

mais
uma
volta



EDITOR'S NOTE

For the record, I had every intention of releasing this retrospect on time: November 30, 2008, Mandingueira's one-year anniversary. When that failed to happen, I had further intentions to release it within a timely window: just in time for Christmas. No, make that New Year's.

I suppose I could've done worse than finally releasing it in time for International Women's Day. Of course, it would've been slightly better if this particular day didn't arrive a full quarter-anniversary later: March 8, 2009. Mea culpa!

What I want you to know is I put together this retrospect as a tribute to everyone who has been involved in any way with Mandingueira, and loved working on it—every article, every layout, every spread. The title reflects my sentiments regarding the blog and all that has come of it. Roughly translated as “once more around”, I leave further interpretation of its significance up to you. Sincerely & with thanks,



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5 Lessons

from Writing a Feminist Capoeira Blog

1 It's possible.

When I first came up with the idea of writing a blog combining capoeira and feminism as its central themes, I had serious doubts about how it would work. Feminists—or anyone—who didn't also do capoeira wouldn't understand half the things I wrote, and capoeiristas already constituted a pretty small niche, let alone blog-following, status quo-examining, feminism-sympathizing capoeiristas. After I actually started though, between comments, emails, and the blog itself, not only did I realize it worked, but it worked *really well*. It's worth listening when they say, "It's so crazy, it just might...!"

2 Dissent = Training

(Or: Comment replying is good practice for law school.)

I don't really remember the first negative comment left on Mandingueira, which is probably a good thing as that means I wasn't traumatized for life, after all. The thing is, disagreement or criticism when it comes to feminism-related topics sometimes seems more personal than it is for other topics, because women are at the centre of what people are talking about, and I am one. But in the end, someone disagreeing (respectfully & constructively) with you is almost always the discourse version of someone making you do 500 kicks followed by a hundred push-ups. It can be painful, annoying, and/or stressful, but it's what forces you to hone your technique, get stronger, and better know and understand what you're doing/talking about.

3 Breaks are necessary.

One major reason that writing a blog with two strong topics worked well for me is that each allows me to take a break from the other. There is no way on Earth I would be able to sustain writing an all-feminism blog, and I think the enjoyment would drain if I wrote about all capoeira, all the time, as well (though my friends might not believe me about that last part). With feminism especially, I've found that after writing a particularly "heavy" post or series of posts, including responding to all the subsequent comments, I'll need to take a step back and write about something completely unrelated to feminism or any debate-attracting issues in general. (That's usually when the pure research and joke posts come in!) This periodic stepping back acts almost like a tiny "reset" button for my mind, and helps make sure I don't end up writing blinders up around myself or getting myself entrenched in a mental foxhole.

4 Water, if honey is impossible. Never vinegar (till needed).

The internet is notorious for its proliferation of stupid, immature, and/or vicious remarks, due to the anonymity and sense of distance or detachedness it gives otherwise-basically decent (sometimes) people. Knowing that, I have never been so impressed with readers of Mandingueira than during the controversial discussion that Kimbandeira started about capoeira and cultural appropriation. With the inflammatory nature of what was being discussed, imagine how that conversation might have been derailed with just one ill-willed attack (or ill-willed defense). Instead, valuable dialogue developed, with people contributing seriously expressed insights and writing what I thought might have passed for grad theses, remaining respectful and genuinely interested in the issues at all times. Similarly, whenever I've made myself reply to the rare (seeming) attack a little more sweetly than I was rather inclined to at the time, it has always turned out well and never given me cause to regret doing so.

5 Obsessions can be productive.

See: Mandingueira blog! Not only have I met some really great, fun, and amazing people, but I've done more writing on my own time than I ever have before; I (and you) have given my brain no small number of rigorous and rewarding work-outs; I got to write for a real-life publishing company; and I can honestly say that more than once, my writing and thinking about capoeira for this blog has directly affected how I practice and train capoeira, for the better. (Alright, so that last reason might slightly be a tautology—give a capoeirista a break!)

If You Learn One Thing

This is not my Very Last Post, but the point is that I'm writing this article as if it were. Maybe you could call it Mandingueira's Ultimate Post. It's about what I think is the most important thing to take away from this blog, out of everything that has been written and said on it over the past year. It's the post I want people to remember if they've forgotten all the others, the one post that gets saved from the recycling bin of memory, the last post standing, crumpled, torn, and half-buried in ashes, if my blog is destroyed by nuclear war.

Surprisingly, it wasn't as hard as I'd expected it to be, coming up with the topic of this post. After thinking over it for a while, I realized that many of the most important issues we've discussed on Mandingueira can be reduced to one simple thing: **the harm that assumptions can do.**

I brought up the idea of assumptions very early on in my blogging, with the post about women and wearing revealing clothing. The bottom line of that post was "DON'T ASSUME". The bottom line of this post, and I suppose by extension the bottom line of Mandingueira, is: **Stop assuming.**

The more I think about it, the more it seems like many of the biggest and worst (sociological) grievances in the world are rooted in people making assumptions about other people, then basing their beliefs, values, and actions on those—wrong—assumptions.

Sexism occurs because/when people assume all women have certain qualities (and assume that all men have certain other qualities).

Racism occurs because/when people assume all people of a certain ethnicity have certain qualities.

Homophobia occurs because/when people assume certain things about homosexuals and homosexuality.

"Strengthism", a term I made up in a more recent post, occurs because/when people assume being physically stronger or bigger automatically makes you a better capoeirista overall, regardless of non-physical factors such as mentality or experience.

Capoeira was a men's sport for centuries because everyone, including women themselves, assumed women were too weak and delicate for it and that it wasn't their place.

Men harass or attack women who wear revealing clothing because they assume that the woman would expect it and therefore wanted something to happen.

Cultural appropriation occurs because/when people assume they have the right to remove something from its original cultural context and mutate it into something of their

own, completely removed from its origins and taken from the people it once belonged to.

Heck, I'd get into arguments with my sister just because one of us mistakenly assumed the other was responsible for some annoying mistake or another.

...many of the biggest and worst (sociological) griefs in the world are rooted in people making assumptions about other people...

particular group of people hurt those who *don't* match the assumption when they're unable to fulfill people's stereotype-driven expectations of them. Obvious examples are Asians being really good at math, or the myriad of pressures on boys and men to be "strong", "stoic", "players", etc.

So, if everyone would just **stop assuming** and bother to actually test out their beliefs before passing judgement on whole swaths of people, they would be able to see for themselves that their assumptions are baseless and wrong. Then maybe the world could start *considering* the idea of jumping out of the proverbial handbasket.

The problem with assumptions, though, is that they're easy to recognize and acknowledge, but usually only in the abstract sense or in other people. Since that part is easy, we assume (ha) that we'll naturally be able to recognize and thus prevent assumptions in *ourselves* if they happen. The thing is, a lot of the time, we don't.

Part of this is because, honestly speaking, making assumptions is a large part of how we get by and function every day. If you were to genuinely stop and question *every single assumption* you take for granted in just one day, from "My friends like me" all the way to "The sun will come up again tomorrow"...well, we'd never even get out of bed (assuming the floor is still there).

Making assumptions is also part of our self-preservation mechanism. Late at night, most people choose to walk along a busy street than through a dark alley, because they assume that there's a much higher likelihood of danger occurring in the alley. If someone acts erratically or in a way that makes you uncomfortable on the bus, you might move away

Assumptions aren't harmful just because they're mostly *negative*, either. "Positive" assumptions about a

These assumptions are founded by the media, by advertising campaigns, by politicians and governments, by schools, by children's toys, by parents and teachers...

because you assume there is something wrong or suspicious about them. Both these situations also involve acting on unverified assumptions, but the difference is that they have most likely been founded in concrete ways over time.

Assumptions about people because of their gender, skin colour, sexual orientation, or the like, are completely *unfounded*. Or, wait—actually, they are. These assumptions are founded by the media, by advertising campaigns, by politicians and governments, by schools, by children's toys, by parents and teachers, by significant others, by clothing retailers, by popular jokes, by magazines, by television shows, by special interest groups, by music and music videos, by Hollywood movies, by other assumers, and by our own cultural history as a *species* (no matter whom, where or when in the world) of consistently believing various assumptions about any group of people who is not ourselves. No wonder we can't recognize our assumptions—it'd practically be like recognizing the Matrix while you were still inside it.

There's probably just one thing I know of that leaves assumptions knocked out in the cold: real life.

So in light of that, actually, in addition to **stop assuming** (since we can't stop what we don't always recognize) I would say: **Start and think**. Even just a minute of that can do wonders. Once, I talked to someone whose values included a really hurtful stereotype, and it actually scares me how easily my counter-arguments changed their mind, because that tells me how effortlessly and unquestioningly they bought into the assumption in the first place.

As one final note, this is a handy tip for non-sociological issues, as well. When my mom visited me in France last year, we ended up on a wrong TRAIN because we'd assumed our departure sign matched up to the train next to it, when really the sign was early

and the train was the one before ours, late in leaving. This, I like to think, was a completely reasonable assumption, yet we were obviously still wrong in taking it for granted! It was a pretty good lesson about the importance and value of questioning even something you *think* goes without saying. After all, even a "reasonable" assumption is, at the end of the day, an assumption.

So, there you go. Mandingueira in a pill-sized time capsule: **Stop assuming. Start and think. Always question.** **m**



Clippings

Mandingueira covered a plethora of topics in the past year. Feminism and gender issues were explored in and out of the context of capoeira, while capoeira itself was mused upon, worked through, played with, and interrogated. Minor themes that emerged include internationalism, change, and interdisciplinary inspiration. The following is a collection of post excerpts from Mandingueira, which I believe reflects the values, diversity, and growth of both blog and writer.

The Feminine in Capoeira (Malicia)

12 December 2007

In my very first post, I mentioned that capoeira seemed to be an art form mostly dominated by men; in fact, it's one of the main reasons this blog exists in the first place. What's interesting is that while some of capoeira may be male-dominated, it is not traditionally masculine, the way people might consider football or rugby to be. Several fundamental aspects of capoeira have been characterized as belonging to the feminine, in ways I find in equal parts inspiring, thought-provoking, and problematic. [...]

You also say that malicia belongs to the Feminine aspect of things. I like that. While Masculine is the gender of the defined, the understandable, rational—the gender of power—the Feminine is, on the other hand, the reverse of all this. It is the void. Its power is also of the sort that you don't know exactly what it is. Its power is “not to be clear” about power itself. It's the power of the void. Because malicia is exactly that: to go around what is clear and established. And in that sense it is Feminine.
(Sodré as quoted by Capoeira, *Roots*, p. 30)

You can see for yourself (I hope) why statements like that are problematic. The “void”? The reverse of “rational”, of “power”? This is where things get tricky. As a capoeirista and English lit major, I can appreciate the symbolism in that, the evoked nature of malicia and the dimension it adds to capoeira and the jogo. And as a feminist, I feel (with all due respect to Nestor Capoeira and Muniz Sodré) that that can't be right, there must be another way to put it, and that the whole thing should be torn up and sent back into the 19th century, where that kind of thinking belongs! How exactly do I go about doing this while maintaining the integrity of both capoeira and modern-day/feminist thinking?

The main issue here, I think, is the seemingly necessary genderizing of things, when in fact it's not necessary at all (let alone the use of capital letters, which just makes the terms look way more qualified than they should). It's cool to think of malicia as the “power of the void”, as that unexplainable, irrational thing that gets in through the cracks and hits you where you thought there was nowhere to hit. When you say that malicia is all these things though—void, irrational, unclear, evanescent—and therefore feminine, that's where you lose me. “Void” is exactly what we are not supposed to be! And you can say that assigning feminine and masculine aspects to capoeira adds meaning and depth, similarly to nuance and capoeira movements in the roda, but I think there is a way around that.

The whole reason it's appealing to associate malicia with the feminine is because of all the things that have been associated with the feminine throughout history. When you say malicia is “feminine”, you are really saying malicia is mysterious, elusive, intangible, and all those other things that Nestor Capoeira and Muniz Sodré said, thanks to stereotypes that have been entrenched probably since humans first learned to discriminate. I believe it's possible to “de-genderize” concepts like malicia while retaining the things one actually means when labelling them “feminine” or “masculine”. Referring again to the nuance in movements analogy, we do not say that a chapa is “masculine” because it's aggressive, or that a bait-and-switch sequence is “feminine” because it's deceptive (or “went around what was clear”)—they are just aggressive and deceptive, respectively. So why can't malicia just be what it is, without perpetuating outdated stereotypes at the expense of women and feminism today?

Femism and other “Isms”: Explanations, Not Excuses

09 November 2008

First off, let me make one thing clear: ISMS (feminism, sexism, racism, homophobia, agism, etc.) are meant to be explanations, not excuses. If a woman who has earned and deserves a promotion does not get it because of sexism, that is an explanation, rightly used to point out social injustices in the world and how they work, in hopes of fixing the system. If, however, the woman has not earned nor deserves a promotion but cites sexism as the reason for not getting promoted, then she is using sexism as an excuse, in order to exonerate herself from the fact she didn't work hard enough or needs to work harder in the future.

[...]

Here's the important thing: That third factor? It's not an external circumstance. It's completely in the person's control how much confidence they exude and whether they behave like they're a beginner (shying away) or a more advanced capoeirista (taking chances and putting yourself out there), triggering further impressions in others that affect their perceptions of you as a capoeirista, despite whether or not you actually are beginner or advanced.

Once I realized that, I felt that my floreio theory had begun to show a slight tear between the stitches. In a way, it was another -ism. For the purposes of this post, let's call it “strengthism”. So while I still believe “strengthism” provides a legitimate explanation, without recognizing that third factor it was also possibly functioning as an excuse. Full disclosure: I never bought in with solidly more

advanced capoeiristas in the roda, in my own group, before the “floreio effect” theory and everything I just wrote about occurred to me. I do now!!!

Returning to feminism, or sexism/misogyny, in the context of capoeira there is also a danger of falling back into that as an “excuse” for not advancing. First, in no way am I discounting the sexism and misogyny that exists; it does, in all the forms and with all the effects on people that feminism describes. At the same time, the point where you take an -ism beyond what it can explain is when it turns into an excuse. Thus, sexism affects women in capoeira, but since there are still many women succeeding and advancing in capoeira, if you are a woman who isn't, then it's probably (for the most part) not completely fair to blame non-success totally on sexism. Does that make sense?

Respect in Capoeira: How Much is Too Much?

05 May 2008

When it comes to respect—or rather, respecting hierarchy—in capoeira, how much is too much? How do you tell what is just capoeira, just context or politeness, and what is pure ridiculousness or taking things too far? [...] This post is slightly related to the “What is the Role of a Capoeira Mestre?” one, only looking at how students and mestres are specifically treated in capoeira groups. [...]

2. Respect is a two-way street.

In response to the questions above, some—or many—people would say that the mestre/mestra deserves it all, purely by virtue of what they have done and accomplished. I agree that they deserve respect and admiration for their accomplishments (provided that they are also good people who have managed to keep their feet on the ground), but there is a limit as well, and you will know when you've hit it by keeping in mind that simple respect between human beings should go both ways.

You know that saying, “My rights end where your rights begin”? I think the same concept applies here: “Respect” for high-ranking people in capoeira should end where disrespect for capoeira students begins.

For example, it is always stressed that students arrive on time for class, rodas, workshops, and events, and they usually get in trouble for being late. This is fair, makes sense, etc. Showing up on time shows you respect your teacher, the rest of the class, and everyone's time, while being late implies you don't (whether or not that is actually the case). Likewise, it's fair enough to expect mestres and teachers will sometimes (or always) be late, especially during big capoeira events (read: logistical nightmares).

However, something is off when students are threatened with push-ups for being five minutes late so they show up on time, but then

are kept waiting for 1-2 hours for the mestre to arrive so things can begin. I mentioned this to one of my non-capoeira friends the other day, and even then it didn't hit me how extreme that actually is in the context of real life, until she stopped and stared at me in shock and possibly even a bit of horror.

Because it's true, if you think about it—where or when else in life ever is it acceptable to keep someone waiting for 1-2 hours? I was an hour late for my friend once (ahh, it's contagious!) and was actually almost scared to show up at all, because she was (rightly) in a more or less homicidal state by then, and in the end I baked her a batch of rice krispie squares to make it up to her. Has your mestre/mestra ever given you a batch of rice krispie squares for being 1-2 hours late? Come to think of it, have you even ever received so much as an apology?

“...as always, a lack of respect by teachers for their young students...”

All of the pull-quotes in this post are things I've heard said in capoeira, and this last one struck me for such an important reason that I felt compelled to write about it: it was the first and only time in my two and a half years of doing capoeira that I'd EVER heard someone talk about students in capoeira needing to be respected, instead of needing to respect.

[...]

Students have a responsibility to respect their teachers and mestres, but don't mestres have a responsibility back to their students? Even if the capoeira world is slightly off-kilter from the “normal” world, aren't we all still entitled to the same common courtesy and simple respect? Because the last time I checked, capoeira students are people, and mestres/mestras are people, too.

(continued on page 10...)

The Feminist Catch-22

05 December 2007

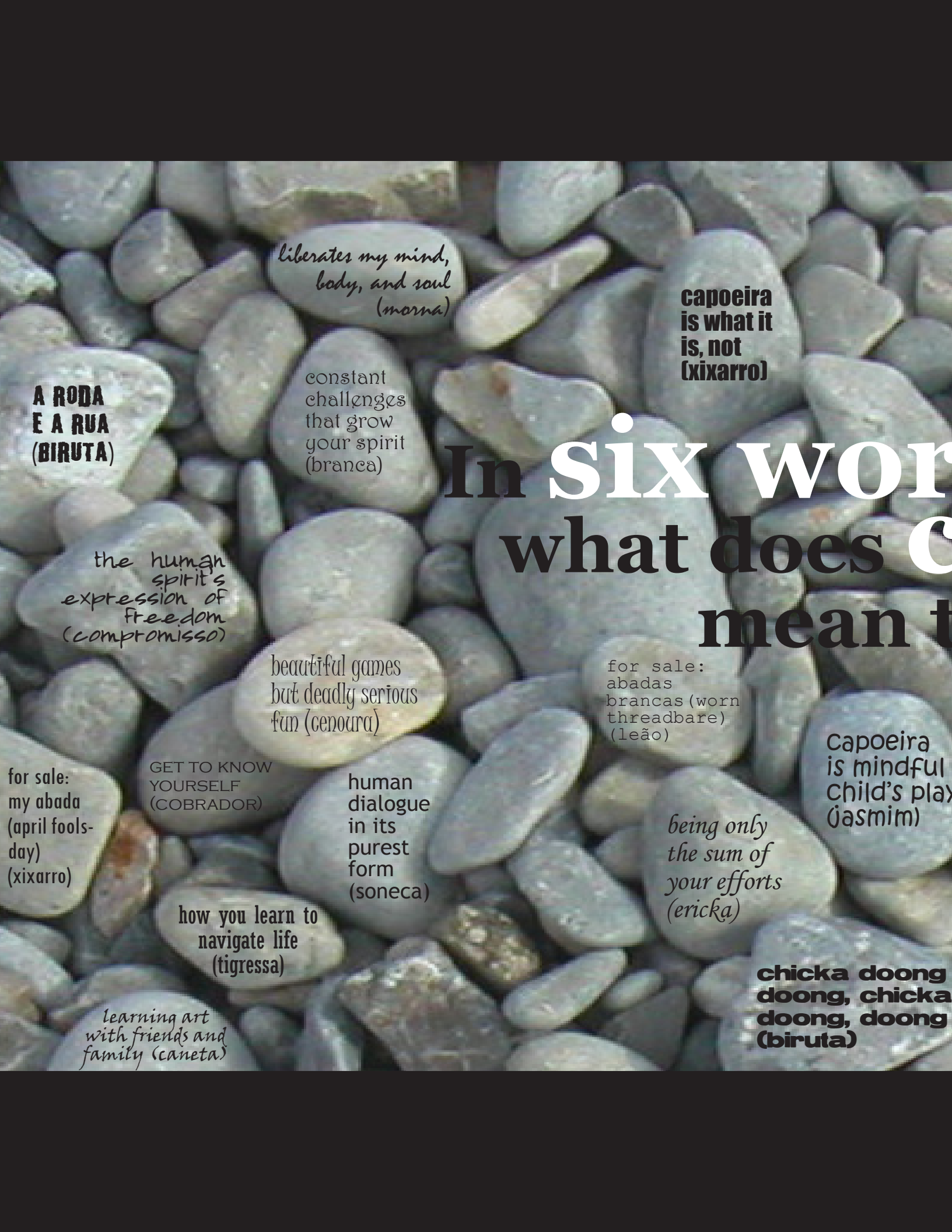
Catch-22 (noun): a no-win situation

Why? That is, why should Edna Lima be singled out and featured, among all the other mestres comparable to her and who might have accomplished just as much or more? According to my own blog, it's because she's not just a mestre, but a female mestre. But isn't writing about her just because she's a woman just as tunnel-visioned as ignoring her just because she's a woman? Aside from the slightly more justified qualification that Edna Lima is not only a mestra, but the world's first (a reason that won't apply to the other mestras and mestrandas I intend to write about), I think my response to that would be yes, to a certain extent, but it's tricky because right now, the world seems to be stuck precariously in a stage between stasis and regression, feminism-wise.

We are not so advanced that women are free from discrimination and harassment in business and the workplace, in politics and the government, in entertainment, in the media, in advertising, and in many cases everyday life; yet, we have progressed just enough since the days of the suffragettes for many people to believe that more talk of women's equality is completely superfluous. That's the catch-22: if women really were equal, we wouldn't have to keep stressing “A woman did this! A woman did that!” The actual stressing itself emphasizes the divide. Yet if we don't say anything, the divide still remains, and becomes ever more entrenched.

[...]

While at times it may *seem* unnecessary, the overall state of things still seems to require that attention be brought to certain issues, lest people settle into casual apathy and slip obliviously into the state of regression mentioned above. It shouldn't be that capoeira mestres are spotlighted specifically for their gender, but until society collectively achieves a mentality where it *truly doesn't matter*, this seems like the best we can do.



**A RODA
É A RUA
(BIRUTA)**

*liberates my mind,
body, and soul
(morna)*

**capoeira
is what it
is, not
(xixarro)**

*constant
challenges
that grow
your spirit
(branca)*

In six words what does Capoeira mean to you?

*the human
spirit's
expression of
freedom
(comptomisso)*

*beautiful games
but deadly serious
fun (genoura)*

*for sale:
abadas
brancas (worn
threadbare)
(leão)*

**Capoeira
is mindful
child's play
(Jasmim)**

*for sale:
my abada
(april fools-
day)
(xixarro)*

**GET TO KNOW
YOURSELF
(COBRADOR)**

*human
dialogue
in its
purest
form
(soneca)*

*being only
the sum of
your efforts
(ericka)*

*how you learn to
navigate life
(tigressa)*

**chicka doong
doong, chicka
doong, doong
(biruta)**

*learning art
with friends and
family (caneta)*

On March 30, 2008, Mandingueira featured a post inspired by Ernest Hemingway's shortest and reportedly best story ("For sale: baby shoes, never worn."). Readers impressively rose to the challenge posed to them, resulting in this quirky collection of what the sport-art-dance-fight-game means to capoeiristas around the world.

Words or fewer, capoeira to you?

a physical
parallel to the
blues (robin)

not reduced
into six words ever
(cenoura)

*capoeira is
seeing and
defending
truth
(pedrita)*

capoeira = O
(arroz)

CAPOEIRA IS
MOVEMENT;
MOVEMENT IS
LIFE (LEÃO)

art, freedom,
music, expression
(leão)

freedom from
the everyday
oppressions
(sebastian)

transformation
and all that is
art (joaninha)

free of
colour,
race, or
class
(algodão)

a place
to begin again
(biruta)

AN
AFRO-
BRAZILIAN
FIGHT-DANCE
(COBRADOR)

creative
individualism
and playful
expression
(faisca)

capoeira is life
(rhygirl926)

Capoeira and Why It Changes Us

19 February 2008

[Excerpted from an article written for www.bluesnakebooks.com]

When playing in the roda, capoeiristas are said to employ mandinga, exude malícia, and through it all, exhibit magia. Outside of the roda though, what is the spell that capoeira puts over us? What is the magic that follows us out through the academy doors and pervades our daily lives, scattering pixie dust in a way that uplifts children, grants second chances, and transforms communities?

Capoeira é magia--what else could it be?

[...]

From the first, I'll extract "exposure to different cultures". As is often cited, one of the characterizing aspects of capoeira is that it is not only accessible to everyone, but is actually regularly taken up by people off of grids going every which way in life. In Brazil, Mestre Bimba's academies drew in students from varying socioeconomic levels; in Canada, classes are true-to-life samples of the country's "cultural mosaic"; and of course, the question of gender is hardly one worth asking anymore (*hardly*—see Mandingueira blog).

My point is, by practicing capoeira, you are not only exposed to Brazilian culture, but to the cultures and backgrounds of all the fellow students and capoeiristas in your class, as well. Last summer, I went out for brunch with a good friend who also does capoeira, and she said something that summed it up perfectly:

"Basically, you have this huge group of people from all completely different backgrounds, with absolutely nothing in common, except for the fact that they all do this thing called capoeira."

Forget Obama; just turn every caucus and primary into an introductory capoeira class, and voilà: instant unification!

Furthermore, imagine a child today starting to train at a capoeira academy from a young age. Having grown up among such unified diversity and integration, the adult capoeirista would then likely be more open to others' cultures, beliefs, or systems of thoughts and values. This, when applied to a larger segment of society, then might theoretically help to eliminate those annoyingly tenacious gremlins such as racism, sexism, or homophobia.

The second point, the idea that capoeira "encourages new ideas and a new approach to life", I would attribute to the fact that capoeira is so much more than what anyone ever tries to say it is. It's not just a martial art, dance, game, philosophy, sport, movement, or fight, but some definition-sidestepping, intuition-seducing, contradiction-joyriding fusion of them all. "The whole is greater than the sum of its parts" was, I'm beginning to think, written by a capoeirista.

Because of this all-encompassing element of capoeira, my opinion is that it affects us so much because we just can't keep it contained

within any one part of our lives. To start becoming a full capoeirista, you must dabble in philosophy as well as in weight-training, develop perfect rhythm as well as (if possible) a Portuguese accent. Capoeira comes at you from so many different directions that you have no choice but to incorporate it into your life, not just a boxed-off part of it. This also explains my last point, which is that even though I said most of the results above can apply to other afterschool activities as well, it is capoeira that, unlike many other passions and past-times, captures everyone and anyone, whether they are old, young, dreamers, cynics, or have a natural talent for it or not.

Finally: anything that gets me to run when I don't have to? Now that's pure magia.

Think Global, Play Local: Broadening Your Capoeira Horizons

1 May 2008

Capoeira is international. Are you?

Something that has periodically amazed me is that from time to time, when I've tried capoeira in other places (such as at last week's batizado in Amsterdam), it seems as if I'd never left home, and was still in a class with my own group, my own teachers. These feelings usually swell, like bubbles, during lectures or talks about various aspects of capoeira.

It doesn't matter if you're at a British, German, or Japanese roda; you still have to sing like a Tenor, gauge your battles like a Spartan, and converse (joga-wise) like characters in a 19th-century murder mystery. Likewise, it matters not whether it's boomed out (like a death sentence) in French, English, or Portuguese: the phrase "deux par deux" (dois par dois, two by two, whatever) will always increase my blood pressure, exact a groan, and have me looking for a good nearby rock to hide under. [Ed.'s note: *Actually, I'm fine with it now!*]

My point is, incredible as it is, I'd never thought of capoeira being literally international in this way before. Obviously, I knew it came from Brazil and had spread all over the world, and my own group has many international branches, but it wasn't until I'd heard words from my first teachers' mouths repeated in the same way, but in a different language, that it really hit me.

[...]

This may be a bit of a stretch, but in a way I think "global to local" thinking can apply to capoeiristas as well, while travelling or having to relocate to other places for any reason. Say you've just moved to a new city, or country, and you have two choices for continuing your capoeira training: drive or take a train four hours out to another city once a week or less to train with the "local" branch of your own group, or start taking truly local classes, from another group. By trying the latter, you are not only truly immersing yourself in your new locale (while saving time, money, and resources), but afterwards you will become more globally conscious capoeira-wise, as well. You will see how different grupos and different cultures do and view things, and in the end it can only contribute to

your experience and growth as a capoeirista.

In a way, being in a capoeira group could be compared to being the citizen of a country. You grow up in your own culture and learn all its ways, and patriotism is usually expected, though in varying degrees. However, your worldview as a person would be deeply stunted if you never travelled or saw anything or interacted with anyone outside of your own country, or even state/province or city/town/village. (Think deep south USA.) And just like in the real world, travelling to other nations doesn't always necessarily mean you intend to become an ex-pat!

Q: What do capoeira and the Energizer Bunny have in common?

01 January 2008

A: They both keep going, and going, and going...

In capoeira, change happens all the time. It's exactly like (sci-fi writer) Isaac Asimov said: "The only constant is change." This might sound paradoxical, but sometimes it seems like change is so constant in capoeira, that it doesn't actually happen at all. Academies change, moves are retired and reworked, people come and go, you get seriously injured and recover, and still—capoeira goes on, and remains capoeira.

There were several points last year at which I kept freaking out to my capoeira (and some non-capoeira) friends at how small my training group's class was getting, to the point where they started making fun of me for it... ("Hey! So, has the sky fallen at KCC yet?") At the same time, one of our two teachers left for a while, which was another major change. The thing is though, we all just settled into a new rhythm, what at first felt weird and unsettling became normal, and all the while we still kept training capoeira as usual.

I think the crux here is really something my teacher (one of) said to me after I came back from a 3-week trip two summers ago (i.e. three weeks of missing class): "You might stop. Capoeira doesn't stop." Capoeira might change, but it never stops. That's why change is always so unsettling when it first happens, because we often see it as the ending, or stopping, of something. This is never the case for capoeira though; no matter what happens, capoeira is capoeira. It never stops. And often, because of this longevity, what was changed may even become unchanged again—people return, attendance perks up, you regain lost skills—and all the while the berimbau has continued to play, so to speak. The rhythm may be momentarily jarred, varied, or subdued, but never is it broken.

Public Service Announcement: Are YOU Affected by Capoeira-Coloured Lenses Syndrome (CCLS)?

06 March 2008

"Weren't you scared going to Amsterdam alone?"

"No, because I was meeting capoeiristas there."

"Did you know them from before?"

"Never met them; but it's fine, we're in the same capoeira group."

Did the above bits of conversation make perfect sense to you? If so, then you, my friend, may be living under the influence—of capoeira-coloured lenses.

Capoeira-coloured lenses, like their close cousin the well-known rose-coloured lenses, are known to shift or alter the wearer's perception of people or situations towards a decidedly positive light. Complete strangers are welcomed with open arms; homes and hearths are opened to any in white or black and yellow; and ordeals otherwise known as travel headaches, major hassles, hardships, pain, or annoyances are often relegated to a rather large category titled "worth it".

Authorities (parents, friends, and the like) are unable to explain the effect these lenses have on their loved ones. Those struck with capoeiryopia—also known as CCLS, or Capoeira-Coloured Lenses Syndrome—rather than displaying anxiety or worry in the presence of self-proclaimed "obsessed addicts" who are often "high" or "drunk" on mysterious substances such as "axé" or "malandragem", on the contrary go out of their way to meet such individuals, and display great joy and delight if they happen to come across such individuals accidentally.

This syndrome, which many fear is contagious, is a new trend sweeping the globe, as persons of uncertain motive (do they dance? do they fight? who knows?!) burn through gasoline, plane fuel, and Puma or Adidas sports shoes in order to take advantage of this popular phenomenon. To anyone wearing capoeira-coloured lenses, you are automatically a wonderful, open-minded, awesome, and fascinating human being by virtue of an affinity for the sound of wood hitting a taut steel wire in repetitive patterns.

Will this trend continue? Will CCLS take over the world? Will YOU know what to do when the time comes?

Stay tuned for further developments! (For now, I'm off to tune my steel wire.)



Year in

Review

In

Your Words



November 30, 2007
Joaninha gets an “Eureka!” moment. Mandingueira blog is born, starting with signature series on female mestres.

December 10, 2007
Mandingueira blog and Joaninha’s post “Playing Women in the Roda” are featured on The Capoeira Blog. Joaninha first experiences the rush of spiking stats!

December 30, 2007
Mandingueira begins to spread around the blogosphere, starting with a small banner link on Bahia-Capoeira Blog.

January 4, 2008
Mandingueira gets revamped: new logo, new layout, new pages!

January 3, 2008
Mandingueira is “discovered” by Blue Snake Books, the same martial arts publisher responsible for the books of Nestor Capoeira. Joaninha is offered a guest-writing position on their blog.



January 15, 2008
Joaninha writes guest post for The Capoeira Blog, “Six Keys to Building Upper-Body Strength”, where it has remained one of the blog’s top posts since.

February 3, 2008
Mandingueira joins Facebook! Add Joaninha, support the fan page, or join the affiliated group “Are you a capoeirista? Because you just turned my world upside-down!”

February 5, 2008
Joaninha’s first of several guest posts on Blue Snake Books Blog: “Capoeira as a Force of Change”

February 28, 2008
Mandingueira reaches 10,000 hits! The blog now has over 60,000 and counting.

May 9, 2008
Mandingueira gets its own domain name! Say hello to www.mandingueira.com.

June 6, 2008
Joaninha begins intermittent bouts of going on hiatus (my apologies!).

July 16, 2008
The comments section explodes with people trying to deal with issues of race, cultural relativity, and cultural appropriation in regards to capoeira and its African roots.

October 21, 2008
Joaninha returns from hiatus; Mandingueira is officially revived. Yay!

November 30, 2008
Mandingueira celebrates first anniversary! One-year retrospect magazine and blog’s first reader giveaway to come. Thank you!



Mandingueira wouldn't be what it is without the participation of you, the readers! Your words have mattered as much as mine, and this section highlights a VERY, VERY FEW of what, for me, were the best or most meaningful comments left on the blog over the past year.

In the end does it really matter?! Aren't we all there to “vadiar”, to play, to smile, to do fun and games, and even if the heat goes up, afterwards we are going out to drink a beer??? -QUALHADA | STRENGTH AND “IMAGE” IN CAPOEIRA: WHY FLOREIOS DO MATTER

I hope old traditions are preserved. They have value. I hope that things continue to evolve. This also has value. -HERA | WHY “SEXIST CAPOEIRISTA” IS AN OXYMORON

Last night, Contra-Mestre Mariano was teaching with an Obama t-shirt on. -ROBIN | CONGRATULATIONS, AMERICA

In the old days, the term “mestre” meant simply “teacher,” not “master.” [...] Some mestres demand respect; others inspire respect. -SHAYNA | WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A CAPOEIRA MESTRE? | RESPECT IN CAPOEIRA: HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

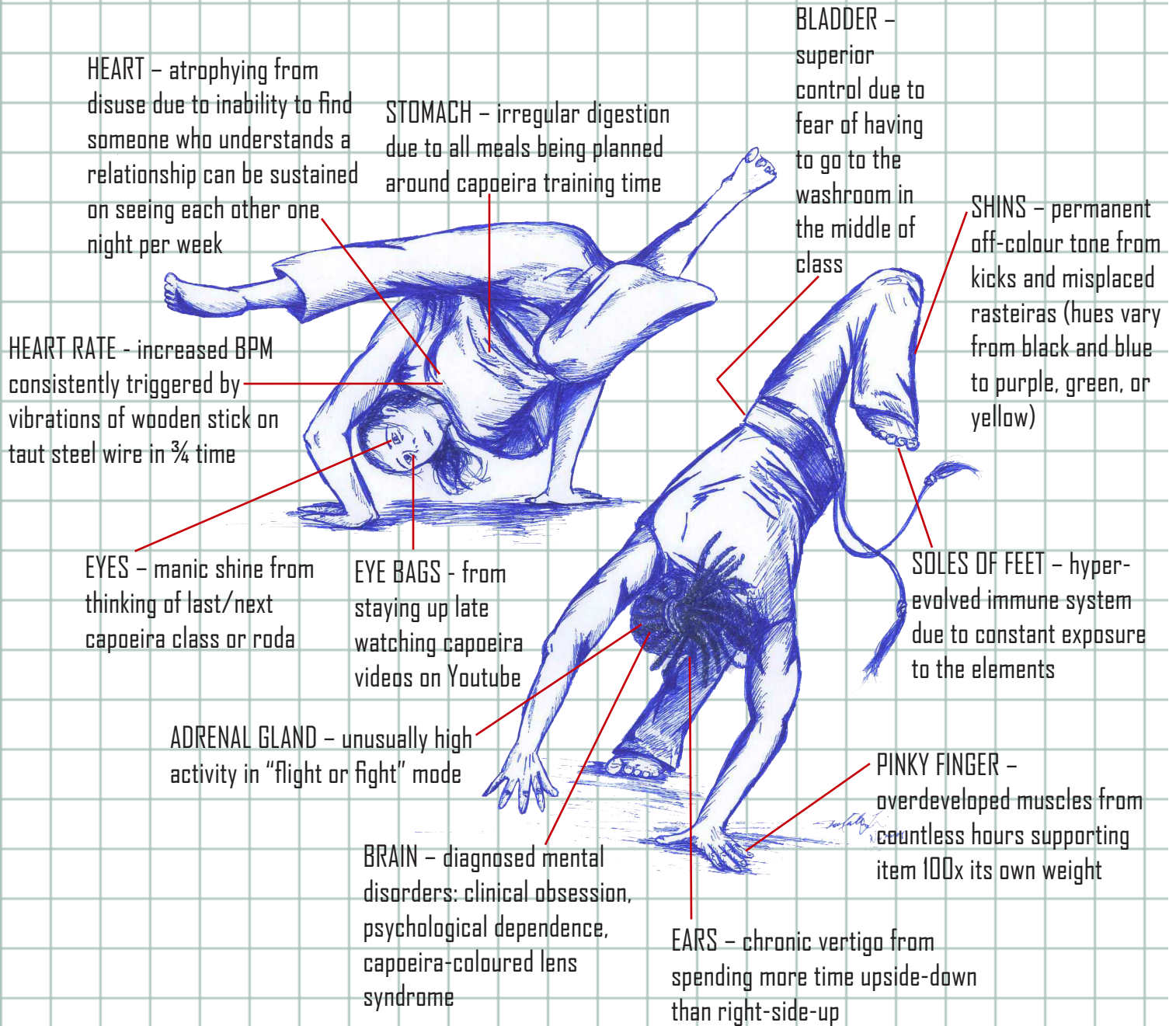
I don't have much control over sexism and what people think about me as a woman. But I can control how I train. -PANAMA | FEMINISM AND OTHER “-ISMS” IN CAPOEIRA: EXPLANATIONS, NOT EXCUSES

Please tell me you understand what a culturally-specific view that is. The world doesn't look that way for everyone, nor should it [...] Capoeira was never about equality—capoeira has always been a strategy for survival and for reconstitution of personal and community honor under the most desperate circumstances imaginable. -KIMBANDEIRA | WHY “SEXIST CAPOEIRISTA” IS AN OXYMORON

Playing with someone who obsessively throws in floreios to show off in the middle of a game is like trying to have a conversation with someone who has ADD. -CIGANA | STRENGTH AND “IMAGE” IN CAPOEIRA: WHY FLOREIOS DO MATTER

Here's the important point: So what? Whose game of capoeira are you trying to play? -TARANTULA | MYTH BUSTERS: WOMEN AND UPPER-BODY STRENGTH

Anatomy of a Capoeirista



Artwork by Coxinha

Chamada

Mandingueira wouldn't have made it without the help and support of several other awesome capoeira blogs. Even if so, it wouldn't have been half as much fun! They are all worth checking out, and run by great people. Obrigada, camaras!



The Capoeira Blog was definitely one of my inspirations for starting Mandingueira, and **Faisca** gave me the best welcome a new blog could've gotten! Check out this site for a great general catch-all of capoeira goodness. www.thecapoeirablog.com



Soul Capoeira Blog is another must-visit. I can't quite explain how, but **Chan** somehow runs a show different from everyone else's. There's everything and also nothing you would expect. Just see for yourself! www.soulcapoeira.org



Shayna of Bahia Capoeira Blog is my heroine for research and knowledge in all things capoeira! Her site www.capoeira-connection.com is a mind-blowing collection of historical documents on capoeira, all translated by her. www.bahia-capoeira.com/blog/



Need a good work-out? Look no further than **SuperBuff**, where capoeiristas **Coral** and **Soldado** are always reliable for a near-daily fix of humour, great anecdotes, and a kick in the butt to get you moving! <http://superbuff.wordpress.com>



Angoleiro of, well, **Angoleiro** fills a much-needed niche in the online capoeira world. It's all angola, all the time, and Angoleiro seems to have a knack for illuminating the exact topics we've all wondered about but never quite fully got. www.angoleiro.wordpress.com



Mestra/e not on Facebook? Maybe they're on **Capoeira Espaço**! Though not a blog, I couldn't leave out this great idea originally built and maintained by **Compasso**. It's a social networking site for capoeiristas, by capoeiristas. www.capoespaco.ning.com

Dear Commenters:

(An Open Love Letter)

Happy one-year. What can I say? We've had a long and rocky relationship, but you know what? I think we'll make it.

I remember the first day I met you. It was so unexpected—but then again, the best surprises usually are. Out of the millions of people one click to either side, someone gave me a second glance?! Someone wanted to talk to me, and listen to what I had to say?! I'll admit it—I swooned.

Then we started getting to know each other, and that was so much fun. I couldn't help being just a little nervous, though. Should I play it cool? Would it look too eager if I wrote back in less than a day? Was there a no-linking-on-the-first-date rule?

In the end, none of that mattered. We made each other better, and things only seemed to improve as we found more and more to talk about. We taught one another, and grew together.

Of course, we've had some rough patches. What would any relationship be without them? And I have to say, you would have the worst timing, sometimes. There I'd be, eight hours and 3000 words away from a major deadline, and I'd open up my inbox and suddenly find us having...The Talk. I didn't like how you saw other women, you thought I was paranoid and just didn't understand you. Not that I've been perfect, either—far from it. I know I get too caught up in my own world, sometimes. And I realize that all those mysterious little "absences" of mine weren't easy for you to take.

But, well, here we are today. That has to mean something, doesn't it? And it's not the arguments we've had that I'm remembering, but the sweet emails, the shared jokes, and your support and encouragement that always kept me going.

So, again, happy one-year. And I can say: I'm looking forward to another.

Love,
Joaninha

thank you

Coxinha, Philipino, Bebe, Formigao

my captive audience; sacrificing their eyesight to my thousand-word facebook messages

Formigao & Coxinha

the seriously awesome logo & artwork, respectively (and not killing me through all the various revisions)

Magia, Bolo

encouragement, support, my international partners in (thought)crime

Sarah Gilliat

telling our mass media class about the monetary potential of blogs and encouraging us to all go start one

Megan

remaining my friend after I stood her up for one hour to finish off a blog post while she got hit on by creepy French dudes outside McDonald's in the cold

Victoria & Talia

editorial feedback; helping me try to block/password-protect Adobe InDesign so I wouldn't work on this until AFTER completing my term papers

my capoeira group

"roots" says it all, right?

my capoeira teachers

being really, really, really good at their job—sometimes psychically so; inspiring me to want to be as dedicated a student as they are teachers and capoeiristas

my French capoeira group

showing me that the capoeira world is round, not flat

Feminists & feminist bloggers

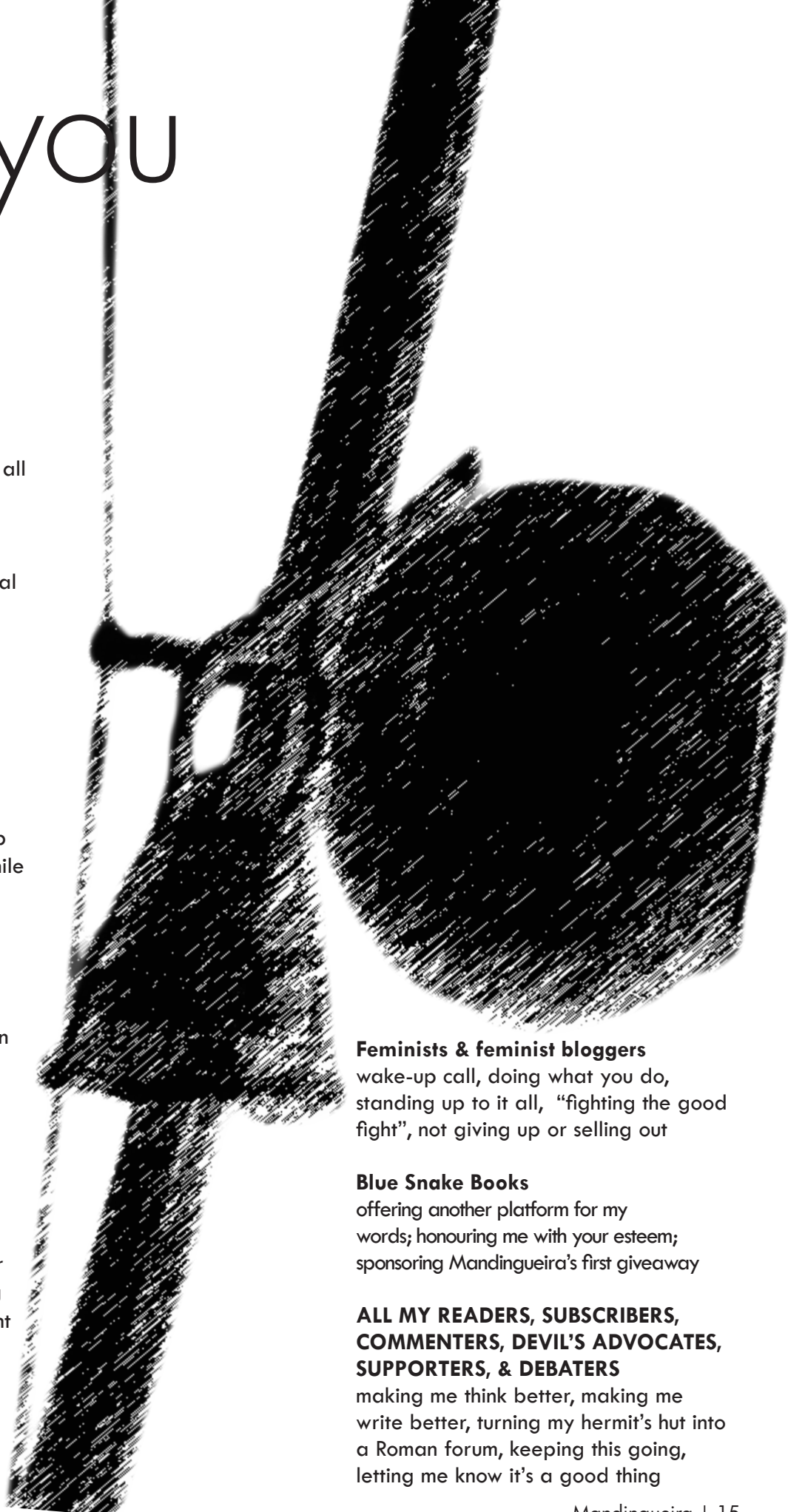
wake-up call, doing what you do, standing up to it all, "fighting the good fight", not giving up or selling out

Blue Snake Books

offering another platform for my words; honouring me with your esteem; sponsoring Mandingueira's first giveaway

ALL MY READERS, SUBSCRIBERS, COMMENTERS, DEVIL'S ADVOCATES, SUPPORTERS, & DEBATERS

making me think better, making me write better, turning my hermit's hut into a Roman forum, keeping this going, letting me know it's a good thing





www.mandingueira.com