

# The Metamorphosis of Black Movement Activists into Black Organic Intellectuals

by

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*Examination of the profiles and trajectories of 15 current or past leaders of the Brazilian Association of Black Researchers points to the emergence in Brazil of a new category of intellectuals who may be called “black organic intellectuals”—academics with the marks of black ancestry (such as dark skin) who have been directly or indirectly influenced by the black social movements and therefore do not resign themselves to racial prejudice and discrimination and racial inequalities. The active academic ethos that guides their professional behavior as university professors leads them to study these inequalities and to promote policies aimed at racial equality and the elimination of racism from Brazilian society.*

**Keywords:** *Brazilian academia, Black social movements, Intellectuals, Racism, Inequalities*

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Since the emergence of the Movimento Negro Unificado (Unified Black Movement—MNU) in 1978, black protest against racial discrimination has significantly increased, and, consequently, debate about the race question in Brazil, including the establishment of state, municipal, and even federal agencies in the area, has intensified (Dal Rosso et al., 2009; Santos, 2007). At the same time, there has been a substantial increase, especially since the 1980s, in the number of intellectuals<sup>1</sup> directly or indirectly influenced by the militancy of the black social movements. As the social scientists Lúcia Barbosa, Petronilha Silva, and Valter Silvério (2003: 9) have put it, “Among black Brazilian researchers, the problem of race has been the object of systematic reflection since the rise of the Movimento Negro Unificado in the 1970s in the context of the redemocratization of the country.”

There have, of course, always been black intellectuals in Brazilian academia,<sup>2</sup> but they have been and remain few. They are not, however, so few as is sometimes said. For example, while the anthropologist José Jorge de Carvalho (2005: 17) argues, on the basis of a 2001 study, that only 1 percent of the professors at the University of Brasília are black, my own research has revealed that 5.1 percent of the professors at that institution are black (*preto*) and 14.6 percent mulatto (*pardo*), making up a total of 19.7 percent of black professors (*preto plus pardo*) in this university (Santos, 2007). However, the

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number of black academics varies from one university and one region to another. What is important is that, in general, the majority of these black intellectuals have experienced difficulties in achieving the status of professor in a Brazilian public university. Furthermore, the isolation to which they are relegated in their departments—given that there are rarely black intellectual peers or nonblacks who take an unequivocal stand against racial discrimination in their academic units—is likely to make it impossible for them to debate the race question frankly and deeply without fear of reprisals and on the basis of intra- and interracial solidarities (see Santos, 2007).

While black intellectuals have always existed in Brazilian academia, what I shall call “black organic intellectuals,” such as Lélia Gonzales and Alberto Guerreiro Ramos, who combined the antiracist ethic of conviction<sup>3</sup> they had acquired from the black social movements in which they were activists with an active academic-scientific ethos originating in the interaction of that ethic with the knowledge acquired through postgraduate studies, which favors racial equality and policies that promote that equality, have been the exception. It is the emergence of “black organic intellectuals” in the Brazilian academic-scientific sphere that is the subject of this article.

#### **DISCRIMINATION IN ACADEMIA: BLACK INTELLECTUALS BEFORE THE 1970s**

Until the third quarter of the twentieth century, black intellectuals were nowhere to be found in Brazilian public universities.<sup>4</sup> Alberto Guerreiro Ramos and Abdias do Nascimento, for example, were never real professors in these universities before the 1970s, although they were professors in universities in the United States in those years.

Ramos applied for a position at the University of Brazil of the time<sup>5</sup> but lost the chair of sociology to L. A. Costa Pinto and that of political science to Victor Nunes Leal (Ramos, cited by Oliveira, 1995: 140) even though in the mid-1950s he had been a professor in the Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros and conducted a graduate course in sociology attended by Abdias do Nascimento (Nascimento, 1985: 5). His value was, however, appreciated in the United States, where for many years he was a professor in the School of Public Administration of the University of Southern California (Oliveira, 1995: 14).

Like Ramos, Nascimento, self-exiled to the United States and there recognized and valued as a painter and an intellectual, became a full professor at the State University of New York at Buffalo, holding the chair of African Cultures in the New World in the Department of Puerto Rican Studies (Nascimento, 1985: 6). Before assuming this post he had exhibited his work at Yale, Howard, Columbia, and Harvard Universities, in the Studio Museum in Harlem, in the Inner City Cultural Center in Los Angeles, and in Philadelphia’s Ile-Ife Museum. He had also served as a visiting lecturer at the Yale School of Drama and a visiting fellow at Wesleyan University and had lectured at Howard, Harvard, Princeton, the Universities of California at Los Angeles and at Santa Barbara, Tulane, the State University of New York at New Paltz, and Columbia (Nascimento, 1982: 16). In addition, in 1976 he was a visiting professor in the Department of African Languages and Literatures of the University of Ife

(Nascimento, 1982: 6). Although very recently there have been some Brazilian studies of his life and work (e.g., Semog and Nascimento, 2006; Guimarães, 2005–2006; and Macedo, 2005), it is clear that he was long recognized as an artist and an intellectual in the United States and other countries but not by academia in Brazil.

But Nascimento was no exception in the Brazilian academic environment. The anthropologist Carvalho (2005–2006) reports that black intellectuals and black organic intellectuals have historically been excluded from academia in Brazil: “To give some idea of extent of the racial segregation implicit in Brazilian academic life, it is sufficient to mention that in the famous Faculty of Philosophy, Letters, and Human Sciences of the University of São Paulo, which contains so many figures of national stature, only 3 of the 504 professors are black” (Carvalho, 2005: 16). Even worse: some social scientists believed that black people were incapable of doing research on Brazilian race relations. According to the social scientist Costa Pinto, with regard to research and knowledge production, black people could only be informants, objects of research, or even “microbes” or “laboratory materials”; they could not be researchers, scientists, or intellectuals (cited by Nascimento, 1982: 61–62). Afro-Brazilians in Brazilian academia are usually treated at best as subordinate and dependent on the colonizing and/or Eurocentric knowledge of the intellectuals who study Brazilian race relations.

What is more, until very recently it was difficult for a black intellectual to achieve a prestigious post in an academic-scientific or related institution (Carvalho, 2005–2006). For example, one of the few black intellectuals at the University of São Paulo, Milton Santos, when he ran for president of the Association of Brazilian Geographers in 1962, was confronted with the assertion by one of his peers that he could not be president because he was black. According to Santos (1989: 433),

In 1962, when I was candidate for president of the Association of Brazilian Geographers, a voice—and not the least eminent in Brazilian geography—stood up to say, “No, he cannot be president because he’s black.” Well, Caio Prado Júnior, whom I did not know well and who had cited me in his work, . . . replied, “No, we’ll elect him.” I am indebted, then, to Caio Prado Júnior for his character and his great generosity in giving this big push to my career.

It is apparent from all this that the few black intellectuals among the professors in Brazilian public universities before the 1970s faced formidable racial barriers to achieving positions of prestige and power and even admission to these institutions. White intellectuals like Prado Júnior who took a courageous stance against racial discrimination in academic-scientific institutions were few. If it had not been for the solidarity of Prado Júnior,<sup>6</sup> Milton Santos would probably not be an internationally recognized geographer today.

### **THE RISE OF “NEW” SOCIAL ACTORS IN “NEW” SPACES FOR THE STRUGGLE AGAINST RACISM**

With the reinvigoration of the black social movements by the emergence of the MNU in 1978 and the redemocratization of the 1980s, the social conditions

were created for the development of a generation of intellectuals arising from these movements or influenced by their call for racial justice and equality. These “new black intellectuals” were eager to acquire new research methods, analytical categories, and knowledge for an understanding of Brazilian race relations and the promotion of racial equality in Brazil. Among other things, they wanted autonomy, independence, and intellectual decolonization. But the fulfillment of their aspirations required formal academic training in the methods, techniques, and scientific knowledge that control subjectivity and ideology and produce scientific data. Put another way, the ardent aspirations of black activists needed guidance and academic monitoring. Thus many black activist university graduates, looking for answers to the questions that black militancy had raised but not yet resolved, began to enroll<sup>7</sup> in postgraduate courses to learn how to answer these questions from a scientific viewpoint.

As these activists began to participate in Master’s and Ph.D. programs, research projects began to be undertaken from their point of view, a point of view that the majority of white social scientists in this area of study did not share and that some even regarded with contempt. Only very recently have some white intellectuals begun to recognize the myopia to which they have been subjected by intellectual colonization—the uncritical acceptance and reproduction of Eurocentric knowledge, knowledge positioned from a dominant view of race relations but disguised as neutral and colorblind. For example, Carvalho (2003: 11–15) asserts,

The struggle against racism must have a broad front. It is the white community that must change its behavior, because racism is everyone’s problem, not just the black’s. It is in the first place a white problem. The white community must change its pattern and begin to talk about the privileges of whiteness in Brazil. . . . Whites need to become traitors to their community like me—to betray the whites, to say that we are racists.

This reflection on Carvalho’s part arose from his having seen at close range the racial discrimination to which one of his graduate students was subjected in the Department of Anthropology of the University of Brasília in being unjustifiably given a failing grade in a required course. This student was the first black doctoral candidate in the university’s graduate program in social anthropology (the Programa de Pós-Graduação em Antropologia Social—PPGAS) in its 20 years of existence and the first student to have failed this course (Carvalho, 2005: 64). Carvalho became aware of the racial discrimination involved because Ari Lima, the student in question, confident in his intellectual capacity and grounded in an antiracist ethic of conviction, did not resign himself to it. Influenced by the militants and intellectuals of the black social movements of Rio de Janeiro, he reacted against the injustice and refused to accept the failing grade. He describes his experience as follows (Lima, 2001: 308–310):

My “drama” began in the first semester of the 1998 school year, when, recently accepted by the PPGAS of the University of Brasília, I took a course called “Social Organization and Kinship” from Professor Dr. Klaas Woortmann. I worked very hard in that course, but at the end of the semester I was summarily given a failing grade. I made three requests for an administrative review, all of which were rejected. Finally, on May 19, 2000, on my fourth attempt, the CEPE (Conselho de

Ensino Pesquisa e Extensão), reconsidering my request, acknowledged (on a vote of 22 to 4) that I had been unjustly given a failing grade and granted me the credit I was due. . . . I believe that this "social drama" is strong evidence of the crime of racism.

Attending to the voices of the black social movements of Rio de Janeiro or to the appeal launched on the steps of the Municipal Theater of São Paulo on July 7, 1978, with the founding of the MNU, Lima—who is now a Ph.D. and a professor in a state university—began to consolidate an antiracist ethic of conviction that supported him in responding to and pursuing to its conclusion the "Ari [Lima] case," which ended in the correction of the injustice he had suffered. Thus he made it possible for his professor to see Brazilian race relations more broadly and clearly, from a point of view far from the myopia that whiteness produces—to see how cleverly racism operates in Brazil, denying the privilege of whiteness. According to Carvalho (interview, Brasília, March 7, 2007):

Whiteness is the racial capital possessed by all Brazilians who are classified as white in the census, in most cases without identifying with this category but benefiting from the privileges derived from it. Whiteness is the racial privilege characteristic of the mixed societies of Latin America. It differs from whiteness in countries such as the United States, South Africa, and Zimbabwe in that, while those societies were explicitly constructed and unequivocally accepted as white, in countries such as Brazil the ideology of *mestiçagem* [mixing] has permitted a dilution of this condition in the public sphere. Whiteness is the privilege of being white in a racist society without the responsibility this generates in terms of racial inequality.

The Ari case caused Carvalho to see race relations in a new, more critical way, closer to the black population's everyday experience of racism, to recognize the privilege of whiteness, and, beyond this, to become a "traitor to the white community" by talking about that privilege.

Another example of the participation in Brazilian universities of black organic intellectuals seeking racial equality is the contribution of then-member of the National Council on Education and professor in the Faculty of Education of the Federal University of São Carlos Petronilha Beatriz Gonçalves e Silva to the adoption (on June 6, 2003) of a quota system for the admission of black students to the University of Brasília. According to Dóris Santos de Farias (cited by Belchior, 2006: 88–89), former dean of extension at that university, Silva had been invited to participate in the meeting of the university's Council on Teaching, Research, and Extension to discuss the proposal after Farias had insisted to Carvalho that there be someone there who could speak to the importance of diversity in the production of knowledge and Carvalho had responded, "I have one, it's Petronilha." Other members of the council confirm that the presence of Silva and of Matilde Ribeiro<sup>8</sup> was fundamental for the adoption of the proposal (Belchior, 2006: 89). Silva's contribution was essential not just because of the authority of her arguments (see Demo, 2005) but also because of the politicization of the discussion, which caused some professors who had been undecided to vote in favor of the proposal.

According to Santos (2007), Silva was present at the meeting both because she was nationally recognized as an authority on education and race relations in Brazil and because she supported the proposal both personally and

academically, and not because the National Council of Education had designated her as its representative at the meeting. The council had not even discussed the proposal.

Like most of the leaders of the Associação Brasileira de Pesquisadores Negros (Brazilian Association of Black Researchers—ABPN),<sup>9</sup> she was from a poor family and had attended public schools (Silva, 2006), but she had graduated from and taken postgraduate courses at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. Again like most of the ABPN's leaders, she had been directly influenced by the black social movements, becoming an organic militant in several organizations. Her strong links with these movements are apparent in her curriculum vitae, which reports that "on behalf of the black movement, I had served as a member of the higher-education unit of the National Council on Education from 2002 to 2006 and in this capacity had written the report that established the legal framework for national curricula in ethnic-racial relations and Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture" (Silva, 2007; 2006; 2004).

The direct influence on Silva's biography of the black social movements dates to the beginning of her graduate studies. In 1984 she joined *Agentes de Pastoral Negros* (Black Pastoral Agents—APN), for which she served as an adviser at both the national and the state level for 15 years (Silva, 2006: 32–33, 48). Later she was a member of Father Antônio Aparecido da Silva's Atabaque Center of Culture and Theology and of the Father Batista Institute for the Black and the Ecumenical Center for Black Culture. Her participation in all these organizations allowed her to absorb, strengthen, and consolidate an antiracist ethic of conviction, and this ethic among other things influenced her academic-intellectual-political behavior and conditioned her research on Brazilian race relations. Thus it was more a mission or a commitment to an antiracist ethic of conviction than simply an academic commitment, and she did not separate her militancy from her academic-intellectual activities. As she has put it (2006: 44–45, 50–51),

It was, obviously, teaching-learning, and I continue articulating my actions as professor, black movement militant, and researcher. . . . My activity as a black movement militant is strongly linked to my academic activities, influencing and stimulating my scientific production, teaching, and extension work. . . . My professional and academic activities are intermingled with my militancy.

The precept of not resigning oneself to racism—not passively accepting discrimination and race prejudice and the resulting racial inequality—that Silva absorbed from the black social movements interacted with the knowledge acquired in her role of intellectual to produce an active academic-scientific ethos favoring racial equality and policies for promoting it. This ethos conditioned her intellectual and political behavior and her view of the world.

As for why this member of the National Council on Education took part in a meeting of the Council on Teaching, Research, and Extension at the University of Brasília, it is plausible that it was because she considered it fundamental to discuss a proposal that the black social movements and the intellectuals of the ABPN had publicly supported. Further, for a black organic intellectual not to accept the invitation to the meeting would have been to deny her antiracist ethic of conviction. It is plausible, then, that she attended the meeting as a

legitimate representative of the black social movements and that she was operationalizing the antiracist ethic of these movements.

Thus, participating in academic debates in Brazilian public universities, influencing other black intellectuals and nonblacks with regard to the struggle for justice and racial equality, and defending affirmative action for black students in Brazilian universities, especially the public ones, black organic intellectuals began to intervene in the production of knowledge about the Brazilian black population and have become agents who recognize themselves as subjects of this production. Feeling, thinking, acting, and carrying an antiracist ethic of conviction embodied in their worldview, as well as academic and scientific knowledge, black organic intellectuals began to achieve their destiny, becoming subjects of that destiny and beginning to produce scientific knowledge committed to the construction of a society that is racially democratic in law and in fact.

The experiences of Ari Lima and Petronilha Silva may well be considered insufficient evidence of the emergence of “new” social actors against racism in “new” spaces. Therefore, I want to turn now to the results of a study of the leadership of the ABPN examining whether they too display an antiracist ethic of conviction—a necessary condition for accepting my hypothesis. While I was of course unable to interview all of the 1,200 participants in the ABPN’s Fourth Congress of Brazilian Black Researchers, which took place in September 2006 at the State University of Bahia in Salvador (telephone interview, Ivanilde Guedes de Mattos, February 25, 2007), I did gather information from 15 of the association’s 18 leaders and former leaders on their profiles and academic trajectories (Santos, 2007). These leaders, who are elected at each congress by the general assembly, theoretically represent the interests of participants in the congress or the membership. From their responses it may be observed that with a few exceptions their academic trajectories and profiles are very similar. Eight of them received their undergraduate degrees from public universities and seven from private universities. Similarly, nine of them did their postgraduate work at public universities and six at the Catholic universities of São Paulo (5) and Rio Grande do Sul (1). Some light on the reason for the disproportionate number of alumni of the Pontificia Universidad Católica de São Paulo (Catholic University of São Paulo—PUC-SP) is provided by one of those alumni as follows (Santos, 2007: 243):

The majority of the friends who studied at PUC were militants in the black movement, to the point that we formed a group called the Núcleo de Estudos Afro-Brasileiros [Afro-Brazilian Studies Unit—NEAFRO]. This group, composed of students like Acácio Sidnei Almeida, Dagoberto José Fonseca, Sandra, Marlene, Benhur (Mato Grosso), and others, was inspired by a certain tradition that PUC maintained in dealing with the racial question. In addition to professors such as Florestan Fernandes, Octavio Ianni, and Josildeth Gomes Consorte, we were influenced by earlier groups of black students such as Gevanilda-Gê, Flavinho, Matilde Ribeiro, and Deborah Santos and by the Instituto de Pesquisas e Estudos Afro-Brasileiros [Institute for Afro-Brazilian Studies—IPEAFRO] directed by Professor Abdias do Nascimento.

It appears, then, that the choice of PUC-SP by many ABPN leaders was not accidental. It was a university with a certain tradition of Brazilian

race-relations studies and home to intellectuals who contested the ideology of Brazilian racial democracy and protested against racism. Black students who belonged to the black social movements lived together there in an atmosphere that was apparently conducive to frank, open, and profound discussion of Brazilian race relations.

The public universities from which most of the leaders had come included the University of Brasília (UnB), the University of São Paulo (USP), the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP), the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG), the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), and the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE). Here, except for the presence of Kabengele Munanga at USP and Octavio Ianni at UNICAMP, it may not be plausible to assert that these leaders had made the same deliberate choice as those from PUC-SP. Except for UNICAMP, none of these public universities had a group of students organized as black-movement activists questioning the ideology of Brazilian racial democracy.

What distinguishes the training of black organic intellectuals—an active academic ethos that resists Eurocentric intellectual colonization and becomes part of their academic and political behavior—is not just the atmosphere and academic knowledge acquired through graduate studies or even their position as intellectuals/academics, because the academic sphere is not immune from racial discrimination (Gilliam, 1997). While their knowledge is a necessary condition for their becoming black organic intellectuals, the adoption or, better, the incorporation of an antiracist ethic of conviction is also fundamental. This ethic comes from the direct or indirect influence of the black social movements. Eleven of the 15 leaders reported direct influence through political activism in organizations from this movements, and the rest had been influenced indirectly, by conversations, discussion, debate, and other forms of communication with black activist friends, by participating from time to time in meetings to which those friends invited them, or by being exposed to the discourse and the antiracist struggles of these movements. One of them had completed a 1998 Master's thesis on the black women militants of the city of Salvador and the following year created a web site on black women that aimed, among other things, at serving as an instrument for the struggle against racism. The other three demonstrated in their discourse the presence of the black movements in their lives, especially in their graduate student days, as follows:

My Protestant—Evangelical Church—background created a personal reality for me that did not include participating in the black movements as a militant. . . . This does not mean that my black family did not question the racism in our church itself, for example, and in Brazilian society in general. In other words, we did not distance ourselves from the subject or fail to “fight” racism in every way possible within a Christian worldview. We were attentive to every action of the black movement: the struggle for an aesthetic of its own that had to be respected . . . the struggle of blacks in the United States, the MNU, etc. We knew it all and went along with it all. At the university, we tried to link up with some movement, but it wasn't easy. Our language and way of life, including clothing, hairstyles, wasn't Pentecostal, it was “white.” All this made it difficult to participate in, for example, the MNU. It wasn't easy to give up one's behavioral, aesthetic, and religious patterns to participate in the MNU. . . . Since it was difficult to belong to the existing groups, I participated in the creation of a group that lasted about two years. It was called *Consciência Negra* (Black Consciousness),

and we met every Saturday afternoon to study texts in the old student-union building at the Federal University of Pernambuco in the center of Recife. It was very good. This was in 1992 and 1993, more or less. . . . There were many people who were "militant" without necessarily belonging to an organized black movement. . . . There is a lot of protest against racism outside of the traditional black organizations. [Female leader A]

I was never a militant in any organization of the Brazilian black movement. During my time in Rio de Janeiro, in 1993 and 1994, through the influence of a militant friend with whom I shared an apartment, I often attended meetings and occasionally participated in activities at the Instituto de Pesquisa das Culturas Negras (Institute for Research on Black Cultures). . . . Actually, I would say that I feel the influence of the black movement as a university researcher and professor whenever I become conscious of the black presence in the lecture hall from the way the students relate to my presence and my positioned black discourse. . . . I attribute this sensitivity to the discourse of the Brazilian black movements. [Male leader B]

I joined the social movements in Recife when I was 18. . . . The relation to the black movement was indirect, specifically with the MNU and the Maria de Conceição Center for Population Education in Morro da Conceição. . . . My participation arose from the need for continuity in my studies, for a deepening of my involvement as an organic intellectual in those social movements. When I went to the Federal University of Alagoas in 1992, I came into a closer relationship with the Núcleo de Estudos Afro-Brasileiros, and we conducted a seminar in 1993 on the condition of the black in Brazilian society. My doctoral research in 1995–1996 was on Carnival, education, and the black social movement in Bahia; at this point I began employing the *négritude* inscribed in my family relations in a more organic way, profoundly redefining my place in the university and my options in the field of politics. It was a rebirth, full of sorrows, joys, and utopias. [Male leader C]

My intention here is simply to demonstrate that these leaders also had an antiracist ethic of conviction derived mainly from the black social movements. As one of them (quoted above) put it, "We were attentive to every action of the black movement. . . . We knew it all and went along with it all." These quotations are sufficient to indicate what I am designating as the indirect influence of these movements in the incorporation of an antiracist ethic of conviction by black organic intellectuals who were not activists in the black movements. This ethic, in interaction with the knowledge they acquired in the universities' graduate programs, made it possible for them to construct an active academic ethos that rejected Eurocentric intellectual colonization.

## CONCLUSION

It seems plausible to assert, from the above, that Brazil is seeing the emergence of a new category of intellectuals that I have called "black organic intellectuals." They are professors, researchers, and graduate students with the marks of black ancestry (such as dark skin) who have been directly or indirectly influenced by the black social movements. These academics absorbed from these movements a moral precept or value of not resigning themselves to racial prejudice and discrimination and its consequences, such as racial

inequality and the marginalization of social-racial groups. This antiracist ethic of conviction, in interaction with the academic knowledge they acquired in the universities' graduate programs, has produced in these black organic intellectuals an active academic ethos that guides their professional behavior as university professors. This leads them to study these inequalities and to point to the need for policies promoting racial equality and banning racism from Brazilian society, as well as to study all of these things from a standpoint that rejects Eurocentric intellectual colonization. There is nothing to prevent black intellectuals—individuals with the marks of black ancestry who are not part of or influenced by the black social movements—from similarly adopting an antiracist ethic of conviction and combining it with the knowledge that they have acquired from their academic training.

## NOTES

1. "Blacks" here means persons who identify themselves as *preto(a)* (black) or *pardo(a)* (brown). The category *negro*, combining these two designations, is the one used by the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística in gathering data on "color" or "race" for the census and its national sample survey of households.

2. According to Antônio Sérgio A. Guimarães (2004), there are black intellectuals not only in academia but also in the artistic, cultural, and political spheres, among others.

3. My use of the Weberian term "ethic of conviction" (Weber, 1963) is somewhat unorthodox but not completely foreign to the conceptual apparatus of its author, given that theoretically black activists have always opposed racism independent of its political articulations or conformations. An antiracist ethic of conviction, then, is a moral precept or value of not resigning oneself to racial prejudice and discrimination and its consequences, such as racial inequality and the marginalization of social-racial groups. In the final analysis, an antiracist ethic of conviction is the precept of fighting against racism in every sphere of social life, seeking to deconstruct the myth of racial democracy and construct a society that is egalitarian in law and in fact. The myth of racial democracy is here understood in Carlos Hasenbalg's (1995: 369) terms: "The notion of myth for characterizing 'racial democracy' is here used in the sense of 'illusion' or 'deception' and is designed to point to the distance between representation and reality, reality and preconception, racial discrimination and inequalities and their denial on the discursive level."

4. According to Carvalho (2005–2006: 99–100), while Brazil's public universities "have expanded in numbers of alumni and professors innumerable times in the course of the twentieth century, they have never made any effort to correct the racial exclusion that has characterized them since their founding."

5. The anthropologist Livio Sansone (2002: 10), citing Ramos's experience, confirms the existence of racial barriers that have denied black intellectuals access to professorships in Brazilian public universities.

6. It may seem contradictory that, while Prado Júnior allied himself with Santos in practice, theoretically he displayed a preconceived idea of the descendants of slaves (Prado Júnior, 1942: 271–272): "The indigenes of America and the African black were on a lower cultural level than their dominators. . . . The contribution of the black or Indian slave to Brazilian society is . . . almost nonexistent. . . . The stock of culture that they bring with them from the American or African jungle, which I do not wish to underestimate, has been suffocated or annihilated, distorted by the social, material, and moral condition to which its bearers have been reduced. . . . It acts more as a corrupting agitation of the other culture, that of the white man, that has been superimposed upon it."

7. This enrollment is not yet a smooth one. According to the U.S. anthropologist Angela Gilliam (1997: 94), Brazilian universities have "academic gatekeepers" or "black specialists" who discourage and even prevent black activists from enrolling in their courses.

8. Ribeiro was minister of the Special Section on Policies for Promoting Racial Equality in the Lula administration from March 21, 2003, to February 6, 2008. She is a Ph.D. candidate in social work at the PUC-SP.

9. Information on this association is available at <http://www.abpn.org.br>.

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