

Emergence of an Organized Politics of Race in Latin America

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In the past 10 to 20 years, Latin America has come to acquire an organized politics of race.¹ By an “organized politics of race,” I mean a situation in which racial categories are simultaneously and explicitly the subjects of state policy, deployed in claims-making by subordinate groups, mobilized as constituencies by political actors, such as social movements and political parties, and used by social scientists to describe and diagnose social inequalities. To be sure, racial identities mattered previously; racism has been widespread, people have used racialized language to describe others, and economic and social hierarchies have paralleled racial differences. However, explicit mobilization around racial categories—by both society and the state—marks a new trend for the region.

This chapter addresses a few related questions. What is the nature of and the implications of the new racialized public policies being adopted in the region? Do they work? Will they raise awareness of discrimination and reduce inequality? The arguments are intended to constitute the basis for an ongoing conversation. The organized politics of race does not look the same everywhere and has proceeded farther in some countries than in others.

The first part of this chapter shows that, because the historical context of the state’s role in race making differs significantly in Latin America from the United States, taken-for-granted racial categories used by states and scholars mean different things on the ground. The second part argues that the emergence of race-based public policies has involved a racial recategorization project launched by elites, a project that does not always resonate with the targeted populations. The third part of the chapter briefly analyzes two major experiences of race-based public policies: university admissions quotas in Brazil and reserved seats for “black communities” in Colombia. These two experiences demonstrate that race-based policies have succeeded in raising awareness and broadening discussions about inequality. However, they mark an imperfect beginning to a longer and much-needed national conversation about race.

RACE IN LATIN AMERICA: WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

Race is not a concept with any inherent meaning. Rather, it has *historical* meanings crafted by the distinct ways that states, international organizations, and scientific and intellectual discourses classified, categorized, and identified people. As Brubaker, Loveman, and Samatov point out, race, ethnicity, color, nation, and other categories are “not things in the world but ways of seeing the world” (Brubaker, Loveman, and Samatov 2004, 47). “Racial,” “ethnic,” or “national” groups do not exist independently of their identification, classification, and demarcation; rather they are created in and through such acts (*ibid.*).

Racial and ethnic “ways of seeing” evolved differently in Latin America than in other areas of the world. Colonial powers in Africa and Asia, particularly the British, invented ethnic identities and then codified ethnic boundaries in laws and public policies (Anderson 1991; Mamdani 1996, 2001; Ranger 1983; Vail 1989). This does not imply that inter-group differences were absent before colonial rule, but they were neither institutionalized and enforced by the power of the modern state, nor known as “ethnic.” State practices of naming, labeling, and classifying—through the census and other instruments—formed part of a technology of rule. They made subject populations legible and facilitated the allocation of jobs and educational opportunities. State classifications also enabled official discrimination, reified social divisions, and laid the groundwork for ethnic conflict and even genocidal violence (Horowitz 1985; Mamdani 2001; Montville 1990; Scott 1998). Official categorizations helped manufacture and maintain inequalities.

Although colonial Latin American states also upheld ethnic and racial classification and used membership to determine rights, these practices were rejected and abandoned by independent states (Cope 1994; Graham, Skidmore, Helg, and Knight 1990; Mörner 1967; Seed 1982). Latin American countries forged models of the nation based not on racial or ethnic pluralism but rather on mixing and miscegenation. Ideologies of *mestizaje* (mixture), the *raza cósmica* (the cosmic race), and *blanqueamiento* (whitening), combined with administrative practices (e.g.,

the failure to count citizens by race and ethnicity, and the absence of segregation or official discrimination), upheld a different “way of seeing.”

Latin American societies were multihued with different social classes and cultural practices. They were not multiethnic, in the sense of being composed of distinct descent-based groupings.² Yet stratification and inequality based on color, language, culture, and other racial and ethnic-like features have persisted. The coexistence of racial multidimensionality on the one hand with racism and discrimination on the other marks Latin America’s uniqueness in the study of comparative ethnic politics (cf. Wade 1997).

Latin Americanists’ use of the terms *race* and *ethnicity* differ from the practice in mainstream comparative politics, in which dominant approaches define ethnicity and race as attributes of individuals and groups that are based on descent (Chandra 2004, 2006; Fearon 2003; Horowitz 1985). The descent-oriented nature of race and ethnicity implies that, although identities and groups can change, the extent of change is limited, at least in the short term (Chandra, 2006).

In Latin America, everyday practices of ethnic and racial identification and classification typically are not based on descent. In a nationally representative study of Peruvians conducted by the Project on Ethnicity and Race in Latin America (PERLA), for example, only 61% of respondents who reported indigenous ancestry actually identified with the indigenous category (Sulmont and Callirgos 2014). Criteria for classification entail perceived phenotype and social status, although perceptions may vary widely. In Brazil, for example, criteria for classification are plural and shifting, and the size of different groups changes—often dramatically—depending on how they are counted (S. R. Bailey, Loveman, and Muniz 2013).

As a result, siblings (of the same parents) can belong to different “races.” And individuals’ ethnic or racial category can change as they acquire an education, earn more income, or change neighborhoods (Graham et al. 1990; Harris 1964; Telles 2004, 2014; Wade 1997). In Mexico, people jettison their indigenous identity by learning Spanish, wearing Western clothes, and moving out of indigenous communities (Martínez Casas et al. 2014).

As Loveman, Telles, and others have pointed out, different methods of classifying and counting groups yield

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dramatically different pictures of the racial and ethnic composition of the citizenry. What you choose to see determines what you get. Different people may see different things, even through the same lens. There is no single underlying racial or ethnic reality to depict, but rather multiple dimensions.

ELITE RACIAL PROJECTS AND TERMINOLOGY

Latin America’s embrace of race-based public policies has been accompanied by the deployment of new categories by the state, international organizations, and social movements. These categories reflect an emerging “way of seeing” on the part of elites. It is less clear that the elite “way of seeing” is embraced by, and resonates with, the broader population, including the intended beneficiaries of new policies.

The term *Afrodescendant* refers to people who have ancestors from Africa but who were not born nor currently live there. Contemporary use of “Afrodescendant” by scholars, international organizations, and development practitioners originated in the Durban Declaration and Program of Action adopted at the World Conference Against Racism in 2001. The Declaration referred to “peoples of African descent” as those neither born nor living in an African country, but who had ancestors from the region.³

The term gained broad purchase in Latin America for its use by the Inter-Agency Consultation on Race (IAC), formed in 2000. Coordinated by the Inter-American Dialogue, the IAC was a network of development organizations with projects intended to combat social exclusion and racism suffered by Afrodescendants.⁴ In their official documents, organizations such as the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), and the World Bank similarly use the term *Afrodescendant* to refer to these groups. (However, the IADB website uses the term *African descendants*.)

The term *Afrodescendant* was not common as recently as 10 years ago. Many scholars referred instead to “Afro-Latins” or, more specifically, “Afro-Colombians,” “Afro-Brazilians,” and “Afro-Cubans,” as well as “blacks” (see, e.g., Andrews 2004; Sawyer 2006; Telles 2004; Wade 1993). Scholarship published since 2010 has used the

term *Afrodescendant* almost exclusively, and usually synonymously with “black” (see, e.g., Loveman 2014; Telles 2014).

“Black” is another complex concept, usually translated today as “negro.” In Brazil, the term was not used in the census or in official state discourse until recently. The census always counted by “color,” and listed *pretos*, *pardos*, *brancos*, and *amarelos* as the color groups to be counted. Although historically not interpreted to be the same as race, today the concepts of race and color often are used as synonyms or jointly (e.g., as in the common “race/color”). *Pardo* was specifically intended to denote people who were neither *preto* (i.e., the word used historically for black) nor *branco* (i.e., white) (Campos 2013).

In the Statute of Racial Equality adopted in 2010, the Brazilian government declared that *pretos* and *pardos* would heretofore form the *população negra*, or the black population (Government of Brazil 2010). This was an historic move. The government named the black population as the country’s largest group, thereby creating a racial dichotomy in place of the color gradations of the past.

For their implicit rejection of intermediate categories, both “Afrodescendant” and “black” move Latin America closer to the US-style binary racial system.

By recognizing the category “negro,” the government was responding to black movements and to findings of social scientists. Activists believed that the *branco-pardo-preto* classification scheme diluted Afro-Brazilian collective identity and facilitated whitening (S. Bailey 2009; Hanchard 1994; Nobles 2000; Telles 2004). Before the 2000 census, some groups mobilized a campaign to convince Afrodescendants of various shades to reject the whitening ideology that had encouraged them to classify as *pardo* and to instead declare their color as *preto* (Nobles, 2000). The idea was that promoting a unified, black identity with a clearly demarcated boundary would expose racism, mobilize blacks to combat it, and make society as a whole more aware of inequality.

In addition, decades of social science research on racial inequality in Brazil had revealed that both *pretos* and *pardos* lagged whites in terms of basic social indicators (e.g., income and education) and that, statistically speaking, both *pretos* and *pardos* were far more similar than either group was to whites (Feres Júnior 2008, 64; Hasenbalg 1979; Henriques 2001; Paixão et al. 2010; L. F. Schwartzman 2009; G. M. Silva and Paixão 2014; N. d. V. Silva 1985; Telles 2004). Whereas an earlier generation of social scientists had written of whites (*brancos*) and nonwhites (*não-brancos*), scholars in the 1990s began to write of *brancos* and *negros*, in part to ally themselves with the black movement’s project to combat racial inequality (Henriques 2001; L. F. Schwartzman 2009).

Unlike in the United States, being nonwhite in Brazil is not the same as being black, and binary distinctions do not characterize perceptions of inequalities. Stated another way, *pardos* are not *negros*. *Pardo* means “neither white, nor black”—an option between the two racial poles; it is a residual category (Campos 2013; Feres Júnior 2008, 63). For many students (and members of the general public), there is a significant difference between a *negro* and a light *pardo* (L. F. Schwartzman 2009).

The genesis of the “indigenous” category also must be considered. *Indigenous* or *Indian* was a category invented by Spanish colonizers, an umbrella term applied to people of distinct languages, cultures, and practices who lacked a common identity. According to Knight: “‘Indian,’ as a term either of abuse or praise, was conceived and applied by non-Indians. No common Indian sentiment preceded the Conquest; it was only in the wake of the Conquest that the generic concept of ‘Indian’ could be formulated in negative contradistinction to the dominant Spanish/European. And this generic concept remained part of Spanish rather than Indian usage” (Knight 1990, 75).

There is evidence that particular language and cultural group labels continue to resonate more than the generic “indigenous” category. Table 1 presents information from the Bolivian 2001 censuses and surveys conducted by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The first column reports what many studies claim, which is that according to the 2001 census, 62% of the population self-identifies as indigenous (see, e.g., Assies and Salman 2005; Lucero 2008; Madrid 2008; Van Cott 2005).

Yet the second and third columns of table 1 show that the generic category “indigenous” has little salience in Bolivia. The widely used 62% census figure refers to the total number of Bolivians self-identifying with a specific group such as Aymara, Quechua, Guaraní, Chiquitano, or Mojeño. (Thirty-six different groups are recognized in the 2009 Constitution.) When surveys ask about generic “indigenous” or “originary” identity, the number of people responding is relatively small, between some 16% and 19% of the country. More people self-identify as *mestizo*. Interestingly, table 1 suggests that Bolivians are comfortable identifying with particular indigenous ethnic groups and simultaneously as *mestizo*.

IMPLEMENTING RACE-BASED PUBLIC POLICIES

The decades of the 2000s have witnessed an expansion of racialized public policies in Latin America directed at indigenous and Afrodescendant populations. As Paschel’s

chapter in this Report notes, these policies evolved at two distinct moments: the first emphasized multiculturalism, and the second, emphasized racial equality. In light of the region's historic denial of racial salience, these actions are revolutionary. Have they worked? Will they work?

University Quotas in Brazil

Affirmative action in Brazil focuses on access to higher education rather than political inclusion or support for minority-owned businesses.⁵ What explains the focus on higher education? Widely recognized as the principal mechanism of social mobility, educational levels are closely correlated with income, meaningful and stable work, and economic security. Yet enrollment in higher education reflects and magnifies social inequalities. In 2008, 21% of whites ages 18 to 24 were enrolled in postsecondary education, compared to merely 8% of nonwhites (*pardos* and *pretos*). Although overall enrollment grew considerably over time for both groups—in 1988, only 8% of whites and 2% of *pardos* and *pretos* were enrolled—the gap between whites and nonwhites has persisted (Paixão et al. 2010, 227).

Public higher education is free, and most of the best institutions are public. Demand for admission greatly exceeds supply. Dozens of applicants compete for each slot in the most prestigious fields of study in public university—including medicine, law, dentistry, and engineering. The only criterion for admission to university is the applicant's score on the entrance examination (*vestibular*). Lower- and middle-income students tend to lose out in this competition, for two reasons. First, the excellent primary and secondary schools that offer the best training for such exams tend to be private, accessible only to the affluent. Most university students come from private schools, but the majority of Brazilians—86%—go to public schools (S. Schwartzman 2008a). Second, success on the entrance exam

usually depends on completing preparatory courses, which are expensive and accessible primarily to wealthier students from private schools (S. Schwartzman 2008b, 2009).⁶

As a result, intellectual elites graduating from public universities tend to be the economic elites who can pay for good private secondary schools, a trend that dramatically diminishes the chances for upward mobility for the lower and middle classes. Quotas—whether social or racial—have been advanced by the black movement and politicians as the most efficient mechanism to break this perverse cycle (Guimarães 2008, 184).

Following the pioneering example of the state of Rio de Janeiro—where the legislature adopted a law mandating public school and racial admissions quotas in 2001—the policy “snowballed” across Brazil in the 2000s. By the end of the decade, the majority of public universities had begun to adopt affirmative action programs. Whereas most were introduced by the universities themselves, some programs were the result of state law.⁷

Effectively, quota programs redistribute results of the *vestibular* so that individuals of certain social groups compete against one another for a subset of the total number of admissions slots (Feres Júnior 2008, 45). Advocates of quotas attribute growth in the numbers of *pardos* and *pretos* in higher education in the 1990s and 2000s to the introduction of affirmative action (Paixão et al. 2010, 231).

In August 2012, Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff signed a law that established a 50% “social” quota in all federal universities. The social quota required that half of all admissions slots be allocated to students from public schools. Within the social quotas, half of the slots are to be reserved for students whose families earn less than 1.5 of the minimum wage, and half for those with families earning above that level. Within each income band, slots are to be reserved for people self-identifying as *preto*, *pardo*, and indigenous, in accordance with their share of

Table 1: Ethnic identification in Bolivia

	2001 CENSUS	LAPOP SURVEY (2006)	UNDP (1996)
Indigenous or <i>Originario</i> (generic term)		19%	16%
Total number who self-identify with specific group (including Quechua, Aymara, Guaraní, Chiquitano, Mojeño, or other)	62%		
Mestizo			67%
Mestizo or Cholo		65%	
White		11%	17%
None or Other		4%	

Source: Adapted from Zavaleta (2008, p. 52).

Note: Blank cells indicate that the survey did not include this category. Since the census, LAPOP, and UNDP studies asked different questions they are not directly comparable.

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the population in each state. Two Constitutional Court decisions issued earlier in 2012 had affirmed the legality of race-based affirmative action.

Two aspects of the implementation of quotas are worth considering. The first is the politics of the categories used by the quota policies. Although the 2012 federal law specified *pretos* and *pardos*, earlier policies did not in fact, most used the term *negro* (Feres Júnior 2008).

Rio de Janeiro’s university quota law introduced the term *negro* under pressure from the black movement, which viewed the implementation of university quotas as a chance to promote the integration of *pretos* and *pardos* into a single, “*negro*,” racial group (Peria & Bailey, 2014). Most policy makers believed that “*negro*” applied to, and encompassed, people who would normally self-classify under the *preto* and *pardo* census categories. They also assumed that beneficiaries would know what *negro* meant (*pardo plus preto*) (ibid).

In fact, most of the population self-identified in other ways and had a different understanding of *negro* than the government and the black movement. Many *pardos*—who were among the intended beneficiaries of quotas—did not think the “*negro*” category applied to them. For example, students at the State University of Rio de Janeiro surveyed by Luisa Schwartzman tended to believe that *negro* referred only to very dark people (L. F. Schwartzman 2009).

The fact that popular understandings of the meaning of *negro* were at odds with elite intentions thwarted the ability of quotas to achieve their intended aims (L. F. Schwartzman 2008, 2009). In fact, few Brazilians self-identify with the category “*negro*.” In the 2010 PERLA study, a mere 6% of respondents identified as “*negro*” in response to an open-ended question about their racial identification (G. M. Silva and Paixão 2014). Critics alleged that, as a result of the policies’ embrace of the term *negro*, many *pardos*, who comprise the majority of nonwhites, and have socioeconomic conditions as limited as *pretos*, are ignored in affirmative-action policies or forced to be classified as *negros* to qualify (Feres Júnior, 2008).

The second important development is the gradual usurpation of race by class. Although the black movement fought for affirmative action, in the eventual application,

social and class criteria were actually more pervasive. Of the approximate 70 universities practicing some form of affirmative action in 2012 (of a total of 96 public universities in the country), 60 used class criteria—operationalized primarily by a public school background—whereas only 40 used race (Daflon, Feres Júnior, and Campos 2013).⁸ Moreover, universities almost always applied social criteria in

addition to racial criteria to preclude affluent blacks from taking advantage of the policies.

During the first decade of the 2000s, the meaning of quotas in Brazil as a tool to promote recognition and combat racism was displaced by an emphasis on promoting redistribution and combatting socioeconomic disadvantage. The inequality posed solely by racial status on its own was inadequate to justify a policy intervention. Only those who suffered from a combination of racial *and* class subordination were entitled to benefit from quotas for university admission. Yet data continue to show that racial status shapes educational outcomes independently of income and family education (S. Schwartzman 2008b).

The racialized status hierarchy—that is, institutionalized patterns of cultural value that position some groups as superior, good looking, normative, and moral, while casting others as inferior, lacking, ugly, and indecent—is an independent dimension of social justice (Fraser 2000). Brazilian authorities should be wary of assuming that racial differences will be solved by socioeconomic redistribution, even when poor Afrodescendants are specifically targeted. As De la Fuente noted, “Racism is not simply a question of unequal distribution of resources; it is a cultural and ideological complex that needs to be actively and systematically dismantled” (De la Fuente 2007, 140).

Are university quotas a distraction, based on a misdiagnosis of the roots of inequality (cf. Banting and Kymlicka 2006)? Simon Schwartzman, a prominent educational scholar and opponent of quotas, suggested they are. He maintains that the principal cause of inequality in higher education is the poor quality of secondary schools: “The main limitation to access to higher education is not a shortage of admissions slots, nor a lack of funding, and much less any type of discrimination in the selection

process. The big obstacle is the secondary school system, which still doesn't prepare students in sufficient numbers to feed the expansion that the higher education system has had" (S. Schwartzman 2008b, 26). In 2005, fewer than 50% of Brazilians of appropriate age were enrolled in secondary school. Secondary school performance is highly correlated with family income and education (although there are racial differences within income bands). Since Brazil offers roughly as many admissions slots in higher education as there are graduates from secondary schools, it is not necessary to further expand the higher education system. Rather, convincing people to enroll in, and complete, secondary school is the main challenge that the country faces (*ibid.*).

Another challenge involves the inadequate training that a public secondary school education provides for students entering university—a problem not addressed by the 2012 federal quota law. Simply placing students in university offers no guarantee that they will be able to gain an education and complete their coursework (S. Schwartzman 2008a). Poor students have difficulty acquiring supplies and supporting themselves while they study—a problem recognized in early debates about quotas in Rio de Janeiro (Htun 2004a). To address some of these concerns, an affirmative action program launched by the São Paulo state government in 2012 requires public school students entering university via quotas to attend a two-year preparatory college and they are given a monthly stipend (Schwartzman 2013).

Admissions quotas provide a fast track for some Brazilian Afrodescendants to gain access to prestigious universities; however, they do not address the underlying structural problems keeping millions of secondary school students away from higher education. In that sense, admissions quotas reflect a broader limitation with the region's racial equality policies, as pointed out by Paschel in chapter 6. By putting racial inequality on the public agenda, quotas have succeeded in compelling people to recognize and talk about a long-denied problem in Brazilian society.

Colombia's Reserved Seats for Afrodescendants

Colombia's racial equality policies were initially based on a "misdiagnosis" (cf. Banting and Kymlicka 2006): the situation of Afrodescendants was viewed as analogous to that of indigenous peoples. In the Constitution of 1991 and other legislation from the early 1990s, Afrodescendants were treated as if they were a culturally distinct, geographically concentrated ethnic group. They deserved collective land rights, representation in Congress, and the

recognition of their practices and traditions (Agudelo 2004; Paschel 2010; Restrepo 2004; Wade 2002). Yet as many commentators pointed out, this "ethnic frame" applied only to a small minority of the black population living in rural areas of the Pacific coast. It was inadequate to address racism, socioeconomic inequality, discrimination, and the status of blackness (Paschel 2010; Wade 2009).

Due to the influence of black movements and international pressures, discourse on race discrimination and racial equality became more prominent in the late 2000s in both society and the state, although the ethnic frame did not lose importance. A major turning point came in the 2005 census, when the wording of questions about race and ethnicity changed. The census asked people if—according to their culture, *pueblo*, or physical features—they self-identified *or* were identified by others as belonging to one of several groups, including the expansive category of "*Negro, mulato, afro-colombiano or afrodescendiente*."⁹ With this more expansive terminology, 11% of the population self-identified as Afrodescendant (Del Popolo et al. 2009). Other studies suggest, however, that the official categories are not synchronous with self- and other perceptions and that, if other terms had been used, the size of the Afrodescendant population would be even larger. The recent PERLA survey, for example, estimates that Afrodescendants comprise approximately 20% of the population.¹⁰

The discursive recognition of racial categories reflected in the census was followed by changes in state policy. In 2005, the Constitutional Court ruled against two Cartagena discothèques that had denied entrance to two black sisters (Meertens 2008). In 2007, the government created an Intersectoral Commission for the Advancement of Afrocolombian, *Palenquero*, and *Raizal* Populations in the Interior Ministry; a 2009 publication by the group recognized the existence of racism (Wade 2011, 26). Yet the agency did not abandon the ethnic frame: a bill submitted to Congress in 2012—the proposed "Law on Equal Opportunities for Afrocolombian Communities"—was based on "recognition of the fundamental right to ethnic identity" and the idea of Afrodescendants as an ethnic group.¹¹

In 2007, the Afrocolombian caucus was launched in Congress, composed of two senators and seven deputies (including both deputies from the reserved seats as well as one white deputy representing the islands of San Andrés and Providencia). Through agreements with the Interior and Justice Ministry, several universities applied small quotas for blacks in admissions and others offered tuition discounts (Ministerio del Interior y de Justicia de la República de Colombia, N.d.). In 2012, the Interior Ministry submitted a bill to Congress that would institute a 10% racial quota in military and police academies, financially reward

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political parties that succeeded in getting Afrodescendants elected, and establish a special loan program for the higher education of black students.¹²

In 2011, Congress approved a law that criminalized racial discrimination and punished it with prison terms. In 2013, the Constitutional Court banned racist speech in universities.¹³ These actions demonstrate that the state's attention to Afrodescendants is no longer limited to "black communities" of the rural Pacific coast. Official discourse evinced greater acknowledgement of problems of racism and racial inequality.

By 2014, mechanisms of political inclusion—intended to provide a vehicle for black movements to gain representation in Congress—had become totally discredited. Created in 1993, these mechanisms involved the reservation of two seats in the lower house of Congress for representatives of "black communities." Although the politicians initially elected to the seats (in 1994) had connections to black movements, this has not been the case with anyone elected since then. Rather, the seats went to prominent athletes, patronage politicians, and, in 2014, politicians who were not recognized as black.

How did this happen? Aspects of institutional design involving constituency definition, ballot access, and ballot structure enabled political opportunists to take advantage of the seats, while furnishing no mechanism for the mobilization of black movements to authorize and hold accountable their representatives.

Colombian electoral rules do not segregate voters by race or ethnicity. In the ballot box, all voters can opt to cast a vote for candidates who contest the reserved seats or to support candidates who contest the ordinary races. Unlike other lower-house seats, which were elected from provinces, the constituency for election of the reserved seats was national, and candidates appeared on every ballot nationwide. These rules thus differ from other countries where electoral rules attempt to create group-specific constituencies to maximize linkages of authorization and accountability between voters and candidates.

Furthermore, lax rules on ballot access have permitted a wide range of organizations—most of which lack any supporters or institutional presence—to contest the seats. To run, candidates require the endorsement of a "black community" organization registered with the Interior Ministry.¹⁴ These organizations are not required to demonstrate popular support (e.g., signatures on a petition)

or any organizational capacity (e.g., presence in a minimum number of provinces). As a result, numerous groups qualify to, and actually have postulated, candidates in these races. In 2013, the organization *Congreso Visible* attempted to contact all of the organizations that fielded candidates for seats in the 2006 and 2010 elections. Of the 830 organizations registered with the Interior Ministry, most existed only on paper (without a functioning telephone number), were inactive or had ceased to exist,

or were merely the vehicle of a single individual (Camacho 2013). The lax ballot-access rules enabled corrupt political interests to manipulate the "black community" seats (Gil 2013; Laurent 2012).

Finally, the structure of the ballot is confusing. Figure 1 is a ballot from the province of Cauca. It is divided into three parts: part A shows the logos of parties seeking the seats to represent the province; part B shows logos of parties contesting the national indigenous seat; and part C, shows the parties and organizations contesting the national "black community" seats. Part C, by far, is the largest part of the ballot, even though only two seats are in dispute. (In Cauca, four seats are in dispute in part A). Ballot structure is the likely reason for numerous blank and null votes cast in the indigenous and Afrodescendant virtual "districts," which undermined the legitimacy of the seats and made them the subject of ridicule.

The experience of Colombia's reserved parliamentary seats highlights the difficulties involved in "creating constituencies for new categories," according to Loveman's remarks at the task force meetings in Berkeley, California. On their own, mechanisms of political inclusion do not generate the social movement mobilization and other bottom-up processes that enable marginalized groups to authorize and hold accountable their representatives. In Colombia's case, the weakness of civic mobilization combined with institutional flaws left the seats open to manipulation. To take advantage of opportunities that the seats offered, the black movement would need to consolidate under the banner of a political party (or a small group of parties), which it has been too fragmented to do.

It is also important to remember that the reserved seats as a vehicle for black representation originated in a misdiagnosis. When blacks were perceived as analogous to indigenous peoples, a communal representation mechanism made sense. However, racial formation in Colombia has not produced communal political groupings organized along

Figure 1: 2010 Lower House Ballot, Province of Cauca



the lines of race. Rather, blacks vote for and are elected by parties across the political spectrum. This suggests that a better mechanism to improve access to elected office would be candidate quotas within parties, not reserved parliamentary seats (Htun 2004b).

CONCLUSION

An “organized politics of race” has emerged in Latin America. People speak of inequality and discrimination, racism is condemned, and the need for remedial measures is assumed. International organizations, intellectuals, and government officials describe national realities in terms

of race and have introduced racial categories into public policies. The action, however, has been more from the top down than from the bottom up. The categories used by elites do not resonate with the racial identities and practices of the citizenry. Everyday experiences of racism and subordination are not translated into mechanisms of political mobilization, contestation, and representation built around racial categories.

Although the expansion of the welfare state has reduced poverty and promoted greater equality, racial gaps remain in education, income, and access to services. As pointed out by Paschel’s chapter 6, racialized policies such as admissions quotas and parliamentary reserved seats have not made much headway against these structural underpinnings of

racial inequality—at least in the short term.

What, then, is the point of racialized public policies? First, they get race on the public agenda and force people to confront and not deny decades of discrimination. Second, these policies promote awareness of the value of diversity and help to discredit the racialized status hierarchy that valorizes whiteness and denigrates blackness. Third, the policies constitute a focal point for social movement mobilization, and build coalitions that can launch new projects.

Racialized public policies seem to apply US-style, one-drop rule racial categories. They rely on, and have the potential to generalize, binary understandings of race. For this reason, even critics who admit and condemn racism view such policies as patently illegitimate for Latin America (Daher 2008). Can the state combat racism and inequality without entrenching racial categories? Does it matter which categories the state uses, as long as it pushes in the direction of equality and nondiscrimination? Is it possible to simultaneously pursue social justice and the deinstitutionalization of racial identities? These questions are relevant not only for Latin America but also for the struggle for equality everywhere. ■

NOTES

- Much of this chapter draws on Mala Htun, *Inclusion Without Representation in Latin America* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2016).
- The growing popularity of ethnic idioms in the region, particularly after the 1990s, has shifted this panorama, but not for everyone.
- It also called specifically on countries of the Americas to recognize the existence of Afrodescendant populations, the racism they suffer, and historically entrenched inequalities in access to health care, education, and housing (United Nations 2001).
- Member organizations of the Inter-Agency Consultation on Race included the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the British Government's Department for International Development, the Pan-American Health Organization, the Ford Foundation, the Inter-American Foundation, and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.
- Bills to create candidate quotas and reserved seats have been presented in Congress but had not been approved as of 2015.
- Organizations to offer pre-vestibular training for poor students, including Afrodescendants, were established in Rio de Janeiro beginning in the early 1990s and later spread throughout the country. Groups offering such courses were important advocates of educational quotas.
- Of the 73 university affirmative action programs studied by Peria and Bailey in 2011, 19 were established by state law, while the remainder were introduced by university decision (2014).
- Different scholars produced slightly different numbers but they concur on the general trends. Peria and Bailey (2014) analyzed 79 affirmative action programs, of which 39 used racial criteria, and 60 target public school students.
- The five groups mentioned by the census included indigenous, "rom" (Roma or gypsy), raizal (i.e., a native of the Caribbean islands of San Andrés and Providencia), palenquero (someone from the runaway-slave settlement of San Basilio), or Afrodescendant.
- If the census had included the "moreno" category, the size of the group would almost certainly have increased. Other studies estimated Afrodescendants to comprise approximately 20% of the population (Barbary et al. 2004, 75), with some going as high as 26% (mentioned in Wade 2002). The 2010 LAPOP survey estimated that blacks and mulattos made up 12% of the population; the PERLA study by Telles and collaborators, estimated 19% (Urrea, López, and Vigoya Forthcoming).
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- The law requires that candidates for the seats "be members of such a community and previously sponsored by an organization registered with the Directorate for Black Community Issues in the Interior Ministry" (República de Colombia 2001).

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