

Hello everyone, and thank you for allowing me to speak at today's open meeting. I wanted to take some time to tell you about my experiences since moving here in October of 2019. There's a lot to say, but I will try to be succinct.

I still fondly remember the 7th of June, 2020. The streets of Lisbon were flooded with people outraged by the murder of a man, George Floyd, which occurred an ocean away. They decided to tell the world that it was not acceptable. They decided to tell the world that racism was not acceptable. I had never felt better about my decision to move here than on the 7th of June, 2020.

Unfortunately, I also remember the days that followed. The media was filled with simplifications about the anti-racist struggle. Right and far-right leaning politicians, including the head of the fascist Chega party, held cropped pictures of a single sign in an attempt to discredit our people-powered movement. Worse, a thankfully much smaller fascist led counter-march occurred in an attempt to somehow prove that Portugal is not a racist country. A sea of white faces claimed that people of color and Romani people had it better than them, the power wielding ethnic majority.

Portugal is a racist country. I have seen it myself.

Something about being a white male American seems to signal to people that it's OK to come to me and explain their racist thoughts and behaviors. Perhaps the assumption is that, being a white male from a wealthy country I would share their dislike for people less fortunate than them. They're wrong.

But having them approach me in such a way has been extremely enlightening about the mentality of the white Portuguese against people of color and the Romani people. I have heard the most subtle claims, such as using language that equates to "the Romani and the Portuguese," as if the Romani people here were not also Portuguese. I have heard the most outright absurd and terrifyingly blunt expressions of racism, such as comparing minorities to undomesticatable animals.

I have heard "I'm not racist but," immediately followed by racist statements about how people of color raise their children. I have heard "They don't speak Portuguese, they speak" followed by a slur I will not ever repeat, claiming that a dialect of the language is less legitimate because it is spoken by people with a different color of skin. I have heard that people of color and the Romani people are poor by choice, by inferiority, or by both at the same time.

I have seen a fascist, platforming on racism, obtain 11.9% of the vote in the presidential elections. I have seen the same fascist's party gain a seat in the parliament and gain partial control of a city hall in Açores. I have seen members of PSD, a supposedly center-right party, discuss aligning themselves with fascists to increase their power. I have seen a petition to deport a citizen of Portugal for no other reason than for being black and fighting against abuses.

I have heard of a teacher telling a Portuguese student, a son of Chinese immigrants, to go back to his country because he sneezed in class. I have had discussions where a white Portuguese person has told me that the Chinese are dirtier than whites, and when I pushed for evidence, they told me about one single time they ate a slightly under-cooked meal in a single Chinese restaurant. I have heard numerous tales of products being inferior simply because they were sold at a shop owned by Asian immigrants.

And that's not the last of it. I have heard so many racist statements since moving here that I sometimes felt like I was transported to the most racist parts of the United States, an incredibly racist country. I

feel bad simply repeating the things I have heard here, but nonetheless, I believe it important to raise awareness about the mentality they represent.

You know what I really haven't heard? The average white Portuguese defending those with no power. Normal people providing aid for the people who need it most. I haven't seen the average white Portuguese speak up against racist claims. I haven't seen news media take anti-racism seriously. I haven't seen any positive news coverage in the major networks on the anti-racist struggle and the people who compose it. All of this coverage has been neutral at best.

I haven't seen equality in jobs. When I order delivery during the pandemic to avoid going out and buying food, the essential worker who delivers it is almost always a person of color, an immigrant from Brazil, or Nepal or some other under-represented person. It is the same oppressed populations that are the victims of the white Portuguese rhetoric and actions that are the ones putting their lives on the line to deliver meals to those who are comfortably teleworking. I have seen almost exclusively people of color doing construction work on the roads in the hot summer sun. While many white Portuguese spend their days working in an office, people of color are building the infrastructure they rely on.

From my perspective, inequality and exclusion is a common thread in Portuguese society. I am sure I only see what is on the surface of the racist Portuguese society. I am sure for those who are a part of the affected communities, racism is even more apparent. After all, if it is so apparent to me, it must be much obviously more so for them.

I could continue on and on with examples of what I've seen within my one year of living here. These occurrences occur almost daily, so there is no shortage of stories. These stories motivate why we must continue to fight.

On March 21st, 2021 there was another manifestation against racism in Lisbon. In the Largo de São Domingos in Rossio somewhere between 150 and 200 people showed up to stand up against racism in Portugal. We were in high spirits, knowing that we were fighting the good fight against racism and fascism. But 200 pales in comparison to the thousands of people on the streets of Lisbon in June.

Worse still, on April 18th, 2021 we had a manifestation against fascism, and against Chega, the party everyone claims to hate. However, no more than 100 people were in the streets, discussing their concern over the growing fascist threat.

Where were the others? Where were the people I remember seeing, with anger and sadness in their eyes, motivated for justice for George Floyd and all of the victims who share a similar story? Has there been sufficient progress that we can call the matter closed? Has there been sufficient progress that we can say racism is solved? Has there been sufficient progress that we can say fascism is no longer a threat?

No. No progress has been made. Racism still seeps out of the mouths of the elite, and out of the mouths of ordinary white Portuguese people on the streets. Fascism and racism continue to gain power. Nothing has changed. As I speak my home country is mourning another senseless loss of a young Black life, and a young Latino life. And yet, thousands of people just stopped fighting. Thousands of people went back to pretending the issue does not exist.

Must we wait for yet another tragedy before the people of Portugal are willing to stand up for what's right? Must we wait for another person to die, or for another person to be brutalized by police? What

about the injustices we don't see, but that do occur every day? Are we going to continue to allow discrimination against people of color and the Romani people? Are we going to continue to allow good jobs to stay only in white hands, simply because the people who hire are white? Are we going to be silent as the old-fashioned Portuguese person talks negatively about people with less power than them? Are we going to continue to allow Chega to gain power because they are mistaken as an anti-system vote?

When are we going to show up and do something about it? Let's be proactive, and start today. The next time you hear someone say something racist, inform them that it's not OK. Tell them the truth: racialized people are people too and deserve respect. Let's hit the streets and protest not just individual acts of racism, but the entire racist system. Let's demand that it change to be equitable for all. And if it doesn't change, let's demand that it be dismantled and replaced with something better.

I believe I have been doing my part. When there is a call to the streets to protest racism, fascism, or other issues, I do my best to be there. I am also putting my professional talents and credentials to use. I am using my Ph.D. in Computer Science and research history in Cybersecurity to create a series of videos that teaches cybersecurity to activists. I am part of a nonprofit organization that attempts to teach privacy and security to the common person. I am working on research and development that would aid in securing organizations with a horizontal structure - an empty research area since most tools are built with hierarchy in mind. In addition to what I already do, I want to do much, much more. If you believe there is room for my talents, I am open to suggestions on how I can contribute. All I want is to see improvement, and I don't believe I'm alone in that.

Now, I cannot speak for my fellow protesters, my fellow immigrants, for people of color, or for my fellow common people. I cannot speak for other marginalized communities, such as women, or the LGBT+ community. I cannot speak for the working class or the middle class. I would never dream of speaking for others. However, I can speak for myself, and I do have some thoughts about what I would like to see from the left bloc.

I would like to see the left bloc be proactive and meet the protesters in the street. I would like Bloco to show solidarity with our causes, loudly and with pride. I would like Bloco to stand behind the movements, and to reflect the movements in legislation. I would like Bloco to come to the protests in person and show solidarity.

I would not like Bloco to attempt to lead the movements, or to make the movements about the party. A political party is not a movement, no matter how hard it tries to be. We should have a party that reflects the movements, not a movement for the party. But that doesn't mean that Bloco can not contribute, cannot be present at events, or cannot show solidarity. Indeed, I believe supporting, but not leading, is the best way to get protesters to support Bloco. Let's stand together and show Portugal and the world that all us protesters want is a world of equity, liberty, and love, as compared to the right's vision of division, hate, and fear.

But it's not just about us protesters. Many ordinary people feel that they are not represented in the current political system. They are tired of politicians telling them what they need. When they hear a fascist tell them that they are not the problem, that the problem is someone less fortunate than them, or the system that gives to the poor, they believe it, desperately hoping it will improve their conditions.

I would like to see the left block meet these people, too, on the streets. Rather than telling them what they need, I think the left bloc should ask them what they need. The left bloc can make it clear that you

wish to serve the needs of the people, not impose what you believe their needs are. You can be clear that you will not take away from the less fortunate, but rather provide services to all who need them. You can be clear that you are interested in protecting the people from the rising costs of rent, from the lack of parking that afflicts their ability to be mobile, and from the ongoing privatization of public services like health, or public spaces like parking lots. As minor as these concerns may seem in comparison to the threats faced by racialized people, neglecting these concerns can create animosity in the people, causing them to turn to promises made by false saviors.

Those are short term solutions. In the long term, Portugal must move away from the evils of capitalism, and build a system more just for workers. It is not sufficient to promise a job, or a good salary. This gives people comfort, but does not grant them liberty or power. Instead, we must give the workers power over their own work. We must grant the worker control of the product of their labor. This will overcome capitalism, in the long run.

I believe these to be the eventual goals of the left bloc. I am eager to participate in making them a reality in any way I can. I may not be able to vote, and I may not be able to run for office, but I am able to work. And I'll put everything I have – my professional credentials, my time, and my effort – into making this country, and this world a better place.

Silence is complicity with the evils of the age. Let's remember that motivation we had on the 7th of June. Let's keep fighting, together.