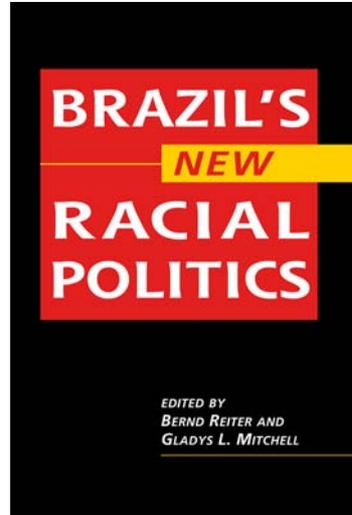


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Brazil's New Racial Politics

edited by
Bernd Reiter and
Gladys L. Mitchell

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1

The New Politics of Race in Brazil

Bernd Reiter and Gladys L. Mitchell

Brazilian racism is not new, but this book, as the title indicates, examines new aspects of the racial politics of Brazil and presents a fresh perspective. The purpose of the book is to provide an overview of the emergent scholarship on black mobilization and agency in response to racism and color prejudice. It is also an attempt to capture the questions and problems triggered by a change in Brazilian “common sense,”¹ in particular a new sensitivity and awareness of the ways that racism structures Brazilian lives. The focus on black agency is one of the main characteristics of a new generation of Brazilian and Brazilianist scholarship, a scholarship more in tune with subaltern perspectives and thus able to offer new insights into Brazilian societal dynamics and their far-reaching political implications, especially with regard to a redefinition of Brazilian nationalism.

Unveiling Racism in Brazil

Racism in Brazil has been exposed systematically as early as the 1950s, when a group of distinguished scholars undertook an analysis of what then was internationally perceived as a “racial paradise.” The UNESCO-sponsored research project, headed by Charles Wagley of Columbia University, counted on such valuable contributors as Marvin Harris, Luis A. Costa Pinto, Thales de Azevedo, Ben Zimmerman, and Harry Hutchinson, thus combining the insights of outstanding anthropologists and sociologists. Initiated in 1950, this broad research project gradually expanded to include even more scholars, such as Roger Bastide, Florestan Fernandes, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, and Octavio Ianni. By the 1960s, it was not only clear that Brazil was indeed far from being a racial paradise; it also became apparent that the whole idea of the racial paradise was a government-led nationalist project.

Yet despite the growing awareness that inequalities in Brazil could not be explained by class alone, the scholarship of the 1950s and 1960s was not coherent enough to dismantle the persuasive ideological construct of the Brazilian version of Jose Vasconcelos's "cosmic race,"² which reached back to the 1930s, and had, since then, been forcefully anchored into the Brazilian everyday reality by a series of vehement measures, including the use of a propaganda ministry under the Getúlio Vargas regime,³ and through it, the widespread production of "historically correct" textbooks to be used in the growing number of Brazilian public primary schools (Dávila 2003). By the early 1960s, when the counterhegemonic discourse of some of the authors associated with the UNESCO project could have impacted the broader society and the government, the military ended democracy in Brazil and suffocated any attempt at producing the kind of knowledge that could have been used to mobilize parts of society for more justice and participation in politics as the military regime ended most voting. The scholars involved in critical studies of Brazilian society had to flee the country, and any attempt to continue researching Brazilian race relations came to an abrupt end.

In 1985, when the military regime finally collapsed, Brazilian social sciences had to start from where they were cut off twenty years earlier. Nevertheless, critical race studies came back with a vengeance, now equipped with the newly developed tools of more sophisticated statistical analyses that could count on a variety of new data, as the Brazilian state started to reintroduce skin color categories into its censuses and surveys. In 1967, the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics (IBGE) created the *Pesquisa por Amostra de Domicílios* (PNAD) or *Penade*, as it came to be known among Brazilian researchers. The PNAD is a household-based survey tool that produced a myriad of new data on Brazil's social and economic reality. As a result, the ideology of the racial paradise came under increased attack, especially from a group of social scientists associated with the Rio de Janeiro-based Candido Mendes University, namely Carlos Hasenbalg, Nelson do Vale Silva, and Peggy Lovell, but also from a new crop of researchers at other universities, including the following operating out of the Federal University of Bahia: Nadya Castro, Antônio Sérgio Guimarães, Michel Agier, Luiza Bairos, and Vanda Sá Barreto, to name a few. These new voices added significantly to those that had spoken up against racism all along, particularly Cloves Moura, Lelia Gonzales, and Abdias do Nascimento.

Race-Conscious Scholarship, Statistical Data, and Black Mobilization

The analyses produced by this new generation of scholars left no doubt that ethnic background was an important variable in the explanation of Brazil's

extreme inequalities in such central spheres of life as education, the labor market, job mobility inside firms, marriage, and even life expectancy. These scholars proved without a doubt that Brazilian blacks were worse off than their white countrymen and women. Furthermore, this inequality could not be explained by educational backgrounds or unequal income and wealth alone. Brazilian whites (and Asians) fared much better than Brazilian blacks and browns with similar educational backgrounds, who suffered from discrimination even if they had access to middle-class incomes. Money did not whiten after all, contrary to what Azevedo argued in 1954 (Azevedo 1996); nor was there a mulatto escape hatch benefiting brown people over black people as Degler (1971) had argued. This new knowledge was crucial for Brazil's newly emerging black-power movements, because it gave them the tools and arguments they needed to mobilize. After several attempts at mobilizing the Brazilian black population during the 1930s and the 1950s, they were silenced by the different manifestations of the Brazilian authoritarian state. Similar to the critical scholarship, black power in Brazil emerged invigorated from its internal and external exile. In 1978, when the military regime started to crumble, the Unified Black Movement (MNU) was created, thus providing a national framework for black activism for the first time. The data provided and analyzed by the new scholars from Rio de Janeiro and Salvador proved extremely instrumental for the goals pursued by the MNU and similar organizations. This link deserves further explanation, and allows us to explain the different uses of *race* in the literature, as well as in this book.

Race is an elusive category and provides an even more elusive way to forge a sense of collective belonging. Nobody is more aware of this elusiveness than Brazilian black-power activists. For most of the history of blacks in Brazil, Africans and their descendents had a strong sense of being different from their white slaveholders. This difference was forced onto them and used to hold them at the bottom of Brazil's social hierarchies, and it left no doubt that Brazilian whites had no intention whatsoever to accept the moral and legal equality of blacks, which held true well into the twentieth century. The sense of black identity was indeed so strong during most of the colonial period and slavery, which lasted until 1888, that African and Brazilian blacks of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds and of different degrees of biological mixture repeatedly united to contest white supremacy and attempted to overthrow the system that held them at the bottom. On several occasions, Brazil barely escaped its "Haitian moment." As late as 1931, the radical Frente Negra Brasileira, the Brazilian Black Front, had a membership of about 200,000, mostly concentrated in the industrialized south (Davis 1999: 187). In 1936, however, the authoritarian government of Vargas outlawed the Black Front, together with all other oppositional political parties. The Vargas government sought to discourage any association that had the potential to endanger his project of national unity.

The risk of factionalism and even secession was so great during the 1930s that the Vargas government undertook extraordinary measures to forge a sense of nationality, national pride, and even a sense of what it meant to be Brazilian.

Among the most successful in this cause was sociologist Gilberto Freyre (1986). Freyre's writings on the Brazilian national character provided the ideological foundation upon which a unified nation could be constructed, and the Vargas regime left no means untouched to disseminate this ideology. Brazil would be a *racial paradise*, inhabited by one race, the Brazilian version of "cosmic race"—a tropical mulatto republic. Anybody daring to say differently was transformed into a naysayer and a reactionary. The concept of a racial paradise promised a solution to finally catch up to the developed world, even if—and especially because—Brazil had such a large mixed population.

To the black-power movement, this move proved devastating. Up until the 1930s, Brazilian blacks were forcefully united by the perverse power of racism and social Darwinism; after the 1930s, asserting one's blackness was transformed into an act of civic upheaval and antipatriotism and little by little, as the Vargas regime made sure that its version of the truth was accepted, asserting ethnic difference became an act of political incorrectness not only aimed against the state, but against mainstream society. Under Vargas, *race* was removed from textbooks, censuses, and from the official discourse about Brazil. The state thus produced the main and only official way to represent the country, and any Brazilian—black or white, mixed or indigenous—had no other choice but to accept that reality and to find ways of social mobility that explicitly took it into account. The core of the doctrine disseminated under Vargas was that no matter what their ethnic background, Brazilians are all mixed and hence *one*. Nevertheless, this was not an "imagined community," as Benedict Anderson (1991) suggests. Rather, it was a designed community, designed by the state and forced onto its people. The only one imagining, dreaming, and sometimes hallucinating such a community was the father of the idea, Gilberto Freyre.

The Vargas years severely delegitimized any attempt to forge a sense of racial solidarity among excluded blacks. Just as black-power movements regrouped during the 1950s and early 1960s, the state stepped in again, this time to avoid a potentially explosive bonding between labor and racialized groups. During the military regime, black-power activism became subversive and was subject to prosecution in the best-case scenario, but also to state-sponsored persecution, imprisonment, torture, and even death. The military regime also ensured that the category *race* would disappear again from the census, and it thus sought to curtail even the prospects for an emerging racial solidarity that would embrace and represent all those affected by the forces of racism and racialized exclusion. Categories, after all, are the building blocks of group consciousness (Brubaker 2004). Without numbers, mobilization is greatly complicated, as there can be no sense of a shared destiny if it is not known with whom, and with how many, this destiny is shared. Political activism is all but rendered

impossible if there are no data and no existing categories other than being Brazilian.

This tenuous link between statistical categories, disaggregated data, and the forging of group identity and solidarity is precisely what made the studies of the 1980s and early 1990s so relevant. They provided the means and the tools upon which solidarity of the excluded could be constructed. With information on inequalities among different categories of people—differentiated by ethnic background, skin color, gender, age, region, educational background, and other demographic categories—the opportunities for ethno-political entrepreneurs to forge group solidarity and awareness tremendously increased. The data produced by scholars of the time left no doubt that Brazilian society had undergone a process of racialization; that is, certain groups had been systematically excluded and stigmatized based on their physical and cultural characteristics. It became apparent that no other factor had such a strong influence on one's life chances as the color of one's skin. Brazilian nonwhites are excluded from almost all spheres of life, including education, jobs, certain marriages, earnings, chances of job promotion, even life expectancy. Discrimination thus structures Brazilian life, and this discrimination is racist, because it targets nonwhites. Racism is thus responsible for creating a renewed sense of belonging to a group, the group of the discriminated, the exploited, and the excluded. The findings published by Carlos Hasenbalg, Nelson do Vale Silva, and Peggy Lovell during the late 1980s and early 1990s left no doubt about the salience of racism in structuring Brazilian social hierarchies and life chances, and they provided the crucial, race-specific information without which mobilization is impossible.

The Normalizing Power of Denying Racism

In 1999, when Michael Hanchard's collection, *Racial Politics in Contemporary Brazil*, first appeared, finding racism in Brazilian society was still a counter-hegemonic endeavor, aimed not just against mainstream scholarship, but also against the official self-identification of the Brazilian state as well as a great part of its population, black and white alike. At the time, vehement reactions against Hanchard's scholarship were not entirely surprising. They were certainly revealing. Recognized international scholars, such as Pierre Bourdieu and Loic Wacquant (1999), took it upon themselves to accuse Hanchard of US imperialism. Many sectors of Brazilian society, especially the historically privileged, who had always been able to benefit from a system that had put them on top of social hierarchies based on the color of their skin and their real or invented European heritage, found a reverse racism in the fact that some scholars now accused them of being racists and maintaining a system that excluded almost half of the Brazilian population from equitable access to education, jobs, and social prestige. US scholars, used to the strict division of their

own society and backed by powerful foundations, were misreading Brazilian realities that were more complex and multifaceted—so went the thrust of Bourdieu's argument. Other Brazilian scholars seemed to lament the political influence that this kind of scholarship had on Brazilian blacks, supposedly leading them to change their ways and embrace a US style of separatism aimed, in part, against Brazilian whites. Many Brazilian intellectuals, all of them white, thus sensed the end of what to them were "the good old days," hastened in by US blacks, who were introducing racial division into Brazil's racial paradise.

Yet the critics of this new scholarship of racial inequalities did more to reveal their own bias than to weaken the growing wave of race-conscious scholarship and black organizing that steadily grew in importance and influence during the 1980s and 1990s. On the scholarly side, all those standing up to defend the Brazilian status quo risked becoming political reactionaries, opposing actions to address the age-old inequalities of Brazilian society. Even worse, those accusing Hanchard and his colleagues of US imperialism raised resentment among the proliferating Brazilian black-power movements, because, apparently, they reproduced the paternalistic attitudes of the traditional power holders in Brazilian society, who have historically claimed to represent the country without ever representing its majority. Brazilian elites had achieved the impossible—through extremely cunning and vehement employment of the state apparatus in their own interests, they had transformed the poor and non-white majority into a minority. As a minority, Brazilian nonwhites were not only pushed and held at the margins of official Brazilian society, and thus left without any real political power; they were also kept at the margin of citizenship and transformed into second-class citizens whose preferences did not count as much as those of the European-descendent elites.

Once the majority was transformed into a minority, it became subject to what Michel Foucault, the French intellectual known for his wide-ranging studies including social institutions and power, has called the "normalizing gaze" of the powerful. Under this scrutinizing and measuring gaze, black and indigenous people become objects of anthropological inquiry, conducted by those who defined themselves as the inheritors of European culture and science—expat Europeans in wondrous tropical lands, inhabited by exotic peoples with strange habits. As decades of concerted effort to whiten the nation had failed, Brazilian state elites under Vargas were able to forge a nation where nonwhites were perceived as enriching ingredients to a dominantly European national culture. In the hegemonic imagery created in those times, blacks and indigenous groups became a sort of spice to the stew that made up the nation. To the white elites, this spice allowed them to define themselves as tropical people, thus providing them with a way to think of themselves at the same time as equals to white Europeans and those from the United States and, yet, as superior to them, due to the Brazilians' greater sensitivity, soulfulness, cunning,

and flexibility—all inherited from the nonwhite contributors to the great Brazilian nation. To the white elites, who engineered this Brazilian nation, this was a perfect solution. It not only provided a way to compare positively to white Europeans and those from the United States and thus to escape the racial determinism that dominated thinking about race and its influence on development until the 1930s; it also blocked any effort to forge a sense of collective identity among all those that had potential grievances against the Brazilian state, and thus it undermined any mobilization of marginalized groups.

To nonwhites, this way of framing, perceiving, and selling the nation also seemed to offer some benefits, as it allowed escaping from the worst versions of racist doctrine and determinism of the time, namely all those theories that defined blackness as an unchangeable and unalterable human stain. The doctrine of the *mestiço* (mixed or half-breed) nation allowed for a gradual blending through a process of intergenerational whitening, even if this meant giving up one's culture and identity. Both black and indigenous people had given up much before without any reward, and Vargas's chimera seemed to compensate for all the suffering and sacrifice it demanded, with brighter days to come.

Times of Change

Nevertheless, the data produced during the 1980s and 1990s revealed that the dream of a color-blind society had not materialized, and all the sacrifice and the deferment of a happy ending in the future turned out to be nothing but wishful thinking. Brazilian nonwhites came to realize that their hopes of eventual compensation were in vain. Worse, all the sacrifice; the anxious effort to rid oneself of anything linked to Africanness, blackness, or indigenoussness; the waiting and postponing only led to frustration. The research emerging in the 1980s and 1990s clearly demonstrated that Brazilian blacks, browns, and indigenous groups remained at the very bottom of social hierarchies. Worse, the stigma against anything nonwhite had not withered; hence nonwhites were not only left at the bottom of Brazilian society, but their sense of a shared destiny and community had been shattered by decades of false hopes of mulatto mobility.

The research conducted during the 1980s and 1990s provided ample evidence that the promise of a racial paradise had not been fulfilled. Providing hard empirical evidence for this failure proved cathartic. It not only inspired a new generation of researchers to examine Brazilian race relations; it also unleashed black-power movements. Black-power activists finally found in the hard numbers that these social scientists produced the substance and spark to mobilize all those frustrated with the dream of becoming mulattos. Hanchard's 1999 collection was not just a collection of the latest research on the effects of racism in Brazil; it also provided space for social activists and representatives of a new and growing race-conscious way of doing politics, represented best

in the figure of Benedita da Silva, the first black, female senator, who once worked as a domestic servant.

To many observers, Brazil's participation in the 2001 International Anti-racism Conference, held in Durban, South Africa, marked the beginning of a new era for thinking about Brazil. Much has changed since Hanchard published his collection, although certainly not enough for Brazil to come even close to the ideal of racial harmony that has been forcefully promoted for so long. In 2001, universities began to enact affirmative action policies for Afro-Brazilians. In 2003, a federal law was passed that requires public schools to teach African and Afro-Brazilian history. Currently, black-movement activists are pushing for affirmative action in employment because they became aware that Afro-Brazilian beneficiaries of affirmative action in universities continued to face discrimination in employment, even with a university education.

Brazil is living through another moment of its self-awareness as a nation. It is not just the growing awareness that racism is a real and serious problem impeding Brazil's path to a prosperous future. Much like the last days of Brazilian slavery, racism is currently being perceived as a shameful stain that needs addressing for the sake of saving the nation's pride. But with the edifice of the racial paradise crumbling, black organizing on the rise, and affirmative action in full swing, Brazil faces the question anew of how to read and understand itself. If Brazil is not a tropical mulatto paradise, what is it? If all the ideas about cordiality and color-blindness that have dominated minds and history books for generations are wrong, then the question of what is the truth becomes pressing. Brazil, in short, is in search of a new national trope—a new way of imagining itself. Brazil is at the crossroads. On one side is the possibility of joining what is commonly referred to as the West—a path opened by Brazil's status as an emerging market equal to or even more promising than China and India. On the other side lies the possibility to rescue some of the imagery of Latin America's difference—an idea much older than the doctrine of the mestizo nation, dreamed first by Simon Bolívar, the liberator, and José Martí, the great philosopher of the Latin American soul.

Again, social scientists and activists feed on each other to discuss the options and weigh different possibilities. Only this time, the historically excluded and their representatives take an active part in this discussion. Scholarship and activism are no longer elite affairs. They also no longer are purely national affairs as destinies and solidarities have long spread across national borders and produced intricate networks of understanding, cooperation, and sympathy. What unites the new voices in this discussion is their consciousness of being subalterns and their commitment to achieve positive change toward a more equitable and just society. Because of their greater internationalism, they are not sanguine about any nationalist model or racial regime that is readily available—least of all the models practiced in Europe and the United States.

The new social science scholarship about Brazil is aware that it cannot avoid dealing with race. It is also aware that the country is searching for new

models and ways to represent itself—to itself and to others. A new Gilberto Freyre has yet to emerge, nor would it be desirable if one would appear. Instead, the current effort to rethink Brazil is more collective, more international, more self-aware and self-critical, and less elitist than anything that preceded it. The new voices speak from different social and geographical places, and they speak differently. There is no more space for chauvinism, no matter what kind. Scholars now have to reckon with activists and vice versa, as everybody is aware that knowledge is multifaceted and not the exclusive domain of university professors. If anything, the relationship between scholars and activists is symbiotic, as each needs the other for material, inspiration, and legitimization.

Yet the resulting discussion is not cacophonous, but rather marked by a careful and, more or less, systematic weighing of arguments, hypotheses, and possibilities. It is also not a narrow discussion, as the task in itself demands complex analysis. Sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and media and communication specialists all offer different viewpoints and angles of the same complex phenomenon that is Brazilian reality. Analysts of more geographically restricted problems are aware that the questions they raise are connected to broader issues and thus relevant to others facing similar problems, leading them to ask similar questions in other regions, or even countries. “The world is a ghetto,” as Winant (2001) pointed out.

This Book

The time is ripe for another assessment of Brazil’s racial politics. As we move beyond proving the existence and effects of racism, this book provides a snapshot of the current stage of the international academic discussion and the collective efforts and social movement actions to analyze, understand, and change Brazilian reality. They go hand in hand, and, as explained above, feed on each other, not to the detriment of positive science, but—to the contrary—to its enrichment, as they provide science with a strong sense of purpose and meaning. Current academic discussions about Brazilian reality are thus more than just scholarly exercises. They are strongly connected to the country’s future, leaving no space for disengaged academic exercises or cynicism.

This sense of purpose radiates through all the contributions assembled in this volume. None of the contributors are just doing business-as-usual. They are all aware that they are participating in a greater project, where their voices bear the potential to impact the course of Brazil’s future. Brazil, much like the United States, is as much a place of yet unfulfilled promise as it is a place formed by ideas of liberty, equal opportunity, and unity. Perhaps even more than any other country, Brazil is the country of the future, and after 500 years of conquest, colonization, discrimination, lack of opportunity, exclusion, and racism, Brazil is slowly but surely awakening to its own immense potential.

The selection of chapters was guided by our perception of this task of rethinking Brazil. As mentioned above, sociology, anthropology, political science, and media and communication studies have all produced much relevant scholarship in this regard. We thus selected outstanding contributions from all these fields. Of course, any selection runs the risk of bias; ours results in selections influenced by our own convictions, beliefs, and familiarity with the subject. We sought to gather the clearest voices, addressing the most significant and representative topics currently discussed among scholars and activists of Brazilian reality and nationalism in general, and Brazilian race relations in particular. In addition, the focus of this volume is on the new politics of race in Brazil, which hints at our attempt to provide a space for recent scholarship in this field. Novelty, here, is not meant to represent any sort of avant-garde status. Rather, it represents our attempt to introduce to the broader audience the new approaches and findings about Brazil produced since Hanchard's assessment in 1999.

Three comments seem necessary. First, by focusing on Brazilian race relations, we are not narrowing the focus to a specific and particular problem among others of Brazilian reality. Instead, we contend that at this stage, discussing ethnicity, skin color, racism, as well as gender-related inequality is a *sine qua non* for anybody claiming to discuss social reality—Brazilian or not. It is no longer morally tenable or scientifically sound to discuss questions of social justice, equality, democracy, citizenship, education, politics, and human rights without considering race and gender. This is not a special task—and most certainly not the privileged task of those inflicted with the continued workings of racism and sexism. The practice of discrimination affects the object of such practice and its practitioner by dehumanizing both, an insight already developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by such authors as Kant and Hegel. By discussing Brazilian race relations, the contributors to this volume are all keenly aware that they are discussing the very substance of the social fabric that constitutes Brazilian society. The scope of this book, then, is of broad significance both for its empirical reach and for its methodological implications for the social sciences, as it seeks to anchor the discussion of race relations squarely in the center of other discussions of Brazilian realities. Skin color, after all, not only overdetermines its bearer and provides him or her with a highly relevant form of symbolic capital, or lack thereof; it is also one of the most immediate and consequential social markers structuring any society. Racialization is not a singular experience to the countries of the African diaspora; it is as much a phenomenon and a problem in all those societies that have long claimed to be homogeneous and free of racial problems. Brazil is only one case among many. It is, however, a very rich and telling case that allows the drawing of many conclusions beyond its national borders.

The second point is one of drawing analytical borders. We have opted not to include any historical accounts in this collection. This choice was not driven

by any aversion we have to that field of study. We are, to the contrary, fully aware that history is currently being written and rewritten to fit the new requirements of the Brazilian people and their state. Nevertheless, a collection of historical accounts that reflects the current refabrication of Brazilian self-understanding and nationalism is a task that requires more historical distance. The discussions represented here are simply too new to permit such an endeavor.

The third point we need to clarify is our usage of the term *race*. We are fully aware of the risks of contributing to the reification of race as a social category by its repeated use. Race is, after all, an invention by the very social scientists that now seek to dismantle its power. We opted to still use this category because of the specific context of Brazilian discussions about social inequalities caused by skin color and perceived ethnicity. In the Brazilian context, progressive social forces are currently seeking to forge racial solidarity among discriminated people, who historically have been discriminated against because of their skin color and ethnicity. This category includes a large number of non-white people, or more precisely, people unable to successfully claim whiteness. To those progressive forces, the forging of a racial identity is the first step toward the creation of a racial solidarity, which would allow for the summing of enough political power to challenge the prevailing hegemonic structures of power in Brazil. Thus race represents a progressive agenda among historically excluded Brazilians as it offers the opportunity to forge enough racial solidarity and group identity to contest and conquer political power. Although we are aware of the extremely loaded etymology of the term and feel uncomfortable with most of its contemporary usages and connotations, we nevertheless find it important to reflect the state of its current usage in Brazil and thus opted for applying it in our book.

This book is structured the following way: Part 1, "Black Empowerment and White Privilege," introduces some of the new attempts and approaches to the study of racial inequality and black empowerment through racial consciousness in Brazil. It provides an example of some of the new problems that have come to the forefront of recent analyses, and it introduces some of the new questions that contemporary scholars have started to ask over the past few years. It examines how Afro-Brazilian identity has changed and how self-understanding depends on a person's social standing. Before delving into the complications of Afro-Brazilian identity and its political implications, in Bernd Reiter's chapter, "Whiteness as Capital," he deconstructs whiteness and the privileges it bestows on white Brazilians. Rather than focusing on the marginalization of Afro-Brazilians, Reiter examines the ways that white Brazilians are included. In studying whiteness and privilege, Reiter seeks to highlight the interdependence of exclusion and inclusion and of marginalization and the active defense of privilege. He offers new ways of studying Brazilian race relations and inequalities by shifting the analytical focus away from the victims of discrimination and exclusion, to the victimizers and benefactors. In doing so, he

shows how white privilege goes unchecked in Brazilian society and contributes to poor quality democracy.

Gladys Mitchell's chapter on Afro-Brazilian color identification and black candidate preference demonstrates how black-movement activism may have influenced individual identification. Mitchell finds that Afro-Brazilians in Salvador and São Paulo who identify as black (*negro* or *preto*) are more likely to vote for black politicians than those identifying in lighter color categories. Not only does this suggest that ethnic voting exists in Brazil, but it shows that the common adage that *negros não votam em negros* (blacks do not vote for blacks) is completely wrong. Afro-Brazilians who embrace blackness do vote for black candidates. Black-movement activists have long encouraged Afro-Brazilians to embrace blackness and a black identification. Although most Afro-Brazilians continue to identify as brown (*pardo*), in 2007, Afro-Brazilians began to outnumber white Brazilians due to a higher number of Afro-Brazilians identifying as black. Only the future can tell if this will resonate in Brazilian electoral politics.

Angela Figueiredo reintroduces a new subject of study to the field of Brazilian race relations, namely the analysis of black middle and upper classes. This topic was first examined in the 1950s by Thales de Azevedo (1955) and has since been neglected. Addressing individualistic attitudes of middle- and upper-class Afro-Brazilians in Salvador, Bahia, Figueiredo finds that Afro-Brazilian entrepreneurs face racial discrimination and exclusion even though they have achieved social ascension, thus contradicting the widely held belief that in Brazil, *money whitens*. Figueiredo further finds that most of her interviewees have developed subtle ways to explain away the racial discrimination they routinely face, thus pointing to the high degree of normalization that racial discrimination has achieved in Brazil. When they do acknowledge it, they blame it on people having bad manners (*mal educado*). Furthermore, they do not act on it because they believe those who practice racism will suffer more than they will themselves, and they are not willing to become involved in legal matters. This implies that upwardly mobile Afro-Brazilian businesspeople may be less racially conscious or that their individualistic attitudes may influence the way they experience discrimination, making it less likely for them to identify racial discrimination.

In the final chapter of this section, Cloves Oliveira addresses the relatively new and unexplored field of race-conscious media studies. In his chapter on media treatment of São Paulo's first black mayor, Celso Pitta, he finds that despite the fact that Pitta sought a nonracialized identity, he was racialized throughout the campaign. Pitta was not connected with the black movement and did not run on a racial platform. Because former mayor Paulo Maluf supported him, the media attributed his electoral success to marketing, and he was often referred to as a marketing product. In addition, his opponent, Luiza Erundina, publicly called him a white thief (*safado branco*) who was not genuinely

black. Interestingly, like those in the United States, Afro-Brazilian politicians face the challenge of racial authenticity as well as racism, making it difficult for them to fully achieve self-agency.

Part 2, “Affirmative Action Contested,” takes on one of the most heated and debated topics in Brazil today. Ever since the Brazilian state first enacted affirmative action policies in 2001, broad sectors of Brazilian society have started to contest these policies, as they seem to threaten the very core of what it means to be Brazilian, namely to live in a society without a rigid color line. The two contributions we selected for this section discuss the different affirmative action policies enacted in Brazil, and they focus on the different reactions they have caused in different sectors of society. Furthermore, both contributors seek to explain why affirmative action is causing such vehement reactions among certain Brazilians, and they set out to analyze these reactions. To allow for a better comparative analysis, both authors focus their attention on the most contested affirmative action policy currently employed in Brazil, namely to regulate access to higher education.

Seth Racusen focuses on university affirmative action policies as an example of how it is difficult for Brazil to exit its existing racial order. He examines how universities seek to verify identity, while considering subjective identities in their process of identifying who should be entitled to privileged treatment. His “grammar of identity” concept acknowledges that there is a certain set of rules and understandings people use to describe themselves and others, and this varies in different contexts. Despite Brazil’s complex system of identity, which is evident in the case that some self-identified white Brazilians have claimed a darker identity to benefit from the policy, Racusen believes implementing affirmative action in a fair way is possible. He promotes a layered approach in which Afro-Brazilians from public schools, whites from public schools, and Afro-Brazilians from private schools should be considered for university affirmative action.

In the other chapter in this section, Monica Treviño examines another aspect of this extremely contemporary debate, namely the support, and lack thereof, of affirmative action among Afro-Brazilians. Treviño pays special attention to the beneficiaries of this program and finds that nearly one-third of affirmative action beneficiaries do not agree with the program. Treviño thus concludes that the Brazilian black-power movement has paid too much attention to implementing this policy, but neglected to explain it enough to garner support for it. She finds that because of the taking over by nongovernmental organizations (NGO-ization) of the black-power movement, there has been less effort devoted to consciousness-raising among Afro-Brazilians, which is detrimental to changing negative perceptions of affirmative action and its beneficiaries.

Part 3, “The New Politics of Black Power,” presents a discussion that has been on the agenda of scholars for some years; however, recent scholarship has been able to expand on and focus specifically on some of the questions previous

scholars have asked. One of these foci is about the viability of cultural activism as a tool to achieve lasting change and improvement for the Brazilian black community. It is also about analyzing mobilization efforts by self-identified black women who have mobilized their communities without recognition in academic discussions. Keisha-Khan Perry's chapter offers a gendered and racialized account of black mobilization. Rather than attribute a lack of mobilization to racial hegemony or an excessive focus on culture, Perry acknowledges that black mobilization occurs in local communities such as the Gamboa de Baixo neighborhood, in Salvador (Bahia). Afro-Brazilians have been displaced in Salvador as some of its historic communities have been transformed into tourist attractions. Residents in Gamboa de Baixo recognize the historic importance of their communities, and women who have mobilized are fighting for clean water and other necessities in their community. In their efforts, they have recognized the challenges they face as poor black women and have embraced these identities rather than ignore them.

To many, recent cultural activism has contributed much to the raising of black pride and racial consciousness, thus contributing significantly to the formation of black group consciousness and racial awareness. Rap music in conjunction with NGO activism has produced, according to Sales dos Santos, much along these lines. This author finds examples of a very fruitful usage of culture to achieve social change. In his analysis of Brazilian rap music and the relationship between hip-hop cultural activism and NGOs, he finds that, to an extent, black-movement activism now takes place in NGOs and through rap artists. Rather than view NGOs as an impediment, Santos believes they serve as new agents of change in the Afro-Brazilian struggle. According to him, unlike traditional black-movement activists, who had a difficult time building relationships with the Brazilian state and its entities, NGOs facilitate such relationships, because they have professionalized black-movement activism. Furthermore, rap artists appeal to black youth through racially conscious lyrics that acknowledge that marginalization is due to both race and class, not simply class.

On the other hand, to Fernando Conceição, cultural activism does not lead to what is truly needed to improve the lot of Brazilian blacks, that is, the conquest of political power. To Conceição, cultural activism has done little to advance the position of Brazilian blacks, and much to consolidate the already existing stereotypes about them. Conceição's chapter thus focuses on Salvador's cultural movements and their relationships to politicians and nonprofit organizations. Written from the perspective of a longtime political activist, it allows us to witness the pitfalls of black cultural activism that dominates black organizing in Salvador, Brazil's black mecca. Conceição is skeptical about the potential of cultural activism and argues that cultural activism works to the detriment of political mobilization by consolidating the positions of Afro-Brazilians within social hierarchies and by strengthening the racist stereotypes about Afro-Brazilians commonly held by white Brazilians. He is also weary of the

power of the cultural industry, which has already transformed much of black protest culture into yet another product to be uncritically consumed by the masses. The example of Salvador demonstrates, according to Conceição, that black cultural entrepreneurs who started their activism with an agenda of change and social justice have sold out to the powers of the media market, being transformed into agents that perpetuate, rather than challenge, the prevalent power structures that dominate Salvador in particular, and Brazil in general. Conceição finds that by becoming market entrepreneurs most of the leaders of black cultural movements he analyzes have replaced their loyalty from black-movement activists to politicians and nonprofit organizations, to profit from black economic misery. Once adapted to the market logic, these movements only discuss racial issues to the extent that it does not endanger their relationships with governmental entities and politicians. Rather than self-autonomy, they become entrapped in paternalistic and patrimonial relationships with white politicians. They are no longer the voice for the plight of Afro-Brazilians; rather, he argues, they are in part to blame for black exclusion and marginalization. He posits that rather than use alliances with those in power for the collective group, they seek individual advantage.

Finally, the part closes with Renato dos Santos's chapter on black mobilization through another nontraditional means, prevestibular courses. In his analysis of the prevestibular movement, that is, the movement of university prep courses offered for blacks and otherwise discriminated groups, Santos presents much evidence for the broad impact this movement had, not just on preparing the historically excluded to pass the university access exam (vestibular), but also in raising their racial awareness and pride in their cultural legacies. While these courses prepare poor and Afro-Brazilian students for college entrance exams, coordinators and administrative directors view these courses as an opportunity to teach about racial issues. This aids, according to this author, in sustaining the black movement.

In the conclusion, Reiter and Mitchell ponder the new scholarship introduced in this volume and its interactions and consequences for Brazilian black activism and race relations. As the contributions to this book amply demonstrate, Brazil is at the crossroads to redefine its foundational myth—the very element that allows Brazilians to self-identify as Brazilian and identify differently from other nations—Latin American, North American, and European. The current discussions do not allow for a prognosis for what will replace the myth of the racial democracy. They do, however, point to the fact that the times of racial democracy are over. The sheer amount of new reflections and analyses leaves no doubt about that. Brazil, so Reiter and Mitchell conclude, might finally be able to live up to its eternal promise to be the country of the future, precisely because it is finally willing and able to look critically upon itself. No problem can be fixed without acknowledging it first, and Brazil seems finally ready to let go of a long-established tradition of merely pretending to attack its

social problems, a tradition so deeply rooted in Brazilian culture that it has produced its own expression—*para inglês ver* (done for the sake of satisfying the Brits). A Brazil ready to face its own problems and shortcomings, not worried anymore what other nations think of it, might finally be ready to tackle the many problems it faces. The problem most central to the reinvention of a better, more equitable, and fairer Brazil is the problem of racism; addressing it bears the potential of a general catharsis toward a brighter future for more Brazilians.

Notes

1. The construction and maintenance of a racist or exclusionary common sense is a widely used term in critical race studies.

2. Jose Vasconcelos was a Mexican philosopher who wrote *La Raza Cósmica* (The Cosmic Race) in 1925, promoting the idea of the peoples of the Americas becoming a mixed race and uniting not only racially, but ethically and spiritually.

3. Getúlio Vargas was president from 1930 to 1945 and 1951 to 1954, although much of that time he was, in reality, dictator.