Racial Specificity in Brazil:
from 19th Century Racialist Understandings
to the Myth of Racial Democracy

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Unlike in the United States, being Black in Brazil does not equate to being "non-white". Instead, Brazil employs a broad continuum of chromatic terms to describe skin color. However, the fact that this chromatic variation is particularly advocated by those closer to the "white" end of the classification spectrum reveals the underlying rejection of black skin color by the majority of the Brazilian population. For a long time, this widespread lack of identification with black skin has hindered the expansion of any sort of movement centered on the idea of a "Black identity".

The Black movement has struggled to constitute itself as a corporate body and attract sufficient members to its ethnic activism. The dominant ideology in Brazil is based on the long-standing globalizing discourse of "Brazilianness" that has seamlessly absorbed Blackness and Indianness whilst also aspiring to a universal "whitening" of the population. This ideology is the outcome of a lengthy intellectual trajectory surrounding the concept of "national identity". In the wake of Brazil's independence in 1822, the abolition of slavery in 1888 and the fall of Empire and proclamation of the Republic in 1889, Brazilian intellectuals have been trying to construct an ideological "Brazilian nation". Brazilians were keen to define their national identity, doubtless influenced by events in Europe such as the nationalist revolutions in Greece and what would later become Germany, which were fighting for independence from the Ottoman Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire respectively, and by the struggles for independence of other Latin American countries seeking liberation from the Spanish crown.

Keeping in with the ideological developments of the times, notably those of 19th century liberalism, this aspiration to determine the nation's conceptual content had a major impact on Brazil around the time of its proclamation as a Republic, and this has continued to this day with little change since World War II. Brazil views itself as a nation of the future, attaching little significance to the past and a great deal of importance to defining itself in the present, which explains the influence of different racial and social theories. The future plays a predominant role in the political vision of the elites while the rest of the population lives largely under the influence of the present.

In order to cast light on the construction of racism in Brazilian society throughout history, we will focus on the ideological framework behind racial democracy in Brazil; from the social Darwinism of the 19th century to the democratic ideal that emerged after World War II. Occasionally we will shift away from a purely historical approach

to consider how we can formulate the specific nature of interracial relations in Brazil. The historical scope of this essay will extend as far as 2001 and the Durban World Conference against Racism in South Africa, which was a milestone for Brazil's Black movement since it resulted in the long-awaited adoption of government policies favouring Afro-Brazilians. These policies were then discontinued in 2016 after the deposition of Dilma Roussef and the dissolution of the Ministry of Racial Equality.

Brazil was heavily influenced by 19th century deterministic theories which affirmed racial hierarchy and condemned racial mixing. These doctrines doomed the Brazilian nation, which was fundamentally mixed at the time, to failure. Faced with such a condemnation, Brazilian scientists adopted the hygienism trends that were in vogue at the time and identified the "whitening" of the population as a viable "path to redemption". In response to this denial of a genuinely mixed Brazil, Gilberto Freyre turned this ideology on its head and declared the birth of a new "race": the Brazilian race, a product of the biological and, above all, cultural mixing of the three founding components of the Brazilian nation: White, Black and Indian. This idealized vision of how interracial relations functioned during Portuguese colonialism gave rise to the founding myth of Brazilian identity: racial democracy. This essay will pay particular attention to the narratives that have emerged in relation to this concept. Situating racial democracy as a key objective in the construction of a national identity, these narratives question how realistic such an ideal is in the context of Brazil's deeply paternalistic, hierarchical society.

The Influence of Biological Determinism: From the "Degeneration" of Racial Mixing to Whitening

The racist theories proposed by European theorists such as Arthur de Gobineau, Henry Thomas Buckle and Friedrich Ratzel in the second half of the 19th century appear to have "scientifically" legitimized the perpetuation of power structures dating back to the Portuguese colony (1500-1822) and the subsequent Empire (1822-1889) and have thereby justified the continuing domination of their associated elites.

Some ideologies have the power to spread and multiply throughout every social class and space, reducing the distance between erudite or scientific theories and the shared values adopted within the society (Da Matta 1993: 59). The racist theories developed in the 19th century had a significant impact on Brazilian society as a whole and played a central role in shaping the narrative that surrounds the country's national identity. Prior to these theories, interpersonal relations were influenced more by the power and domination of master/slave-type relationships than by the simple question of skin color (Mattos 2013).

Gobineau was the French ambassador to Brazil between April 1869 and May 1870. Whilst he did try to immerse himself in Brazilian society to develop some of his theories, he also had a major influence on the country's elites.[1] According to Gobineau, different racial groups in Brazil could be differentiated in terms of

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1   On the topic of Gobineau's time in Brazil, see Raeders Georges (1997). The play staged by Onisajé in 2019, *Traga-me a cabeça de Lima Barreto* (Bring me the head of Lima Barreto), with the Companhia dos Comuns in Rio de Janeiro, which recounts the influence of his theories on the writer's life.

their intellectual and psychological development, their propensity to animality and their moral aptitude. The black race represented the negative extreme of all these attributes, the white race the positive extreme; with the yellow race falling somewhere in the middle. Any mixing between these three could only lead to the degeneration of humankind.[2] On these grounds, the situation in Brazil was deemed catastrophic since racial mixing was one of the principal defining characteristics of the Brazilian population.[3] As Gilberto Freyre explains, the Portuguese crown encouraged relationships between colonizer and colonized throughout the colonial period, especially in the beginning. Those involved in conquering new regions tended to be single and their union with Amerindians in particular would allow them to populate the country.[4] Subsequently, union between masters and slaves, albeit forced, led to the birth of numerous mixed-race children.[5]

In the late 19th century the elites were thus faced with a real obstacle to define positively the Brazilian national identity, since the nation was seemingly "in a state of perdition". As Lilia Schwarcz explains, racist theories had a major influence on Brazilian intellectual circles, influencing medical schools (especially Bahia under Nina Rodrigues), law faculties and ethnographic museums. Mixed race people were believed to have a greater propensity to insanity, violence and criminality as a result of their natural degeneration. Eugenics were in fashion and proposals were made to draw up different criminal codes for Blacks and whites[6] and to sterilize mixed race people as a means to "purify the race",[7] along many other such policies.

In response to this stalemate between European racist theories and the reality of Brazilian society, Brazilian scientists identified the concept of whitening the population as a potential "solution". Schwarcz cites the example of João Batista Lacerda from the Museo Nacional de Rio de Janeiro in 1911, who used statistics to predict that the Brazilian population would be entirely white by 2011 (Schwarcz 1996: 17). According to Oliveira Vianna, this whitening would be brought about by higher birth rates among healthy white men and higher mortality rates among degenerate black and mixed-race people, who experienced

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2   Da Matta 1993: 72, and Schwarcz 1995.
3   Following the 1870 census, which showed that the majority of the Brazilian population was mixed race, the question relating to skin color was removed. This points to the influence of racialist theories on the lives of mixed-race individuals at that time. See Schwarcz 1996: 174.
4   Schwarcz (1996: 154) cites the case of the Marquis of Pombal in the 18th century, who encouraged marriage with Amerindians as hisk main population policy. Gilberto Freyre attributed great importance to this stance from the Portuguese crown. In his view, the establishment of this type of rural family laid the foundation for the colonisation of the Brazilian territories. In Freyre (1992: 8).
5   Freyre considered Portuguese colonists to be very different from Scandinavian colonists. The Portuguese had a completely different understanding of race to other Europeans due to the "bi-continentality" that existed between Africa and Europe (1992: 6). Indeed, following the Moorish invasion during the early Middle Ages, the Portuguese population was intrinsically mixed rather than "pure". The myth of the enchanted Moorish woman (*A Moura Encantada*) had taken hold in Portugal and Portuguese colonists found a similar figure in Indian women, prompting racial mixing. According to Roberto Da Matta (1993: 67), this is an idealised image as the Portuguese population in Portugal discriminated actively against Jewish and Arab minorities, especially after the Inquisition. This proximity to Moorish culture alone cannot, therefore, account for the level of mixing between Portuguese colonists and Amerindian women. Moreover, Gilberto Freyre notes that the union of masters and slaves occurred when the masters were adolescents and had their first sexual experiences with young slaves. This reinforced "white sadism" and the "'innate' masochism of Black women" (1992: 50). Many scholars have condemned how the masters' abused their power over their slaves, especially in this kind of sexual relationship. Freyre does not deny the use of force; he simply implies that Black women valued these unions.
6   On this topic, see Nina Rodrigues (1957, first edition 1894). On the topic of eugenics, see Jurandir Freire Costa (1976).
7   In the United States, during the same period, a campaign to sterilize "the poor", who were most often Black, was launched on the grounds that they were "mentally handicapped". This policy remained in force until the 1950s.

hardship after abolition due to the increase in European immigration and strict political and ideological control over racial mixing (Munanga Kabengele 1996: 182). This long-term vision of the whitening of the population reassured the elites and justified any inequalities between the races. By "naturalizing" social differences on racial grounds, it became possible to scientifically justify social and political injustice (Schwarcz, op. cit.: 162).

This "whitening" ideology was introduced by the Brazilian elites towards the end of the 19th century. Among other clearly expressed aims, the objective was to trigger economic "development" in the country, which was thought to have been delayed by the presence of Black and mixed-race inhabitants. Between 1870 and 1930, immigration from Europe rose to more than three million.[8] The principle of eugenics was written into the Constitution of the Republic in 1934 (Larkin-Nascimento 2000: 206). This ideology of whitening the nation was widespread throughout Latin America. It led to "policies to encourage and subsidize European immigration and legislation to ban immigration by Africans and Asians."[9] According to Peter Wade, "miscegenation", which is a set of social practices rather than an ideology, must be differentiated from whitening, which is a hierarchical, discriminatory version of racial mixing. Miscegenation points to homogeneity and inclusion, differing from the norms of purity in force in other racial systems. It would, however, be a step on the way to the expected end result of whitening.[10] Yet could miscegenation not be understood the other way around? Challenging the dominant readings, some of the Black activists in the 1940s interpreted the idea of racial mixing as blackening of the population instead of its whitening. Some Black activists in the 1940s interpreted the idea of racial mixing in this way.

The Myth of Racial Democracy: Rationale, Reality and Challenges

The Brazilian notion of racial democracy is deeply ambiguous; it embodies both a progressive ideal of democratic equality, regardless of ethnic origin, between every member of a nation and an immensely conservative society that seeks to impose homogeneity upon the population as part of a single culture that is based on a hierarchy of individuals defined by their skin color. Therefore, it is not incompatible with an authoritarian regime. Yet how can the principle of racial democracy be made viable in a country where any individual's right to citizenship is highly relative? How can it be considered a democracy then? As Michel Agier explains, in Brazil "nobody is assumed to be a citizen until they prove otherwise" (Agier 1992: 55).

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8   Rufino dos Santos, Joel (1988, p. 44). Rufino dos Santos shows that the image of Black men as "lazy" and "poor workers" applied to mixed race people in the 19th century rather than to Blacks, who were considered inventive, creative and good professionals. Former slaves who had bought back their freedom were numerous and had mostly become expert artisans. This negative image of Black people represents an ideological construction that emerged at the time of abolition and was reinforced over the long term.

9   Carlos Hasenbalg (1997: 29) adds: "The failure to conduct censuses in most countries on the continent is in itself revealing. Either the racial composition of these countries is considered socially unimportant (due to the publicity surrounding racial democracy) or the aim is to reinforce the invisibility of Black and mixed race members of the population."

10   Wade 1993: 19, 4. Peter Wade is an expert on racial relations in Colombia, especially the Chocó region, which is home to a large Black population.

The Myth and its Limitations

This section will explore the roots of the myth of "racial democracy". According to Renato Ortiz, the 1930 Revolution, which sought new political and social ways forward for Brazil, no longer met the requirements of 19th century racialist theories prompting Gilberto Freyre to join the debate in an attempt to provide a "response" to this new demand (Ortiz 1994: 40-41). Freyre, who was influenced by Franz Boas in particular, brought about a considerable paradigm shift in the understanding of interracial relations in Brazil, moving from the concept of "race" to that of "culture".[11] Although Freyre continued to classify the three races hierarchically based on their biological characteristics and with the white people driving "Civilization" forward culturally. This paradigm shift enabled a new approach to mixed-race people; far from being viewed as degenerates, they came to represent the Brazilian nation as the product of the unique characteristics of Portuguese colonization. Freyre argued that the difficulties faced by Brazil were not so much due to racial mixing but to other "colonial" problems such as syphilis, poor nutrition among colonists and slaves, wild nature, poor crop yields, and other such factors.[12]

Brazil was not only a place of biological mixing between the three races from the start of the Portuguese colonial era but also, and more importantly so, of cultural mixing. This perspective was extremely bold for the time as it proposed the recognition, albeit relative, of many elements of African and Indian cultures. This dual biological and cultural mixing represented the origin of what would become the myth of "racial democracy": from the start of the colonial era, a genuine harmony based on cordiality and amiability (the main foundations of the myth) could be observed between the "three founding races" and, as a result, between every social class. Mixed race people in Brazil would thus constitute a new "race", a global model of the tropical specificity of Brazil's nature and culture, and become the legitimate representatives of the nation. There would be a single Brazilian culture and none of the "three races" would have any legitimacy in advocating their specific culture, which implicitly meant that Afro and Indian cultures would be overlooked.

The myth of racial democracy penetrated every layer of the Brazilian population and, as Roberto Da Matta notes, it may be considered as the dominant ideology right up to the early 2000s and it retains a significant presence to this day. Although the majority of Brazilians are aware of the serious shortcomings of the paradigm in practice, they view it as an objective for the future and as an ideal for the nation. Although "the ideology of syncretism describes a universe free from contradiction, which transcends real discrepancies" (Ortiz 1994: 95) and thus evades conflict, the fact remains that the myth is present in everyone's minds, even those of certain members of the Black movement whose aim is to make this ideal a reality. The myth of the three races, which is synonymous with that of "racial democracy", allows individuals from different social classes and skin color groups to interpret racial relations within a given framework and to recognize each other as nationals (Ortiz 1994: 44).

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11 Freyre takes an interest in everyday life rather than "major events", adopting an approach that would later be referred to as the 'History of mentalities'.

12 Freyre (1992) shows that slaves of African origin ate a far richer and more balanced diet than Europeans, who subsequently modified their cuisine. His book was highly controversial and daring for its time and following its publication his home was searched by police under Vargas's Estado Novo for "inciting racial hatred" among the Black population. It is well-known, however, that Vargas later adopted many of Freyre's ideas.

Detail from a poster for the MNU (Movimento Negro Unificado/ Unified Black Movement) in Salvador in 1978, featuring the following slogan on one of the banners: "For a genuine racial democracy".

The most striking limitation to the concept of racial democracy is its single-minded relation to the concept of what is "national". The cultural manifestations of people of color became "Brazilian" and have lost their specificity. For instance, Samba, a style of music with African roots became "national". Getulio Vargas and the Estado Novo made this vision their official ideology. Nevertheless, the recognition of mixed-race people was far from completely eliminating racial determinism. The ideology of whitening often overlapped with that of racial democracy, "concealing" the hierarchy with a supposedly homogeneous national culture whose components were all equal to one another. Stripped of the right to proclaim their uniqueness, non-white communities no longer had any credibility when calling for genuine integration and civic rights. Ethnic claims became obsolete and demands, especially those made by the Black movement, were rejected because they were deemed unrelated to "reality".

The concept of racial democracy was ambiguous from its very creation. By dismissing the historical context and the numerous situations of conflict that arose as the colony developed, such as recurring slave revolts, Freyre overlooked the asymmetry present in power relations, confusing "racial mixing" with "absence of stratification". Far from being permissive, the Portuguese monarchy introduced an extremely hierarchical society in which there was no place for individuals and the whole (monarchy and Catholic Church) was always greater than the sum of its parts (Da Matta 1993: 75). This pyramid structure, subtly subdivided into countless levels within each category, positioned slaves in terms of the value accorded to their activity and masters according to their powers, forming the basis of a deeply unequal society which was dominated by favoritism.

According to Da Matta, "everyone knew their place" in Brazil so it was not necessary to impose official segregation, as in the United States or South Africa. The system of social and racial relations was fundamentally unequal, thwarting any campaign for change.[13] Indeed, individualistic liberal ideology made very little headway in Brazil:

13 The author views North American segregation as a response to liberal ideology, which considers all individuals to be equal in the eyes of the law. How could whites retain power, especially in the southern United States, which had recently been conquered by troops from the north during the American Civil War, if not by legally establishing apartheid? The reality in Brazil was quite different.

the colony's independence came into effect when the monarchy was transferred from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro and the proclamation of the Republic occurred as a continuation of the Empire.

The concept of racial democracy provided ideological justification for the continuation of a system of domination. By highlighting ongoing mediation by mixed race people, occupying the middle-ground of the hierarchy, it avoided conflict and ensured that any attempt to bring social change could be suppressed, according to Da Matta. As Florestan Fernandes observed in 1955, it ensured the perpetuation of the traditional elites.[14] Apart from members of the Black movement such as Alberto Guerreiro Ramos, Abdias Nascimento and José Correia Leite, Floresan Fernandes was the first sociologist to systematically question the reality of racial democracy and condemn the absence of genuine civic rights for Black populations in post-abolition society:

> The historical and social circumstances have allowed the myth of 'racial democracy' to emerge and be manipulated as an intermediary in the exercise of the societal mechanisms that defend the attitudes, behaviours and 'aristocratic' ideals of the 'dominant race'. For the reverse to occur, the myth would have to have come into the hands of Blacks and mixed-race people and they would have to possess equivalent autonomy to exploit it in the opposite direction in view of their own interests and as a factor for democratizing wealth, culture and power.[15]

Applying a structuralist approach tinged with Marxism, Fernandes reconsidered the slave order's persistence within society at the time. In his view, Brazilian society was not divided into classes, as Donald Pierson had argued, but into prestige and status groups inherited from the colonial era: Whites (former masters), Blacks and mixed-race people (former slaves). Class barriers also existed, of course, but were juxtaposed with race barriers limiting the social mobility of Blacks and mixed-race people within the new post-abolition social order. Fernandes believed that discrimination would gradually disappear as society became modernized, allowing post-colonial structures to fall away. Michel Agier considers that Florestan Fernandes actually believed in an evolutionist paradigm: "the transition from a status society (inherited from the past) to a contract or class society (in the making), brought about by industrialization and urbanization" (1992: 53).

Fernandes believed that the white elites viewed the arrival of Black and mixed-race people on the labor market as a potentially destructive influence on the established patriarchal order. Their demands for genuine competition, in the sense of the liberal capitalist ideology which was supposed to guarantee "equal opportunities" and "social success through work", represented a threat to the white elites: this equality challenged the very foundations of the dominant system of clientelism controlled by former colonial elites, who were mostly white.[16] While this fear goes some way to explaining the persistence of racial discrimination, it may also be viewed as the result of the internalization of 19th century racial theories by the dominant population and, rather unfortunately, by Black and mixed race people. Discriminatory behavior is thus considered "natural" by white people, as is the granting of the numerous privileges that they consider their "due".

14 In his first publication from 1955; he went on to specialise in this topic (Fernandes 1965).
15 Fernandes cited by Guimaraes (1999: 93).
16 This echoes the reaction from the elites in 2018 when they brought Bolsonaro to power in response to public policies, notably involving quotas for university education and rights granted to domestic employees.

Hardly any Brazilian sees themselves as a racist and it is considered uncouth to openly express prejudice against specific skin color groups in public. In private or interpersonal relations, the topic continues to be relatively taboo. In 1972, Fernandes explained that the powerful myth of "racial democracy" had made Brazilians "prejudiced about not being prejudiced" (1972: 23). According to Agier, "the myth of racial democracy gradually emerged as a political imposition: a social, or even institutional, prohibition on discussing racism and racial prejudice" (Agier 1992: 61). This lasted until 2001 and the Durban conference in South Africa. The Brazilian delegation returned from the conference with a genuine desire for change thereby allowing government policies to be introduced to fight discrimination both in universities, through the implementation of quotas, and in the justice system, etc.

In 1988, Lilia Schwarcz conducted a study for the University of São Paulo that provided evidence of this ambiguity. The results of the questionnaire showed that 97% of respondents claimed not to hold prejudices, yet 98% of the same sample said that they knew somebody who was prejudiced, which could even include friends or family. The author concluded that "every Brazilian feels like an island of racial democracy surrounded by racists on all sides" (Schwarcz 1996: 155). There is real impunity when it comes to breaches of anti-racism laws. Despite the fact that Law 7.716, which came into force in January 1989, criminalizes racism, the police continue to treat racist comments as "jokes." Carlos Moura, executive secretary of the Inter-ministerial Working Group for the Recognition of the Black Population, stated in 1998: "It is not a shortcoming of the law. From the filing of the complaint to the police investigation and the judge's ruling, there is prejudice against Black people. At all three levels, there is absolutely no recognition of racism against the Black population" (*Folha de São Paulo*, 23.08.98, caderno 3: 1).

The UNESCO Project and the Unexpected "Revelation" of Brazilian Racism

It was a UNESCO project that prompted Florestan Fernandes's critique of the racial system in Brazil. The project led to substantial changes in the approach taken to the race issue in Brazilian society. Following the horrors of World War II, it aimed to show the success of Brazil's racial system, producing a mixed-race nation and serving as a model of racial democracy.[17] This large-scale survey was conducted between 1951 and 1952 and covered four Brazilian states: Pernambuco, Bahia, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Only the team responsible for conducting the study in São Paulo (Roger Bastide, Florestan Fernandes and Oracy Nogueira) revealed the social inequality that was present between white, Black and mixed-race people and highlighted the inaccuracy of an assimilationist and integrationist understanding of Brazilian society. Their sociological study was the first to identify the existence of a cruel racial inequality in terms of access to work, education, health and leisure in Brazil.

With the exception of the study on Bahia and several articles by Bastide, the final report was not published as it did not meet UNESCO's expectations and Brazil con-

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17 As part of the project, Claude Lévi-Strauss was asked to write an essay on the importance of respecting cultural differences, which would form the basis for numerous subsequent reflections. For more information about the UNESCO project in Brazil, see Chor Maio (1997). The details presented here on this topic are taken from this source.

tinued to be "exported" globally as a "model" of interracial harmony.[18] As Chor Maio explains, the study was highly useful as it provided evidence of the differences between the situations of Afro-descendant populations in north-east and south-east Brazil in particular, which remains a necessary distinction. It also led to the practical disappearance of the deterministic theories that were still in vogue and to an understanding of the race issue based on the sociological framework of interracial relations including Black and mixed-race populations as part of society, and therefore moving beyond the approaches that saw Afro-Brazilian culture simply as a "side-show" that were common to such research in the 1930s.[19] Indeed, the members of the various *Congressos Afro-Brasileiros* organised in Recife by Gilberto Freyre (1934) and later in Salvador by Nina Rodrigues (1937) took a very limited, often deterministic approach to research on Black subjects, focusing solely on the characteristic elements of "African" culture and often considering Afro-Brazilians as strangers to the national culture because they were "African", without seeking to understand their degree of integration within Brazilian society.[20]

The São Paulo team, which subsequently became known as the *Escola Paulista*, completely changed the approach to the race issue raised at the start of the century. The *Escola Paulista* often based their reflections on the Marxist paradigm, combining the concepts of race, class and social mobility. In their view, Freyre's thinking evoked an "archaic", rural north-eastern Brazil rather than a "modern" Brazil experiencing the urban, industrial reality of a class-based society. Like Florestan Fernandes or Oracy Nogueira, however, Roger Bastide never dismissed one of the central elements of Gilberto Freyre's thought: the warmth and cordiality of interpersonal relations in Brazil. They all shared the opinion that this eminently Brazilian characteristic could not be overlooked when developing a new interracial model. Bastide drew attention to the Brazilian dilemma: Brazilians were at once aware of the fact that cordiality underpins the preferential relationships involved in Brazilian paternalism but were also proud of the affectionate and fraternal relationships that existed between the different ethnic groups.[21] Nevertheless, Fernandes and Nogueira believed that only the civic and democratic education of the Brazilian people in combination with this cordiality would allow a Brazilian "model" of interracial relations based on true racial democracy, rather than paternalism, to become a long-term reality.[22]

The members of the *Teatro Experimental do Negro* (TEN), including Abdias Nascimento in the 1940s and Guerreiro Ramos (one of the founders of TEN), raised these kinds of questions and reached similar conclusions: education was required not only for the white population but also for Black and mixed-race people in order to reduce the social differences arising from the unequal treatment of ethnic groups and achieve

18 Chor Maio notes that only the study conducted in Bahia and directed by Wagley was published. According to Alfred Metraux, who was responsible for overseeing the project on behalf of UNESCO, the study provided a simple, didactic overview of the racial situation in Brazil and met the institution's expectations. The study in Rio de Janeiro, directed by Costa Pinto, reached similar conclusions to the São Paulo study and was not published. The author does not clearly explain why the Recife study, led by René Ribeiro, was not published either (Chor Maio 1997: 307, 309, 312).

19 The UNESCO study influenced sociological and anthropological research throughout the democratisation process (1946-1964). This research was interrupted by the military coup d'état in 1964. Fernandes' research, in particular, provided a starting point for reflection by many activists in the Black movement. However, these studies rarely reached society as a whole and never managed to trigger the emergence of a new "dominant ideology", to use Roberto da Matta's term.

20 The participants in the congresses were mostly doctors, usually psychiatrists, and viewed Black people as mentally retarded in line with the principles set out by Gobineau.

21 Bastide (1957: 512), cited by Chor Maio 1997: 318.

22 Fernandes, (1960: XVI.) and Oracy Nogueira, 1955: 423-424 (cited by Chor Maio: 316-317.)

true racial democracy. Abdias Nascimento and Guerreiro Ramos also sought to influence UNESCO's research and put pressure on the Brazilian government to organize an International Conference on Race Relations from UNESCO. In their view, the proposals made by the TEN could be used as a starting point to analyze what could actually obstruct genuine racial integration.[23] But was UNESCO really keen on learning about the dysfunction present in the system or was it merely seeking to promote a "model" of interracial relations? Although the TEN's proposals were not taken up by UNESCO, Costa Pinto,[24] director of the survey in the state of Rio de Janeiro, and the São Paulo team, including Roger Bastide and Florestan Fernandes in particular, were familiar with the history of TEN and are sure to have been inspired by the organization in their analyses.

"Brazilian-style" Racism: Skin Color as a Factor in Racial and Social Hierarchy

Brazilian racism is truly unique. It can neither be understood as a model of racial democracy, nor as a copy of North American or South African racism. Instead, it is the product of successive phases in the development of specifically Brazilian racial practices and narratives.

In order to understand how discrimination became naturalised in Brazilian society, Michel Wieviorka's typology of the different dynamics coexisting within the practice of racism is an excellent source of wisdom. The author establishes two main dynamics: firstly, the targeted group is made inferior, and secondly, it is made different (Wiewiorka 1993: 10-12). The first variant is deeply unequal: the group can have a place within society, as long as discriminated individuals adopt a position of inferiority that corresponds to them as a result of their "nature". The second reserves no space in society for the ostracized group. The discriminated community is viewed as a threat to the dominant culture due to its "intractable" cultural characteristics. This second dynamic results in rejection, exclusion and, in the worst case, expulsion or even the destruction of the group. The aim is to prevent any kind of social interaction with the group which evidently leads to segregation.

Brazilian racism is more closely linked to the first variant, while the second is more relevant to the United States and South Africa. In Brazil, Black and mixed-race populations are not excluded from society and their culture is not viewed as a threat. However, they remain "inferior" and their function tends to be limited (in the collec-

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23 This shows how attentive members of the TEN were to all kinds of initiatives to fight racism, both artistic and political. See Chor Maio 1997: 261.

24 According to Elizabeth Larkin Nascimento, Costa Pinto drew inspiration from the information and conclusions presented at the conference organised in Rio by the TEN in 1950 (Primeiro Congresso do Negro Brasileiro/First Conference for Black Brazilians), especially with regard to the status of Black people as mere objects of study rather than full members of Brazilian society. Costa Pinto does not name the organisers of the conference in his work. In his book *O negro no Rio de Janeiro*, the product of the survey conducted for UNESCO, he criticises all the initiatives launched by the Black movement, especially the TEN. He views it as a movement of "intellectualised, pigmented petty bourgeois", with no connection to the "Black masses". From Costa Pinto's radical Marxist perspective, any claim to a Black identity was a "false consciousness" that cut the Black "masses" off from the rest of the population and jeopardised the potential for raising awareness among the "people". In his response to criticism of his study from the TEN, Costa Pinto opted to speak in biological terms: *"I doubt that there is any biologist who, after studying a microbe, let's say, has seen that microbe appear in public and write sentences on the study in which it participated as laboratory material"*. He also claimed that it was a racist movement comprising of only Black people. However, numerous white people participated in the TEN. In Larkin-Nascimento, (2000: 237, 238, 301); Costa Pinto 1998.

tive imagination, at least) to that of driver, cleaner or bricklayer, or, "at best", musician or footballer, as shown by the roles played by Black characters in most television series or theatre plays on the commercial circuit. To return to Da Matta, Black and mixed-race people in Brazil "know their place" and are "requested" to make do.[25] Therefore, Brazilian racism falls under the first dynamic identified by Wieviorka.

Wieviorka emphasizes that the two dynamics are distinct in theory but have never been entirely separate in practice. Not long ago, the ideal of whitening echoed the second dynamic, as it sought, rather absurdly, to "eliminate" Black blood through racial mixing.[26] This ideal is no longer advocated officially but it continues to influence interpersonal relations and has even been internalized by the discriminated groups themselves.[27]

Ultimately, the outcome of this dynamic is a deeply unequal society that continues to operate social classifications based on skin color and other physical markers such as hair type, nose shape and lip shape (*preconceito de marca*) rather than ancestry or blood (*preconceito de origem*) as in the United States or South Africa, as Oracy Nogueira brilliantly explains.[28] Only the Brazilian Black movements, with their pugnacity and determination, have managed to change the situation in Brazil since 2001. They received support from the Lula government in 2003 and their abrupt slowdown in 2016, exacerbated in 2019 and still continuing to this day can only highlight how effective their actions have been. As they brought the Afro and Amerindian populations out of the shadows and into the spotlight, they sowed panic among the country's white elites, now represented by the current president. The government has since shut down the Ministry of Racial Equality and appointed an individual who rejects all aspects of African ancestral culture (such as Candomblé and Umbanda) as the director of the Fundação Palmares, the institute responsible for developing Afro-Brazilian culture.[29] Since 2019, their places of worship, *terreiros*, have been subjected to unprecedented numbers of attacks. In August 2020, the magazine Veja recorded 1,335 crimes linked to religious intolerance in the first eight months of the year.[30] Many *terreiros* have been closed as the result of the actions of the unlikely 'Soldiers of Jesus' movement, which forbids playing drums or dressing in white and drives practitioners out of their places of worship, often ancient and loca-

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25 Agier clearly summarises the situation in Brazil with reference to the specific case of Bahia: [Contemporary racism is a] "system comprising the simultaneous existence of a wide range of racial stereotypes, the established belief that Black people prefer to be at the bottom of the social hierarchy and out of power, a discipline of interpersonal relations based on evading conflict, and finally, an acceptance that it is inappropriate to speak of racism in the land where everyone is mixed (...) Bahian racism is not exclusion/segregation, but rather a diffuse, unspoken form of integration and domination" (1992: 61-62).
26 This was a "long-term" vision of whitening, with no "ethnic cleansing" implemented. It is important to question what it means to be "white" in a country with high levels of racial mixing. Although the Brazilian authorities and elites advocate a "whitening" of the Brazilian population over time, would this not actually be a "blackening"? Are all "white" Brazilians not already mixed? (See Piault 1997: 14).
27 Rufino dos Santos (1980: 73). He cites the case of a husband who attempted to "whiten" his wife in 1971 by bathing her in acid. Rufino recounts that it was common in the 1940s to see women rub their faces with bleach to whiten them. Many continue to straighten their hair even in contemporary times. Frantz Fanon describes the same ideology of whitening among Caribbean populations, who sought to "whiten" the "race" by marrying people with lighter skin. "In the end, the race must be whitened; this is what all Martinique women know, say and repeat. Whitening the race, saving the race, and not in the sense that one might expect: not to preserve 'the originality of the part of the world where they grew up' but to guarantee its whiteness." (Fanon 1971: 38). His broader work reveals the difficulties encountered by Caribbean men of color in detaching themselves from a system of thought that they are taught from childhood, in which white people represent Good and Black people represent Evil.
28 South Africa and the United States do not allow for gradations of skin color: the "mixed race" category is non-existent and mixed-race people are classified as "Black" based on the classic definition of the "one-drop rule" (in Nogueira Oracy 1955).
29 Sergio Camargo is President of the Palmares Cultural Foundation.
30 *Veja,* August 18 2021.

ted in disadvantaged neighborhoods (*favelas*). There is some degree of resistance but the situation remains difficult, as the racism described here is compounded by a religious factor, with this mass involvement of congregations from evangelical churches that demonize African or Amerindian cultural and religious practices.

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