Equality and Difference: Identity Politics in Brazil

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EQUALITY AND DIFFERENCE: IDENTITY POLITICS IN BRAZIL

Our discourse about race in the United States has lost its moorings. We're not sure whether "race" even exists. We suspend our disbelief to procure equal rights and opportunity for all. But the narratives of color-blindness and integration generated in the civil rights era are worn thin, and the legal race barriers that served as the site of struggle for the civil rights movement are gone. We are now struggling to construct ideas and language adequate to challenge the thickets of racial exclusion and subordination. Meanwhile, conservatives claim victory, pointing to a tiny number of successful African Americans as proof that we've achieved the goal of color-blind equal opportunity. This dilemma accurately describes the state of discourse about race in Brazil as well, where there never were legal race barriers or a color line.

Tania, a teacher's union director, confessed in 1992 that she'd only just discovered a language about race in Brazil:

As a student, I had never reflected very much about these things. Later, when I got involved in the [black] student group, I discovered that the anguish that I felt

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all along, but hadn’t known how to call it, had a name. It was racial discrimination. And I began to perceive that that was the source of the anguish I was feeling...3

Identity politics is a transnational politics that uncovers the political as deeply personal. Particularly now, as the ideologies of the Cold War are muted, defense of nation states and the struggle of labor against capital have given way to ethnic identity movements fighting for autonomy in polities all over the world. The politics of those movements speaks to the individual’s experience of oppression, seeking full citizenship rights and access to opportunity for its members.

In the United States, contemporary identity politics took root in the battle for civil rights and women’s rights, when African Americans and women argued that discrimination on the basis of race or gender violated their rights. Their arguments were based on the idea that no essential differences divide us and their goal was a color-blind system of equal opportunity regardless of race or sex. This liberal position overlooked real and important differences among groups -- most of all individuals’ sense of identification with the history and culture of their own group. Women, African Americans, gays and lesbians, Latinos and others claimed and celebrated their uniqueness, putting to rest the idea that universal equality implies sameness. "Difference politics" became a politics of affirming and mobilizing around class, race, gender and other differences as a source of strength.

Today, identity politics questions the freezing of identities that may harness individuals into categories without recognizing their personal experience of multiple identities and allegiances. Post-essential identity politics therefore pursues cultural affirmation and legal strategies for equality but realizes that identities are not fixed and may be renegotiated. As in all social movements, language serves as a primary means of constructing and reconstructing identities, and this paper argues

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3 Tania Silva, Coordinator of the Sindicato de Professores da CUT in Porto Alegre: "Com minha inserção dentro do movimento estudantil é que eu fui saber que o nome dessas questões todas que me angustiavam e ao qual eu não sabia me referir, eu fui sabendo que era discriminação racial" (Interview in Porto Alegre, November, 1992).
that the discourse of identity construction and mobilization -- of identity politics -- has become a transnational phenomenon.

The language of identity politics has been embraced in the strategies and discourse of the Brazilian black and women's movements over the past decade. As social movements, unionists and political parties negotiate new constructions of race, gender and class, leftist politics has begun to integrate the discourses of difference and equality.

Identity politics in Brazil are deployed in a transnational dialogue through which the lines separating national and international politics are disappearing. In Portuguese, "transbordar" means to spill over; this is a useful metaphor for the transcendence of borders we are witnessing today among women, African American and African Brazilian activists, white and black unionists and even human relations professionals in international business. All are involved in exchanges that increase public consciousness of gender and racial identity and attempt to remove barriers to equality.

These processes are explored here in the context of debates surrounding equal opportunity policies -- usually referred to as "positive discrimination" or "quotas" -- in contemporary Brazil. As one part of a larger project, this account will focus mainly on race, referring to the women's movement or discourses about gender when they are suggestive of more general trends in Brazil's emergent identity politics.

I explore here how affirming difference (in contrast to the idealized and transcendent Brazilian national identity) may risk either reinforcing essentialist biases or appear to discriminate against those who are different. I am interested in Brazilian leftists' talk about identity and difference; about whether equality in Brazil requires the same or different treatment; whether equal treatment holds for people in unequal situations; whether it is just to single out categories of people for special
treatment; and how to approach these questions when the identity categories are fluid, as in the case of Brazilian racial identity.

This study draws on 88 open-ended interviews with Brazilian union and labor party officials representing all three labor confederations (CUT, CGT and Força Sindical) and the Workers Party (PT) and Democratic Labor Party (PDT), conducted between November 1992 and January 1995 in six Brazilian cities. A preliminary review of the strategies of the women's and African Brazilian movements today serves as a background to the second part of this text, which explores leftists' interpretations of racial difference, equality and equal opportunity measures.

Discourses of union and labor party officials were chosen for analysis because their sympathies and resistances to the claims of identity groups would represent the potential and limits of large-scale mobilization to combat discrimination in Brazil. Race and gender were explored together in the interviews because there appeared to be synergies in movement strategies and discourses -- which will be explored explicitly in a later paper. Analytically as well, blacks and women, and particularly black women, have been assigned primary responsibility for production and the reproduction of the labor force in Brazil's agricultural, industrial and household economies. Therefore, in relation to capital, the fortunes of women and blacks are profoundly intertwined.

The most striking feature of the group interviewed is its extraordinary educational mobility. A full 64 percent of the 88 union and party officials had some post-secondary or university education (compared to the national average of eight percent). The fathers of three-quarters of the group had primary or less education, and only five mothers of the 88 had a post secondary education. The blacks

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4 Some would disagree with my characterization of some of the groups interviewed as 'leftist', but official representatives of the labor confederations and the two 'workers' parties were selected for interviews in order to inquire into their class analyses and their incorporation (or not) of identity politics in a class analysis.
interviewed, particularly the black women, were even more educationally mobile than the whites, in the sense that they had come from families that were farther behind. Sixty-five percent of the black women interviewed had post-secondary education (compared to the national average of 2.5 percent of black (preta) women and 3.2 percent of brown women (pardas)), and their parents had even lower education levels than the parents of the whites.

White women were the best educated of the group. Eighty-two percent of them had post-secondary or university education, but their parents also tended to be more well educated. So, in terms of education, the white women were actually less mobile than the rest of the group.

The high educational achievement of the entire sample is consistent with their leadership in the unions and parties. The great majority of the leaders had come from disadvantaged backgrounds, and while they were far from rich, they had tasted the fruits of hard-earned success. Clearly, the elected and appointed officials of the workers parties and labor unions belong to a unique group of people -- highly motivated, articulate and much more educated than the general Brazilian population. We cannot assume that these subjects represent anyone beyond themselves. Moreover, the sample size, interview method and analysis techniques used in this study do not allow for generalizations. Chi-tests of the coded interview responses confirmed that the findings are not statistically significant. This inquiry, therefore, is not intended to draw any conclusions about overall endorsement, or even leftist support, for affirmative action in Brazil. Instead, patterns that emerged

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5 1990 National Household Survey. Data from the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), Brazil's national statistical institute, demonstrate that conditions for preto and pardo groups are analogous for a range of socio-economic indicators, to the degree that they effectively form a single racial group when contrasted with indicators for white Brazilians. IBGE now publishes much of its statistical data on race in dichotomous form, grouping pretos and pardos into the negro category. In this article, the convention adopted by African Brazilian organizations will apply: "black" (preto), "brown" (pardo) and negro will be translated either as "black" or "African Brazilian," except where otherwise specified.
in the interviews may allow us to detect trends and generate hypotheses for further investigation.

Movement strategies and leftists' discourses evidence the emergence of an increasingly dynamic and transnational identity politics in Brazil that may shape leftists' endorsement of affirmative action policies. Overall, approval preferential policies in a 1995 national Datafolha survey and in my study were nearly identical. Among whites, exactly the same proportion (32 percent) supported affirmative action measures in my study as in the national study. 42 percent of blacks in my study and 40 percent of blacks in the Datafolha study endorsed affirmative action. The Datafolha data indicate that approval of affirmative action measures for blacks drops with higher education and income levels, even though awareness of racial discrimination was more widely reported among the better educated. My interviews with highly educated leftists confirm the national trend toward declining support for affirmative actions with higher education. But in my study, awareness of discrimination did not increase between secondary and university levels of education. (This was also the case for the white group in the Datafolha study.)

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6 Datafolha, São Paulo, "300 Anos de Zumbi: Os Brasileiros e o Preconceito de Cor" (São Paulo), 1995. The Datafolha interviews asked a random stratified sample of over 5,000 subjects in 121 cities, "Do you agree or disagree that educational or employment positions should be reserved for blacks?" In my study, subjects were asked how they felt about the CUT's gender "quotas" policy, and whether it should be considered for blacks. And to avoid biases inherent in the idea of quotas I also asked subjects what they thought of the idea of reserved access to training opportunities to improve the job skills of women or blacks within a company.

7 In the Datafolha study, greater increases in awareness of discrimination occurred between primary and secondary education levels. Differences between secondary and post-secondary education levels were negligible. Awareness of discrimination was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Whites(%)</th>
<th>Mulattos(%)</th>
<th>Negros(%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-secondary</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In my sample, 68 percent of those with secondary education and 59 percent of those with university education (completed) cited specific cases of racial discrimination. The number of subjects in my sample with just primary education was too small for comparison.
While I found rates of approval comparable to the overall national sample as well as the tendency for support to decline with higher education, my sample was much more educated than in the national survey. Therefore, endorsement of affirmative action among less educated unionists and party members could be very strong (i.e., proportionately stronger than their well-educated counterparts). In any case, we may conclude that leftists are more supportive of affirmative action than their counterparts at similar education levels in the national survey. The leftists have adopted transnational discourses of diversity and difference that may open new pathways to authentic democracy.

Public Denial of Difference

As the single country that imported the largest number of slaves to the new world and officially encouraged miscegenation among Portuguese colonizers and Africans,\(^8\) over 45 percent of Brazil's population now identifies itself as preto or pardo. Nevertheless, Brazil has for decades promoted a singular "supraracial" national identity, cast in a pervasive national narrative of racial democracy. Denial and mystification of race differences is widespread, and even acknowledging difference is considered tantamount to discrimination.

In his 1995 inaugural speech, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso reinforced this deeply ingrained belief:

> We Brazilians are a people with great cultural homogeneity. Our...basic culture [is] born of the encounter of...Portuguese, African and indigenous [cultures].\(^9\)

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8 According to the 1798 census, slaves represented 48.7 percent of the Brazilian population. Brazil was one of the last countries in the Western hemisphere to abolish slavery, in 1888.
9 President Cardoso's rhetoric shifted by Independence Day, 1996, when he applauded Brazil's "distinct" races, making for a "diversity" that enriches the national culture.
During his campaign, Mr. Cardoso wasn't quite as elegant when he tried to say the same thing by claiming that he, like most Brazilians, was in fact a mulatto, with "one foot in the kitchen" himself.\textsuperscript{10}

In spite of the longstanding official discourse, darker-skinned Brazilians continue to endure the effects of discrimination in the workplace, schools, the public health system and politics. Among Brazil's poor, those who identified themselves in the national census as \textit{preto} or \textit{pardo} can expect to lose more children to disease and malnutrition, die at an earlier age and earn significantly less than Brazilians of primarily European descent with the same levels of education, job experience and housing conditions.\textsuperscript{11} That is, race differences remain even when class conditions are held constant.

Illiteracy rates of black children are more than double the levels for whites (1987 PNAD). The numbers of African Brazilians working in low-wage construction and domestic services are twice that of white Brazilians in those sectors, and across all sectors (except domestic services), white Brazilians earn more than African Brazilians in the same occupations by 57 to 73 percent.\textsuperscript{12} Less than three percent of economically active blacks have attained management positions,\textsuperscript{13} and extremely few African Brazilians are found in higher education, public office or the media. In Bahia, as state where 80 percent of the population identifies itself as \textit{preto} or \textit{pardo},\textsuperscript{14} only five percent of all lawyers are black, and three percent of the state Attorney

\textsuperscript{10} This was an unfortunate reference to the common Brazilian dictum which implies that the "place" of African Brazilians is in the kitchen. See \textit{Folha de São Paulo}, May 31, 1994.
General’s Offices (Ministerio Público) are black. African Brazilians are excluded from many private clubs; they are more likely than whites to be arrested and convicted and serve longer sentences for similar crimes.

Many Brazilians and Brazil-watchers argue, with the likes of Thomas Sowell, that the mere presence of inequality is not evidence of discrimination. Using a version of Sowell’s market analyses of the distribution of human capital and structures of opportunity, Brazilian analysts still draw upon Florestan Fernandes’ notion of the ‘legacy of slavery’ to explain why blacks, 107 years after abolition, are still overwhelmingly represented among the poorest Brazilians, have the country’s highest illiteracy rates and make up the overwhelming majority of the prison population. This view considers the situation to be a result of longstanding (and naturalized) social inequalities that keep African Brazilians from being able to ‘compete’ -- to use Fernandes’ term -- in a modern capitalist economy. This interpretation has only recently been contested, and it is still the dominant view among mainstream Brazilians.

Brazilians respond to the so-called handicaps of the descendents of slaves with the trope of absorption, having long prided themselves on their inclusive color-blind society as Brazil’s unique identity. Attending to racial differences is considered rude and avoided at all costs. This has resulted in a multitude of oblique color categories and terms for racial identity, distancing

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15 Personal communication, Dora Lúcio Bertulio, March 24, 1997.
everyone from a frontal black category.\textsuperscript{20} And as anthropologist Roberto da Matta has articulated, the taboo against naming differences has impeded social mobilization as well:

In Brazil the very notion of democracy tends to be equated with a refusal to allow the definition (and closure) of social groupings, and this attitude prevents the formation of interest groups that would be politically representative, hence politically powerful.\textsuperscript{21}

The formal blurring of difference, as a demobilizing national project, has prompted activists such as the former Democratic Workers Party (PDT) Senator, Abdias do Nascimento, to reflect on the failure of his legislative proposals to address racism:

Nobody in Brazil ever says they’re against blacks, that they’re racist; everybody is a friend. This is the Brazilian technique, they just let things fall into a vacuum...If you ask, [they'll say] 'Here, racism doesn't exist -- Struggle? For what?'\textsuperscript{22}

PT Senator Benedita da Silva spoke of this blind spot in her analysis of her 1992 campaign for the mayoralty of Rio de Janeiro:

Our campaign didn't prioritize race issues. Neither were women's issues a priority. But the fact that I was a black woman made the party

\textsuperscript{20} In the 1976 National Household Survey (PNAD) conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, a sample of 50,000 respondents was asked their "color or race" using no predetermined categories. 135 different terms were cited.

UN Rapporteur Maurice Glélè-Ahanhanzo also observed that when subjects were asked to identify their color in the 1991 national census, more than 100 shades of color were "used to describe themselves, out of a desire to distance themselves as far as possible from the colour black." See Maurice Glélè-Ahanhanzo, "Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Third Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination," Commission on Human Rights, United Nations Economic and Social Council, New York, 23 January 1995, p.12.

One of the social scientists participating in UNESCO-sponsored studies in the 1950s, Marvin Harris found over forty different color classifications, which he interpreted as avoidance of identification as black. He surmised that "as far as actual behavior is concerned, races do not exist for Brazilians." See Marvin Harris, "Race Relations in Minas Velhas, a Community in the Mountain Region of Brazil," in Wagley, Charles, ed. Race and Class in Rural Brazil (Paris: UNESCO) 1952, pp. 47-81. See also Marvin Harris, Josildeth Gomes Consorte, Joseph Lang, Bryan Byrne, "Who are the Whites? Imposed Census Categories and the Racial Demography of Brazil," Social Forces, 72(2), December 1993, p.451-462; and Harris, Marvin, Patterns of Race in the Americas (New York: Walter) 1964.

\textsuperscript{21} See Roberto da Matta, Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes: an Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press) 1991, 102.

\textsuperscript{22} Interview in Rio de Janeiro, December 1992.
confront this debate...It was important that the PT was forced to be confronted with this situation in the campaign...since race is very difficult to bring up, to focus on, in any party, and the left's class analysis has rarely discussed it.\textsuperscript{23}

Historically, Brazilian leftists have focused on Brazil's inequitable class structure as the single determinant underlying all of the nation's extreme socioeconomic disparities. But in the wake of the political opening in the 1970s, after 21 years of military rule, advocates of women's and African Brazilians rights have raised awareness of gender and racial discrimination and identities, pressing for specific policies to address sexism and racism. Most of the political parties and labor unions have established departments to defend the interests of women and blacks, and many progressive Brazilian political leaders are now beginning to confront their own longstanding convictions about the 'cordiality' of Brazilian race and gender relations. As a result, the CUT, PT and PDT have each mandated quotas for women's representation among the leadership, although the policies are still controversial and unevenly enforced.\textsuperscript{24} In 1996, the \textit{bancada feminina} (women's congressional caucus) pushed through a law requiring parties to include women among at least 20 percent of their candidates for municipal elections.\textsuperscript{25}

\textbf{Transnational Articulation: The Women's and Black Movements}

\textsuperscript{23} Interview in Rio de Janeiro, November 1992.
\textsuperscript{24} Despite these signs of potential, neither African Brazilians nor women have amassed political clout. Both blacks and women are still poorly represented among the leadership of Brazil's hundreds of trade unions and 26 political parties. African Brazilian representation among leadership of the trade union movement cannot in fact be measured, as a Director of the Teachers Union in Porto Alegre, Tania Silva, observed:

The unions don't ask for color on the membership form, because up to now, they had the idea that this would be discriminating against the unionist. [Interview in Porto Alegre, December 1992]

Women's participation in organized labor has been stronger than their access to party leadership. In fact, increases in the number of women in trade unions have been greater than their growth in the economically active population. In a 1988 survey of 5,500 urban and rural trade unions, 8.4 percent of union leaders were women, the majority urban. In 1981, women represented only 4.9 percent of the leadership of the most important political parties, and this actually dropped to 4.6 percent a decade later. Women in 1996 held only seven percent of all nationally elected congressional posts. Blacks held less than 5 percent.

As reflected in the gender quotas policies, principles of equal opportunity -- never before implemented in Brazil -- are beginning to be tested. Small, informal affirmative action programs at several universities have experimented with preferential admissions policies, and the University of São Paulo established in 1996 a Commission to investigate and make recommendations for "quotas" policies. Models for these policies are implicitly drawn from international experiences, and as a result have been disputed as divisive instruments imported by radicals, veiled attempts to threaten national sovereignty, or unrealistic bids to impose identities inappropriate to Brazil's 'national' identity.

In another set of international strategies, black movement and feminist activists are developing legal and policy initiatives that appeal to the authority of international law, including, among others, the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination, CEDAW (Women's Convention Against All Forms of Discrimination), and ILO Convention 111, which provides for salary equity. Brazil is a signatory of all these conventions but until very recently has never been held to account for enforcing them.

With the political opening, the Brazilian women's movement moved before the black movement to engage internationally in mobilizing around identity-specific issues. This movement was strongly influenced by the experiences of women who had been in exile in Europe and participated in feminist groups there.

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26 Examples of such programs are the Federal Fluminense University, the Institute of Philosophy and Social Sciences at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, and the State University of Rio de Janeiro.
27 Reactions to the transnational strategies and discourse are cast in nationalist narratives. A similar sort of nationalist rhetoric has registered disapproval of President Cardoso's international dialogues with leaders from the industrialized and large developing countries (Japan, Germany, US, China, Russia, India). President Cardoso's strategy of increasing his international exposure in order to strengthen his political power internally has provoked the opposition to stir up nationalist sentiments, such as the legislation proposed by a PDT deputy (Matheus Schmidt) that would force the president to only speak Portuguese when travelling abroad. See O Globo, April 24, 1996.
28 A book published by CFEMEA and circulated among women's groups, Guia dos Direitos da Mulher (1994), lists national and international conventions and legal instruments relevant to women's rights.
In 1992, in collaboration with women's organizations all over the world, Brazilian women coordinated the Planeta Fêmea (Female Planet) at the NGO Earth Summit Conference parallel to the U.N. Conference on the Environment and Development. This is when the enormous potential for international articulation became clear to Brazilian feminists, who found that the women's movement worldwide was poised to develop worldwide networks. Since 1993, in anticipation of the U.N. Conferences on Human Rights (1993), Population and Development (1994) and the Beijing Women's Conference (1995), Brazilian feminist scholars and activists mobilized women all over the country to hold the government accountable for enforcing the human rights and women's rights conventions it ratified in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as to provide input to the platform statements presented at the official U.N. meetings.

In a show of their political strength in 1994, feminists who gained a place in Brazil's official delegation to the U.N. Conference on Population and Development convinced the Brazilian government to back a reproductive rights agenda, in opposition to the agendas of both the Vatican and the population control community. The official delegation to Beijing (1995) included feminist NGO activists, and the Brazilian government platform reflected priorities that had emerged from a series of regional public seminars that the Foreign Ministry had commissioned, organized by feminist consultants.

While most observers agree that in the U.S. the women's movement followed on the heels of the civil rights movement, in Brazil the Black movement has followed the women's movement in seeking international interlocutors, particularly from the labor movement and from African and African American activists. For example, CUT and an African Brazilian organization, the Center for

the Study of Labor Relations and Equality (CEERT) organized an Interamerican Trade Union Conference for Racial Equality in November of 1994. The conference convened unionists representing all three of Brazil's labor confederations to meet with high-level African Americans from the AFL-CIO, the A. Philip Randolph Foundation and South African unionists to exchange strategies for combatting racism in the workplace and to debate the role of the labor movement in advocating equal opportunity policies. One strategy that emerged, which has since been advanced, was for unionists on both sides of the equator to hold U.S. multinationals accountable to enforce equal opportunity policies in Brazil that are consistent with their corporate policies toward U.S. workers.

Another outcome of the conference was that Brazil's three labor confederations united in a national Campaign to Enforce the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention 111. Pressures from that campaign led President Cardoso to create in March of 1996 a Working Group within the Ministry of Labor to address job discrimination (The Working Group for the Elimination of Occupational and Employment Discrimination). And in October of 1996 the ILO and the Ministry of Labor held a conference on diversity policies -- the first official recognition of the diversity concept -- with private sector and NGO participation. Six multinationals were invited to describe how they have applied diversity policies in Brazil.

African Brazilian and women's activist organizations have begun to strategically enlist multinationals and progressive business groups (such as National Entrepreneurial Ideas -- Pensamento Nacional das Bases Empresariais) in their efforts to educate Brazilian government and industry about how diversity policies are good for both business and the consolidation of democracy. In November 1996 and again

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31 This meeting was followed up in 1995 with a conference hosted by the AFL-CIO in Washington, D.C.
in March, 1997, a feminist NGO, ELAS, and African Brazilian organizations enlisted significant private sector support to further discuss affirmative action and diversity programs. The diversity conferences were each attended by over 100 participants including union leaders, state Secretaries of Labor for São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, representatives from the Ministry of Labor and business groups.

The Black movement took on an extensive international campaign to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the death of Zumbi de Palmares in November of 1995. Scores of international visitors arrived to bring world attention to racism in Brazil. In response to the black movement's show of strength, another Presidential Decree was issued, creating an Interministerial Working Group to Develop Policies Valuing the Black Population. This executive level Working Group, in turn, was instrumental in the government's announcement of the National Human Rights Plan on the anniversary of the abolition of slavery -- May 13, 1996. The Human Rights Plan officially recognized racial and gender discrimination as human rights violations for the first time in Brazilian history. That year, the Ministry of Justice created the National Human Rights Award, which was presented to the Geledes Black Women's Institute.

Following these victories in drawing government attention to race issues, the black movement has appealed to other U.N. instruments to publicize the problem of racism in Brazil. Decades after having ratified the 1969 Non-discrimination Convention, the Brazilian government had not submitted a single report to the U.N. In 1995, a Special Rapporteur was assigned to investigate racism in Brazil by UNESCO's Commission on Human Rights (Program of Action to Combat Racial Discrimination). After that Rapporteur's unfavorable assessment of Brazil's compliance with the Non-discrimination Convention, the Ministries of Justice and Foreign Affairs hosted an international conference on multiculturalism and affirmative action, in July of 1996. Again, this was the first official recognition of
either "affirmative action" or "multiculturalism." The latter concept, like "diversity" (officially recognized in October 1996), is in direct conflict with Brazil's previously official miscegenated national identity. In September of 1996, President Cardoso saluted the new discourse in his Independence Day address. Distancing himself from the homogenous national identity hailed in his inaugural address, the President celebrated Brazil's "distinct" races and their enrichment of the nation's "diversity."

Finally, the African Brazilian movement is organizing regionally in Latin America. In 1993 and 1994, Brazilian activists collaborated in the organization of two regional Latin America-Caribbean conferences for Afro-Latin organizations, one in Venezuela for black women's organizations, and the other in Uruguay, to begin regionwide networking.

To articulate transnationally around identity is a relatively new strategy for Brazilian social movements, one that appears to be bringing the principles and language of other region's identity politics to bear on national problems of discrimination. In a clear case, the black movement for reparations in Brazil has directly borrowed ideology and strategy from their U.S. counterparts, presenting a legislative proposal to guarantee financial reparations for all descendants of slaves.32

A standard generalization made about Brazilian culture is that Brazilians prefer a lateral or "encompassing" approach to conflict, rather than head-on confrontation.33 The Black movement's international articulation, bringing

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32 The proposal was announced on November 21, 1995, sponsored by PT deputy Paulo Paim. The law provides for descendants of slaves $102,000 Reais per person, políticas compensatórias in terras remanescentes de quilombos, specific employment and housing policies and better access to schools and the media.

33 Da Matta draws attention to the "hidden motive" of relationships among political parties, social categories or interest groups; he identifies affective loyalties among elites as a "third party" that can "if not encompass the other two, at least postpone conflicts and their resolution or make ideological disputes secondary" (1995:284). I propose that this approach to conflict mediates potential confrontations between non-elite Blacks and White elites as well. Following Gilberto Freyre, the image of 'one big happy family' is summoned to reproduce the affective loyalties present among elites. See Roberto da Matta, "For an Anthropology of the Brazilian Tradition or 'A
outsiders' awareness -- if not pressure -- to bear on national problems, may be viewed in that light. Applying Da Matta's typology, a "third party" -- in this case, international opinion -- plays a mediating role based not on traditional affective loyalties but appealing to the national concern for the appearance of its affective identity (racial democracy), in the eyes of the world.\textsuperscript{34} In any case, both internal mobilization strategies and transnational networking have been effective in generating far greater public awareness of racism in Brazil than ever before, and with the advent of revolutionary information technologies, transnational organizing strategies have become more sophisticated. The movements' discourses about difference, equality and democracy now have been taken up by the left and have thus become part of the national dialogue.

A 1997 editorial in the \textit{Estado de São Paulo} written by a state prosecutor and law professor at the Catholic University of São Paulo illustrates just how much transnational dialogue has taken place:

\begin{quote}
Affirmative actions, as compensatory policies, fulfill a decisive public objective in the democratic project, which is to guarantee social diversity and pluralism...in the belief that equality must be framed in respect for difference and diversity.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

But the new discourse is widely contested. The dreadlocked African Brazilian \textit{timbalada} musician, Carlinhos Brown, proves that the stubborn traditional narratives will not quietly go away. Brown frames his view of equality in a familiar Freyrean text:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{34} See Roberto da Matta, "For an Anthropology of the Brazilian Tradition or 'A Virtude está no Meio'," in David J. Hess and Roberto A. DaMatta, eds., \textit{The Brazilian Puzzle} (New York: Columbia University Press), 1995, 270-291.  
\textsuperscript{35} "As ações afirmativas, como políticas compensatórias, cumprem uma finalidade pública decisiva no projeto democrático, que é de assegurar a diversidade e a pluralidade social...com a crença de que a igualdade deve se moldar no respeito à diferença e diversidade." See Flávia Piovesan, "Ações afirmativas, igualdade e democracia," \textit{O Estado de São Paulo} (February 17, 1997, A2).
\end{quote}
Miscegenized, we are even stronger, because we are absorbing the
world's culture...It's hard to talk about blacks in Brazil today. I think
we've overcome all those issues...I don't like separatist movements.
They seem to be looking for a pure race. And in Brazil, we're all mixed
by now.36

In the first issue of Raça Brasil magazine, "The Magazine for Brazilian
Blacks," congratulatory letters to the editor from well known figures chorused in the
same tune: "I hope that this will be a magazine to bring us together and make
Brazilians proud of their race, the Brazilian Race...It's there, in all our faces, the
black Brazilian" (Caetano Veloso); "I want to emphasize that I don't see blacks and
whites apart from each other, but as parts of the same Brazilian race" (Walter
Avancini, artistic director of Rede Manchete).37

The movements' victories have reached Brazil's highest echelons of power,
changing the customary rhetoric of amalgamation to a discourse of diversity. Yet,
widespread ambivalence remains about affirming difference as a means to equality.

Mobilizing Discourses on Identity: The Parties and Unions

Leftists' interpretations of difference and equality continue to reflect the
perspectives of Brazilian society, problematizing efforts to implement anti-
discrimination policies. Only in the reta final (final challenge) of campaigning in the
1994 presidential race did PT candidate Luis Ignacio "Lula" da Silva focus on the
dispossession of specific groups -- women, blacks, indigenous groups, rural workers
and favela dwellers. He used terms like minorities, discriminated, excluded -- in a new
(for the PT) application of the term coined by Cristovam Buarque and adopted by the

36 "Eu acho que é muito difícil falar de negro hoje no Brasil. Acho que já superamos todas essas
questões...Não gosto de movimentos separatistas. Isso parece aquela busca por uma raça pura. E no
Brasil tudo já se misturou." See "Brown acredita na força da miscigenação," O Estado de São
Paulo(January 23, 1997, D5).
37 Caetano Veloso: "Espero que seja uma revista que veio para juntar e fazer o brasileiro se orgulhar
de sua raça, a RAÇA BRASIL...Tal, na cara de todos, o negro brasileiro." Walter Avancini, artistic
director of Rede Manchete: "Quero ressaltar, também, que não vejo negros e brancos dissociados, mas
sim peças da mesma raça Brasil." See Raça Brasil magazine, "The Magazine for Brazilian Blacks"
1996, 1(1).
PT, *apartheid social*. To that point, *apartheid social* had not explicitly registered racial or gendered marginalization within the overall portrait of Brazil’s social inequality.  

Presidential candidate Cardoso had also specifically mentioned women in his televised campaign messages, both earlier and with more frequency than the PT candidate. And during his inaugural speech, in his accentuated discussion of social justice, President Cardoso called forcefully for eliminating the marginalization of three specific groups — women, blacks and indigenous groups — rather than the generic "poor" that had been the objects of most candidates’ attentions.

PDT Governor Brizola had futilely called in 1993 for special admissions quotas for black *Cariocas* in the new Rio de Janeiro State University at Campos. But this was a rare exception to the public policy platforms of labor and party officials that until 1996 had almost never advocated explicit affirmative action or equal opportunity policies. As far back as the 1989 presidential campaign, Lula was pressed to take a position in the televised presidential candidates debate sponsored by the National Council for Women's Rights. He spontaneously vowed to assure proportionate representation of women, blacks and workers among appointees. This was well before the CUT's 1991 vote on 30 percent quotas for women in leadership positions. PT Federal Deputy José Genoino echoed Lula's pledge in 1992:

> We must concretize the issue with specific proposals, to break through the official farce that in Brazil there is no racism, but also to try 'positive discrimination' — places in the universities, quotas. I believe it’s a necessary stage, it shouldn’t be permanent, but is necessary.  

How had Lula, Cardoso, Brizola and Genoino come to these positions? What pushed them to break open the concepts of racial democracy and *apartheid social* to distinguish among excluded groups — a differentiation that has always been

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considered divisive, amounting to discrimination, by the Brazilian left? A threat of widespread racial violence is considered absurd by most Brazilians, including leftists, but as blacks consolidate a national social movement, their power to apply pressure is increasingly recognized as a political force. In 1992, Abdias do Nascimento believed that the "consciousness of black people will be raised to the degree that blacks will mobilize politically to confront white society and demand equality policies." He predicted a "major confrontation, because the dominant system will do anything to keep blacks from taking power." Jorge Bittar was also convinced that blacks will mobilize for equality policies and political power, entering into conflict with white society as a natural consequence of economic development:

I am convinced that as the quality of life improves for the poorest, the issue of discrimination against blacks will be put forth more firmly, with more vigor in Brazilian society....A black is accepted, is wanted, as long as he is in his place in society, as long as he knows his place in society. When he dares to participate in the power game, things begin to get complicated, which is the case with Benedita.

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40 Rio de Janeiro's PDT (Partido Democratico de Trabalhadores) Secretary of Labor (and author of the 1988 'Lei Caô'-- Brazil's first anti-discrimination legislation with teeth), Carlos Alberto Caô, described leftists' focus on the luta geral -- the class struggle -- in the 1970's and early 1980's:

The thinking of serious leftists was reductionist--at the base of everything was the class struggle...What they said was that racial and ethnic conflict and racial discrimination were a ploy by the right to divide the working classes. [Interview in Rio de Janeiro, November, 1992.]

Feminists report a similar tendency vis a vis gender. Women's "specific" struggle was expected to take a back seat to the "general" socialist struggle to transform society. Ríta Andréa, Regional Sub-secretary of Partido de Trabalhadores (PT) Women's Department, recalls:

In the beginning, around 1981, it was considered divisive, as if we put the class struggle in second place....So, it was a battle of many years, within the party itself." [Interview in November 1992.]

Some unionists still hold to the position that women's concerns are divisive. Marta Vanelli, member of the Executive Board of the Central Union of Workers (CUT) in the state of Santa Catarina, observed that feminists "may be working class women, but they are part of the dominant classes' institutions. They are used by the dominant classes to produce the type of [unequal] society that we have today." [Interview in Florianopolis, November 1992.]

The Maluf/Pitta campaign for São Paulo's mayorship in 1996 marked a significant reversal in public perceptions of black political participation. Blacks suddenly were recognized as a viable and potentially powerful constituency in the political process. Maluf's PPB (Partido Popular Brasileiro) -- well known as having walked hand-in-hand with the authoritarian regime -- made a pre-emptive strike against the left by playing the race card.\textsuperscript{43} Maluf and his proxy Celso Pitta, an African Brazilian economist, swept the São Paulo municipal elections with the endorsement of \textit{o povo} (the people).\textsuperscript{44} They banked on the expectation that whites would privilege Pitta's class status over his race, and that black voters would privilege race rather than voting according to their class interests.

With the Pitta campaign, the right went on the offensive to exploit racial politics unabashedly -- which the PT had been afraid to do with Benedita da Silva's 1992 bid for Rio's mayorship. In both cases, the PT wound up on the defensive. African Brazilian activist Hedio Silva published an analysis of the campaign in the PT newsletter:

Maluf's candidate accelerated the emergence of a phenomenon that even the most optimistic Black Movement activist would not have dared predict: illustrious reactionaries openly defending a racial vote on radio programs; poll workers inciting black voters not to "pass;" television images of providential black hands stopping pale hands from paralyzing the city."\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{43} The idea of a "black vote" as a vote representing "the people" is not entirely new to Brazilian social scientists. According to Reginaldo Prandi (1996:63), political scientist Amaury de Souza attributed a "black vote" to Vargas' PTB because "populism ...dilutes the races into a homogenous unity -- \textit{o povo} (the people) -- which is the ideological source of legitimacy.... Populism is thus an ideology of integrating blacks as \textit{equals}." In this formulation, the "black vote" is not a black vote at all, but it is the very device that informed Celso Pitta's campaign strategy. See Reginaldo Prandi, "Raça e voto na eleição presidencial de 1994," \textit{Estudos Afro-Asiáticos}, 30, December 1996 and Amaury de Souza, "Raça e política no Brasil urbano," \textit{Revista de Administração de Empresas}, Rio de Janeiro, 11 (4), October-December, 1971, pp. 61-70.

\textsuperscript{44} Rumors circulated in 1996 that U.S. political consultant James Carville had urged Maluf to select Pitta, predicting that a racial vote lay dormant.

\textsuperscript{45} "Assim é que a candidatura malufista acelerou o surgimento de fenômenos que nem mesmo o mais otimista militante do Movimento Negro ousaria prever: ilustres reacionários defendendo desavergonhadamente o voto racial em programas de rádio; cabos eleitorais que apelam para o voto racial diante de transeuntes negros; a TV exibindo providenciais mãos negras impedindo a ação de
The PT discovered too late that the right had appropriated the moral high ground. Pitta accused the PT candidate, Luisa Erundina, of not having appointed a single black to her cabinet in her previous administration. Erundina desperately accused Pitta of being an [expletive] Uncle Tom,\textsuperscript{46} generating the eerie scene of Paulo Maluf appearing on national TV to defend the black race. For the first time in Brazilian history, every election poll analyzed results by race. By the runoff election, millions of black votes had migrated to Pitta, and many more black activists \textit{pittaram} (turned to Pitta) than admitted publicly.

The political significance of the emerging identity movements is a subject of increasing speculation, particularly after Pitta's landslide victory.\textsuperscript{47} Leftists interviewed consistently confessed that they were struggling to make sense of the power of the new identity categories, which they frankly felt had been overlooked by their party or union. Federal Deputy Genoino, for example, acknowledged that the Brazilian left is facing new challenges that cannot be comprehended by the theory of the class struggle:

\begin{quote}
pálidas mãos que ameacam fazer São Paulo parar.\ldots[num] aparente paradoxo...a raça, a fresta, a inexistente, a desimportante, resolveu dar o ar da graça." (Silva, Hedio Jr. "Adivinhe quem veio para o jantar," \textit{PT Notícias No.13}, August 26, 1996, p.4)
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{46} "(Pitta) diz ter a pele negra, mas, interiormente, tem a cabeça e o comportamento de um branco safado." \textit{Folha de São Paulo}, November 5, 1996, p.1, 1-5.

\textsuperscript{47} On whether representational politics are a force in overall voting patterns in Brazil -- particularly the question of whether blacks are more likely to vote for black candidates, the jury is still out. Luis Felipe de Alencastro and Elza Berquó (at the Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning, CEBRAP) examined racial voting patterns in 1992 and 1993 state elections (in Espírito Santo and São Paulo), and found that African Brazilians did show tendencies to vote for leftist candidates, but this trend was not strongly associated with the race of the candidates.

Sensing that identification with black candidates could become a more powerful influence in voting patterns, political analysts like de Alencastro have begun to ask whether a district voting mechanism would elect more African Brazilians. The debate on district voting (to replace the current at-large system) has never taken hold, yet congress has promised to consider a district vote since the time of the constitutional debates in 1988. See Luis Felipe de Alencastro and Elza Berquó. "O surgimento do voto negro," \textit{Novos Estudos} (São Paulo: CEBRAP), July, 1992, No.33, 77-88.

In a long-overdue comprehensive analysis of black voting patterns in Brazil, sociologist Reginaldo Prandi of the University of São Paulo studied the \textit{preto} and \textit{pardo} vote in Brazil's 1994 national elections. Prandi's statistical analysis confirmed that the majority of \textit{pretos} and \textit{pardos} voted for leftist candidates. He concluded, however, that the strongest determinant of black voting behavior is not ideology, but blacks' identification with the "excluded," based on his finding that significant numbers of \textit{pretos} and \textit{pardos} also voted for right-wing or populist candidates. See Reginaldo Prandi, "Raça e voto na eleição presidencial de 1994," \textit{Estudos Afro-Asiáticos}, 30, December 1996,75.
For me, abortion rights are as radical as agrarian reform; ...
discrimination is as radical [a problem] as democratization of the
state...We can't function anymore with the idea that first we resolve
political and economic problems and then the rest.\textsuperscript{48}

\textit{Difference}

In the U.S.A., there is a great deal of discussion about whether "difference"
implies essential or natural differences, whether the notion of universal equality
means sameness, and whether that idea erases or blurs group identities. In the grey
area between sameness and difference, as we know, is the longstanding ideology of
racial democracy. Claims that Brazilian society is color-blind directly subvert the
logic of affirmative action by identifying any recognition of difference as
discriminatory.\textsuperscript{49}

Yet, clearly many Brazilians do register differences, contrary to the national
myth; whether the differences are always naturalized is ambiguous.\textsuperscript{50} What is clear

\textsuperscript{48} Brasília, Feb. 1993. "A sociedade humana colocou novos desafios que não podiam ser resolvidos
teoricamente pelo conceito apenas da luta de classe como explicação última da história...e depois as
questões relacionadas com...a diferença e a pluralidade...Para mim é tão radical o papel da reforma
agrária, como pelo direito ao aborto; é tão radical o fato pela democratização do estado, como
também discriminação entre homem e mulher, discriminação racial...Não se pode mais trabalhar
com aquela visão de que primeiro se resolve os problemas políticos-econômicos para depois se
resolver os demais."
\textsuperscript{49} Da Matta describes this characteristic of Brazilian society (1991: 147): "We try to avoid at all
cost individualization that would lead inevitably to a direct impersonal, irrevocable binary and
dichotomous confrontation between whites and blacks, superiors and inferiors, dominators and
dominated, etc. This particular way of relating opposed categories is an old one in Brazil."
\textsuperscript{50} As an example of essentialist notions pervading everyday discourse, Anthony Garotinno's
observations about \textit{sangue africano} (African blood) are illustrative:
Existem bairros inteiros como Santa Rosa, Cidade Luz, Cristópolis...são compostos de
negros, são áreas, chama-se lá, palha, que é inteira de negros, o interior, onde as pessoas, ou negros,
ou mulatos, ou misturados, mestiços, \textit{mas que também tem origem no sangue africano}... [Interview in
Rio de Janeiro, December 1994].
Nei Lopes (former Cabinet Chief for the Rio de Janeiro State Secretariat for the Development and
Promotion of Negros - SEDEPRON), incorporated the idea of essence in a discussion of funk dances in
urban Rio:
O negro jovem brasileiro \textit{não tem referências dentro de sua própria nação}, não encontra
referências com as quais ele se identifica [Interview in Rio de Janeiro, November, 1992].

With respect to feminine "essence," a resurgent eco-feminist tendency in Brazil asserts that
women are qualitatively different than men, due to their biological reproductive capacity.
According to this increasingly popular view in the women's movement, women's functions as nurturers
of life have placed them in closer contact with nature's creative forces. As a result, women's
political participation should inspire the life-preserving ethics of justice and social responsibility.
is that they are so deeply internalized that they function as permanent categories in everyday social relations. Célia Kline (Vice President of the Santa Catarina State Union of Education Workers, CUT) is a good example. Her union work takes her from her home in Santa Catarina to the poorer Northeast, where, she reports in a you-know-what I mean way:

When we travel up to the Northeast, we are treated like we're from another planet, because we are white, well fed and healthy.\textsuperscript{51}

Luiz Horácio (an African Brazilian National Director of the Força Sindical labor confederation and Treasurer of the Insurance Workers Union of São Paulo), also seems to feel that blacks and whites may as well be living on different planets:

From what I can tell blacks still have one foot in the senzala (plantation), they don't invest in their own development or think of alternatives that would bring medium or long-term results. This complicates the [life of an] individual with limited knowledge, keeps him from competing on an intellectual level and stuck with low-paying manual jobs, not realizing he's being exploited as brute labor by elites.\textsuperscript{52}

Moving from these extreme views of difference as exclusionary, many of those interviewed sounded sincere in their call for equality, but feared that if special interest groups take too much space the party or union would end up with a 'patchwork quilt' of different identities that don't truly 'represent' their

\textsuperscript{51} Interview in Florianópolis, November 1992.
\textsuperscript{52} Interview in São Paulo, November 1992. "Pelo que eu vejo o negro ainda não consiguiu tirar o pé da senzala, não investe em seu retorno próprio ou em outras alternativas que tragam resultado a médio e a longo prazo. Isso dificulta muito o indivíduo que fica com um conhecimento limitado, não podendo competir com outra pessoa de nível intelectual, ficando sempre com o serviço de mão de obra mais barata e não percebendo que está sendo usado como massa de manobra numa sociedade elitizada."
constituency. Adeli Cel, for example, the Secretary of Public Policy for the PT in Rio Grande do Sul said this:

We have women on the executive board that wouldn't be there if it weren't for quotas, and they are demonstrating impressive political capacity....They're showing us that at times we must use numerical goals to integrate sectors that haven't got the forces to gain access to party leadership. But, this leads to another problem. We could get to the point where all sectors make demands because they are excluded from the leadership of the party, and we would end up like a patchwork quilt that wouldn't in fact represent the strength of the party.\textsuperscript{53}

Here, a paternalistic Cel recognizes the special needs of different subordinate groups, along with their unique contributions. But the party as a whole must still be represented as other and stronger than those interests -- i.e., "they" do not legitimately represent the party, "they" are different.

Finally, at the end of the spectrum, we find a rarely articulated view of difference as a right, a right constituent of freedom itself. Again, PT federal deputy Genoino expressed it best:

Quotas in themselves won't solve the problem in people's thinking, their consciousness and values, of human relationships in which the right to freedom merges with the right to diversity and the right to difference.\textsuperscript{54}

\textit{Equality}

While interpretations of difference seemed to lay along a continuum from difference as exclusionary to difference as a democratic right, narratives about equality seemed more paradoxical. One of the questions probed in the interviews was whether achieving social equality requires the same or different treatment, and whether equal treatment holds for people coming from unequal backgrounds. PT

\textsuperscript{53} Interview in Porto Alegre, November 1992.
\textsuperscript{54} Interview in Brasilia, December 1992. "As cotas por si só não resolve o problema da cabeça, da consciência, dos valores, de uma relação com o gênero humano em que o direito à liberdade se combina com o direito à diversidade, e o direito da diferença."
candidate for governor, Jorge Bittar, voiced the key question himself (again, paternalistically) in 1995:

It's the old problem: how much protection should the state concede to certain segments of society, to promote equality?  

The paradoxical answers to these questions reflected either simultaneous recognition of blacks' subordinate status and special necessidades (needs) together with a firmly held belief that equality policies must not differentiate, or a strong faith in Brazil's racial democracy expressed along with approval of the concept of special measures for blacks or women. Sergio Porto (Chief of Staff of the black PDT governor of Rio Grande do Sul State, Alceu Collares), for example, emphatically announced that there is no discrimination in Brazil, but his remarks also implicitly recognized race differences as he incorporated the idea of the need for a level playing field to achieve equality:

If everyone started out at the same level, with the same measures of education and culture, they would certainly have the same chances.

When queried about how to get to that equal starting point, Sr. Porto went on to emphasize that treatment of all groups must be absolutely symmetrical (in education and employment), or there could be no equality. Mr. Porto thus presents

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55 Interview in Rio de Janeiro, January 1995. "É o velho problema: qual o grau de proteção que o Estado deve conceder a determinados segmentos da sociedade, para que se promova a igualdade?"
56 Brazilians are not alone in holding paradoxical positions. Danielson and Engle identified two tendencies within identity politics that seem contradictory: "On one hand, lawyers and activists have sought to design legal remedies for broad classes of disadvantaged groups, focusing on generally drawn status categories to define these groups. On the other hand, these same group remedies have often sought to transcend these categories by making it unlawful to take them into account. Perhaps the paradigmatic example of this conflict is expressed in the apparent incommensurability of colorblindness and affirmative action" (from the Introduction to Danielson, Dan and Engle, Karen (eds.) After Identity: A Reader in Law and Culture (New York: Routledge) 1995, p.xiv.
57 Interview in Porto Alegre, November 1992. "Educação é a nossa prioridade, porque a nossa preocupação com igualdade e, principalmente, a igualdade no ponto de partida. Se todos partirem de um mesmo patamar, com o mesmo índice educacional e cultural, eles terão, tudo indica, as mesmas chances."
us with a double bind: equality requires equal conditions, but for those who start at a disadvantage, can there be equal conditions if treatment is symmetrical?

Anthony Garotinho, former PDT mayor of Campos, in Rio de Janeiro state, did recognize rampant discrimination, but he also felt that treatment should not be different, as it runs the risk of "ghettoizing" subordinate groups. Yet, at other points in our interview, Garotinho strongly favored quotas for women in on-the-job training and university slots for blacks. So, he was against special treatment and all for special treatment. To be fair, Garotinho differentiated between treatment in internal versus external contexts, like many of those interviewed.

In those cases, discussing whether equality implies symmetrical or disparate treatment, several people opposed internal quotas to promote women and blacks to leadership positions in the union or party, but favored preferential employer or government programs to train women or blacks for higher-skill jobs. In other words, they felt that subordinated groups must "earn" their places internally, but that the larger society should be held to a higher, more beneficent standard. In their logic concerning the roles of private versus public actions, individuals who held these apparently contradictory positions might represent the inverse of U.S. conservatives who promote private earmarking of scholarships for minorities, for example, while they reject government or court-mandated preferences. Of course, these positions reflect differing views about the role of the state.

Roberto da Matta would go further. He portrays such apparent contradictions as constituent of the Brazilian national character. Da Matta identifies what outsiders call contradictions as a feature of Brazilian society's "self-referential duality." Da Matta claims that Brazilian social systems are not governed by a single set of rules:

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58 For example, in 1990 the Bush administration banned minority scholarships given by universities, since universities are government contractors, while private scholarships were permitted.
The behavior of certain people changes in accordance with where they are...Thus, a circular logic may arise: precisely because I am a liberal in Congress (i.e., as recognized in national public life), I have the 'right' to be a slave-holder or a paternalist at home.\(^{59}\)

In an earlier work, Da Matta described the nonlinear Brazilian system in graphic terms, concluding that solidarity is hampered by vertical axes that cut through horizontal cleavages; vertical affiliations (identification with those in power) are sustained by the familiar rhetoric of equality and inclusiveness.\(^{60}\)

In an attempt to slice through the array of paradoxical attitudes on equality policies, CUT President Vicente Paulo da Silva (Vicentinho) strongly supported differential treatment for women in a 1994 interview, resolving a contradiction that many have claimed undercuts the legitimacy of women union leaders:

I was one of the defenders of the 30 percent quota in the [labor] confederation. It was a complicated and difficult debate, because we discovered that the union's different factions were themselves divided—there was no one clear position of this or that faction within the union. The factions changed their configurations and they transformed into just two sides: those who wanted quotas and those who didn't. And even I think that women's participation in the union movement cannot be just a technical measure, it has to come out of women's conquista of [political] space. But I also believe that the imposition of a quota is women's conquista of space.\(^{61}\)

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60 "The possibility of classification along multiple axes or dimensions...allow(s) continuous, disturbing, and systematic differentiations among equals....it permits the maintenance of a hierarchical and complementary framework that can coexist with egalitarian ideas, thereby obscuring our vision of the way the system operates....Thus, alongside the...perspective that seeks (but not always obtains) equality, we find a hierarchizing attitude that allows the differentiation of equals and therefore prevents horizontal social solidarity...One can therefore establish patterns of internal differentiation within the same social category and social class, based on criteria other than those of the economic dimension, which is expected to be hegemonic. The system equalizes on one level and hierarchizes on another, the result of which is a great classificatory complexity, a deep sense of compensation and complementarity which certainly hinders horizontal social solidarity and increases vertical social awareness to such an extent that the worker sometimes identifies with the boss, the maid with the household where she works, the worker with his company...." (And in this context, the unionist with the union director.) See Roberto da Matta, Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes: an interpretation of the Brazilian dilemma (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press), 1991, p.147.

61 Interview in Salvador, November 1994.
Vicentinho's observation was repeated over and over again: the quota debate -- the quota may be conceptualized in da Matta's terms as a threat to vertical affiliations within parties and unions -- cut across all of the existing alliances within the confederation. The vote was a free for all rather than a negotiation among the union's established power bases. Similar debates were kept under wraps in the other two confederations, but of course when pressed in the interview to take a stand, the Presidents of both the Força Sindical and the CGT also endorsed affirmative action policies, albeit in ambiguous terms. And in contrast to the opinions of the higher-up union and party officials, lower officials did not tend to approve of equal opportunity policies at all. In this group, doubts were much stronger than support for the idea of affirmative action. Even among those who were intensely aware of discrimination, there was a great deal of ambivalence (if not pessimism) about the application of such policies in Brazil.

Do Brazilians Count Bodies?

Affirmative action policies in the United States and elsewhere are premised upon the assumption that the aggrieved ethnic, racial, gender or other identity groups are clearly defined. Compensatory policies depend on consensual or normative means of identifying members of those groups, first in order to assess

62 In 1992, Luiz Antônio Medeiros, president of the Força Sindical labor confederation, agreed to the principle of affirmative action:

Blacks are less skilled because they are poorer and have less access. I believe the solution is to denounce this situation and use positive discrimination which is the following: we should make more slots for blacks, for women, for youth...that is, the union would promote positive discrimination in this sense: X percent of the slots are for discriminated groups, they're for those who have nothing. I don't know if 'positive discrimination' is the right term, but that would be the emphasis. This has to be a role of society, of all of us. [Interview in São Paulo, December 1992]

Candido Pegado (President of the Confederação Geral de Trabalhadores-CGT), also agreed:

I see it [positive discrimination] as a useful, healthy measure, and we need to put it into practice. In the CGT we wouldn't have any difficulty putting it into practice, reserving a minimum number of slots -- [reserving] a larger number would mean negotiating, or a conquista -- but a minimal number we would have no problem observing. [Interview in São Paulo, December 1992]
whether intervention is necessary, and subsequently to evaluate whether policies have resulted in advances for those groups. In polities that have experimented with affirmative action all over the world, counting bodies is the principal means of measuring representation.63

When asked to estimate how many women and blacks occupied positions of leadership in their party or union, Brazilian leftists were not accustomed to counting bodies. Overall, fewer than half would or could estimate the number of women in positions of leadership in their local party or union, and only about one-third would or could estimate for blacks. This was particularly surprising vis a vis gender, as the noise generated by the PT and CUT's vote for a gender quota system the previous year had a general spillover effect into most leftist groups. As expected, PT members were most likely to estimate numbers of women represented in the local leadership of their party or union (56 percent), but surprisingly, only four percent of this group also endorsed gender quotas. CUT members did not significantly differ from the PT in head-counting (54 percent), but they were much more supportive of gender quotas.64 As might also have been expected, women were more likely than men to count women in positions of leadership.

Respondants were somewhat less willing (or able) to estimate numbers of blacks represented in local leadership of their party or union. Thirty percent of whites and 40 percent of blacks ventured estimates. CUT led the way, followed by blacks.65 The Força Sindical, CGT and women were among the least able to identify numbers of blacks in leadership.

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64 This was probably an artifact of the sample. Black men were overrepresented in the CUT group in the sample, and black men strongly supported gender quotas.

65 Again, this probably reflects sample composition. See previous Note.
Strangely enough, only about one-quarter of all respondents were able/willing to count both blacks and women; this was true across all groups, men and women, blacks and whites. However, CUT and the PT had much larger margins of those who counted both blacks and women than did other unions and parties. Well below half of those who counted both blacks and women approved of either race or gender quotas.

What does the lack of concern for counting bodies mean? First, counting contradicts the national ideal of inclusiveness.66 People seemed to feel caught between the traditional ideology of racial democracy and newer discourses on black or gendered identities. They sought both/and rather than either racial democracy or difference politics. Datafolha captured this paradox in its 1995 study in which 89 percent of those who identified themselves as white agreed that whites harbor racial prejudice against blacks in Brazil, but only 11 percent of the whites admitted to prejudice themselves.67 The contradiction, stated in a subtitle of the Datafolha report, "Brazilians don't admit to racism that they know exists" is a perfect statement about Brazil's public affirmation of its racial democracy while racism festers.68

Were the 30 to 50 percent who did estimate the proportions of blacks or women in leadership positions more aware of discrimination against those groups? Of those who did count women in leadership, 78 percent also recognized gender discrimination, but less than half of the individuals who counted women also supported gender quotas. 69 percent of those willing to count blacks also identified racial discrimination in society, but only one-third of this group favored racial

66 Da Matta concludes that Brazilians "...immediately adopt anything said that implies openly embracing inclusiveness, whereas we hide and whisper about anything that suggests exclusiveness," Roberto da Matta, Carnival, Rogues and Heroes: an Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press) 1991, 141.
67 DataFolha, São Paulo, "300 Anos de Zumbi: Os Brasileiros e o Preconceito de Cor" (São Paulo), 1995, p.2.
quotas. To summarize: of those who did count bodies, more counted women than blacks, more identified gender discrimination than racial discrimination, and more endorsed gender quotas than racial quotas.

Had those who counted bodies been in contact with difference politics, a transnational phenomenon? Few reported their contact as frontally as the President of CGT, Candido Pegado, who reported that a surprising experience in Europe led him to concede that a "minimal" number of slots in leadership positions should be reserved for women. Earlier that year, Pegado had led a Brazilian delegation to an international labor meeting in Europe, where he was warned by his European colleagues that if CGT didn't bring women delegates the following year, they shouldn't come back at all.

Awareness of Discrimination

Another measure of contact with identity politics would be an individual's ability or concern to cite examples of discrimination that he or she had witnessed or heard about. Subjects were asked first whether their party or union had taken action against either gender or race discrimination, and if they could describe such a case. Later they were asked whether there had been any reports of gender or racial discrimination within the party or union, and to describe what happened. (Subjects were free to choose whether to discuss racial or gender discrimination, or both.)

The majority of those interviewed conceptualized discrimination either as based either on individual acts of discrimination, or in the case of race, as a feature of a Brazilian society still shackled by the legacy of slavery (a cipher for Florestan Fernandes' 'blacks' inability to 'compete'" motif). The idea that systematic stratification reinforces unequal access to jobs or education, that standardized tests or other measurements of achievement might suffer from instrument biases, or that the lack of representation at management levels of the unions or parties was in any way systematic did not appear in the discourse.
Overall, 57 percent of the subjects cited at least one example of gender discrimination. Many of those who weren't attentive to women's representation in positions of power cited a case or problem they had heard about. Examples of gender discrimination overwhelmingly focused on individual cases, especially sexual harassment. Moreover, harassment examples were framed to suggest that women need primarily to be protected from violation of their *pudor* (moral integrity), rather than to charge that sexual harassment limits women's opportunities for job advancement. Structural forms of gender discrimination, like the glass ceiling phenomenon, were rarely mentioned.

More women than men were sensitive to gender discrimination. Over two-thirds of all women cited specific cases. About two-thirds of this group also identified gender discrimination within their union or party (rates were similar for white and black women). However, women who identified discrimination were not more likely than the overall sample to favor gender quotas.

About half of all men identified examples of gender discrimination. White men were more conversant about gender discrimination than black men. (This may be understood in the context of respondents having been asked about racial and gender discrimination at the same time, giving them the choice of response. White men tended to choose to talk about gender, black men tended toward race.) Again, no clear relationship emerged associating awareness of gender discrimination with support for quotas. Only about half of the men who did identify gender discrimination also supported gender quotas, and the majority of them were black men.

For the overall sample, awareness of racial discrimination (63 percent) was slightly higher than of gender discrimination (57 percent) and highest among blacks
(almost three-quarters of blacks).\textsuperscript{69} PT and CUT were the groups most articulate about racial discrimination.\textsuperscript{70} However, just one-third of those who recognized cases of racial discrimination also supported race quotas.

The pattern of no pattern remained consistent -- there was no clear relationship linking awareness of racial discrimination to endorsement of racial quotas. However, among those who did recognize both forms of discrimination, there was a trend toward less support for race than for gender quotas. Forty percent of black males identified both forms of discrimination. One-third of these approved of race quotas and half of them approved of gender quotas. 55 percent of white males identified both race and gender discrimination, and of this group, half supported race quotas and 58 percent supported gender quotas.

Charges of discrimination taking place within the unions or parties were rare but heated. Just 31 percent of those interviewed cited gender discrimination and 34 percent cited cases of racial discrimination within their party or union. But, in the leftist tradition of self-criticism, those who did identify discrimination in their union or party were quite outspoken. Over half of the black women cited cases of gender discrimination in their party or union -- significantly more than white women, and more than double the number of men. Black women were also the group most sensitive to racial discrimination in their union or party. 69 percent cited specific cases, compared to one third of black men and just one-quarter of whites. Their forthrightness suggests that black women are most victimized by both race and gender discrimination in their parties and unions.

\textit{The Left's Responses to Discrimination}

\textsuperscript{69} Coincidentally, 53 percent of the sample was black and 53 percent cited examples of racism, but about one-quarter of blacks interviewed did not discuss racial discrimination.\textsuperscript{70} As mentioned in a previous note, this probably reflects the larger number of black CUTistas in the sample.
To get at attitudes about "positive discrimination," ("affirmative action" and "diversity" had rarely been heard of at that time), people were asked how they felt about the CUT's "quotas" policy. To get away from the biases already inherent in the idea of quotas, people were also asked to react to the idea of reserved access to training opportunities to improve the job skills of women or blacks within a company.

The findings seem counterintuitive. Even though they potentially have the most to gain, white women were least supportive of those affirmative action measures. One third of white women endorsed gender quotas (and less than 20 percent endorsed race quotas -- compared to 51 percent and 44 percent respectively for the overall sample). Only one quarter of the women who identified cases of gender discrimination supported gender quotas. (In contrast, just over half of the men who identified gender discrimination were in favor of gender quotas.) The most politically progressive groups, CUT and PT, were generally less supportive of affirmative actions than the other parties and unions, perhaps because they had been most involved in debates about quotas and so had hardened their positions.

As mentioned previously, there was no clear relationship linking awareness of discrimination to approval of affirmative action measures in any group. Neither did individuals who supported quotas for one group necessarily support training opportunities for that group, or quotas for the other group. For example, only half of the black men who favored gender quotas also favored race quotas, and just one-third of them supported training opportunities for either women or blacks. Fewer

71 Although the white women in my study were very well educated, it is interesting to note that a recent study in California reported by the Equal Rights Advocates found that white women, particularly those who were not university educated, were unsupportive of affirmative action. In both Brazil and the United States, white women have benefitted most from affirmative action. See "Affirmative Action: Equal Opportunity and Economic Justice," (San Francisco: Equal Rights Advocates XXI Annual Report) 1995.
white men than black men favored gender quotas, but white men were more likely than black men to favor training for both women and blacks.

As an alternative to affirmative action policies, almost two-thirds of respondents cited actions taken by their union or party to counteract discrimination. For example, legislation against sex discrimination was proposed, actions were taken against employers who discriminated against women, or the union established an internal gender quotas policy. About half of those interviewed identified actions taken by their party or union to counteract racial discrimination. The PDT led the way (63 percent of PDT respondents cited a specific remedy or action taken), followed by PT (51 percent) and CUT (48 percent). Força Sindical straggled behind with less than one-fifth able to think of any actions taken to address racial discrimination. Again, no clear pattern emerged to link knowledge of those remedial actions to the subject’s own position on gender or race quotas.\textsuperscript{72} What should we make of the fact that recognizing discrimination does not translate into support for corrective measures? In the national Datafolha study, the pattern was clear. Across all racial categories, those who were most aware of discrimination (the best educated and wealthiest) were also those who least supported affirmative action.\textsuperscript{73} Of course, no one is obliged to automatically endorse affirmative action remedies simply because he or she recognizes discrimination. But a different standard might be expected of leftist leaders. Of those who supported gender quotas, just 69 percent cited cases of gender discrimination, and among those who supported race quotas, 78 percent had described cases of racial discrimination.

\textsuperscript{72} PDT members were more likely than PT members to cite actions taken by their party, but only 38 percent of this group favored gender quotas. On the other hand, the smaller number of PT members who knew of specific actions taken by their party against gender discrimination were more likely to support gender quotas (66 percent of the group, vs. 51 percent of the overall sample).

\textsuperscript{73} At each educational and income level, blacks were more aware of discrimination than whites and “mulattos” at that level. See Datafolha (1995:7).
The pattern of no pattern, the paradox and contradiction (in Northern eyes) may represent no puzzle at all. As the Datafolha study suggests, the ideology (and ideal) of equal treatment -- even given unequal starting points -- is deeply revered, even in the face of the facts of discrimination.

Quotas?

*Gender Quotas*

The controversial quotas policy had been passed by the CUT and PT in 1991. In the wake of those debates, we found 51 percent approval of gender quotas. This figure is deceptive however, as only 39 percent of women and 38 percent of whites supported gender quotas. Support for gender quotas was strongest among black males.\(^74\) Significantly, among those black males who supported gender quotas, only about half favored race quotas. Was a vote for gender quotas perceived as a safer alternative to vocal approval of race quotas?

About 40 percent of white men supported gender quotas.\(^75\) However, unlike black men who supported gender quotas, almost all the white men who favored gender quotas also supported race quotas. White men were also slightly more likely than black men to support training for both women and blacks.

Women’s approval of gender quotas was about equivalent to white men’s. (The numbers of black and white women who responded to the gender quotas question were too small to break down into subgroups.) Less than half of the women who supported gender quotas also supported race quotas.

While there were too few responses among the Força Sindical and the CGT to draw conclusions, members of those groups voiced overwhelming endorsement of gender quotas. With a greater number of cases from the CUT and PT, their approval rates were also more moderate (45 percent and 41 percent, respectively). Those who

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\(^74\) The 63 percent of black males that supported gender quotas was spread across all education levels, but all had poorly educated parents.

\(^75\) This group was also evenly distributed educationally.
were firmly against gender quotas were also mostly CUT or PT leaders. More than half of those firmly against gender quotas had cited specific cases of gender discrimination in society and one-third had acknowledged sexual discrimination within their union or party.

**Race Quotas**

Racial quotas were more polemical than gender quotas. 44 percent of the overall sample favored racial quotas (compared to 51 percent support for gender quotas). Education levels and parents' education levels of those who supported race quotas was similar to that of the overall sample. However, this group was slightly more educated and came from less educated families than those who supported gender quotas.

Significantly, only about half of the black men, black women and white women even addressed the question of race quotas.\(^{76}\) In contrast, 19 of 22 white men did address the issue. Were white men the only group that felt empowered to express an opinion? Of those who did respond, black men and black women were most supportive of race quotas (well over half of each group). Just over one-third of white men and less than one-fifth of white women approved of race quotas. The number that voiced opposition to race quotas was roughly equal to the number opposed to gender quotas, and more whites than blacks were opposed to race quotas.\(^{77}\)

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\(^{76}\) A total of 52 people addressed this question.

\(^{77}\) Analysis of responses to the question of whether special training opportunities should be provided to women and blacks is compromised by the small number of responses to this question. About half of those who addressed the question about training for women were supportive and were spread equally among blacks, whites, men and women; their education level was similar to the overall sample. A high proportion of this group identified gender and race discrimination and cited actions taken to remedy discrimination.

Members of CUT and PT were least in favor of special training opportunities for women. Training opportunities for blacks were also supported by about half of those who addressed this question. Their education levels were similar to the overall sample; equal numbers of blacks and whites were supportive, but women's support for training opportunities for blacks was extremely low. (In fact, women's low support for black training opportunities was the only finding that a chi-square analysis proved to be significant.) A high proportion of those who supported training for blacks also supported quotas (92 percent of this group supported gender quotas and 77 percent)
My interviews with leftists are consistent with the national trend identified by Datafolha in which support for affirmative action for blacks decreased significantly with education. Those in my study who had completed university education were less supportive of race (and gender) quotas than those with secondary education. 78 (The group with primary or less education was too small for analysis.) However, an intermediate category emerged in my study -- a group I defined as educationally mobile. Members of this group had parents with primary school or less education and had attained post-secondary or university educational levels themselves. Consistent with the trend, this group was less supportive of quotas than those with a secondary education, but more supportive than the overall group of university graduates.

While the overall approval rates for affirmative action measures in the national Datafolha survey and in my study were nearly identical, and trends relating education levels to attitudes about affirmative action were congruent in both studies, support for affirmative action was stronger in my study at higher educational levels. In the Datafolha study, support for race preferences at the secondary education level was 25-28 percent, and 46 percent in my study. At the post-secondary level, approval of race quotas was 11-12 percent among whites and supported race quotas). Of blacks who favored training for blacks, only 80 percent also supported quotas for blacks, but 100 percent supported gender quotas.

35 percent of those who addressed the training question (which was just one-third of those interviewed) supported training for both blacks and women. This group was highly aware of both gender and racial discrimination and was most aware of actions taken by their party or union to combat discrimination. 78 The number of subjects in the sample with only a primary education was so small that we cannot draw conclusions about the role of education in influencing support for affirmative action. However, at the secondary level of education, support for gender quotas (57 percent) and race quotas (46 percent) was slightly higher than for the overall sample. But this group just as strongly disfavored quotas—both racial and gender. Among those with university completed (without controlling for parents’ education), support for quotas was lower, (32 percent for gender and 31 percent for race). In this group, unfavorable rates were more moderate than among those with a secondary education level.
blacks, and 4 percent for mulatos in the Datafolha study.\textsuperscript{79} In my study, approval of race quotas among those with a university education was 31 percent.

In addition, my entire sample was highly educated, compared to the representative national survey. Since I found rates of approval comparable to the overall national sample as well as the tendency for support to decline with education, we might hypothesize that support for affirmative action among less educated unionists and party members could be very strong (i.e., in accordance with the identified trend, proportionately stronger than their well-educated counterparts). In any case, we may conclude that leftists are more supportive of affirmative action than their counterparts at similar education levels in the national survey.

Politically progressive members of labor unions and workers parties have adopted the transnational discourses of diversity, difference and equality. To varying degrees, leftists have adopted the strategies of transnational identity politics -- including a measure of support for affirmative action. With those actions they confront not only longstanding ideals of Brazilian national identity, but they challenge the taboo of difference itself. Yet, the puzzling array of interpretations of difference and equality still leads us to believe that knowledge about and commitment to affirmative action policies was still very low at the time of the interviews.\textsuperscript{80} The majority of those interviewed in 1992 declared that they knew these were pressing questions, but confessed they were still feeling their way around the issues.\textsuperscript{81} By 1996, when white feminist Lena Lavinas drew the lines of the

\textsuperscript{79} It is significant that mulatos were the group most keenly aware of racial discrimination at the post-secondary education level (99 percent), yet that group's support for affirmative actions (just 4 percent) was far below that of any of the other groups. This finding merits further investigation.

\textsuperscript{80} We may also presume that constraints of the interview environment itself may have produced ambiguous or contradictory responses.

\textsuperscript{81} The great majority of the interviews took place in 1992, when affirmative action was still labeled "positive discrimination." Clearly, many of the subjects were influenced by the interview situation and probably told me what they thought I wanted to hear. This would help explain the mixed messages.
affirmative action debate in Brazil, she observed that "there are cleavages but not deep ideological trenches. The cards are on the table and the game is just beginning."82

Resistance to Identity-Based Policies

How widespread in Brazil is the view that different treatment is required to achieve equality? How many people are struggling to make sense of an idea of justice that recognizes, even promotes difference, and advocates unequal treatment -- in the name of equality? Among the Brazilian union and party officials interviewed, even those sensitive to the subordinate position of blacks and women voiced concerns that sound all too familiar: the danger of reverse discrimination; backlash; lowering of standards; the requirement that blacks and women prove themselves through merit rather than advancing via 'mechanical' or 'artificial' mechanisms; and doubts that would inevitably arise about the competence of targeted persons or groups.

While white women were most opposed to equality policies, black women were among the more vocal opponents. Several of the black women interviewed felt strongly that leadership should be earned by demonstrating competency, not by special set-asides, and that a danger of affirmative action would be that women and blacks in leadership would not be treated as legitimate leaders.

Neide, for example, is a black bankworker and director of the CUT in São Paulo, who is against quotas:

What's the point of having quotas for women if they aren't prepared? The same with blacks. On our board of directors we have 14 blacks and three of them understand that this is an important issue. It depends on how these quotas are filled, with what type of person....Quotas, as far as

82 Lena Lavinias, "Ações Afirmativas," Estudos Feministas, Vol.4, No.1, 1996, p.125: "No Brasil, o debate ganha vários rumos e suscita muita controvérsia, embora esteja apenas iniciando...existem clivagens mas não fossos ideológicos, o que significa dizer que as cartas estão na mesa e o jogo apenas começa."
I'm concerned underestimate the capacity of people...and everyone should have equal access.83

Many others referred to social tensions that had resulted from affirmative action programs in other countries. Almost all supporters of 'positive discrimination' stipulated that it be a temporary, transitional measure, intended to jump-start a process of integration of subordinate groups into a mythical mainstream that would then go on to function naturally as a color-blind equal-opportunity system. Finally, the belief was widespread that affirmative actions based on socio-economic disadvantage would be fairer than preferences based on racial or gender group membership. Have we heard all this before? It is clear that not only the discourses for change but discourses for dismantling those potential changes are increasingly disseminated in Brazil.

Brazilian blacks are reported to have been absorbed into the general population since slavery. In a deft sleight of hand, then, analysts ascribe to African Brazilians both virtual invisibility and "handicaps" wrought by the legacy of slavery. As a question for moral philosophers, it is curious that while all discourse in Brazil about race relations necessarily refers back to slavery rather than focusing on contemporary inequality, justifications for equal opportunity policies virtually never are placed in a context of remedying past injustices, as they are in the United States. In the United States, we are awash in up-to-the-minute data about racial inequalities, but the logic of applying remedies here has always been cast in terms of correcting past discrimination.

This lead to a final caveat: in the absence of a "color-line," who would be the beneficiaries, if benefits were intended to remedy past discrimination? Descendents

83 "Então, o que adianta ter 30% (women) se não se tem as condições? É a mesma coisa de ter 30% de negros, na nossa diretoria nos temos 14 negros e três entendem que essa questão é importante; depende de como essas cotas são preenchidas, com que tipo de pessoa." She says appearance, skin color, sex, should not be criteria. ..."Cotas, no meu entender, subestima a capacidade das pessoas."... "Everyone should have equal access." [Interview #5, in Sao Paulo, November, 1992]
of slaves, as the reparations movement would have it? Who isn't a descendant of a slave, in Brazil? Professor Moniz Bandeira, National Secretary of the PDT's International Relations Department, voiced a popular sentiment when he explained why a U.S.-type race-based model couldn't apply in Brazil:

Here, miscegenation has been much greater. I see people here who visibly have negroide characteristics, but who are considered white. In the U.S., they would be black, even if their skin was white, until the fifth generation, because of a black ancestor. Here in Brazil, no. A person may be a grandson [of a black]; you might see in his face a negroide physiognomy, visible characteristics, but he is already considered white. So he himself, a mestizo, would get angry [at affirmative action policies], and he would think, 'Look, the black got the job because he is black.' That is, it would create racism here.  

Of course, Brazil is in no danger of creating racism. But identities are in the midst of a process of re-creation, as they are everywhere, and this may be what elicits the sense of impending danger present in so many of the interviews. Vicentinho's public representation of his identity is a good example of this re-creation. When I interviewed him in 1992, he referred to himself alternately as mulato and negro. By 1995, when he had accumulated a good deal more political muscle, he shaved his head as an Afro-Brasileiro in solidarity with the Zumbi tricentennial.

Difference, Equality and Democracy

In conclusion, the many languages used to discuss difference and equality consistently revealed that leftists are frankly struggling to make sense of the power of the new identity categories. Most clearly stated that what they termed "specific" identity categories had been overlooked by their party or union for too long. Blacks felt that they had been invisible and perhaps still were. When I asked whether the demise of the Soviet Union had changed leftist views about class, I found that the class consciousness of the classe trabalhadora is alive and well. But while rarely

speaking directly in terms of class struggle, many were concerned to not "divide" the working class by focusing on "secondary" struggles. The Brazilian class analysis has not yet found a language to integrate other/different identities.

This may be a liminal or a threshold period, at least in terms of difference discourse. In July of 1996 Brazil saw its first official recognition of affirmative action and multiculturalism in a conference organized by the Justice Ministry. In October of 1996, diversity policies in the private sector were officially recognized. Brazil is witnessing phenomenally rapid changes in discourses about opportunity and equality. We may now look to see equally significant changes in practice.

British feminist Anne Phillips warns that as postmodernists attempt to deconstruct the narratives of the 1960s and 1970s about race and gender (i.e., the narratives of universal equality), we have begun to recognize specific, historical, contingent (and often multiple) identities. In this process, we also negate 'essential' identities, but risk at the same time erasing the basis for group solidarity. The Brazilian struggle is a paradigmatic case, since 'difference' has always implied unequal, according to the ideology of racial democracy.

At the same time, and paradoxically, there has been an underlying idealization, even a reverence for differences, both racial and gendered, which have been naturalized and now flood the social movements' discourses about identity—whether in African Brazilian revivals of Nagô culture or in the elegiac nostalgia for the feminine "difference," as in the title of a book by the president of Brazil's National Council for Women's Rights, Elogio da Diferença. That is, universalizing tendencies within the movements deny individuals' experiences of multiple identities within groups, as this would place group solidarity at risk. Black

women, for example, have faced tremendous obstacles to the articulation of their unique concerns within both the women's and black movements.

Where does this leave us? With a challenge confronting leftists all over the world -- the search for a language to reconstruct difference, this time as a *means* rather than a barrier to equality.