

The ABRAFH and the visibility of homo and transparenthood families

Anna Paula Uziel (<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7807-3910>)¹

Saulo Amorim (<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3413-753X>)²

Abstract *This is an interview conducted by Anna Paula Uziel, a professor at Rio de Janeiro State University, with Saulo Amorim, who was president of ABRAFH (Brazilian Association of Homotransafetive Families), about the history of the Association, its impact on the spread of these family configurations, and how it intersects with the interviewee's fatherhood story. The different characters who make up this story speak about the political moment in the country, the incorporation of transparenthood into ABRAFH, and how it is becoming a space of sociability and comfort for those who practice non-hegemonic parenting.*

Key words *Parentalities, Homotransafectivity, Families, LGBTI+*

¹ Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro. R. São Francisco Xavier 524. 20550-900 Rio de Janeiro RJ Brasil. uzielap@gmail.com

² Colégio Pedro II. Rio de Janeiro RJ Brasil.

Anna – Saulo, how did you come in contact with ABRAFH¹ (Brazilian Association of HomoTransaffective Families) and how does this intersect with your life?

Saulo – When I started the adoption project, I was still married. That was in 2013. We went to the Children’s Court in the capital, and they directed us to an adoption support group in Barra, *Rosa da Adoção*. We prepared for the license there, and then we started the process in 2014. Then in 2017, I was called. My initial profile was girl and boy, I wanted two children. But when it was my turn, there was no such arrangement. I chose, since it was my turn, to meet the available children. Then I was recommended Teodoro, but the fact that I chose to receive one child and continue to wait for another pushed me back to the end of the line. I got divorced in 2019 and had to go through the whole retraining with a psychologist, social worker, home visit, all over again. My license renewal came out during the pandemic, I had to do virtual interviews, and then there was the waiting time. Child protection systems were completely affected by the pandemic; there were no social workers on the streets; there were no schools open; health centers closed or focused on the COVID pandemic; there was no one who could report violence suffered by children, so the child protection and observation systems failed during the pandemic.

Anna – Could you tell us a little about the creation of ABRAFH? What were the questions that were being asked at that time when it was created, and since then? And during your management, what issues arose?

Saulo – In 2013, we were experiencing the euphoria of the decision of the Federal Supreme Court (*Supremo Tribunal Federal* – STF), which had understood the same-sex union as a family entity and had finally opened the possibility of marriage through administrative means, and it had expanded the rights: right to social security, right to inheritance, right of registrations in functional settlements and adoption. Participating in the Pink Adoption Support Group (*Grupo de Apoio à Adoção Rosa*), I look for the coordinators and discuss the following: there is so much talk these days about same-sex families; I have been participating in the group for almost a year and have never seen a talk about LGBTI adoption. The coordinator thought that provocation would be wonderful and the following month, much to my surprise, Rogério Koscheck arrived and, together with Ana Lodi, were taking the first

steps towards the formation of ABRAFH, founded in 2015. They were recruiting people, visiting places, talking about this idea. Months earlier, an event had taken place in the Federal Senate on “contemporary families”, in which the expansion of rights for LGBTI families following the Supreme Court decision was discussed. Judge Maria Berenice Dias was present at this event and raised this idea: “I know several entities that protect the interests of the LGBTI community, but none that specifically focuses on the interests of LGBTI families”. Marília Serra and Ana Lodi made contact with people here in Rio de Janeiro. Rogério Koscheck was one of the people contacted because he had participated in the GNT “Adoption Stories” program, where he and his husband adopted 4 children. ABRAFH then emerged as an idea at this Senate event, and was founded two years later. Rogério emerges as the first president of ABRAFH, and I joined at Rogério’s request, as the administrative director of the Association to help organize a first international conference that would be held at the Brazilian Bar Association (*Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil* – OAB). We tried to bring together people who were present at the Senate event and others who had political and social relevance at the time, such as Jean Wyllys, who was the only openly LGBTI Federal Representative; Maria Berenice Dias; Rodrigo da Cunha Pereira, lawyer from the Brazilian Institute of Family Law (*Instituto Brasileiro de Direito de Família* – IBDFAM); Sávio Bittencourt from the Public Ministry; among several other prominent figures. Tony Reis, current president of ABRAFH, who was the president of the National LGBTI Alliance, also participated in the event.

Rogério was the first president, after which I served two terms. During this period, I realized the need to give visibility to ABRAFH; we needed to be recognized as a national reference. Until then, the media reference, when talking about LGBTI families, was the IBDFAM (*Instituto Brasileiro de Direito de Famílias*, or the Brazilian Institute of Family Law); LGBTI people did not necessarily talk about the rights of LGBTI families. At our second conference at the beginning of 2018, held in Brasília, we had in attendance Representatives, Senators, as well as the Federal Public Ministry, the Public Defender’s Office, the local OAB, and the local IBDFAM. There was talk of the transversality between the LGBTI agenda and ethnic-racial issues, with issues of ableism, gender identity, and then we delved deeper into the issue of trans families. I was concerned about bringing a trans person to the ABRAFH board of

directors and invited Alexya Salvador to become vice-president.

Anna – What changes with Alexya’s entry?

Saulo – We decided to change the name of ABRAFH, which until that moment was the Brazilian Association of Homoffective Families to Homotransaffective² Families, a term suggested by Alexya. And then I began to see, to my delight, the term homotransaffective being used in articles, in other people’s speeches. Until that moment, the search for ABRAFH was largely carried out by homosexual families, men and women. I could count the trans families and intersex families on my fingers... I knew two of the bisexual families. The bisexual closet is more difficult to break, and trans families have difficulty accessing family issues; it’s a higher dream. Alexya says that, for her, a black woman - today she identifies as a transvestite - to reach where she is today with the adoption of three children; she had to overcome many barriers, the main one being the lack of opportunities. Trans people are more concerned about surviving, eating, working. The adoption process is free, but it involves expenses, you have to obtain a document, you have to go to a forum, you have to have money to pay for housing somewhere to make the visit. So, for a long time, ABRAFH was labeled as an entity for white, upper-class people, as if it had been created for this niche. It was designed for all families and, unfortunately, those who have the most access to the media and social networks about this association are the families that have money and access to the effective implementation of the paternity/maternity project. ABRAFH conferences are intended to be a moment of catalyzing forces and bringing militancy closer together.

Anna – Why do you use the term homoffective/homotransaffective? Why homoffective and not homosexuals?

Saulo – The term homoffective was coined by Maria Berenice Dias, one of the creators of this association. At first, they thought of being the “Association of Contemporary Families”. But at that time, the Contemporary Church already existed, which was an LGBTI church, founded by gay pastors concerned with the LGBTI community. There was concern about this Association being linked to the religious agenda. At the first conference, there was a lot of discussion: why not homosexual families? Why not from LGBTI families?

And then the great defense was due to the suffix “affection”. When we use the term homosexuality, lesbosexuality, transsexuality, we have in the suffix the mark of an expression that is natural to every human being, which is sexuality. We are, like all human beings, political bodies, sexual bodies, even if it is to exercise this sexuality in a negative way, like asexuals. Human beings are gregarious beings; we search for tribes; we look for our life partners, even the most intimate friends and people who will actually be family, those who form larger projects of existence and journey with us. So, reflecting on this ability to create bonds, to establish relationships, we realized that affection would represent much more of the association’s proposals. It is not denying sexuality, on the contrary, it is highlighting the potential of affection. The second step was to realize that homoffective did not include different identities, we decided to move forward to value trans issues and created the term homotransaffective, at the suggestion of Alexya herself.

Anna – What are people looking for when they seek ABRAFH?

Saulo – Three profiles that have remained over the years: (1) Families who seek ABRAFH for its mission, for reasons of identification, representation, and coexistence, that is, those families who said “we need to be represented and identify ABRAFH as an entity who can speak for us”; (2) the other profile is of people who look for ABRAFH saying “I have young children, I intend to have children, I am in the adoption process, I want to be close to people like me, live with people like me so that my children grow up in these environments, so that my family can develop in this environment”; (3) and a third profile that sought retribution. “What can this association do for me?” And this profile is the most delicate. The main idea of ABRAFH has always been to congregate, to bring families together to establish representation. And many people, because they did not understand this role of association, sought it with the prospect of free legal and psychological assistance, as they were unable to support themselves. Which hurt us a lot, but there are entities that work precisely with this type of social support issue. During the pandemic, we even received volunteer psychologists who offered some pro bono hours to accompany people who were going through difficulties, but it was a contingency action. And in the same year, we created a list of lawyer friends.

Anna – In research, people say a lot, especially women, that when they discovered they were lesbians, they thought they weren't going to be mothers. So, do you think the association also plays this role, in the sense of saying "look, this is possible"? Because, knowing that your life is viable produces mental health, doesn't it? Or do you think it's already widespread enough and that it happens less and less, where a man realizes he's gay and thinks it's incompatible with fatherhood.

Saulo – Depending on the origins of this LGBTI person, they really don't see these powers. If it is a person who was born in an environment where the culture of biological relationships constitutes the truth of the structure of a family, they have difficulty coming out as gay, lesbian, trans, or whatever, also out of fear. Because if she, like me, is born with this strong desire for fatherhood or motherhood, she will do whatever it takes to make that desire come true, because she cannot see beyond the biological perspective of parenthood. Even more so if you are born poor, in an evangelical context, on the outskirts, you don't have money to pay for an insemination, you don't have money to travel abroad and have a surrogate mother enjoy a surrogate pregnancy elsewhere. Until the person is able to break away from this and see paternity and motherhood in other ways... and then I speak specifically about adoption. Then ABRAFH does bring examples, highlights types of families that will bring relief.

Anna – And how did discussions about parenting appear at ABRAFH? Maternity, cis, and trans paternity...

Saulo – The lesbian agenda has always been even stronger within ABRAFH. It was much more common for us to focus on the demands of cis and trans women in conversation circles and events than for us to have other perspectives; there was an absence of discussions about paternity. And it's very difficult to find academic texts that talk about trans parenthood. Who is the trans father? Who is the cis father? "Ah yes, because we are trying to break with the patriarchy, there are all these difficulties...", yes, but if we don't talk about fatherhood we also don't transform the reality of the patriarchy. We can implode the patriarchy from within, talking about what it means to be a father and what is expected of this father figure. Speaking about my place of male, white, cis privilege, I was never offended when people referred to me, for being a man, in the feminine term, right. "You take care of your children like

a mother", on the contrary, I feel very honored. The feminine does not disqualify me, it does not diminish me. Being identified with motherhood does not invalidate me in my fatherhood. So where am I going with this whole story? For me, motherhood and fatherhood are two reflections of the same condition, regardless of the human being or so-called responsible person. It doesn't matter if those who care for children have a penis or a vagina, their sexual orientation, or how they identify socially, as a father or mother, you know what I mean? The perspective of deconstructing this place of fatherhood also seems very powerful to me. When I think about talking about fatherhood, it's actually precisely to implode the archetype. Revealing that being a father is not a contradiction to being a mother. And one does not invalidate the other, but rather complements it. Psychoanalysis says that they are functions and that both functions can be in any person, or in two or three. And I really believe that; these functions are all in me and it doesn't matter that I have a penis and that my partner does too.

Anna – I wanted to ask you a little more about terms now. There is this term coined by APGL (Association des parents et future parents gays et lesbiens) in France, in 1996³, which is homoparentalité, homoparentality (homoparentalidade in Portuguese). I have heard women claiming lesboparenthood. Do you think this is important? And then later I would like you to talk a little about whether there are differences among heteroparentalities, homoparentalities, transparentities.

Saulo – When we bring up the suffix of parenthood, we take away from that field that I was discussing with you, which is affection, the construction of family structures. We begin to have a greater perspective on relationships. The term parenting is better suited to relationships in the extended family. The primary nuclei need a lot of affection to be functional, dealing with parenting is a greater "cure", a step further. Are there differences between LGBTI parenting and cishetero⁴ parenting? Yes, in Brazil we have no differences in guarantees of nominal rights to LGBTI families. The exercise of rights comes from the 2011 Federal Supreme Court (STF) decision, which recognizes stable unions between people of the same sex as a family entity. The problem is that the exercise of these rights lacks guarantees, which should have come over the last decade. We have such a lack of guarantees that we are now, as we speak, having to deal with a bill that aims

precisely at retrogression, which passed the first vote in the thematic committee and will continue in the Chamber. It is a bill that seeks to end the possibility of LGBTI marriage in Brazil, but it has numerous consequences in the field of adoption, succession, etc. The right to marriage is cishetero, it is in the text of the law, this “model” is what interests Centrão (the Brazilian right-wing) as a family⁵. LGBTI parenting is a type of parenting that survives in Brazil through court decisions, enjoying rights given to others and understood for us. Now, if you delve into personal experiences, that’s another field. You will find parenting exercises that seek that age-old reflection of straight unions, the famous hetero keychain, because he does not identify with the agenda of the LGBTI community and thinks that the demands of activism are really exaggerated. They conform to society’s expectations, silent, unattractive, and do not dare to break the standard of masculinity that is expected from those bodies, or the femininity that is expected from those bodies. And there is also the exercise of parenting, which is the opposite, which is that family that breaks all social expectations, such as non-binary, trans, and intersex families, who will have more difficulties in accessing rights.

Ana – Thinking today in terms of social acceptance and family formation. Do you see a difference between families made up of female couples and male couples?

Saulo – The only thing I can say that I see as an evolution over the last decade is that people are no longer so afraid of the fact that children are cared for – mothered or fathered – by two people of the same sex. Or by two trans people. Those children, who were adopted 10 years ago, are reaching adolescence and are not “suffering” for it. They were loved, cared for like any other human being, and will develop like any other human being regardless of the sexuality or sexual orientation or gender identities of those who care for them. So, in that sense, I realize that there has been a reduction in stress, but I don’t believe that

perspectives, when they enter the field of prejudice, have changed. Because the idea of biological fatherhood and motherhood, as being the correct, true, ideal, expected path, is still very strong, including in the LGBTI environment. Most people who sought out ABRAFH were not seeking guidance on adoption, but on artificial insemination, supportive gestation, and surrogacy. Why do LGBTI people still seek affection as the second option? And it is very difficult for us to transform this culture, since they don’t even realize how narrow-minded they have been and how the cishetero patriarchy has consolidated the idea that a “real mother”, or that a “real family” is biological, in that conservative discourse where “there is a father, a mother, and the children born of this relationship”. Who said that biology guarantees the truth of affection? The forgotten Family Statute, an old expectation of the evangelical front, of the center, is nothing more than the writing of a social project designed long ago, which does not yet see parenthood beyond blood ties.

Anna – There is a move to get the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), and other databases created based on it, to recognize the CPFs (Brazilian social security numbers) of two mothers, which does not happen, despite the names of both mothers appearing on the children’s documents. Can you tell us a little about this situation?

Saulo – In IT programming, every CPF has a name and the first homonymy screening starts with the mother’s name, even before the date of birth. So, if they change this registration nationwide, they lose a homonymy tracking field. What they fail to understand and elaborate on is that the date of birth remains a trace of homonymy; the place of birth can be a trace. We need to change the system. Will it be hard work? Of course it will take hard work, but it has to be done. At some point, it has to be done.

Anna – Thank you!

References

1. Amorim SXB. Sonhos, realizações e recomeços. In: Moreira SM, organizadora. *Parentalidades diversas*. Curitiba: Juruá; 2022. p. 173-180.
2. Aliança Nacional LGBTI. *Manual de comunicação LGBTI+*. Curitiba: Núcleo de Estudos Afro-Brasileiros – Universidade Federal do Paraná; 2021.
3. Uziel AP. *Homossexualidade e adoção*. Rio de Janeiro: Garamond; 2007.
4. São Paulo. Ministério Público do Estado de São Paulo (MPSP). *Direito e diversidade*. São Paulo: MPSP; 2017.
5. Butler J. O parentesco é sempre tido como heterossexual? *Cad Pagu* 2003; 21:219-260.

Article submitted 21/11/2023

Approved 18/12/2023

Final version submitted 18/12/2023

Chief editors: Romeu Gomes, Antônio Augusto Moura da Silva