

Beyond Race or Class

Entangled Inequalities in Latin America

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Latin America is infamous for its deeply entrenched and extreme inequalities. Speaking of the specific case of Brazil, economic historian William Summerhill often states that the country is more unequal than ancient Egypt was under the Pharaohs.¹ In fact, as Gasparini and Lustig (2011) noted, Latin America houses 10 of the 15 most unequal countries in the world.² In this sense, Latin America historically has been a region of both extreme poverty and extreme wealth. This was particularly true in the 1980s and 1990s, when inequality continued to rise as a result of economic crises and structural-adjustment policies imposed by international institutions including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as a condition of their loans. This led most countries in the region by the 1990s to have a Gini Index of more than 50—in which a score of 0 means that every person in the society has the exact same income and a score of 1 means that one person has all of the income of the society. To put this in perspective, in the same period, the United States—a country also known for its extreme disparities—had a lower Gini Index of 45.

These patterns began to change by the end of the 1990s decade as Latin American states adopted economic reforms—including a broadening of social-welfare policies—that began to chip away at deep-seated socioeconomic disparities (López-Calva and Lustig 2010). This period also marked profound changes in citizenship regimes as states throughout the region adopted new constitutions recognizing ethno-racial rights for indigenous and black populations (Van Cott 2000). The reforms included symbolic concessions such as the naming of these countries as “multicultural” and “pluriethnic” nations; the change in public educational curricula to include the history of black and indigenous peoples; and the naming of national ethnic holidays such as the Day of Black Consciousness in Brazil (November 20) and the Month of Black Heritage in Panama. In addition to important symbolic concessions, states granted these communities the right to highly sought-after material resources, including large swaths of national territory in the form of collective ethnic titles and the right to natural resources.

This coincidence of reforms raises several questions: What is the relationship between these ethno-racial policies and the social-welfare reforms that so greatly reduced

inequality in Latin American countries in the last decade? Taken together, are these policies sufficient to address the deep-seated ethno-racial inequalities these countries continue to experience today? What are the politics of their implementation? This chapter examines these questions using the specific cases of Colombia and Brazil, particularly policies designated for black populations, for several reasons. First, these two countries adopted the most robust legislation for black populations in Latin America and were among the first to do so. As a result, they have become models of ethno-racial policy in the region. Second, and perhaps more important, ethno-racial policies in Colombia and Brazil emerged amid radically different political contexts. This chapter shows how these differences shape the nature of the policies as well as the extent of their implementation. It is these similarities and differences that provide much needed leverage for thinking through the relationship between race and class inequality in Latin America as well as which type of approach is needed to address them.

The following discussion first explores the ways in which race and class are heavily imbricated in these cases and in Latin America more generally. Second, it provides an overview of the ethno-racial policies that the Colombian and Brazilian states began to adopt in the late 1980s, including an explanation of how they came about, the nature of the policies, and the politics of their implementation. Third, ethno-racial policy is situated within broader social-policy agendas of the Colombian and Brazilian states during the last decade to further analyze the relationship between class- and race-based policies. This discussion highlights the ways in which the logic of policies for black populations complements broader policy reforms in Brazil but also how they have violently clashed with the development strategy of the Colombian government. Fourth, the chapter then moves toward a series of recommendations for effectively addressing systemic ethno-racial inequalities in both countries—with two caveats. First, it is recognized that there can be no simple policy solution to what is fundamentally a problem of economic and political power. Second, as it is clear in the Colombian case, it is important to unsettle the assumption that “equality” is *necessarily* what marginalized ethno-racial groups want, make claims to, or may actually need. This is discussed in more detail throughout the chapter.

ENTANGLEMENTS OF RACE AND CLASS

The Brazilian term *favelado* translates literally to a person who lives in and/or is from one of the country's numerous and massive slums; however, the term functions more as a marginalized social category defined primarily through ideas of spatialized class at the same time that the idea is deeply racialized. Although some poor white Brazilians live in *favelas*, the *favelado*—as it exists in popular imaginary—is a poor black body often pathologized as criminal (Sheriff 2001). Although the social meanings ascribed to places such as Brazil's *favelas* are highly pejorative, the equating of blackness with poverty in Brazil and elsewhere in Latin America reflects a social reality in which black people are disproportionately found among the poor and extremely poor in these countries (Telles 2007). This also reflects the fact that the relationship between race and class is highly entangled with space. This occurs in terms of both the spatial inequality that occurs within urban centers in Colombia and Brazil as well as through the great disparities among regions. Indeed, this material pattern of uneven wealth distribution has given way, in part, to a symbolic order that also links class with race and space.

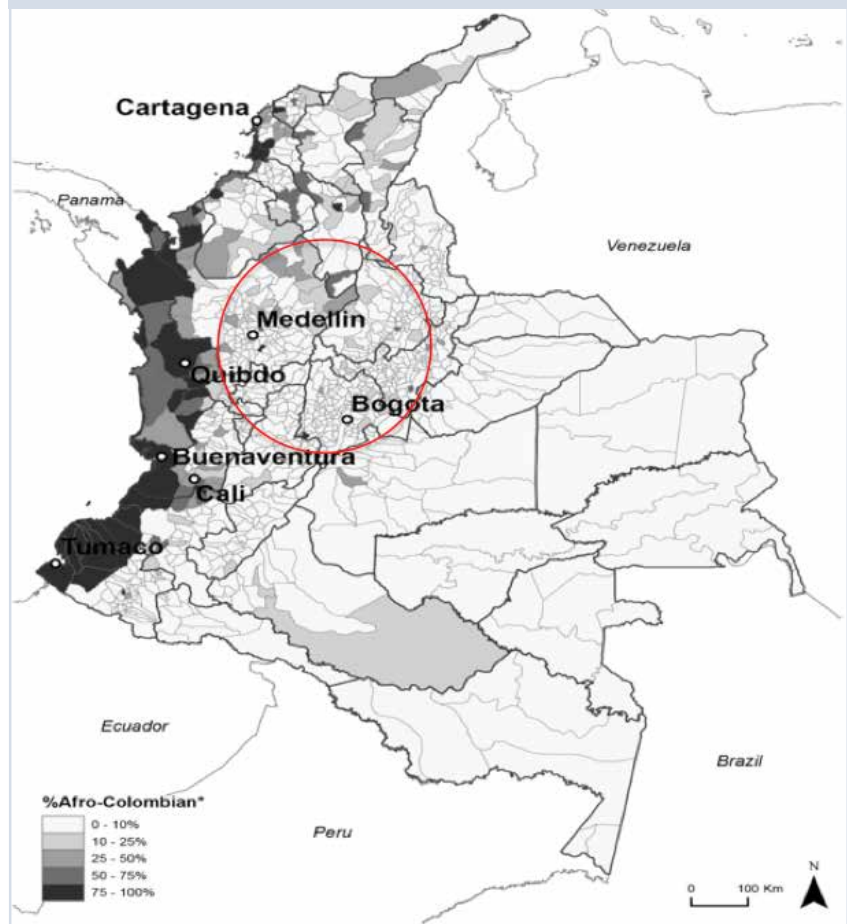
In the specific case of Brazil, nonwhites are overrepresented in the poorest and most underdeveloped region of the Northeast, whereas whites are overrepresented in the more urbanized and industrialized Southeast and Southern regions. In a similar way, Colombia's department or state that is infamous for having the highest percentage of people living in extreme poverty (i.e., more than 40% in 2012) also has 74% of its population identifying as Afro-descendant (Departamento de Estadística Nacional Estadual 2012). It is also important to note that in both countries, indigenous people also are more likely to live in regions that are extremely underserved in terms of basic infrastructure and public services (Hall and Patrinos 2012).

Figures 1 and 2 show the proportion of each state that identifies as black or brown in Colombia and Brazil, respectively.³ In both figures, the darker the map, the higher is the percentage of those who identify as black, brown, *mulato*, or

pardo. The maps also highlight the more industrialized and wealthier regions of both countries in a red circle to convey that in both cases whites are concentrated in the wealthier regions and nonwhites in the poorer regions of each of these countries.

This coincidence of racial and regional and spatial inequalities has led some scholars to argue that blacks and indigenous people are not poor because they are black or indigenous but rather because they simply live in regions that are poorer. Although there may be some truth to such a statement, it requires us to naturalize—rather than analyze and historicize—regional disparities. Indeed, as historians have convincingly shown, Latin American states' investment in specific regions—especially in the decades following independence—was a highly racialized project (Andrews 2004; Helg 1990; Sanders 2004; Skidmore 1993). In this period, elites throughout the region made strategic racial calculations about how to ensure the entrance of black

Figure 1: Spatial Distribution of Afro-Colombian Population by Department (State)



Note: Map was created using raw data from Colombia's 2005 census.

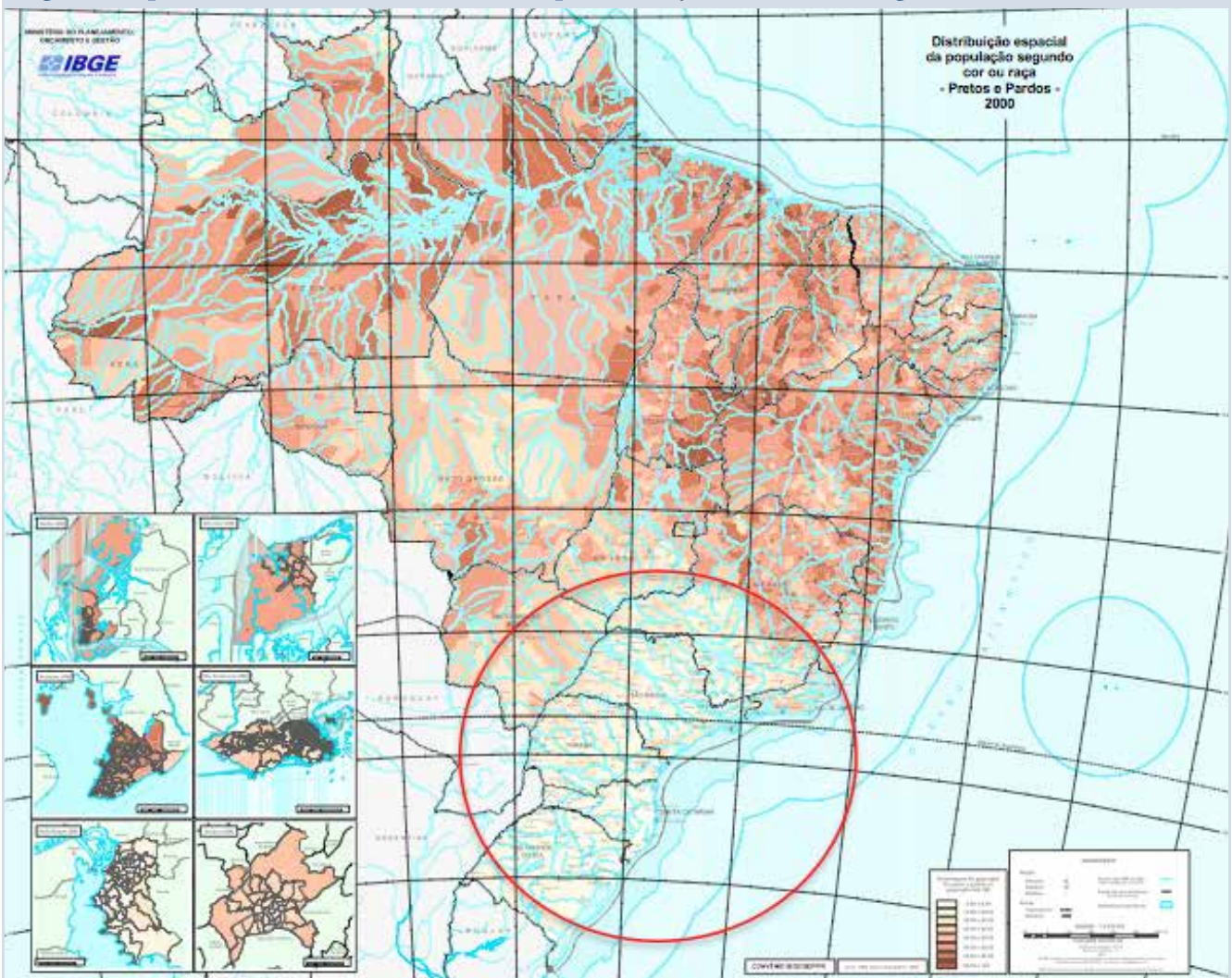
and indigenous people into modernity. This meant investing in particular areas such as Brazil's Southern region, as well as adopting a range of "whitening" policies, including offering subsidies to European immigrants (Skidmore 1993).

However, to state that racial disparities are, in part, a function of regional disparities is not to deny that race has also driven some of the very unevenness of regional development. The most useful way to think about the relationships among race, class, and space is as necessarily entangled, both materially and symbolically (Wade 1993). More than the material reality that underlies these spaces, regions can be said to be highly racialized as well as highly classed. Conversely, race and class can be said to be deeply

spatialized insofar as certain regions are understood as synonymous with particular ethno-racial groups and, therefore, read as inherently poor and "backward."

Because of the way that race operates in these two countries, this imbrication also means that lighter-skinned people from regions that are understood in the national imaginary as black regions also can experience racial inferiorization. This is clear in the negative treatment of *nordestinos* (i.e., people from Brazil's Northeast region) who in recent decades have migrated in increasingly larger numbers to the wealthier, whiter Southeast region of the country to work in the service sector and informal economy. Although not all of these migrants are black or even brown, they still are subject to racialized ideas of

Figure 2: Spatial Distribution of Brazilian Population by Color (Percentage Black or Brown)



Note: The original map uses 2000 census data.
Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics.

the “*nordestino*” and the “*paraíba*” as ignorant and lazy. Of course, this depiction is as much about region and class as it is about race.

Despite these complex entanglements, the story of regional and class inequalities in Latin America has been told primarily as separate from the story of racial disparities. Indeed, the canonical studies on *favelas* in Brazil argued that race and color were not salient in the lives of ordinary people or they simply underplayed race in their own analyses (do Rio Caldeira 2000; Fischer 2008; Holston 2008; Perlman 1979). As such, some of the most foundational works on class in Latin American countries have not explored how it actually may be entangled with race in everyday life.

On the other side are race scholars who either assume—rather than interrogate—the tight relationship between race and class in these countries or ignore it entirely.⁴ Of course, neither approach has led to a serious interrogation of the relationship between the two. This refusal to engage seriously with the question of how class shapes racialization occurred, in part, because these scholars were pushing against scholarly and popular paradigms, which held that inequality in Latin American countries was about class, not race. As Hanchard (1998) argues, these exclusively class-based explanations of inequality often served to delegitimize any race-based critique of the social order in these countries..

Indeed, many scholars, government officials, and ordinary citizens in these countries acknowledged the existence of class inequalities whereas they denied the existence of racial inequities. Goldberg (2002) spoke of this as raceless racial states and Hanchard (1998) discussed the silencing of the critique of racism as a form of racial hegemony. In this, all critique of the racial order was and—in some spaces—continues to be dismissed as importation from the United States. Much like in the United States—where there is a myth that everyone is middle class—in many Latin American countries, there is a powerful idea that everyone is equally mixed. Both ideas serve to obscure social hierarchies while also acting to depoliticize collective action around marginalization. In this ideological context, scholars of race had to emphasize the point that there was not only a class order in these countries but also a racial order. In this context, scholars set out to prove that race was definitively shaping people’s lives and life chances.

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Among other factors, these scholars have showed convincingly that race is not reducible to class. In fact, when they controlled for parental education and income, for example, they found that blacks and indigenous people still have less education and lower returns to education. The work on discrimination

that Colombia’s and Brazil’s small black middle class faces in the labor and the dating and marriage markets is particularly telling in this respect (Figueiredo 2004; Viveros 2014). Ultimately, then, being black can be said to negatively affect a person’s life chances for three reasons. First, being black makes one more likely to be poor. Second, whether or not one is actually poor, being black in Latin American countries is equated so significantly with poverty that a black person will be assumed to be poor. This, in turn, means that blacks are more likely to experience class-based discrimination, even if they are actually middle or upper class. Third, there is what Wade (1993) called a “relative autonomy of race” from class such that blackness itself is a “container” for a plethora of negative attributes distinct from class or materiality, strictly defined (e.g., ugliness, criminality, ignorance, and corruption).

Nevertheless, the study of class and urban space has largely been separated from the study of race, which has come at the expense of systematic examinations of the relationship between race and class.⁵ Stated differently, scholars on both sides often operated within a set of debates that pitted race against class. The question was whether race *or* class structured Latin American societies. Of course, this was a false dichotomy and it came at the expense of asking more interesting questions. For instance, whereas scholars of race typically highlight the ways in which black and indigenous populations are disproportionately poor, they typically do not ask questions about how this relates to the broader (and changing) features of the economy, including factors such as the structure of the labor market, fiscal policy, reach and quality of the educational system, and social-welfare policy. The types of social movements that have emerged in recent decades also seek a more intersectional analysis. Indeed, race and class often are linked organically in the political practices that emerge from those who are doubly marginalized as black *and* farmers, as black *and* slum dwellers.

ETHNO-RACIAL POLICY TRANSFORMATIONS IN COLOMBIA AND BRAZIL

Beginning in the late 1980s, almost every country in Latin America adopted some type of ethno-racial policies. This represented a serious break with nearly a century of state policies based on an emphasis on “race mixture,” both “biological” and cultural. Previously, the model of Latin American nationhood was built on the idea that the strength of a nation was in its unique mixture of Europeans, indigenous people, and Africans. Although on the surface, *mestizaje* was about the equal valorization of each ancestral root, in almost all cases, it reproduced hierarchies. As many scholars argued, if *mestizaje* valued mixture on the one hand, it celebrated European culture and “blood” above indigeneity and blackness on the other.

The adoption of ethno-racial policies in Latin America beginning in the late 1980s also overturned a long-standing tradition throughout the region whereby political elites denied the existence of racial inequality and racism. How could there be cultural genocide or racism if everyone was culturally and biologically mixed? In this sense, recent policy changes signaled that the taboo on speaking of racial inequality and heterogeneity has been broken, in great part due to pressure from black and indigenous movements in the region.⁶

Yet, whereas most recent scholarly accounts characterize this as a singular “multicultural turn,” I argue that it may be more useful to view these changes as constituting two distinct moments.⁷ The first, I suggest, began to unfold in the late 1980s with the shift to what Van Cott (2000) termed “multicultural constitutionalism.” In this period, Latin American states reformed their constitutions in ways that recognized the “pluriethnic” and “multicultural” character of the political community while also extending specific rights to indigenous peoples and—in some cases—to black populations. In countries that included black populations in this multicultural alignment, the black political subject that emerged was defined by a discourse of cultural difference and autonomy entangled with concerns about the well-being and survival of indigenous peoples.

However, in a few Latin American countries, these multicultural reforms also were followed by a subsequent wave of ethnoracial policies in the 2000s and 2010s aimed at promoting racial equality and typified in affirmative-action policies. Combating systemic racial discrimination was the goal of these policies and blacks were their presumed subjects. If these temporal and substantive distinctions are taken seriously, Colombia and Brazil emerge as especially important cases for their similarities as well as their differences. They were the only countries to first include black populations in multicultural reforms and then to expand the policies. Elsewhere I argue that these policies occurred as the result of interplay between changes in domestic politics and consolidation of a field of international actors interested in questions about multiculturalism and racial justice (Paschel 2016).

More important, however, are the types of reforms that the Colombian and Brazilian states underwent. Although *mestizaje* began to lose ground as a state project throughout Latin America beginning in the 1980s, there was still significant variation in ethno-racial policies in the region. First, countries differed with regard to who was either included or excluded from ethno-racial reforms (Hooker 2005). Table 1 outlines these important differences. Of the 19 Latin American countries, all recognized the rights of indigenous peoples (see column 1) and approximately half also recognized specific sectors within the black population, typically rural and geographically concentrated

Table 1: Ethno-Racial Legislation in Latin American Countries

	1987–1998		2001–present
Cuba	No specific legislation for indigenous or black populations	Ethnic rights for indigenous peoples	
Dominican Republic			
El Salvador			
Argentina			
Chile			
Costa Rica			
Mexico			
Panama			
Paraguay			
Peru			
Uruguay			
Venezuela			
Ecuador	Rights for black rural populations		
Guatemala			
Honduras			
Nicaragua			
Bolivia			
Brazil			
Colombia		Policies for general black population	

communities such as those on the Atlantic Coast of Central America and the Pacific Coast of Colombia and Ecuador (see column 2).⁸ After this initial round of multicultural reforms, Colombia and Brazil became the only two countries to expand the definition of blackness beyond rural populations by passing legislation that focused on achieving racial equality in terms of socioeconomic status.

Fifteen years after the signing of a new constitution, the Brazilian state began to adopt affirmative-action policies unparalleled in Latin America. During this period, the government also began to proactively address racism and racial inequality across a number of policy areas, including health and education. Similarly, in the same period, the Colombian government broadened the conception of the black political subject through a number of constitutional court rulings, the 2005 census, and several policies aimed at achieving “equal opportunity” for “Afro-Colombians.” In addition, the Colombian and Brazilian states created the most robust ethno-racial state apparatuses in Latin America to guarantee these rights and to coordinate the implementation of ethno-racial policies. As a result, these two countries often serve as models for other governments in this region in designing their own approach to ethnic rights.⁹

Although both countries experienced these two moments of policy shifts, the types of policies that stuck in each case were different. Whereas discourses of ethnic difference have come to dominate discussions of black rights and policies in Colombia, racial equality is the dominant frame in which to discuss policies targeting Brazil’s black population.¹⁰ This is important because these different types of policies have radically different implications for racial inequality. They also have given way to distinct forms of contestation around implementation.¹¹

Laws that Stick, Laws that Don't Stick

Those familiar with Latin America know that simply because laws exist on paper does not mean that they exist in any real material way. A popular adage in Colombia (i.e., “there are more laws than Colombians”) and Brazil’s expression (i.e., “there are laws that stick and laws that don’t stick”) seek to capture this conundrum. Those interested in understanding ethno-racial inequality and politics in this region must look beyond formal law as signs of change or, at the very least, examine when and under what conditions states have kept their promises.

Law 70 has five substantive chapters, each focusing on a specific area including land, natural resources, ethnic education, mining, and social and economic development. Each chapter was to be implemented through separate

pieces of legislation. However, despite 20 years of promises by Colombian presidents, ministers, and directors of the Office on Black Communities, the chapters on ethno-education and territory were the only two implemented. Even in those two areas, there were serious limitations, including the fact that less than 10% of Colombia’s public schools have adopted the legally mandated curriculum on Afro-Colombian history and culture.¹²

In contrast, Colombia’s record on land titling of black rural communities is impressive. This is especially true when comparing it to Honduras and Brazil, where efforts to recognize collective titles have been crippled. In the mid-1990s, Colombia began to aggressively title indigenous and black communities through its Natural Resource Management Program. The original amount committed to Colombia’s titling of black communities was \$39 million; however, the final project cost was \$65 million.¹³ The impact was substantial: as one World Bank publication reported, the funding benefited 497 black communities on the Pacific Coast and 2.36 million hectares of collective land titles (Sánchez and García 2006, 27). In the same period, the Inter-American Development Bank also supported land titling in Colombia through its Land Titling and Registry Modernization.¹⁴ Thereafter, the Colombian state continued to demarcate and title collective territories for black communities. Indeed, according to the Colombian Institute for Rural Development, the state had titled 5.4 million hectares involving 185 black community councils by 2014.¹⁵ These figures are particularly striking if we consider that they represent 66% of the Pacific Coast’s 8.3 million hectares of territory.

The institutionalization of black political participation was intended to ensure full implementation of Law 70. Given the contestation over land and natural resources that initially catalyzed black rural mobilization, throughout the 2000s, Black Communities’ Movement pressured the Colombian state to ensure not only participation as defined under Law 70 but also the right to *consulta previa*. Embodied in International Labor Organization Convention 169 and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, “prior consultation” mandates that governments must protect the right to free, prior, and informed consent on all state and private projects that affect the lives of people in indigenous and, increasingly, black rural communities. However, in the case of Colombia, *consulta previa* had been largely a performative exercise. State officials would meet with leaders, commit to next steps, organize and fund regional and national conferences, and transport black activists around the country to sign on to development plans that were never implemented. In some cases, state officials used the mere presence of black leaders in meetings as proof that they had been legally consulted.

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In contrast to Colombia, the Brazilian state seems to have been expanding ethno-racial policy in recent decades. In addition to affirmative-action policies—which were becoming increasingly commonplace throughout the country—in 2003, President Lula signed Law 10.639, which required all public and private elementary schools to teach African and Afro-Brazilian history and culture.¹⁶ Moreover, under the Workers' Party administration, the Brazilian state also attempted to mainstream racial equality across other policy areas, including antipoverty programs, health, and education more broadly. However, this characterization of expanding ethno-racial policy holds only if we ignore the fact that long before there were quotas in Brazilian universities, the state had recognized territorial rights for *quilombo* communities.

Considering the host of policies targeting Brazil's black population, we find that whereas certain policies have “stuck,” others have not. The main failure of Brazil's ethno-racial policies is the titling of *quilombo* land. To date, only 1 million hectares of land have been titled to *quilombo* communities. To put this in perspective, it is only one fifth of the land that the Colombian state has given to black communities despite Brazil's much larger size, greater number of officially recognized *quilombos*, and greater state capacity. After little movement on the issue of *quilombo* titling, in 2003, President Lula signed a decree that was supposed to identify, recognize, delimit, demarcate, and title *quilombo* territories in accordance with the country's 1988 constitution. Lula also launched the Brazil Quilombo Program, an initiative that was to title *quilombo* communities as well as build infrastructure; implement local development projects; and work on issues of citizenship, rights, and participation. Housed in the Special Secretariat for the Promotion of Racial Equality (SEPPPIR), Brazil Quilombo was supposed to involve coordination among the Ministry of Agrarian Development, the Ministry of Social Development and Hunger Alleviation, and other relevant ministries. However, the lack of a real budget and commitment on the part of the substantive ministries curtailed the program's effectiveness.

At the 25th anniversary of *quilombo* rights, Brazil's National Institute for Settlement and Agrarian Reform had recognized 1,360 *quilombos*.¹⁷ Of those, only 193 had

received collective titles, representing only slightly less than 1 million hectares of land (Bailey 2009). As in Colombia, the Brazilian state's procrastination on *quilombo* land titling is deeply tied to underlying economic interests.

However, if the titling of *quilombos* was an uphill battle, affirmative-action policies proved to be the opposite. By the early 2010s, dozens of Brazil's most prestigious public universities had adopted some form

of affirmative action, based on either race, class, or both (Racusen 2009). At that time, 10.5% of the country's highly coveted university slots were reserved under affirmative action, amounting to slightly less than 35,000 students (Paixão, Rossetto, and Carvano 2010). As a result, the number of black and brown students at universities in Brazil had increased substantially. This was remarkable, given that affirmative-action policies had been adopted in a decentralized manner through decisions made by individual university councils and state legislatures rather than federal mandate. The Statute of Racial Equality sought to further institutionalize racial-equality policy, including affirmative action in a more durable way at the national level.

In the decade leading up to affirmative action, the majority of Brazilians already believed that racism was a problem in the country (Bailey 2009). This does not necessarily mean that they, in turn, supported policies such as affirmative action; however, in the late 2000s, there was increasing evidence that they did.¹⁸ In 2006, for example, Datafolha found that 65% of Brazilians were in favor of race-based affirmative action and 87% were in favor of class-based quotas. Similarly, seven years later, as Brazil's Supreme Court considered a landmark affirmative-action case, the Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion and Statistics (IBOPE) released results from another nationally representative survey showing that 64% of Brazilians were in favor of race-based affirmative action.¹⁹ This ideological change culminated in April 2012 when Brazil's Supreme Court voted unanimously that affirmative-action policies were constitutional.

The Supreme Court decision came at a time when the federal government also was shifting toward a more aggressive stance on racial policy under president Dilma Rousseff and SEPPPIR Minister Luiza Bairros.²⁰ In addition to being more vocal about racism, there were substantive

changes in racial policy under this new Workers' Party administration. Most notably, in August 2012, Rousseff signed the Law of Quotas that had been delayed in Congress for more than a decade. This was a major feat considering that professors at Brazil's prestigious federal universities had been among the most vehement opponents to affirmative action. The Law of Quotas required all of the country's 59 federal universities and 38 technical institutes to reserve 50% of their seats for poor and working-class students. The law also mandated that these same universities guarantee that the racial composition of those reserved seats match that of the state in which a university is located. Although federal universities had until 2016 to comply, most had already done so by the end of 2012.²¹

Yet while affirmative-action policies have undeniably transformed state and popular discourse around the question of race in Brazil, it is not yet clear how transformative they have been in material terms. Whereas in 1988, 12.4% of whites had some college, only 3.6% of blacks and browns did. This gap actually widened slightly in 2008 when the percentage of whites that had some college increased to 35% whereas that of blacks and browns increased only to 16.4% (Paixão, Rossetto, and Carvano 2010). In this sense, the Law of Quotas could radically transform not only the federal university system but also the broader patterns of social mobility and racial inequality in ways that more decentralized affirmative-action policies had yet to do.

The dynamics of these two cases are distinct in important ways. Even so, the Colombian and Brazilian states' uneven records on implementing ethno-racial reforms can both be said to have derived from two sources. The first factor is the emergence of various reactionary movements against affirmative action in Brazil as well as ethnic land rights in both countries. The second factor, which has resulted in the uneven implementation of these policies, is related to the depoliticization and cooptation of black activists vis-à-vis the creation of racial-policy institutions within the Colombian and Brazilian states. Although Afro-Brazilian activists such as the Minister of Racial Equality, Luiza Bairros, have been able to push for policies from within the state apparatus, their power is extremely constrained. The failure of the government to consider the issue of police killings of black and brown youth, as well as the recent subordination of race-based affirmative action to class-based policies, speak to these limitations. Furthermore, because many of the recent policy gains are not sufficiently institutionalized (i.e., almost all of them occurred through presidential decrees rather than congress), there is reason to believe that they are fleeting. This is especially the case if we consider the record-low approval ratings of Dilma Rousseff and the Worker's Party

more generally, as well as the historic and politicized impeachment process underway in the country.

The situation in Colombia is even more precarious due in great part to the nature of the incorporation of Afro-Colombian activists in the state. Beyond paying off leaders, the state created hundreds of spaces for black participation that are devoid of power and that facilitate state retrenchment. In this, a few activists who represent themselves through "paper organizations" have colonized most spaces that were initially created to ensure the elaboration and implementation of legislation related to black communities. Given these dynamics, even those Afro-Colombian activists who engage with the state for more sincere reasons—whether or not knowingly—participate in ritualized participation that facilitates state retrenchment.

ETHNO-RACIAL POLICY AND THE BROADER DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

The recent ethno-racial reforms that the Colombian and Brazilian states have undertaken are embedded in a larger political field, which can have a profound impact on those very policies. Moreover, if we care about racial disparities, we also must consider that given the high concentration of black people among the poor and extremely poor in both countries, class-based programs have the potential to remedy racial inequality. This section situates the ethno-racial policies outlined previously within the larger context of the Colombian and Brazilian states' approach to development and inequality in the last two decades.

Racial-equality policies in Brazil occurred within the context of a broader expansion of social policy in Brazil. Although much of this is to the credit of the Workers' Party—which took national office with the election of Luis Inacio da Silva in 2002—secondary enrollment already had increased dramatically under the previous president, Fernando Henrique Cardoso (López-Calva and Lustig 2010). As a result, the impact of affirmative-action policies must be situated in these decades-long attempts to reduce class inequality. Indeed, at a time when nations throughout the Global North and South were shrinking the welfare state, Brazil was expanding it. This included several robust national-level programs such as *Fome Zero*, a large-scale antihunger campaign; *Bolsa Família*, a cash-transfer program that rewards poor families for immunizing their children and keeping them in school; and *Saúde para Todos*, which substantially expanded access to health care.

Additionally, several reforms to higher education, including unprecedented government investment and the creation of programs such as Programa Universidade Para Todos (PROUNI)—which offer tax breaks to private

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universities in exchange for their offering access and scholarships to poor students—dramatically increased the size of Brazil’s higher-education sector (Limena 2011). The success of these programs is unambiguous; *Bolsa*

Familia alone reduced Brazil’s poverty rate by half. When analyzed with programs of the previous administration, Brazil witnessed the percentage of those living in extreme poverty decrease from 25% to 4% between 1990 and 2012.²² Educational attainment at every level also has increased in the last decade in Brazil.²³ However, the impact of these policies on racial inequality is less clear. The question becomes: Between affirmative action and these broader social policies, is there a decrease in racial inequality? The simple answer is it may be too early to tell for several reasons (Paixão 2011). First, the federal affirmative-action program has yet to go into full effect, and its effects will not be seen until at least 2018. Second, even then, the effects are likely to be modest when we consider that Brazil’s higher-education sector does not have the capacity to house 10% of the college-age population. Third, Brazil’s public schools—in which all affirmative-action programs are concentrated—account for only a small percentage of all higher-education slots. In other words, even if quotas were exclusively race-based, and even if 100% of the slots were reserved for black and brown students, only a small part of the university sector—albeit the most prestigious part—would be diversified. As Brazilian sociologist Marcia Lima (2010) aptly noted, this makes programs designated for private schools (e.g., PROUNI) all the more important to analyze. Fourth, there still are many other problems that current policies do not address, which also contributes to the reproduction of racial inequality in these countries. The most important problem is the systemic advantage of white Brazilians in the labor market and their higher returns to education compared to nonwhites (CEERT, Dias forthcoming).²⁴

Consequently, when analyzing ethno-racial policies, we must not lose sight of the macrostructural features of education and labor markets, which have a direct bearing on the effectiveness of such politics in terms of closing racial gaps. Although affirmative action has opened the door to upward mobility for many black, brown, and poor students in Brazil, it is not likely that it will radically change the color of Brazil’s middle and upper middle classes.

Situating ethno-racial policies in Colombia within a broader development strategy is a more difficult task. The decade of the 1990s was not only a time of intense political

changes in the country; it also was one of intense economic transformations toward privatization, decentralization, and trade liberalization. These policies have had mixed consequences in the lives of ordinary Colombians,

especially for those in the lower income distribution. As Attanasio et al. (2004) argued, trade liberalization in Colombia in the 1990s and 2000s resulted in an increase in inequality because it hurt sectors in which unskilled lower-waged workers were concentrated, pushed workers into the informal labor market, and led to a higher skills premium resulting in higher inequality at the top.

Furthermore, while Brazil was expanding social-welfare policy, Colombia was cutting its programs. This is not surprising when we consider that the expansion of social policy in much of Latin America in recent decades occurred under leftist parties. In part because of Colombia’s protracted civil war among leftist guerilla groups, right-winged paramilitary groups, and the military, it was impossible to imagine that the Left would win major elections until very recently.²⁵ In 2012, Colombia had the seventh-largest Gini coefficient in the world, and it was one of the few countries in Latin America in which social spending did not increase (Moller 2012).

Moreover, whereas coverage in primary education increased substantially throughout the region, it did not in Colombia. Beginning in 1990, the government introduced a parallel private pension program at the national level (i.e., *Regimen Subsidiado en Salud*), which led to a tripling of the rate of coverage among workers (i.e., from 30% to 90%) and which allowed for informal workers to obtain health insurance for the first time (Moller 2012, 202).

These social-policy changes in Colombia were a mixed bag for the country’s black population. More important, the policies also occurred in tandem with a series of new development plans for the country’s Pacific Coast and for its black population throughout Colombia. Rather than focus on guaranteeing the territorial rights of black rural populations or the social mobility of Afro-Colombians living in urban areas (i.e., 70% of the black population), the Colombian government began to invest in large-scale development projects including industrialized mining and large-scale agricultural exports, such as sugar, and palm oil (used in food and as biodiesel) production. Indeed, despite much concern from environmentalists, the Uribe administration—in partnership with organizations including USAID—made large-scale palm oil the cornerstone of its development project for places including Colombia’s

Southwestern region. The government sought to make Colombia the main exporter of palm oil—a goal that it eventually realized. However, in 2008, a highly contagious disease befell many of the crops in the region.

In addition to the problem of the African palm was the much deeper clash between the Colombian state's development agenda and the guarantee of basic human rights, including the ethnic rights won in the constitutional-reform process. Although these major development schemes ostensibly were designed to generate income for Afro-Colombian communities as well as revenue for the Colombian government, instead they have led to illegal mining, forced cultivation, and increased violence throughout the country (AFRODES 2009). Furthermore, offering titles to mining companies, many of them transnational, has resulted in the violation of many rights guaranteed under Law 70.

In this sense, the logic of development operating in Colombia is fundamentally in tension with the type of multicultural project for which many indigenous peoples and rural black communities fought. The rights-based project was conceived as one that would allow for more autonomy in making decisions about what type of development was wanted and would have guaranteed their collective territorial rights. Of course, this has not been the case. Furthermore, even if communities desired this kind of development, these were often designed to benefit large, mechanized agricultural and mining practice, and as such would benefit large corporations rather than mitigate Colombia's extreme racial inequalities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Brazilian and Colombian cases raise many questions about how we think about the relationship between race and class. They also provide insight about what types of policies would address most effectively the different types of inequality that derive from race and class.

1. *Beyond Race or Class*

First is the fundamental question about the terms of the debate. Several myths pervade political and scholarly debate in Latin America (as in the United States) about the relationship between race and class, which undermine real efforts to jointly address race and class inequality. Perhaps most obvious, the case of black rights in Colombia underscores the need to move beyond debates that pit race and class as fundamentally irreconcilable approaches to addressing inequality. In such a formulation,

policies would either be race-based *or* class-based. This problematic binary is based on several assumptions that must be problematized before the discussion about the relationship between race and class can begin. First is the idea that identities, movements, and policies based on race inherently undermine class struggle. We know from recent work that this also has little basis—at least in terms of policy outcomes. In fact, the same states that adopted multicultural reforms in the 1980s and 1990s also were likely to adopt social-welfare policies (Banting and Kymlicka 2006). In countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, and Bolivia, the adoption of specific policies for black and indigenous peoples occurred alongside an unprecedented expansion of universal social-welfare policies. Banting and Kymlicka (2006) found that countries with more robust multicultural policies also were more likely to have more robust social-welfare programs. Second, such binaries between race *and* class rely on the assumption that racial claims are inherently not material in nature. This is a difficult argument to uphold when we consider the diversity of claims that black movements in Latin America have launched at the state, including access to basic infrastructure, education at every level, and natural resources.

A less cynical view is that given the imbrication of race and class discussed previously, class-based policies—in and of themselves—would dramatically reduce racial inequality. The experience of Latin America gives us pause (Buvinić, Mazza, and Deutsch 2004). Although blacks and indigenous people are overrepresented among the poor, antipoverty programs historically have not lessened ethno-racial inequality. As policy analysts also aptly noted, this is in part because black and indigenous people tend to be overrepresented among the extreme poor when compared to their white and *mestizo* counterparts. They also are more likely to live in regions where the basic infrastructure is precarious. Moreover, class-based programs and policies are not designed to address racism, structural or otherwise. The Cuban case is especially telling on this point. Despite adopting a blend of universal class-equalizing policies and a symbolic commitment to antiracism in the wake of the country's 1959 revolution, racial hierarchies continued to pervade Cuban society, inside of and beyond the reach of the state (Sawyer 2005). In this sense, racial logics continued to infiltrate society and the state—if they ever were exterminated. Cuba makes the strongest case that formal equality and class-based solutions can go only so far in remedying racial inequality.

Ultimately, then, the conversation should not be about race or class but rather both. Former Brazilian President Fernando Henrique Cardoso made a speech that set the ball rolling on affirmative action in Brazil after decades of denial of the country's racial inequality. A sociologist who had

conducted extensive research on racial inequality in Brazil before becoming president, Cordosa—commenting at the Third World Conference against Racism—stated:

We, in Durban, what we saw was the need to reaffirm that societies need to become more and more just and based on equality and solidarity. It's for this reason that the Brazilian state recognizes the painful consequences that slavery caused in Brazil. And it will continue with the task of repairing such damage, through policies that promote an equality of opportunities. There is an eternal debate about if policies should be universal or specific. They should be both....²⁶

In the same way that class policies alone are insufficient for addressing the entanglements of race and class inequalities, so too are racial policies. No matter how robust, race policies cannot address dramatic structural inequalities in areas such as uneven access to health care and quality of education or the precarious nature of work—particularly given the size of Latin America's labor market. These structural issues are a central factor in explaining the reproduction of racial inequality in this region. Again, the example of Colombia is useful. The few policies aimed at addressing racial inequality in Colombia have not been part of a broader set of reforms in the same way that they have in countries such as Brazil, Bolivia, and Venezuela. In those cases, the Left has “colonized” the state—so to speak—and, as such, ethno-racial policies have emerged as a broader package of reforms.

What is needed are social policies that not only address the overlap and imbrication of race and class but also recognize how race can function autonomously from class to produce systemic disadvantages for blacks, independent of their class position.²⁷ It is worth noting that in contexts such as Colombia—where black and indigenous populations are concentrated in specific areas—policies that target particular regions also may jointly address class and racial inequality. For example, a program that targeted the state of the Chocó—which is more than 80% black—might be perceived as simultaneously addressing both race and class inequality. Of course, it does not follow that such an approach will necessarily address *racism* in any meaningful way.

2. Beyond Universal Measurements

Even if we agree that race- and class-based approaches are not inherently about conflict, we still must recognize that it does not mean that they are in complete harmony either. This is especially clear in the Colombian case. Assuming that the goal of class-based or universal welfare policies is to bring about class mobility, the multicultural

policies passed in Colombia and throughout Latin America unsettle the very premise that such class mobility should be the end goal. If Law 70 was completely implemented, it would not necessarily translate to more equality—at least not measured through macro socioeconomic indicators such as income, wealth, and education. As discussed previously, black and indigenous movements in the 1980s and 1990s fought to be incorporated under fundamentally different terms than they had been historically. Rather than be incorporated through the logic of assimilation and modernization, they demanded recognition of their cultural differences and right to chart different paths to the future that did not involve industrialization, marketization of land, and large-scale extraction. As a result, many of the ethno-racial reforms adopted by Latin American states fundamentally challenge the idea of a singular horizon toward social mobility and development.²⁸

Ultimately, both multicultural and racial-equality policies are simultaneously about recognition and redistribution, about symbolic and material inclusion. However, they do imply different types of state projects of inclusion, which has implications for how inequality and exclusion are measured. Indeed, whereas the impact of racial-equality policies can be measured concretely in indicators such as educational attainment, income, wealth, and returns to education, multiculturalism cannot be quantified in similarly discrete ways. More important, mainstream indicators of well-being may be in serious tension with the livelihood projects that have been institutionalized in multicultural reforms. Stated differently, the right to difference and the policies aimed at granting indigenous and rural black communities the right to collective territory, political autonomy, natural resources, alternative development, and even multicultural education are not easy to capture in traditional measures of inequality and development. It was precisely the construction of certain people and places as “poor” and “subjects of development” that led to the many integrationist policies against which they fought in the first place (Escobar 2008). In fact, what may appear on a graph as unemployment in black or indigenous communities with a collective land title actually may be precisely what they demanded from the state beginning in the 1980s: that is, the right to stay on their land and continue to practice sustainable farming and mining.

At the same time, it is difficult to ignore the fact of glaring differences in basic infrastructure and access by race in Colombia. To cite only a few examples, in their audit study, Rodríguez Garavito et al. found that there was systematic racial discrimination in employment in cities throughout the country.²⁹ Moreover, according to 2005 census data, the black infant-mortality rate was

double that of the nonblack population in Colombia, and black women lived 11 fewer years, on average, than other Colombians (Rodriguez Garavito et al. 2008). Also absent from many discussions is the fact that 12.7% of Afro-Colombians still live in “*miseria*,” which means that they do not have the income for a minimal diet (compared to 6.8% for whites and *mestizos*); only 56% have access to sewage systems (compared to 75% for whites and *mestizos*); and only 66% attend high school (Rodriguez Garavito et al. 2008). These statistics underscore the fact that even if Law 70 were fully implemented, it would not have the power to change the material lives of most black Colombians.

How do we perceive inequality when those who are experiencing the brunt of it are not demanding class mobility in any conventional way? The simple answer is that we must ask different types of questions. Perhaps the point of departure for these questions should be: What do people on the ground believe a better future would look like? Rather than embrace hegemonic projects of industrialization, urbanization, and large-scale extraction of natural resources, some communities and movements have rejected them. By taking this position—refusing to succumb to development regimes that mean foregoing socioeconomic gains that may have resulted (i.e., employment in industrial-mining operations)—they understand that the development projects would have come at great cost to the communities and the environment. Given this, rather than registering these alternative development projects as poverty, an analysis of racial inequality requires more multilayered and flexible definitions and measures. In those cases, for example, it may be better to measure the extent to which these communities can enjoy their constitutionally protected rights. In this way, we might take as a point of departure the idea that the utopias that these communities envisage may not look like those that well-intended scholars, development officials, bureaucrats, and politicians would design for them. In Colombia, these utopias—to some extent—have been institutionalized into state policies over the last three decades.

Following the World Social Forum, social movements around the world—particularly in the Global South—have adopted the expression “another world is possible.”

... the utopias that these communities envisage may not look like those that well-intended scholars, development officials, bureaucrats, and politicians would design for them.

The looming question that remains is: What would that other world look like? In the context of deep-seated race and class inequalities in Latin America, there is no doubt that it would mean more access to education, health care, dignified housing, justice, and higher incomes for blacks who historically and systematically have not enjoyed them. However, we also must recognize that this “other world” may be entirely

different: something that shows up as extreme poverty and unemployment, instead of self-sustainable living, on our graphs. Ultimately, people want to live a better life. This is as true for Afro-Colombian farmers living in remote villages on the rivers of the Chocó as it is for their counterparts in urban slums such as the Agua Blanca district of Cali. This desire is perhaps universal; even so, we must take seriously the fact that these different groups may have distinct definitions of the good life. We must also grapple with the fact that social mobility and incorporation into markets may run counter to these life projects and political claims. The multiplicity of claims—which often have mapped directly onto differences in the material conditions and trajectories of politicization of urban and rural black populations—may require moving away from measuring “inequality” and toward developing more nuanced definitions of “*el buen vivir*” (“the good life”).

3. Beyond Policy, Toward Politics

In Tanya Murray Li’s (2007) work on development policy in Indonesia, she argued that a main reason that policies that attempt to improve the lives of people fail is that they “render technical” what actually are political problems. If we take her warning seriously, we must not only examine how to get policies “right” but, more important, we also must analyze the deeper political and economic constraints to implementing greater equality in Latin America—and, indeed, in the world. In the cases of Colombia and Brazil, this exercise must involve rethinking how we characterize ethno-racial legislation passed in the last 20 years. Rather than fetishize these laws or fixate on the dramatic shift from formal “colorblindness” to ethno-racial policies (which, admittedly, I have done), we must think seriously about what actually was won and how institutionalized the gains

are. In other words, what will happen if the Left is forced to leave power (a likely scenario in several Latin American countries)? Moreover, what are the actual impediments to full realization of ethno-racial rights and policies? What accounts for their expansion in some cases?

This chapter is not a call to cease all analyses of the impressive armory of legislation accumulated in the last 20 years in this region. This was a major outcome of mobilization by the Left and by black and indigenous movements. Instead, it is a call to think more systematically about the dynamics of implementation, including the politics of backlash. This has manifested in the media-backed movements of mostly white upper-class Brazilians, who have launched a frontal attack on affirmative action and, more recently, against social-welfare policies. However, reactionary movements also have emerged to undermine ethnic land rights in Colombia, Brazil, and elsewhere in Latin America, through both legal and extralegal means.³⁰ The difference between this and the backlash against affirmative action in Brazil is the extreme violence, dispossession, and displacement that it often entails.

The consolidation of the reactionary movements, as well as the precarious state of black rights and participation within many state apparatuses in Latin America, signal (perhaps more now than ever) the need for a more organized and autonomous movement that is against both class and racial inequality. Nevertheless, mobilizing the grassroots around ethno-racial issues has always been difficult for black movements in this region. The fact that they were successful in pressuring states to include specific subsets of black populations in the constitutional reform processes of the 1990s, and later in affirmative-action policies, does not mean that they overcame this problem. Instead, their effectiveness was in their lobbying of governments in the context of constitutional-reform processes and international norms. This was an important strategy that allowed these movements to take advantage of a political opening without massive grassroots backing; however, it may not be sufficient to hold states accountable for implementing or expanding policies.

Ultimately, then, the study of stratification is inherently the study of politics; it also is necessarily about the study of both formal and contentious policies. In Colombia and in Latin America more generally, how much the state complies with specific laws for black populations depends heavily on activists' ability to exert pressure from outside official channels, typically with transnational leverage. Indeed, many of the advances in terms of policy implementation in Colombia occur in the face of international pressure from human-rights organizations and other US allies to

indigenous and black movements. Given that the issue of policy implementation is inevitably one of politics, any amelioration of racial inequality in Colombia and Brazil must be just that: a question of politics, not policy. ■

NOTES

1. Lectures given at University of California, Los Angeles in 2000–2001.
2. That is, of the countries included in the World Income Inequality Database (2007); the other five are on the African continent.
3. Afro-descendant includes those who identify as black as well as those who identify as *pardo* (in Brazil) and *mulato* (in Colombia). Both categories refer to people who are considered a mix of African and European ancestry. Increasingly, though, scholars have argued that *pardo* is not always associated with blackness in Brazil.
4. There are some important exceptions here including Twine (1998).
5. Some exceptions include: Wade, Peter. 1995. *Blackness and Race Mixture: The Dynamics of Racial Identity in Colombia*. JHU Press; Sheriff, Robin E. 2001. *Dreaming Equality: Color, Race, and Racism in Urban Brazil*. Rutgers University Press.
6. Elsewhere I argue that rather than massive movements, it was the mobilization of small black movements in the context of an alignment of both domestic and international political openings.
7. See Greene (2007), Hooker (2005), Loveman (2014) and , Rahier (2012), and for accounts that outline a singular shift to multicultural, multiethnic state policies.
8. The countries that recognized the rights of certain groups in the black population are Nicaragua (1987), Brazil (1988), Colombia (1991), Ecuador (1998), Guatemala (1998), and Bolivia (2009), primarily through constitutional reform processes. Honduras (1991) passed multicultural legislation not through constitutional recognition (Anderson 2007).
9. The Ministry for the Promotion of Racial Equality in Brazil, for example, consulted with governments throughout South America on institutional design. In addition, the inclusion of black rights in Colombia's 1991 constitution and later the Law of Black Communities (1993) served as a template for the inclusion of blacks in Ecuador's multicultural constitution some years later.
10. See: Paschel, Tianna S. 2016. *Becoming Black Political Subjects: Movements and Ethno-Racial Rights in Colombia and Brazil*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
11. A number of scholars have addressed these differences including Hooker (2005), Ng'weno (2007) and Asher (2009).
12. See: Reflexión para la Planeación Balance General del Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2006-2010.
13. This included funding from other sources. Available at: <http://www.worldbank.org/projects/P006868/natural-resource-management-program?lang=en>. Accessed November 25, 2014.
14. Available at <http://www.iadb.org/en/projects/project-description-title,1303.html?id=CO0157>
15. Available at <http://www.incoder.gov.co/portal/default.aspx>
16. The educational system was not only the main vehicle through which race and class stratification was perpetuated in Brazil, but also was arguably the most central arm of the state in the production and diffusion of racial democracy ideologies. As such, textbooks typically highlighted racial mixture as the strength of the nation, while also marginalizing Afro-Brazilians from history (Munanga 2005). There have been many impediments to implementation including intense debates within the Ministry of Education between those who support the legislation and others who believe it effectively introduced racism into Brazilian schools (Moura, Santana Braga and Soares 2009, Silva Souza and Souza Pereira 2013, Gomes and de Jesus 2013).
17. It is important to note that this number did not include the many communities still fighting for official recognition as *quilombos*.
18. It is important that the debate about affirmative action may have been particularly polarizing because rather than a point system, the majority of policies were based on a quota system that reserved a specific number of seats for students based on race or class or both. See the Grupo de Estudos Multidisciplinares da Ação

- Afirmativa (GEMAA), that provides a comprehensive map with information on all university affirmative action policies in Brazil. <http://gema.iesp.uerj.br/dados/mapa-das-aco-es-afirmativas.html>. Accessed on October 28, 2014.
19. They asked respondents their opinion on affirmative action based on color, attending public school, and income. Much like the 2006 Datafolha survey, the support for class-based affirmative action was higher (77%). Only 16% of Brazilians, overall, were against all forms of quotas, however, this percentage increased substantially when specifically considering wealthy Brazilians. Results are available <http://www.ibope.com.br/pt-br/noticias/Paginas/62-dos-brasileiros-sao-favoraveis-as-cotas-em-universidades-publicas.aspx>. Accessed October 28, 2014.
 20. Luiza was the first black-movement activist in that position. Previous ministers had been leaders within the Workers Party, rather than the black movement, which made them particularly vulnerable to critiques from the movement.
 21. Available at: <http://gema.iesp.uerj.br/dados/mapa-das-aco-es-afirmativas.html>. Accessed November 22, 2014.
 22. Available at http://www.ipea.gov.br/agencia/images/stories/PDFs/comunicado/120925_comunicadoipea155_v5.pdf
 23. Ibid.
 24. Study by the Center for the Study of Labor Relations and Inequality.
 25. I state this with one caveat. In 2005 a number of leftist organizations consolidated to create the Alternative Democratic Pole (POLO). Although the party has had more electoral success than any other leftist party in Colombian history, it has been more successful at taking local office. In the 2014–2018 session they held only 5% of seats in the Senate and less than 2% of those in the House of Representatives.
 26. Speech by Fernando Henrique Cardoso, on December 19, 2001
 27. See Mala Htun's analysis in this report for a deeper discussion of this relationship, and particularly the subordination of race to class in federal affirmative action policy in Brazil.
 28. This debate is not entirely unfamiliar in the US context either. At its core it is the type of debate that played out among African American leaders in the 1960s and 1970s about integration versus autonomy and self-reliance. However, to be fair, movements for black power and self-determination did not necessarily critique the idea of economic development. More at stake was whether black communities should rely on the white-dominated economic institutions and market to bring about that mobility, or create their own.
 29. Sociologist and lawyer Cesar Rodríguez Garavito is currently finishing a study with findings along these lines.
 30. Examples include Ley Florestal in Colombia, the proposed revision of the mining code and the land law recently proposed in Honduras.
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