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AMÍLCAR CABRAL: JOURNEYS, MEMORIES, DESCOLONIZATION

Sílvia Roque

After [Letters from Amílcar Cabral to Maria Helena / The other side of the man \(Amílcar Cabral a Maria Helena / A Outra Face do Homem\)](#) the Cape-Verdean press *Rosa de Porcelana* is publishing another book based on the PAIGC leader's correspondence, [Itineraries of Amílcar Cabral \(Itinerários de Amílcar Cabral, 2018\)](#). The book is a collection of letters sent by Cabral to his partner, Ana Maria, and to his children, Raul and Ndira. It has been put together by Ana Maria Cabral herself, along with Filinto Elísio and Márcia Souto, and annotated by the historian Aurora Almada e Santos.



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The work takes us with Cabral on his travels, through images, intimacy and the justice of the struggle. In his letters, Cabral reflects on and gives historical context for the places he visited as part of his diplomatic work. Above all, the work reveals that experience and private memories are inherently public and political. His letters give us a sense of Cabral's itineraries, but also of his thinking about the world, love and justice:

"Here is a tulip: beautiful, haughty, rich with silences and mystery. Like you, my companion. May we have a long life in the difficult but glorious struggle for the progress and liberation of our people: so that in the light of your gestures we may transform silences into the joy of living and mystery into our life-force, the love of justice." So he writes to Ana Maria from Stockholm.

"Do you see this beautiful land full of well-dressed people? Our struggle is to make our land beautiful like this: with everyone living well, at work and in justice" or, "You see how beautiful the world is, how people are varied - but all human?" Cabral writes, from Stockholm and Rabat, respectively, to his son, Raul.

Itineraries of Amílcar Cabral is the latest of a series of recent publications around Cabral's life, thinking and legacy. Though the interest and admiration internationally accorded to Cabral is not new, it seems to have been revitalised in recent years through biographical and historiographical work (1), documentaries (2), seminars and international colloquia.

This profusion of initiatives reflects Cabral's importance as a universal prompt but also as a complex and diverse signifier. His memory evokes not only readings of the past, but also readings of the postcolonial present in a transnational and transgenerational framework which call into question the prefix "post". For many young people today, in Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau, Portugal, France, Brazil, the United States of America, Cabral represents the possibility of criticizing various forms of power, of resistance and of affirming their identities. The ways that Cabral has been taken up confirm that the originality of his praxis lies in its articulation of, and opposition to, different dimensions of domination and violence, from neo-colonialism to gender discrimination.

This goes far beyond deploying Cabral as an empty and institutionalized icon. The evocations I have mentioned in various contexts have small audiences and little visibility, but are essential precisely because they are critical of the instrumentalization of his legacy. [We see this in the Guinean and Cape Verdean rappers who convey the memory of the liberation struggle and its revolutionary project](#), in



the ways [his thought has been studied as an inspiration for new struggles](#), and in the ways he is already evoked as part of a cultural almost-memory, fragmented and dispersed, impregnated with the discourses of recent generations.

It is true that the images and meanings of Cabral today are plural. [His image can represent the ongoing work of decolonization, or new forms of pan-Africanism, anti-imperialism, anti-racism or the defence of human rights. His image can also signify a critique of corruption, of tribalism, or that culture is resistance.](#)

For this reason, Amílcar Cabral's memory offers us multiple opportunities to think through the decolonization of Europe and to put it into practice. We can start, for example, by bringing historically subalternized individuals, peoples and ideas to the centre of discussions about teaching history, [about national celebration](#) and about citizenship.

(1) For example: *O fazedor de Utopias. Uma biografia de Amílcar Cabral* de António Tomás, Tinta-da-China, 2007; *Amílcar Cabral - Vida e Morte de um Revolucionário Africano* de Julião Soares Sousa, Nova Vega, 2011; *Claim No Easy Victories: The Legacy of Amilcar Cabral. Organized by Firoze Manji e Bill Fletcher Jr.* CODESRIA/ Daraja Press, 2013.

(2) For example: [Cabralista](#) de Valério Lopes e [The heart of Amilcar Cabral](#) by Guenny Pires.

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