Brazil. Abdias formulated 16 principles for the Quilombist National State, from which we selected 11 (1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16) to engage in dialogue with the field of Afro-entrepreneurship. The selection was guided by two criteria: (1) their practical relevance to the challenges faced by Black entrepreneurs in the contemporary context, and (2) their alignment with the three axes proposed in this study.

The proposal presented here adapts Quilombism to the field of afro-entrepreneurship as a model of collective emancipation, moving in the opposite direction of neoliberal entrepreneurship, which promotes individualism, precarization, and competition as foundational values. This critique also applies to dominant

approaches in the traditional entrepreneurship field, such as those of Schumpeter (1934) and Shane & Venkataraman (2000), which — by emphasizing the individual innovator — reinforce a rationality centered on performance, disruption, and efficiency. Although valuable for understanding market dynamics, such approaches rarely engage with entrepreneurial experiences rooted in community and marked by trajectories of racial resistance.

As Antunes (2020), highlights, the neoliberal model materializes in the “uberization of life” and the dismantling of rights, while Carmo et al. (2021) point to the erosion of social protection and the individual’s accountability for their own success or failure.

Instead, inspired by Quilombism, this proposal is anchored in three interdependent **strategic axes** — network support, financial self-organization, and afrocentric education — as a way to mitigate the impacts of structural racism and strengthen *aquilombamento* practices (community-based solidarity and resistance) in the economic field. In the following sections, we detail each of these axes in light of Quilombist principles and the challenges faced by afro-entrepreneurs in Brazil.

### Network Support

According to Dornelas (2008), a successful entrepreneur is not defined solely by the ability to make sound decisions, identify opportunities, maintain an optimistic outlook, and be passionate about their work, but also by the capacity to build a strong and reliable network of relationships (networking). For Miloud et al., (2012), beyond relational capital, market reputation emerges as a strategic resource that can be mobilized in future ventures. An entrepreneur’s network contributes to identifying opportunities for mergers, acquisitions, and expansion, while the relational ties built by the company directly influence its performance and market valuation (Stuart et al., 1999; Zheng et al., 2010).

More than the quantity of connections, the quality of ties, the knowledge shared, and the ability to generate influence and trust are critical. In this context, both the company’s reputation and the entrepreneur’s skill in establishing consistent, trustworthy relationships become key assets for business success.

Lechner and Dowling (2003) reinforce this perspective by arguing that the entrepreneur plays a central role in shaping external relationships and that the size of a firm’s social network is strongly linked to the personal network the entrepreneur brings with them.

However, in the Brazilian context — shaped by a history of slavery and the absence of effective public policies after abolition — Black populations were systematically neglected by the State and left to navigate a transforming capitalist society based on the commodification of labor (Monteiro, 2001). This produced deep social inequalities, reflected in persistent exclusion from access to opportunities. Consequently, Black entrepreneurs’ ability to build strategic networks that open doors to high-value opportunities has historically been far more limited compared to white entrepreneurs.

In this scenario, it becomes strategic to foster forms of network support emerging from within the Black community itself, reducing the impacts of historical discredit and strengthening the creation of networks for contemporary Afro-entrepreneurs through mutual and collective support. Such initiatives directly align with principles 1, 2, and 3 of Quilombism, as proposed by Abdias do Nascimento, which emphasize solidarity, economic self-defense, and the building of community structures as key pathways for the emancipation of Black people. Notable examples include:

- Creation of associations or collectives of Afro-entrepreneurs by territory or sector.
- Black-led business incubators and accelerators, focused on technical training and ongoing support.
- Shared physical spaces (Black coworkings) to strengthen networks and identity.

- Development of peer-support networks among Afro-entrepreneurs
- Formation of unions or organized fronts of Black workers and entrepreneurs
- Black social innovation laboratories (*BlackLabs*)

### Financial Support and Afrocentric Economic Self-Organization

As Silva and Mello (2020) demonstrate, the criteria for obtaining credit often incorporate subjective and discretionary dimensions, which reinforce racial exclusion even in technologically innovative contexts. This scenario pushes Afro-entrepreneurs into an opportunity limbo, marked by institutional racism and the absence of concrete mechanisms of reparation.

Another aggravating factor related to access to financial resources is the scarcity of networking and the historical lack of family wealth accumulation. Southern (2016) notes that small businesses are typically financed through personal savings, credit cards, loans from family and friends, or financial institutions. However, this reality is far from accessible to most of the black Brazilian population — according to the Institute for Applied Economic Research (IPEA, 2023), 80% of people living in poverty in Brazil are Black.

The financial barriers faced by Afro-entrepreneurs are urgent, especially when the sustainability of their businesses depends on credit approval by third parties — a process prone to explicit or subtle racist practices. In this context, it becomes strategic to foster financial support mechanisms emerging from within the Black community itself, reducing the impacts of structural racism and strengthening collective economic autonomy.

This proposal unfolds into several financial self-organization strategies, aligned with principle 14 of Quilombism by Abdias do Nascimento, which emphasizes self-sufficiency as a foundation of sovereignty. Among them, the following stand out:

- Afrocentric credit cooperatives
- Community solidarity funds (*collective savings pools*)
- Community banks or social currencies
- Collective purchasing networks and Black supply chains
- Digital platforms for collective financing and crowdfunding
- Self-managed productive associations
- Solidarity microcredit groups among Afro-entrepreneurs
- Creation of collective investment funds for Black-owned businesses
- Development of a community-based digital wallet

These are just a few of the countless possibilities for building an autonomous Black economy, grounded in solidarity, ancestry, and collective self-management.

### Educational Support

Educational support is a central element in the process of Afro-entrepreneurs’ emancipation — not only regarding the technical and managerial knowledge required to run any enterprise but also the knowledge needed for decolonization. In a reality where entrepreneurs in general are directly influenced by the individualism of colonial, neoliberal entrepreneurship, Afro-entrepreneurs have, over time, become disconnected from the collectivism and cooperativism historically present in traditional African societies and in diasporic resistance groups.

According to Costa and Grosfoguel (2016), decoloniality is an act of opposition and intervention that arises when the first colonial subject of the modern/colonial world-system resisted the imperial designs initiated in 1492. Locating the beginning of the “capitalist/patriarchal/Christian/modern/colonial European world-system” in 1492 has deep implications for decolonial theory (Costa & Grosfoguel, 2016). It is the task of Black entrepreneurs





to reclaim the truth that entrepreneurship was not created by capitalism, nor by Europeans or white people. On the contrary, it was appropriated as a tool to spread neoliberal rationality, which promotes competition, individualism, financial accumulation, and knowledge hoarding as the path to so-called “success” (Dardot & Laval, 2016).

Even contemporary approaches such as effectuation theory (Sarasvathy, 2001), while attempting to move beyond the causal, rationalist model of traditional entrepreneurship by valuing action with available means and continuous adaptation, remain anchored in Western individualistic assumptions. These frameworks, although relevant, fail to fully integrate the spiritual, racial, and collective dimensions that shape the economic practices of Black populations in Brazil.

This colonial neoliberal entrepreneurship places Black people at a constant disadvantage: individually, they carry all the social indicators of structural vulnerability; collectively, their support networks are weakened. Furthermore, as Fanon (1979) argues, this model operates psychologically, perpetuating an inferiority complex inherited from the colonial process — a trauma still present in the minds of the formerly colonized.

To say “no” to white and hegemonic narratives and to build new narratives grounded in the trajectory of ancestors and living elders is a fundamental act of resistance, built over centuries. In this sense, Rufino (2019) proposes the concept of knowledge in crossroads (*saberes em encruzilhadas*) as a rupture with the monocultural and monorational mentality imposed by colonial logic. This knowledge emerges as an act of liberation; the crossroads become decolonial practices that not only subvert but also transgress and reorganize meaning.

Thus, educational support unfolds as a movement of transgression. It goes beyond mere technical-managerial training and directly acts to break the mental chains on Afro-entrepreneurial minds, aligning with principles 7, 8, 11, 12, and 13 of Abdias do Nascimento’s Quilombism. Among the key actions comprising this support are:

- Training in community-based and circular financial education
- Management courses with a critical and afrocentric approach
- Narrative and counter-hegemonic communication labs
- Mentorship programs with black leaders and role models
- Study groups on decolonial thought and pan-africanism
- Digital platforms for the circulation of black knowledge

These axes are not merely abstract propositions but find support in concrete, ongoing experiences in Brazil. Within the network support axis, initiatives such as PretaHub and BlackRocks Startups have acted as incubators and innovation hubs dedicated to strengthening Black-owned businesses. In the field of financial self-organization, experiences such as Banco Palmas and Banco Comunitário União Sampaio demonstrate the viability of solidarity credit instruments and social currencies to stimulate local economies. In the Afrocentric education axis, projects like Afrolab — linked to Feira Preta — and Escola Maria Felipa, in Salvador, reveal the transformative power of training programs guided by Afrocentric pedagogies. Incorporating these examples into the Quilombist framework reinforces the practical validity of the propositions presented, showing that this is not just a conceptual construction but a model anchored in real, emancipatory practices.

By highlighting the intersections between Quilombism and Afro-entrepreneurship, this chapter sought to present the conceptual foundations that sustain the articulation between emancipatory economic practices and Afrocentric epistemologies. Grounded in collectivity, ancestry, and autonomy, this perspective outlines a fertile field for building entrepreneurial experiences that transcend hegemonic capitalist logic.

The articulation between the axes presented and the principles of Quilombism is not random; it directly responds to the main challenges faced by Black entrepreneurs in Brazil, as diagnosed by both academic literature and practical initiatives.

The following framework summarizes this connection, showing how the selected principles of Abdias do Nascimento’s Quilombism can be strategically mobilized in the field of Afro-entrepreneurship. This structure makes it possible to visualize, in an integrated way, how Quilombist theoretical foundations can guide practical actions toward economic emancipation. (see Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Summary Framework — Articulation Between Challenges, Strategic Axes, and Quilombist Principles*

| Structural Challenge                               | Proposed Axis         | Corresponding Principles of Quilombismo                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lack of support networks and strategic connections | Network Support       | 1. Political Quilombismo<br>Financial Self-Organization<br>Afro-centered Education                               |
| Institutional racism and precarization of labor    | All axes              | 3. Cooperative Economy<br>Network & Education<br>11. Anti-capitalism                                             |
| Déficit de formação crítica e técnica afrocêntrica | Educação Afrocentrada | 7. Afro-centered Education<br>8. Encouragement of the arts<br>12. Gender Parity<br>13. Democratic Transformation |
| Racismo institucional e precarização do trabalho   | Todos os eixos        | 11. Anti-racism<br>16. International Cooperation                                                                 |
| Invisibilidade nas políticas públicas              | Rede & Educação       | 2. Egalitarianism<br>15. Valuing life and the environment                                                        |

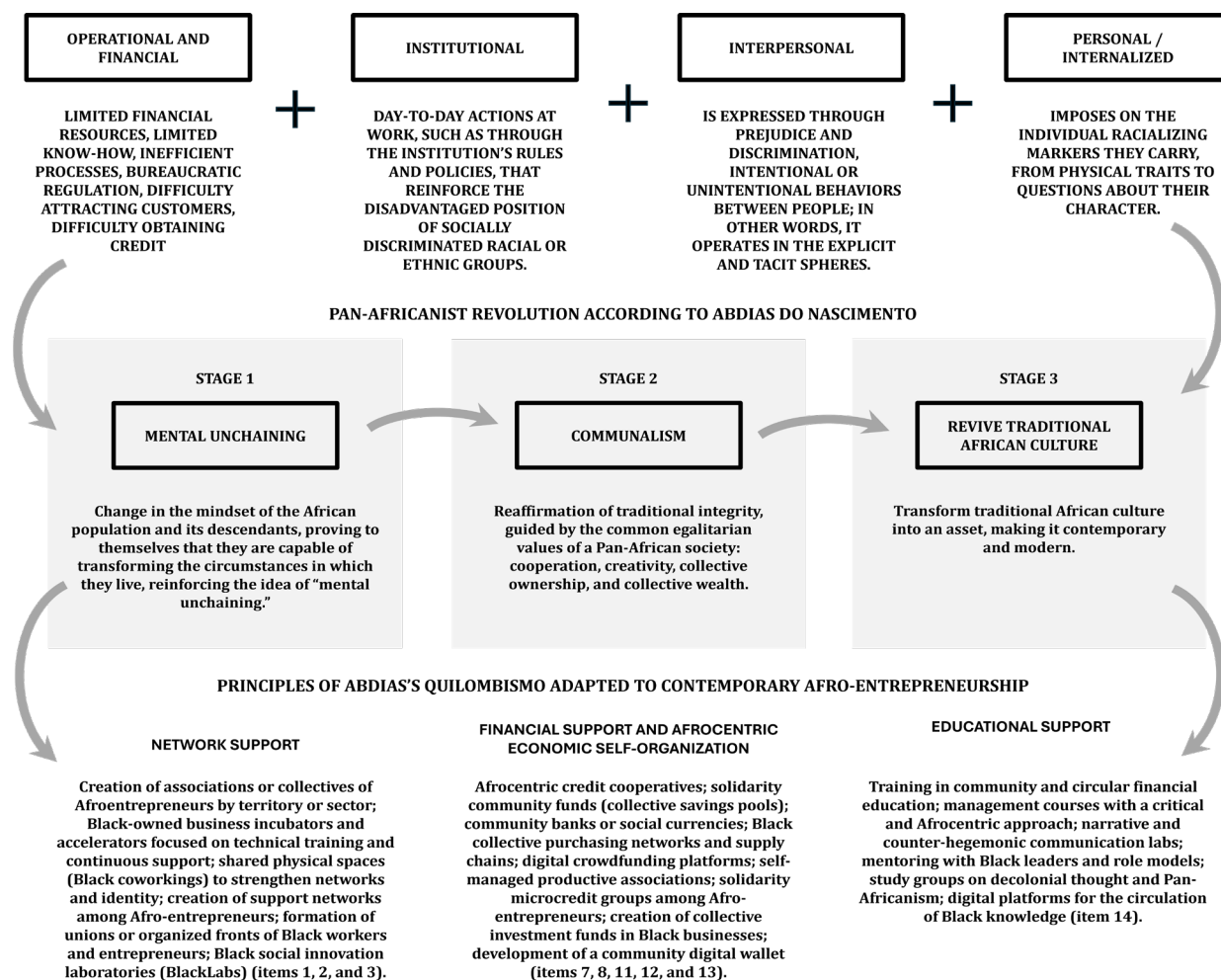
Note: Author’s elaboration based on Abdias do Nascimento’s Quilombism (1980).

Esse quadro evidencia que os princípios do Quilombismo, ao serem reorganizados em torno de eixos estratégicos, não apenas oferecem uma lente crítica para o afroempreendedorismo, mas também funcionam como um guia prático de reconstrução coletiva e emancipatória da economia preta no Brasil.

A Figura 3 aprofunda a síntese da Table 1 ao organizar os 11 princípios selecionados de Abdias do Nascimento em camadas: (i) núcleo (fundamentos ético-políticos do Quilombismo); (ii) eixos (suporte de rede; auto-organização financeira; educação afrocêntrica), que funcionam como traduções operacionais desses princípios; e (iii) camada de implementação, com exemplos de iniciativas coerentes com cada eixo (como coletivos e incubadoras negras; bancos comunitários e moedas sociais; formações afrocêntricas e laboratórios de narrativas). As setas bidirecionais destacam a interdependência e a retroalimentação: redes fortalecidas viabilizam finanças comunitárias; finanças robustas ampliam a capacidade formativa; e a formação afrocêntrica, por sua vez, qualifica redes e disciplina o uso dos instrumentos financeiros. Desse modo, a Figura 3 explicita o raciocínio processual do framework (dos princípios → aos eixos → às ações), tornando mais claro como o Quilombismo é sugerido como caminho teórico-prático e porque o framework é a contribuição derivada desta proposta.

Figura 3

Framework quilombista do afroempreendedorismo: princípios de Abdias do Nascimento organizados em três eixos — suporte de rede, auto-organização financeira e educação afrocentrada



Nota: Elaborado pelos autores.

## CONCLUSÃO

Este artigo buscou compreender como os princípios do Quilombismo, formulados por Abdias do Nascimento, podem oferecer uma lente alternativa ao afroempreendedorismo no Brasil, contrastando com as abordagens neoliberais dominantes. Partindo de eventos catalisadores como o sucesso do filme *Pantera Negra*, a pandemia de COVID-19 e o assassinato de George Floyd, foi possível identificar uma "janela de visibilidade" efêmera para questões raciais, que reforça a urgência de modelos estruturais e permanentes de emancipação negra.

Ao propor três eixos estratégicos — suporte de rede, auto-organização financeira e educação afrocentrada — ancorados em 11 dos 16 princípios do Quilombismo, o artigo apresenta uma proposta teórico-prática que busca reconstruir o afroempreendedorismo como prática de aquilombamento econômico, e não apenas como inserção periférica no mercado. Essa abordagem amplia os horizontes teóricos do campo ao incorporar uma epistemologia negra, decolonial e baseada na ancestralidade e na coletividade.

As contribuições deste trabalho se manifestam em três níveis. No campo teórico, ao conectar o Quilombismo ao empreendedorismo, o artigo apresenta um modelo original e afrocentrado, ainda pouco explorado na literatura de administração e inovação. No plano prático, ao sistematizar os desafios enfrentados por afroempreendedores e associá-los a princípios quilombistas, oferece uma ferramenta de análise e planejamento para políticas públicas, iniciativas comunitárias e organizações de

apoio. Por fim, no âmbito social, ao reafirmar a potência política do afroempreendedorismo como prática de resistência, o artigo contribui para a consolidação de economias negras solidárias e autônomas. Em conjunto, tais contribuições reforçam a relevância do Quilombismo como base teórico-prática para a emancipação econômica negra no Brasil.

Como caminhos para pesquisas futuras, sugere-se a aplicação empírica do framework proposto, por meio de estudos de caso de organizações ou territórios que operem em lógicas quilombistas (como o Vale do Dendê, a PretaHub ou o Banco Palmas). Além disso, recomendam-se comparações com modelos internacionais de afroempreendedorismo, sobretudo em países do Sul Global, para explorar convergências e divergências em práticas de resistência econômica negra. Outra possibilidade é aprofundar, qualitativamente, as experiências de empreendedores que já operam com base em coletividade, ancestralidade e autonomia, mesmo que de forma não nomeada como quilombista.

Em tempos de retrocessos sociais e precarização da vida negra, reafirmar o Quilombismo como base do afroempreendedorismo é, mais do que uma proposta teórica, uma declaração política de futuro. Aquilombar-se, portanto, é empreender a liberdade.

## Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.



## Authors' statement of individual contributions

| Roles                      | Contributions          |                      |                 |
|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
|                            | Batista de Oliveira, F | Paiva de Andrade, E. | Perez Zotes, L. |
| Conceptualization          | ■                      |                      |                 |
| Methodology                | ■                      |                      |                 |
| Software                   |                        | N. A.                |                 |
| Validation                 | ■                      | ■                    | ■               |
| Formal analysis            | ■                      |                      |                 |
| Investigation              | ■                      |                      |                 |
| Resources                  | ■                      |                      |                 |
| Data Curation              | ■                      | ■                    | ■               |
| Writing - Original Draf    | ■                      |                      |                 |
| Writing - Review & Editing | ■                      |                      |                 |
| Visualization              | ■                      | ■                    | ■               |
| Supervision                | ■                      |                      |                 |
| Project administration     | ■                      |                      |                 |
| Funding acquisition        |                        | N. A.                |                 |

Note: Acc. CRediT (Contributor Roles Taxonomy): <https://credit.niso.org/>

## Open Science: Data availability

The entire data supporting the results of this study was published in the article itself.

| Badge                                                                               | Description                                                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Not applicable                                                                                          |
|  | Not applicable                                                                                          |
|  | Not applicable                                                                                          |
|  | <a href="https://doi.org/10.14211/regepe.esbj.e2660pr">https://doi.org/10.14211/regepe.esbj.e2660pr</a> |
|  | Not applicable                                                                                          |

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