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Black Protest and  
Public Policies in Brazil**

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# Racial Inequalities, Black Protest and Public Policies in Brazil

Antonio Sérgio Alfredo Guimarães

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I begin by providing a brief overview of the evolution of racial inequalities and Black poverty in Brazil. There is a steady and increasing pattern of inequality between non-whites (blacks and pardos) and whites in every aspect of social life (income, occupation, education, health, housing, etc.). The data show that the increase in wealth and quality of life that occurred in the last decades was almost completely concentrated in the white population. The emergence of a black middle class did not contradict the fact of rampant inequality between ethno-racial groups. On the contrary, the tiny black middle class that has emerged provides support for an organized black movement in the country.

I then discuss the question of how a country that is believed to have exceptionally few race issues generates contradictory public reactions even today towards the implementation of affirmative action policies, which could break the structural inertia of inequality. In the next section, I present the Movimento Negro Unificado (Unified Black Movement) agenda in the 1980s and 1990s. I explain (a) the main areas of racial unrest (everyday racial discrimination, prejudice expressed in books, mass media, educational system, lack of political representation); and (b) the political strategy of the Black movement, its alliance with the *esquerda* and the progressive parties, and the gains that accrued to it under the 1988 Constitutional Charter.

Subsequently, I analyze the main state responses to the Black movement's agenda. I analyze the official responses to black mobilization and as attempts to integrate black protest into the political system. I conclude the paper by providing a brief appraisal of current federal programs, which can affect the black population and reduce inequalities (Agenda 2000-2001; *Avança Brasil*; *Alvorada*, *PLANFOR*).

Given the increase in inequalities among ethno-racial groups, despite state efforts to tackle them, I will conclude by trying to answer the question: "what is wrong with Brazil's anti-racist programs?"

## **Black poverty and how the racial issue is handled in Brazil**

Black poverty is a fact of life in Brazil. Usually, we read statistical reports on poverty and racial inequalities in Brazil, and accept poverty as natural. Reviewing some of the numbers may help us think about the causes in a more precise manner. Below, the data that unequivocally shows that poverty affects blacks more than whites is presented.

**Table 1: Selected Socioeconomic Characteristics by Color – Men**

Socio-Economic Characteristic	COLOR		
	White	Black	Pardo
<b>Years of Schooling</b>	<b>6,25</b>	<b>3,81</b>	<b>3,96</b>
<b>Age of first employment</b>	<b>12,66</b>	<b>12,20</b>	<b>12,01</b>
<b>Per capita family income</b>	<b>376,57</b>	<b>166,87</b>	<b>163,61</b>
<b>Size of family</b>	<b>3,70</b>	<b>4,05</b>	<b>4,18</b>
<b>Urban residence (%)</b>	<b>83,17</b>	<b>77,79</b>	<b>73,19</b>
<b>Father's schooling</b>	<b>2,96</b>	<b>1,33</b>	<b>1,57</b>
<b>Father's occupational status</b>	<b>8,66</b>	<b>5,58</b>	<b>6,04</b>

Source: PNAD 96 – quoted from Silva (2000)

Also, there are large status and income differences in favor of the whites that are due to the employment area (in rural areas income is nearly 50% lower), which is expressed in the difference between occupational stratum 1 and 2. Other differences, like manual and non-manual labor, are shown in the difference between occupational stratum 3 and 4. Both these facts demonstrate the great importance, in our social hierarchy, of education (minimum schooling) and of urban residence. But, in all occupational stratum, or status groups, the black income is, on the average, almost half of that of the white (49%).

**Table 2: Income Averages by Occupational Stratum and Color**

Occupational stratum	Color			Total
	White	Preto	Pardo	
<b>1</b>	<b>315,96</b>	<b>158,12</b>	<b>182,06</b>	<b>239,46</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>577,88</b>	<b>311,75</b>	<b>350,09</b>	<b>173,17</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>644,88</b>	<b>464,99</b>	<b>458,49</b>	<b>567,48</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>1.246,94</b>	<b>717,05</b>	<b>775,80</b>	<b>1.100,78</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>1.877,23</b>	<b>987,32</b>	<b>1.039,20</b>	<b>1.678,49</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>2.919,93</b>	<b>1.805,16</b>	<b>1.940,11</b>	<b>2.772,62</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>949,66</b>	<b>403,24</b>	<b>432,81</b>	<b>734,18</b>

Source: Silva (2000).

A third point is that, aside from color, gender is a discriminating factor in terms of income, and therefore, poverty. Table 3 shows that white men and women have average earnings more than black men and women. Black women earn the least.

**Table 3: Average Earnings by Gender and Race\***

<b>White men</b>	6
	.3
<b>White women</b>	
	3.6
<b>Black men</b>	2
	.9
<b>Black women</b>	1
	.7

\*Expressed in multiples of the monthly minimum wage (at this writing, about US\$75.00).

Source: IBGE, 1994. Apud: Nascimento and Nascimento (2000)

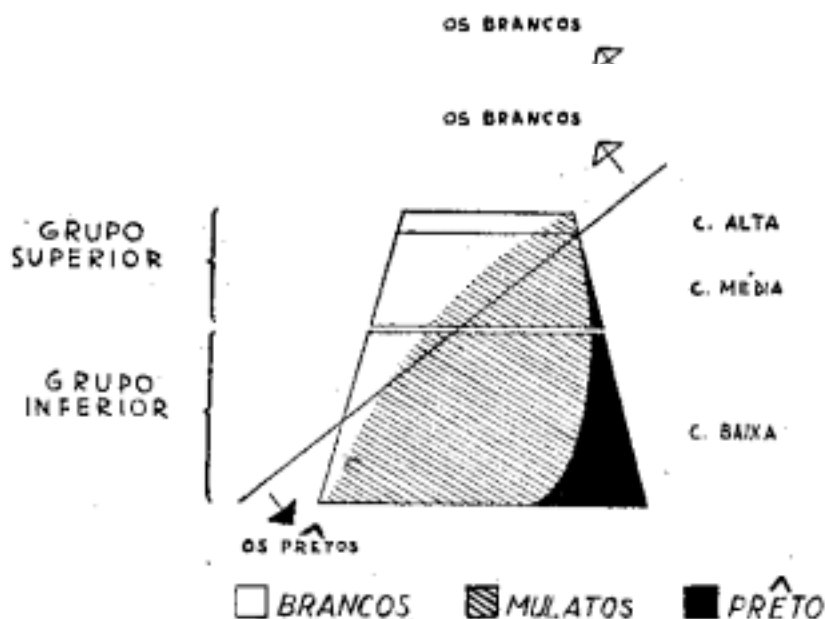
This third point can also be demonstrated by examining the participation and unemployment rates by gender and race. As Table 4 shows, black women are more numerous in the working population than white women, but they are also more prone to unemployment. Black men are part of the working population in the same proportion as white men, but their unemployment rates are higher.

**Table 4: Participation and Unemployment Rates by Gender and Race, São Paulo Metropolitan Area 1998**

<b>Rates</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Black (pretos and pardos)</b>	<b>Non-Black</b>
<b>Participation</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>73,3</b>	<b>73,3</b>	<b>73,4</b>
	<b>Female</b>	<b>50,9</b>	<b>53,8</b>	<b>49,5</b>
<b>Unemployment</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>18,3</b>	<b>22,7</b>	<b>16,1</b>
	<b>Female</b>	<b>21,2</b>	<b>25,0</b>	<b>19,2</b>

Source: INSPIR/DIEESE (1999)

And finally, the number of blacks in absolute poverty is almost double that of whites.



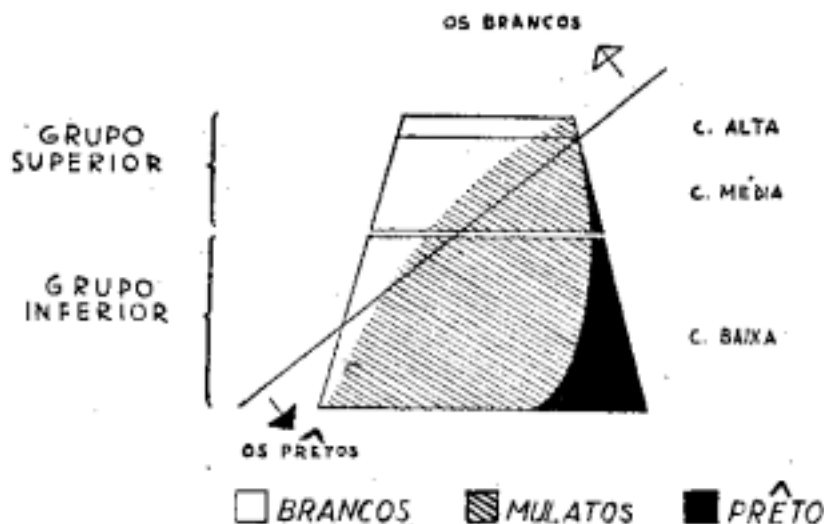
### AS CAUSAS DA POBREZA NEGRA

Seen from a historical view point (for example, between 1960 and 1996), the inequalities between the blacks and the whites have not diminished much in Brazil, and indicators such as university schooling have grown. The two graphs from Telles (1999) included in the annex show this. And according to this author:

“The findings demonstrate that in Brazil industrialization has no clear or singular effect on racial inequality. Cross-sectional data suggest that industrialization reduces overall racial inequality among men although longitudinal data shows no effect on men but possibly positive effects for nonwhite women. However, both cross-sectional and longitudinal data suggest that industrialization and development increase racial inequality at the top of the social structure particularly because of the effects of education. Although the expansion of higher education in the 1970s may have led to unprecedented mobility for some nonwhites, higher education has mostly benefited the almost entirely white, middle, and upper-middle classes.”

Therefore, statistically, it is well established that poverty affects blacks more than whites in Brazil. More than that, it's also demonstrated in sociological literature, since the 1950s, that in Brazilian ideology, imagery and speech, black and poor are considered equivalent, as also white and rich. Anthropologist Thales de Azevedo (1966), for instance, in a text dating back to 1955, studies racial hierarchy in Bahia, Brazil, and concludes that the steepest differences occur between whites and blacks. These steep differences are equally referred to colloquially as rich and poor. Comparing social structures in Bahia and in the south of the United States, based on a diagram suggested by Lloyd Warner which visualizes the racial/social class system, Thales expresses the Brazilian social structure as follows:

State/Region	Color		
	White	Preto	Pardo
Rio de Janeiro (Southeast)	6.0	12.7	13.8
São Paulo (Southeast)	4.0	12.3	8.7



Source: (Azevedo 1966: 39).

There is, therefore, in Brazil, be it in people's minds, in demography or sociology, in economy or anthropology, between those who govern and those who are governed, a consensus that the poor are black and the rich are white.

### Poverty as being natural

What are the causes of black poverty? The explanation widely accepted by the government and by the people is that the discrepancy between whites and blacks is the result of slavery in the past. As it is inherited from the past, it is considered then as something that would disappear in time. This explanation, although it contains some truth, hides some big problems. Firstly, it frees the present generations of responsibility in the continuing inequality. Secondly, it offers a convenient excuse for preserving the inequality (how can you reverse in 5 years the product of 5 centuries? has been the most used phrase by the many republican governments, including the current one). Thirdly, it suggests that many governments have, gradually, tried to correct the discrepancies (sometimes, this argument is more than suggested, it's explicit among economists: the economy must grow so that the social problems can solve themselves naturally).

Against this conservative explanation of poverty, through the years (at least since 1930 in an organized manner), the black leadership has taken a stand. For them, the cause of black poverty is the lack of opportunities, the racial prejudice and discrimination. Up until a short while ago leading to 1988 review of the constitution, the arguments of the black leadership were peremptorily rejected: there was no discrimination, no racial prejudice, and black poverty was purely poverty. This is how "racial democracy" is defined, and it explains black poverty as a product of the past, class prejudice and discrimination, meaning the discrimination of the poor. Nowadays, an important change can be noted: both the government and public opinion recognize the existence of racial discrimination<sup>1</sup>. But, it's my opinion that class discrimination is still considered legitimate, which in the end, for blacks, comes down to the same thing.

It is important to state the legitimacy that has been acquired in Brazil of class discrimination and prejudice against the poor. Black militants say, in great part, that this legitimacy comes exactly

<sup>1</sup> On the governmental side, the Fernando Henrique Cardoso administration publicly recognized, on several different occasions, that there is racism in Brazil. On the public side, a Datafolha research from 1995 indicated that 89% of Brazilians also believe that whites are prejudiced against blacks, and 58% think that the fact that the black's living conditions are worse than the white's is due to the discrimination of whites against blacks and prejudice. Datafolha (1995)

from the fact that the poor are black. I think these militants are right. First, there is what Hasenbal & Silva call a “cumulative disadvantage cycle”, which affects blacks. In other words, statistics show that not only the black’s starting point is at a disadvantage (heritage from the past), but that in every step of social, educational, and market competition, new discriminations are added, which cause a rise in disadvantages. In other words, the statistics show that the disadvantages of blacks are not only due to the past, but are heightened in the present through discrimination.

Secondly, and maybe most importantly, is how this discrimination presents itself. You could not state, in Brazil, as has been done in the United States or in South Africa, that the racial factor is a reason for explicit or directly detectable discrimination. On the contrary, in Brazil, the racial issue is usually diluted in a series of ascribed personal attributes. Using as an example access to employment, 45% of Brazilian blacks, according to Datafolha (1995), consider the main problem blacks experience: in the job market, esthetic and behavioral values translate as “good appearance”. This notion is the largest single factor responsible for discrimination against blacks and the poor<sup>2</sup>. Aside from “good appearance”, young university students looking for jobs also have to worry about their university’s good name. The market prefers the free public universities, in which competition for admission is great, than private universities<sup>3</sup>. The problem consists in the fact that the quality of the free public grade school has deteriorated so that any student who wishes to enter a free university must be able to pay for a private grade school. Not only do the young poor kids have no access to that, but also many of the wealthy blacks that don’t go to elite schools, must pay for their university education. So, the market and the government discriminate against blacks twice: first, the market offers more qualifications to students from private schools, and second, the government rewards students from the public universities better.

Furthermore, the market for less qualified jobs -- the ones the black and the poor have enough schooling to aspire towards -- is fragmented by areas, in large cities like São Paulo. The first question that candidates are asked when applying for a job is in what area of the city they live in, and how many buses or trains they will have to take to get to work. That diminishes the chances of blacks and poor people of getting a job. On one hand, the poor districts are stigmatized by violence, poor esthetics and dishonesty<sup>4</sup>; on the other hand, the richer districts are the ones that offer the best jobs.

There is still a more perverse kind of discrimination that cannot be ignored: gender. Poverty, lack of opportunity, salary inequality and discrimination affect women much more than men. In the last few years, women’s rights and equality between the sexes in the work place have improved the position of women in the job market. But, looking at statistics based on race, it is clear that these benefits affect only white women. In other words, female emancipation is restricted to the middle and upper classes, not benefiting poor women, who are usually black. The data show that, for instance, even as white women have expanded their participation in the PEA and in the job market, including income raises, black women are still plagued by unemployment and lower pay (Guimarães e Consoni 2000).

**Table 6: Distribution of working individuals in the Brazilian job market, according to gender and race, in 1989 and 1998**

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<sup>2</sup> The idea of “good appearance” is defined in the following way by a human resources consultant: “good appearance means success, attention, social acceptance. Even though we know that people should not be judged on appearances, in the real word the best looking ones are favored”

<sup>3</sup> Only three or four private universities, all in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, aren’t included in this rule.

<sup>4</sup> Terms like “slum-person”, for example is one of the most common racial insults in Brazil. (Guimarães 1999)



	PEA	
	1989	1998
<b>Black women</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>18.7</b>
<b>White women</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>23.5</b>
<b>Total Women</b>	<b>35.2</b>	<b>42.2</b>
<b>Black Men</b>	<b>28.3</b>	<b>26.6</b>
<b>White men</b>	<b>36.6</b>	<b>31.1</b>
<b>Total Men</b>	<b>64.8</b>	<b>57.8</b>

Source: PNAD/ IBGE Apud Guimarães e Consoni (2000)

**Table 7: Salary differences, by gender according to race, in the Transformation Industry between 1989 and 1998**

	WOMEN			MEN		
	BLACK	WHITE	W/B	BLACK	WHITE	W/B
<b>1989</b>	<b>417.5</b>	<b>801.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>803.5</b>	<b>1571.7</b>	<b>2.0</b>
<b>1998</b>	<b>263.9</b>	<b>438.1</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>393.9</b>	<b>790.3</b>	<b>2.0</b>

Source: PNAD/ IBGE (valores médios nominais) Apud: Guimarães e Consoni (2000)

As has been demonstrated, the Brazilian government has historically made little effort to address the problems of poverty, and the people who have been mainly affected by this, if not targeted by it, are the blacks. Education policies directed toward the black and the economically challenged, public health and sanitation programs, housing programs for the poor, and public transportation policies could all help reverse the poverty of the black population in Brazil. These policies, when considered in the job market perspective, would give blacks a fighting chance in competition with whites. An effective pursuit of these policies would mean that if blacks continue to be at a disadvantage in relation to whites, it would be solely because of their slave past.

This last point is important because affirmative action policies (the only ones that try to redeem past errors), proposed by the black leadership, have been rejected based on social class arguments (there is no black community per-se in Brazil, meaning a properly identified black identity). Well, we all know that the moral justification for this is based on the fact that Brazilians lack a sense of responsibility or blame for the past, which invalidates any reparation claim. Also, the Brazilian political scene shows a lack of feeling of responsibility towards the present and poverty: affirmative action designed to benefit the economically challenged population is equally rejected on behalf of merit by competition or academic excellence<sup>5</sup>, while policies for war on poverty are never executed. That is why it seems to me that the affirmation by black leaders that this indifference towards poverty and the legitimization of discrimination against the poor is racially motivated is very plausible.

<sup>5</sup> That is what happened with Law Project no 298/99, approved in the Senate, but ignored by educators, deans and intellectuals, including the more progressive media. This law, going through the House of Representatives, guarantees 50% of Brazilian public university openings for students coming from public grade schools, the only ones the economically challenged can go to.

The Brazilian elite does not accept effective measures against poverty. Undeniably, they defend secular values, protected by corporate interests. These interests keep anti-poverty measures from being taken or implanted by the Brazilian government. In a recent article, Elisa Reis (2000:187) expressed this difficulty in the following way:

“Another noticeable aspect of the elite political culture is the strong preference for universal social policies to counteract poverty and inequality. The survey data also show a strong elite consensus against affirmative action and taxing wealth. While recognizing that there is negative discrimination against blacks and women, the elite is not prepared to compensate for it with positive discrimination. Even education seems to be favored as the most effective solution to overcome poverty and inequality largely because it is perceived as a universal solution, free to all.”

This fight to implement social policies for the black population, for example, has among its enemies the best well-known social scientists of the country. They argue that these policies contradict liberal values (Reys: 1997) and insult the Brazilian sense of intelligence (daMatta 1997; Fry2000). For them, adopting these policies is EQUIVOCAL because it strengthens ethnical and racial identities, and racism; and goes against our cultural tradition. The intellectuals who defend the more radical anti-poverty measures, that include gender and race discrimination, are, therefore, seen as either too unrefined to understand the complexity of Brazilian culture (Fry: 2000), or they are ideologically contaminated by their involvement with the black movement

**Table 8: Brazilian's opinions on quotas, according to income class and race groups**

Agrees or disagrees with quotas <sup>6</sup>	Income class		Total	
Whites	Agree	Up to10 MS	11 or more MS	
		714	313	1027
		69,5%	30,5%	100,0%
	Disagree	54,3%	35,5%	46,7%
		602	568	1170
		51,5%	48,5%	100,0%
		45,7%	64,5%	53,3%
		1316	881	2197
		59,9%	40,1%	100,0%
100,0%	100,0%	100,0%		
Non-white (black and pardos)	Agree	736	181	917
		80,3%	19,7%	100,0%
		56,7%	37,6%	51,5%
	Disagree	562	301	863
		65,1%	34,9%	100,0%
		43,3%	62,4%	48,5%
		1298	482	1780
		72,9%	27,1%	100,0%
		100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Source: DataFolha, 1995.

What these authors ignore is that the Brazilian people do not reject affirmative action, even in the extreme form of quotas, as they suggest. The ones who reject them are the middle classes and the elites, including the intellectual ones. As early as 1995, a Datafolha research on racism showed that the poorest and less schooled are favorable towards these policies, and this situation inverts the higher you go, in the better off and more educated population. Is this intellectual and cultural refinement or blatant defense of class privileges? The same data show that it is not about simple racial bias, for support for these policies among the blacks that are better off diminishes. In other words, we are undeniably looking at a society in which privileges are well-structured and sedimented in race and gender groups. This means that these privileges are reproduced and amplified through discrimination (as opposed to this race and gender discrimination not existing). It means that racial peace, in Brazil, is equivalent to a black and white privileged pact (and those who do not accept the pact want racial war or unrest, and are intellectually and culturally low).

<sup>6</sup> The question that was asked was: There are people who defend that, in view of present and past discrimination against the black, the only way of guaranteeing racial equality is saving a part of the openings in universities and companies for the black population. Do you agree or disagree with saving work and study openings for the black?"

To conclude this part, I would like to discuss another aspect of the legitimacy of discrimination against the poor, which is expressed in the justification given to undeniable and recognized cases of discrimination against black people. In these cases, this discrimination is explained as one of social class and not racial discrimination. This popular argument was, in the 1940's, accepted and refined in the Brazilian social sciences by authors as important as Donald Pierson (1942), Marvin Harris (1966) and Thales de Azevedo (1953). As these authors were anti-racism heralds, that meant natural and legitimate treatment of class discrimination, forgetting the possibility that a poor person not having the full extent of his/her rights as a citizen was unacceptable in a democracy. The fact that the poor, in Brazil, aren't practically entitled to their rights has only become an issue recently, when the Brazilian social sciences started basing their doctrine on the ideology of modern citizenship<sup>7</sup>. Only after that have studies on violence, criminality and citizenship started to explicitly examine the daily discrimination perpetrated against all those who, because of their physical characteristics, especially their race, do not have subjective rights in the eyes of the government and its agencies.

### **Black protest in the 80s – the agenda**

The black social movement that broke out in the Brazilian political scene, in July 1978, was called MNU – Unified Black Movement against race discrimination, and this represents something new in the Brazilian political system. This new movement was described by Florestan Fernandes, in the preface to Abdias do Nascimento's book "O genocídio do negro brasileiro" (the genocide of the Brazilian black), published in 1978, as follows:

“(Abdias) puts the black and mulatto segments of the Brazilian population as being part of an African stock, that has peculiar cultural traditions and historical destinies. Summing that up, the idea of what a pluri-racial society should be in a democracy is born for the first time: either it's a democracy for all races, and guarantees economic, cultural and social equality, or a pluri-racial society doesn't exist.” (Nascimento 1978:20)

This new idea, shown by Florestan, went through a gestation throughout the 1970's, principally in Rio de Janeiro and Salvador, where what Jônatas da Silva (1988) called black “cultural auto-affirmation” matured rapidly. Following the purely political train of thought, the MNU in the 1980's traces its past in continuity with the black movements in the 1930's, 40's, 50's and 60's, in an evolutionary line where the ruptures reflect only the maturing of black ideology and the growth of the Brazilian society and nation. In other words, MNU was not like lightning out of a clear blue sky, and did not originate in a superficial past.

Between 1930 and 1964, Brazil was ruled by what political scientists called a “populist pact” or “national-development pact”. Through this pact, Brazilian blacks were totally integrated into the Brazilian nation, symbolically through the adoption of a mixed or syncretic culture, and materially, at least partially, through the job market regularization and urban social security, reversing the First Republic's exclusionary and uncompromising orientation. During this period, the organized black movement concentrated on the fight against racial prejudice, through an eminently universal policy of social integration of blacks into society, which had Brazilian “racial democracy” as an ideal to be attained.

When the military dictatorship took over in 1964, the populist pact was destroyed, and the link between the black protest and the political system was straightened, as this link was forged under

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<sup>7</sup> Habernas may be the contemporary author that most emphasized the normative fundamentals of the social sciences.

liberal nationalism. In the beginning of the 1960's Brazilian external affairs were under stress when it came to what policy should be adopted towards the liberation movements of the Portuguese colonies in Africa. The black movement in Brazil, influenced by the French Negritude movement, emphasized the African roots, which provoked reactions from intellectuals like Gilberto Freyre (1961, 1962) in his crusade for cultural mixing and Portuguese-tropicalism. The discussion on "racial democracy" in Brazil – a conflict between "cultural reality" (as Freyre and the conservative establishment wanted) and a "political ideal" (as the black movement and the liberals wanted) – radicalised both sides. The idea that the Brazilian "racial democracy" was nothing more than a mystification, a fib, a myth, then became dominant in the movement. At the same time political participation was restricted: liberals and dissident culturalists were excluded. From 1968 on, the most important Brazilian black leaders went into exile.

In Brazil, getting rid of racial democracy, in its conservative institutional social reality version and anchored on a state that sought to prevent the organization of anti-racist movements, became the top priority of the black resistance movement. But this resistance will first flourish in the cultural field than in the political field. There are many reasons for that, among them the most important is the repression of political activities and the direction the Brazilian external affairs were headed in the 1970's towards black Africa. The Brazilian policies in Africa explored two main things: Brazilian racial democracy, which required repression of black activists and the African origin of Brazilian culture – which will lead the State to encourage cultural afro-Brazilian manifestations, especially in Bahia.

In this game of repression and incentive, it will be the "black culture" and "African origins" that will be the paths through which an alternative discourse to the government's policy will arise. The terms "syncretic" and "mixture" will be substituted by "black" and "cultural purity". So, before 1978, when the Unified Black Movement was created in the main Brazilian cities, many black cultural entities were already searching for their ethnic affirmation, through the black cultural reconstruction<sup>8</sup>. Not only the African culture based in Brazil, but also the black-black urban culture will serve as references for this sort of black cultural renaissance in Brazil.

In the political scene, when the black movement was reborn, in 1978, it occurred at the same time as the redemocratization movement in the country. The analysis of their documents shows that the movement was articulated at several battle fronts: (a) for the redemocratization of the country; (b) for respecting human rights and citizenship (against torture, police arbitrariness, and detention); (c) for women's emancipation; (d) for respect for cultural diversity; and (e) against the worker's precarious situation. In all these battlefronts, the black movement acted through personal agendas. The redemocratization must not only contemplate black people's requests, but also black political representation; human rights are, after all, any citizen's rights, and most citizens are black, and commonly disrespected by the police and the government; respecting women's rights requires a specific fight for black women's rights, at all social levels, including inside the movement; respect for cultural differences means the affirmation of the black culture's autonomy, as different from the national culture; guaranteeing worker's rights means the end of racial discrimination in the work place.

Between roughly 1978 and 1985, the first phase of the black movement was part of an ample battle for the redemocratization of the country. It was also a phase of formation and organization of the movement, and the creation of black political and cultural entities. In this phase, there were tensions

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<sup>8</sup> Some examples: in Salvador: African Brazilian Cultural Nucleus, Ilê Ayê afro group, Bahian Confederation of Afro-Brazilian Cults, Palmares Iñaron group, in Rio de Janeiro: Brazil-Africa Exchange Society, Institute of Black Culture Research, Black Art and Culture Center, Quilombo Samba School, in São Paulo: Black Notebooks, Black Newspaper, Afro-Latin-America group, Young Brazil Recreational Association, Black Artist's group, Christian Charity Associations, Brazilian Africanist Study Institute.

between solely political organizations that emphasize worker's union, electoral and party participation, Brazilian-black style, and cultural organizations that emphasize creation of a new black culture. These two groups mirror the main influences of the black movement: on one hand the fight for Brazilian blacks and their culture; on the other the African political organizations fighting for liberty (Angola, Mozambique) and against apartheid (South Africa, Zimbabwe).

The MNU became a unifying reference. Three battle fronts gave prominence to the ideological side of the struggle: (a) denunciation of racism, racial discrimination and prejudice Brazilian blacks are a victims of; (b) denunciation of the racial democracy myth; (c) creation of a positive racial identity, through afro-centrism and *quilombismo*, which rescues the African heritage in Brazil (the invention of a black culture). The political side of the movement involved seeking the black vote through black candidates running in the opposition parties, and creating black centers in the political parties.

Even before the redemocratization of the country was accomplished in the 1982 state elections, the black militants had the opportunity to gain power in some states, like Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. They were incorporated into government organizations. It was time to create black centers in the main political parties, and creating state organizations that absorbed the militant demands in culture, legislation and executive action. In 1982, for instance, Salvador City Hall incorporated into the historical state patrimony the Terreiro da Casa Branca (White House religious area), the first candomble field in Bahia; in 1983, the Education Department also in Bahia included a subject in the public grade school curriculum: *Introduction to African studies*; in 1984, the São Paulo government created the Black Community Participation and Growth Council.

In São Paulo and in Rio de Janeiro the *esquerda* opposition to the dictatorship achieved power and attended to their black allies, who also belonged to the opposition. But in Bahia, the issue was about a movement for amplifying black cultural rights that, since the 1960's, have been used for Brazil's external affairs policies on Africa, for expanding the tourism industry in the state of Bahia.

This sponsoring of the afro-Brazilian culture created, not only in Bahia, but also in Rio de Janeiro, a sort of cultural rebirth, which benefited a lot of the young black militants. Lélia Gonzalez, for example, states that an important fact in MNU's formation was the Afro-Brazilian Week, in 1974, sponsored by the CEEA and SECNEB, which included an exposition of black culture and art. In that same year, SIBA (Africa-Africa Exchange Society) and IPCN (Institute of Black Culture Research) were created in Rio de Janeiro, and the Bahian Confederacy of Afro-Brazilian Cults (which joined with the Afro-Brazilian Cult Federation, created in 1946) and the Ilê Ayê Afro group were formed in Salvador. In 1976, the Afro-Brazilian Culture Nucleus was created in Salvador, and its manifest was published in the Bahia Tribune (December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1976), and in Rio the Black Culture Research Center and the Quilombo Samba School were created. Also in Salvador, historical decisions were made, governor Roberto Santos decreed that the candomble religious areas (terreiros) no longer needed a police license to work, and through an agreement between the Pro-Memory Foundation, the CEAO and the SECNEB, the first multi-cultural grade school curriculum was established in Axé Apo Afonjá School.

In other words, before the movement appeared on the national political scene with an agenda of radical anti-racist demands, the black "cultural affirmation" movement was very mature, and was protected by the "racial democracy", which goes as far back as the 1930's. In the 1980's, the new thing, as Florestan said, was the demand for the right to cultural difference *pari passu* the demand for social rights and respect for civil rights of blacks.

A new political institution was formed between 1985 and 1995, called The New Republic. The black activists were summoned to take their places in the newly created State councils and Ministries of the black community, and in the federal Palmares Foundation, created in 1988 by the federal Culture Department. An important symbolic victory is the fact that Serra da Barriga, where the Quilombo dos Palmares existed in the XVII century, led by the black hero Zumbi, was turned into national historic patrimony. The federal government had already started, symbolically, to incorporate the demands of the black movement<sup>9</sup>.

From this time, we also have the institution of a new anti-racist legislation, and its legal parameter was the 1988 review of the Constitution, which states in chapter 1, article 5, § XLII: “racism constitutes unprescribable crime with no possibility of bail, subject to imprisonment according to law”, and, in the Transitory Constitutional Dispositions Act, article 68: “to the descendants of the quilombo communities that still occupy that land, it is now considered their property and the State must emit the necessary titles.” On January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1989, law nº 7716 was passed, which defines the crimes on race or color prejudice. This law allows the fight against color prejudice and race discrimination to be backed up by legislation. The state constitutions, valid from 1989 on, will follow the Carta Magna<sup>10</sup>, in this aspect.

To conclude this part, let’s see what the black agenda was in the 80’s. The black movement’s greatest concern was always the black collective situation since the 1930’s. What has changed are the assessment and demands to reverse the situation. In the 30’s, it was about family disorganization, lack of instruction, deficient morality, observance of barbaric customs, etc. This sub-citizenship was the fruit of the state abandonment of and acceptance of the black population itself. In this diagnosis, there was mainly a lack of black leaders. But color prejudice was also largely blamed for the black’s lack of opportunity. In 1978, the MNU published the Open Letter to the Population Against Discrimination, in which it focused on the absence of social rights for blacks, attributing this absence to racism:

“Unemployed fathers, abandoned children, without medical care, family protection, schools or a future. It is this kind of collective, institutionalized racism that leads to all sorts of violence against a whole people.”

Organized action focuses on fighting racial discrimination and creating a racial conscience in the blacks and pardos, now united under the political denomination “black”<sup>11</sup>. The ideals to be immediately accomplished were establishment of November 20<sup>th</sup> National Black Conscience Day (1978), and fighting discrimination, which leads to, in December 1979, the 1<sup>st</sup> MNUCDR Conference, in Rio de Janeiro, to simplify the name of the movement: as the movement’s priority is fighting racial discrimination, its name was shortened to (what was already informally used) Unified Black Movement (MNU)” (Gonzalez 1982:64).

The 3<sup>rd</sup> MNU Conference, in 1982, discussed the statistics on spatial distribution of whites and blacks based on the 1976 PNAD (there are more blacks in the poorer regions); and the income, education, and general situation of black women. The strategy applied to correct these inequalities is also collective: “in the fight against racism, we blacks from MNU wish to free the black community and all the oppressed. And, in this battle, we do not settle for less than unifying all the oppressed in this fight.” And the manifesto concludes :

“Therefore, the MNU must organize the black population in its entities, samba schools, umbanda and candomblé terreiros, recreational clubs, afoxé groups, and

<sup>9</sup> See Maggie (1989) and Santos (2000) about it.

<sup>10</sup> The anti-racist Brazilian legislation is grouped and commented on by Silva Jr. (1998)

<sup>11</sup> For us who belong to the Unified Black Movement, blacks and their descendants constitute only one people.

organize them into syndicates, neighborhood associations, political parties, prisons, police and armed forces.”(MNU, no date)

“Appearing politically in touch with the *esquerda* front, principally the worker’s movement, mentioning neighborhood associations” reflects the political mobilization of these entities; while defining “black spaces” shows not only the previous founding of a black cultural identity, but also the wish to expand that into new areas, such as state controlled areas, like prisons, the police and the armed forces.”

The main issues addressed in the manifesto are:

1. Racial discrimination at the work place. The arguments here are rather vague, the clearest of them being the historic one: the European work force substituted the black workers post-abolition. The movement seems leery of confronting the worker’s unions.

2. Unemployment and sub-employment of the black population. The diagnosis is weak; there is no research data. They try for a common fight with the worker’s unions and political parties to try to organize sub-employment.

1. The black population’s terrible living conditions, that the manifesto calls racial division of space, as an analogy to racial and sexual division of work, which is shown as segregation. In this item, the movement expresses the necessity of organizing neighborhood associations.

2. Citizenship and civil rights. The manifesto points out the police’s racism in daily life and the disrespectful situation of the detention houses according to human rights.

3. Homeless children. The manifesto demands schools, day care centers, community and culture centers.

4. Black culture. The strategy adopted was preserving and bettering the already present agglutination forms – carnival, religious parties, afro-Brazilian dance groups, black contemporary dance, and denouncing “the racist language present not only in the population’s mannerisms but also in the mass media”. The movement is also against the commercialization of black culture and asks for a guarantee on religious freedom concerning the afro-Brazilian religions.

5. Education. The diagnosis is precise: in the case of black children, it’s in school that their psychological, emotional and cultural structure is broken, through the internalization of the whitening ideology, the myth of Brazilian cordiality and racial democracy. The demands are not only particular – non-racist content, giving blacks their due in school books, subjects or African history -, but also universal – more openings in public schools, more scholarships, installation of public technical schools, free public schooling at all levels.

6. Black women. It shows some concern with mass sterilization campaigns, seen as a racist tactic, and denounces the worse working conditions for black women, which are the main victims of “good appearance”. Part of this problem is due to the chauvinism in the black movement.

7. About the worker’s unions, the manifesto states that “the MNU, which defends the most exploited people in the Brazilian society, must take part in fighting and participating in unions and factory committees, for it’s an important base for our demands, for the working class, we remind you, is the class that has the best historical conditions for creating a just and egalitarian society, so our centers must be present in all worker’s unions composed of a large number of blacks.



8. Rural areas. In this item, the movement fights for Land Tenure Reform.

From 1983 on, MNU centers or new black activists started being incorporated into city, state and federal committees, ministries and foundations, that struggle for the growth of black culture, or defending what's in the interest of the black communities. Since 1988, a new juridical base for institutionalization was set, which is amply favorable to black interests, and a good many black militants who were in MNU, in political parties, unions and state organizations went to what has been called the 4<sup>th</sup> sector: the non-governmental organizations (ONGs). That does not mean that the MNU no longer exists, but rather it's one more black organization, it also doesn't mean that state organizations, unions or political parties no longer recruit black activists. In fact, as will be seen, since 1995, black recruitment has grown for federal government organizations. The big news, though, is the proliferation of organizations in the black movement in society in general. To highlight most important black entities we will cite the creation, in 1988, of Geledes – Institute for Black Women; in 1989, of CEAP – Articulation Center for Marginalized Populations; in 1990, the CEERT, Inequality and Work Relationship Study Center; and in 1993 the Fala Preta Black Women's Organization. The fact is that black NGOs have grown steadily, encouraged by incentives provided by the growth of international funding for philanthropy.

Rosana Heringer (2000) documents and classifies 124 main ONGs in 1999, and their activities:

**Table 9: Focus areas**

	Frequency	Percentage
Education	38	30,6
Work and income	25	20,2
Human rights and advocacy	24	19,4
Health	3	2,4
Information	12	9,7
Legislation	8	6,5
Culture	10	8,1
Other	2	1,6
Not informed	2	1,6
Total	124	100,0

Source: IERÊ/ IFCS research, 1999.

These NGOs concentrate on (a) fighting racial prejudice – the S.O.S.Racism has been created for law services – taking advantage of the fact that racism has become a crime by law 7719; (b) fighting discrimination in the work place, making sure that the International Convention laws, of which Brazil is a part, are effectively respected in the country; (c) in the health area; (d) in the education and qualification for work area; (e) in the child protection area.

**New governmental responses to black protest**

From 1982 on, as has been partially shown, the black movement's major demands started to find positive responses from the government, through changes in the political and institutional areas of the country. Some of these demands, though, were more seriously confronted from 1995 on, as for instance human rights. In 1995, because of the Real Plan, the country became economically stable and a somewhat liberal government led by PSDB was elected. Under these conditions, much of the purely political militancy found itself without anything strong to mobilize the people. The same occurs with black militancy. The new federal administration began, as soon as it got into the government, to incorporate the demands of the movement, through the (a) creation of a Human Rights Department, which quickly came up with Human Rights National Plan, that absorbed most of the demands concerning stopping random imprisonment, beatings and torture, race discrimination, racist expressions, etc; (b) creating an Interdepartmental Work Group (GTI), presided by a black leader, responsible for drawing up a battle plan against discrimination and racial inequalities; (c) the Education Department made sure school books with racist content and other blatant errors were no longer used, and implanted programs to universalize grade school teaching; (d) the Health Department acting on reproductive and child health, and sickle-cell anemia; (e) the Work Department created qualification programs for the workers, that take into consideration their race and gender, and made sure that the international conventions on racial discrimination were implemented and obeyed; (f) creation of the Palmares Foundation, to inventory the "lands that belong to the black" and title them according to the Transitory Constitutional Dispositions. Up until 2000, the Palmares Foundation had inventoried 50 black (originally quilombo) communities.

In 1997, the president passed law 9459 that modified the penalty for racial discrimination, setting a maximum of 5 years. This law was a victory of the black NGOs that were tired of police departments calling discrimination "injury" (Guimarães 1998). But, when the law was passed, the black movement wasn't engaged in amplifying the S.O.S Racismo program. On the contrary, it was becoming a consensus among the activists that if a discrimination case wasn't a good enough example to call a lot of attention, then it should be left for the competent authorities to handle, leaving the NGOs to fight a more resistant enemy: racial inequalities.

From 1997 on, up-front affirmative action against racial discrimination was firmly implanted, with the creation of GTI. In that same year, GTI and the Justice Department organized a public seminar in Brasilia, with the support of the president and vice-president, which included the participation of the press, many intellectuals and black militants, to discuss affirmative action and multiculturalism as a way of promoting interracial peace. The intellectual's reactions, not only academic but also writers and newspapers, in that seminar and in the others that followed it, was the worst possible, so the government stoutly abandoned any initiative in that area. But the subject is still being discussed in society in general, and public organizations, like universities, have become more interested, especially when it comes to gathering information on the black's access to higher schooling, just as private companies have started adopting diversity policies, some of them responding to incentives by the government itself – be it the federal Work Department, city or state.

The black movement has started increasingly to discuss and look for policies that fight inequality, diminishing its historical emphasis on racial prejudice. In the higher education area, pre-college courses for blacks and the economically challenged<sup>12</sup> are rapidly created, mainly by black missionary agents, linked to the Catholic Church, and by new NGOs created for this purpose. Also, teaching, research and extension programs and committees targeting the afro-Brazilian population have been rapidly created in Brazilian Universities.

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<sup>12</sup> See Maggie (2001) for an initial evaluation of these programs

The federal government has pursued mainly color-blind anti-poverty programs like Alvorada, Avanço Brazil and Comunidade Solidária, but there are some programs led by the Justice Department (National Human Rights program), the Work Department (“Brasil: Raça e Gênero” (Brazil: race and gender) and PLANFOR – qualification for work program), and the Culture Department (Quilombo Land Titling program) that take race into consideration.

According to the Brazilian government, there have been advances in the anti-poverty battles: the BRASIL2000 program compares data from 1990 and 1997, and found a 10% reduction in the number of people below the poverty line (44% to 34% of the population). This reduction is attributed to the Real Plan.

But, even as we accept that the recent economic stability has reduced absolute poverty, there seems to be no drop in social inequalities. That is what Barros et al (2000) say: “the biggest drop in the degree of inequality, albeit of little relevance, is on the eve of the nineties, between 1989 and 1992. Particularly, with regard to the Real Plan, there is no evidence whatsoever that it has had any significant impact on reducing the degree of inequality, although poverty has diminished considerably, as described herein above.”

Also, the recent drop in absolute poverty cannot be considered permanent, but, on the contrary, a downward oscillation that will depend on economic growth in the future. At least, that is what the data suggest:

“During the past two decades, the intensity of poverty has been relatively stable, with only two slight drops at the time when the Cruzado and Real plans were implemented. This stable behavior, with the percentage of the poor swinging between 40% and 45% of the population, demonstrates fluctuations associated, especially, with the unstable macroeconomic dynamics of that period. The degree of poverty reached its maximum during the recession in the early eighties, in 1983 and 1984, when the percentage of poor passed the 50% barrier. The sharpest drops were the result, as mentioned, of the impacts of the Cruzado and Real plans, causing the percentage of the poor to fall below 30% and 35%, respectively.”(Barros et al 2000:)

It is undeniable, though, that the Brazilian government has uncontested victories. Using the PNAD data from 1999, it can be seen that the illiteracy dropped from 14% in 1995 to 5.5% in 1999, the number of children out of school declined from 17.8% to 4.3% between 1989 and 1999, the number of houses with access to plumbing grew from 76.3% to 79.8% between 1995 and 1999.

But, considering a country that uses about 20% of its GNP on social programs, and has an annual per capita income of about US\$2900.00, the high poverty levels, according to the general opinion of intellectuals and the present government, “are linked to the extremely unequal distribution of money and little-effective public funding” (Brazil 2000).

## Conclusions

Even though black poverty and racial inequalities in the country have been the focus of study of a couple of intellectuals and black political leaders since the 1930’s, the truth is that only recently did the Brazilian government admit to the fact that these inequalities, and racism, constitute social problems that should be solved. But, even nowadays, Brazilian intellectuals still have the idea that the black problem is part of the country’s problem; that you can not find a solution for it if not through universal measures that solve the class inequalities.

Blacks have historically concentrated their energies in a largely ideological fight, putting themselves in the spotlight as the object of discrimination and racial prejudices, and as having a cultural identity of their own. They seek prove that (a) they exist as as a social group, and (b) they are not given the same rights as other racial groups. Only recently has the black movement and the state adopted affirmative measures in educational programs, job qualifications and jobs. These measures, though, are still limited in scope.

When it comes to the centenary government poverty fighting programs that use universal measures, it is a consensus among Brazilian intellectuals that those resources are greatly wasted, by lack of technical efficiency, irregular (in the eyes of the law) choice of companies, or simple corruption.

Even though the present government has tried to correct many of these errors, there are no indications that its corrections have altered the poverty and inequality in the country. That is because all the government's social investment seems only enough to compensate for the anti-social effects of the economic growth policies. Even though the present Brazilian democracy has incorporated 83% of its population as voters, a much bigger political mobilization would be necessary, especially black mobilization, for the economic growth policies to be truly what the majority of the population wants.

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