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Afro-Latin Americans
within the changing global order[1]

The following discussion of Afro-Latin Americans will focus on recent trends and changes in national identity articulation among people of African descent in Latin America and efforts at reconciling the generality of national identity and the specificity of Afro-Latin Americans in a formulation which does not consider the two articulations as mutually exclusive.

Because of shared history of slavery post-slavery but a bifurcated race relations order with the United States, there exist possibilities for comparative analysis of the situation of Africa-descended individuals within the two areas especially as the Latinamericanization of the United States continues apace. Brazil and Afro-Brazil occupy a disproportionate, space within this discussion without in anyway implying that developments there are the metaphor for the rest of Latin America.

Brazil and Cuba share a commonality of state recognition of the existence of problems with race relations and official efforts at dealing with its consequences for Africa descended populations. They are also the two countries that are directly engaged in diplomatic relations with Continental African countries over the last four decades. Thus, the interconnection between historical relations and present-day relations provide insights into the position of Africana in the societies and the responses to increasing demands by people of African descent for recognition. Afrodescendent implies heritage and history joined to the present and the future!

Omi and Winant (1994) cautioned against avoiding two extremes in studying race; either as an essence, fixed, immovable or, as a mere illusion, a purely ideological construct which some ideal non-racist social order would eliminate. Race is an element of social structure rather than an illusion. Racial formation, their bridging concept between the two extremes delineated above is a socio historical process by which racial categories are created inhabited transformed and destroyed, a historical process linked to hegemony. Distinguishing racial awareness from racial essentialism is critical. Though a key problem with essentialism is its denial of differences within a particular racially definest group, members of subordinate racial groups faced with racist practices, exclusion and discrimination are frequently forced together to ban together to defend their interests, and even their lives in some instances. They warn against equating such strategic essentialism with the essentialism practiced by dominant groups, nor should it prevent the interrogation of internal differences.

Robert Cottrol (2001) has observed that a paradox existed in the United States of America in the matter of the law and liberal ideology and slavery. It was difficult to reconcile race-based slavery and race-based hierarchy with a strongly liberal national ideology and normatively anti-hierarchical national culture. It was a cognitive dissonance not found paradoxically, Cottrol observes, the USA has been

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more successful in using the law as a tool to dismantle patterns of racial discrimination and race-based status and hierarchy than countries in Latin America. (2001: 16)

A lack of consensus about the meanings of nomenclatures to designate racial/color identity in Latin America and a sense of all embracing nationalist identification have stymied social mobilization of People of African descent in Latin America (Davis, 1992: 256) But recent developments have produced unexpected opportunities for transnational activism and national reconfigurations. The current,

Afrodescendent as both a national and trans-national descriptor and its increasing usages is an indicator of the increasing visibility of Afro-Latin Americans within Latin American societies and the degree to which these societies have become more receptive to the idea of re-evaluating the African historical connection and its meaning for the present. All above, it is a response or even challenge to traditional national identity articulations based on accepted ideas of *mestisagem/mestizaje*.

In this new round of interrogations, *mestizaje*, interpenetration of cultural practices and traditions, (Afro- and non-Afro), the impressive activities of myriads of Non-Governmental Organizations, critical and invaluable as they are, cannot be separated from the realities of what Kwame Nkrumah characterized as the political Kingdom. Though by no means the only mode through which a successful interrogation would emerge. It is questionable if any such interrogation can fully proceed without taking into account the political dimension.

Peter Wade (2003): notes the existence of homogeneity and diversity as a tension within *mestizaje* discourses. Nationalist glorification of *mestizaje* as a democratic process leading to racial harmony occludes racist and even ethnocidal practices of whitening. Blacks in Colombia are both included and excluded as ordinary citizens. They are not people white(r) people want to practice *mestizaje* with, especially where intimate relations are concerned. Wade further observes that both *mestizaje* and racial democracy are silenced in the matter of linking racial identity and citizenship.

Carol Smith (1996) observes that *mestizaje* can become a state supported ideological project and multiply subjectivity or the fragmentation of identity, political and gendered components are present.

Political discourse. There *is* a mythological aspect *envisioning* the attention of racial distinctions and the homogenization of culture. In the original Mexican articulation there was a rhetoric about a superior *mestizo* race, more an instrument to challenge external racism and to paper over cultural, political and color divisions in Mexican society.

For Florencia Mallon *mestizaje* has been double-edged discourse of militant hybridism and a counter hegemonic claimant of intermediate identities.

Sarah England and Mark Anderson (2000) Have provided an insightful example of a challenge to *mestizaje*m. Authentic African Culture in Honduras? Afro-Central Americans challenge Honduran *Mestizaje*

Not an Official response to the expressions of Pan African-American solidarities, which transcend the nationalist ideology of all Hondurans having been *mestizajed*. Travel and contact with Afro-USA has produced a Pan Blackness, linking young Garifuna men to what they perceive as modernity which challenges

young Garifuna men to what they perceive as modernity which challenges the normativeness of both *mestizo* and white Hondurans. But they also have been able to slide in and out of racial and ethnic identity in the pluriverse of global blackness in New York City. Honduran. Minister of Culture 1997, Rodolfo Pastor Fasquelle - responding to the afrocentricity expressed during the bicentennial of Garifunas, I must remind the Garifuna where they come from. They are *Mestizo*s like all Hondurans.

Elbein dos Santos offers a new definition of Brazil (1986) describes Brazil as an Afro-Luso-American nation. Because of geography and the indigenous population it is American, it is Luso on account of Portuguese colonialism; and it is African not just because of the African contribution in terms of labor and manpower but also because of the cultural presence and roots which would be found in significant numbers in great urban areas, small towns, and in religious traditions brought over and adapted to the exigencies of the new environment.

Darien Davis (1995) considers the politics of racial identity as the most formidable enemy of Panafricanism *Mestizaje*, color codes, miscegenation, nationalism have been inhibitors of solidarity among peoples of African descent; color consciousness combined with fervent patriotism - identifications with nation rather than with extra-national identities (361) Now, challenging theories of mixture and identity as per Honduras Montivideo 1994 to Durban, the effects of new transnational.

No discussion of Afro-Latin Americans, especially, Afro-Brazilians would be complete without tackling, (no matter how briefly) the history and present-day situation of Salvador Bahia and connectedness to Africa. Wafer and Santana (1990) had characterized Africa in Brazil as being essentially two-dimensional embracing both the spiritual and material worlds and a conjunction of local, national and international cultural politics. Both the mythological and real dimensions were imagined communities, each characterized by its own epistemological status. Such a separation would help resolve some of the confusion emerging from the gap between black demographic advantage and perpetual black disempowerment, symbolic religious and cultural pre-eminence notwithstanding.

Sansone's (2003) vision and interpretation of Salvador Bahia is different. He considers the role of globalization as enabling the worldwide dissemination of symbols associated with a number of local identities and individual characteristics. Tourism and the production of multi-cultural ideologies have brought new forms of racism in their train, resulting in the imposition of polarized race relations' language that is not native to Latin America.

Sasken (1996: 97) discusses globalization and notes the emergence of the notion of international human rights displacing the states exclusive power over the individual, renationalization of politics as an outgrowth of the transnational tradition of economic spaces and human rights regimes, and the emergence of economic citizenship belonging to firms and markets, specifically the global financial markets global corporate actors - power over individual governments.

Kennedy (1986: vii) opted to afford a more global approach to Latin America, insights are offered into aspects of the cultures of not only some of the region's Spanish-speaking countries, but also Latin America's two non-Hispanic nations - Brazil and Haiti.

Jeanette Sutherland (2001) argues that, thanks to globalization Latin America might loose one of its major advantages, the unlimited availability of cheap labor. Cheap manual labor – the advantage may be slipping – need for adaptation in order to compete globally.

Sansone (2003) view globalization as enabling the worldwide dissemination of symbols that are associated with a number of local identities and individual characteristics. World Wide impact aided by tourism, production of multicultural ideologies but also new forms of racism. Local versions of black culture have always exhibited a number of global traits as such the imposition of polarized language of race relations on Latin America - black culture have always exhibited a number of global traits.

Mark Juergensmeyer's discussion Paradox of Nationalism in a Global World (2002: 3-17) 1) production; ownership, market commodity chains 2) currency and financial 3) instruments, political alliances 4) military justification and intervention 5) environmental concerns and protection 6) media and communications 7) culture and ideology 8) citizenship and identity: urban, transnational, professional elites. Offers a good break down of different dimensions of globalization, which is helpful for understanding Afro-Latin America and the unexpected consequences of globalization.

What is Afro-Latin America?

Afro-Latin America includes those regions of Latin America where significant groups of people of known African ancestry are found. These comprise not only the obvious cases of Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, and Panama, but also the Caribbean Coastal areas of the various Central American countries (including Costa Rica), and as well Uruguay and the Buenos Aires region of Argentina. In addition, the Hispanic Antilles (Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico) are also encompassed in this designation.

The existence of Afro-Latin America and Afro-Latin Americans are not historical or has not been universally recognized because of a racial ideology's disdain of Africana[2]. Local euphemisms and nomenclatures (*indo*, *mestizo*) Fontaine provided a long list of official antipathy to engaging with, supporting, or even minimally recognizing the validity of Afros in respective countries. The insistence on the historical unilateralism of national identity has shifted, in some cases, resulting in more open public discourses and the discovery of the existence of Afro-Latin Americans by the outside world and in some cases, by national societies themselves[3]. It's this increasing visibility, which has, arguably, benefited Afro-Latin American activities today. With hindsight, it appears to be an incredible effort at containing the internationalization of their Afro-populations as a form of pre-emptive deface against threats from the outside to national unity with an unstated

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[2] For definitions of Afro-Latin America, see Michel Fontaine (1980), Elbein dos Santos (1995), Davis, 1995 for African.
[3] Discovering the African Diaspora and the roots of Afro-Latin America, see Thompson 2000, Okphewho et. al., 2001. Walker, 2001.

implication that Afro groups were best protected, for their own good from outside contagion[4].

Sarduy and Stubbs (1995) identified three key areas of conceptual debate about Afro-Latin American race relations. Africa, the Atlantic World, and black self-liberation, an essential component of any meaningful notion of racial democracy. Tackling the myth of racial democracy is a priority. One of the volumes was that neither a history of race mixture nor the articulations of interracial co-existence constituted a sufficient explanation of the situation of Afro-Latin Americans today[5].

Situating Afro-Latin Americans within the context of globalization is intended to draw attention to the increasing emergence from an area of invisibility which has characterized them within Latin American polities and societies and their increasing insertion into national and transnational spaces and discourses which have been opened up as a result of expansions in communications. The most noticeable development has been the proliferation of meetings and sessions of different Afro-Latin American groups in the period leading to the Third (United Nations) World Conference on Racism in Durban in the summer of 2001. As Turner has observed, the road to Durban involved protracted negotiations with national governments in order to produce agreed upon national positions and avoid fissures among national delegations in Durban. It also involved alliance-making across national borders, ethnicities and political orientations[6].

Santiago, Chile had been the site of a December 2000 preparatory conference for diasporic African communities. Emerging from this gathering was the Santiago Declaration and the recognition of the long-term consequence of slavery as a contributory factor to the miseration of peoples of African descent in the Western Hemisphere (Turner 31:2002). Writing Afro-Latino into the official document was an important advance but leaves some confusion as to usage in terms of the United States.

Afro-Latin American and indigenous attempts at alliance making as per the February 2001 meeting in Quito proved abortive. The emergence of the Global Afro-Latino and Caribbean Initiative (GALCI) (November 1999) has provided a venue for further cross border initiatives. A parallel significant development has been the greater visibility of multilateral and bilateral or agencies and Afro-Latino links to them, albeit not a self-evident example of the transformation of Afro-Latin American agency[7]. The continuing conundrum of the actual size of Afro-Latin

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[4] Discussions of nationality and threats to it can be seen in both scholarly and popular discourses.

[5] Racial Democracy as a distinguishing characteristic of Latin American society is epitomized by Brazilian discourse. Wade's recent work has broadened the discussion to include Colombia. See Wade 1993, 2003.

[6] The emergence of extensive activities through Non-Governmental Organizations is impressive as Turner illustrates. It is also within discourse on new social movements in Latin America, see, Foweraker, 1995.

[7] The emergence of extensive activities through Non-Governmental Organizations is impressive as Turner illustrates. It is also within discourse on new social movements in Latin America. See Foweraker, 1995.

American populations within specific countries has yet to be resolved, especially in the absence of demographic data. Perhaps in the future, governments might reconsider the desirability of (re)including a question in national census taking which would provide the requisite information. The increasing public discussion of Afro-Latin Americanism provides some basis for optimism but not certainty. What is both fascinating and puzzling in these recent developments is the prominence of funding organizations and the creation of an emergent group of net-worked recipients of external support for the continuing work of Afro-Latin Americans. How such connections become open to the much broader Afro-Latin American community and not restricted to the newly privileged would merit closer observation.

There is no doubt that Afro-Latin Americans today are participating in activities ranging from politics, cultural production, national representation, and transnational communications. Friedemann and Arocha have charted the trajectory of Afro-Colombiana and the continuing denial of its salience in national life. Nonetheless, recent state initiatives in recognizing indigenous rights have brought along some benefits for Afro-Colombians. The 1980s witnessed Afro-Colombian initiatives the Afro-Colombian political movement begun to gain momentum in combating the traditional negation of Afro-Colombian activism.

The 1990 Constitutional revision and New Constituent Assembly included indigenous representative. It was the reason of the expansion of the term *mestizo* to include Afro-Colombian. We are all *mestizos* as deflection political demagogy. Thus in a nation governed by a class minority, *mestizaje* as a concept emerged as a strategy to counteract ethnic and ethno-social claims (66). *Mestizaje* as a democratic force flattening out all differences. Equality of rights was not compatible with the conservation of identity (territorial rights as applicable to Afro-Colombian communities). Freidemann and Arocha Carlos de La Torre (2002) have discussed recent Afro-Ecuadorians (from Quito - Afroquitianos/as) activism in their society[8].

Moving from invisibility to visibility and activism is a fitting characterization of Afro-Ecuadorian life. A new recognition in the wake of the state's Legitimation of indigenous entitlements to historically occupied lands, and political empowerment has spilled over into the recognition of rights for Afro-Ecuadorians. The emergence of an Afro-Ecuadorian/Quiteño consciousness as a result of Catholic missionary activities he implies, is double-edged. The definitions and articulations of Afroness as a result of ideological and programmatic initiatives by missionaries who then train church members/activists to carry forward the message of articulating a new identity with emphasis on black pride/history and even essences, what was the natural black condition which might have been transformed through colonialism, exploitation, stereotyping, and discrimination? Hence, the re-discovered blackness is, arguably, a new construction whose agents sometimes demonstrate impatience or relative lack of sympathy with those who have not seen the light. It is a danger which must be recognized but which does not obviate the gains of the new consciousness[9].

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[8] See Foweraker, 1995.

[9] Carlos de La Torre's study of Afro-Ecuador and issues related to the ways in which emergent new identities are linked to a joint. Afro and outside missionary action races questions about the limits of this kind of relationship

The (1989) constitution, Ecuadorian recognized indigenous rights, becoming a landmark, an indication of a new relationship between the state and its agencies and hitherto marginalized populations. What accounts for the change? It is partially the result of initiatives of international organizations, which emphasize multiculturalism in the support they provided for national activities.

A significant part of the new Afro-identity is the emphasis placed on the authenticity Afro-rural communities, as the natural setting where titles to land can be legitimized. An unintended consequence is the suggestion that it is only in rural communities that Afros can be legitimately situated and found. The urban setting becomes extra-territorial an area not native to or natural for black habitation. Hence, black urbanites whose residence is either permanent or transient are presumed to be out of place. Encounters with the police and the assumption of non-belonging of Blacks have serious consequences for individuals and the group with urban settings. Regionalization of blackness, in this case, Esmeraldas (Islands) and the Chota Valley, is common practice in the minds of the society, and even some of the church trained re-africanized individual activists. Some of the names of Afro-Quiteño organizations reveal a transnational and diasporic african consciousness; Nelson Mandela, Africa Mia, Martin Luther King, Despierta Negro, Afro-29, Negra Bonita, Franqueza Negra are examples[10].

Ironically, perhaps, the sponsorship by the priests (paternalism) has the effect of putting a freeze on activities of the trained because the clientelism. The patron's ability to resolve problems related to discriminatory behavior, interferes with the conceptualization of race relations, power relations as transcending individual ignorance, prejudices, lack of education disconnected from asymmetrical power relations. The new identity elaborated with the help of catholic priests/missionaries, ultimately could be compromised because of its elaboration of a new ideology which cannot be delinked from paternalism, intended or not.

Multiple dimensions of this new identity, as a reflection of the praxis of new social movements or enlightened missionarizing have provided an unprecedented opportunity for conceptualizing and interrogating national belonging and citizenship. Once the new Afro-Quiteño identity is publicized, especially its public articulations of revindicatory claims linked to historical and contemporary exclusions and discriminations, the response from privileged sectors of state and society is the allegation of reverse racism[11].

The Afro-Brazilian identity articulation and political activism could not be more different from the Afro-Ecuadorian experience. With a long history of political activism in a country of a more pronounced Afro-presence, the developments of the last twenty-five years are, nonetheless note-worthy. Elisa Larkin Nascimento (2003) notes that in a globalized world, the individual locates him/herself before symbols of an ephemeral nature, albeit power ones, and the fluxes en a global scale, which characterize society in the network of the age of information. Identity formation as a project for social movements, who criticize the hegemonic culture extent and put in

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[10] See Carlos de La Torre's study.
[11] See Carlos de La Torre's study.

opposition. Their own signs and symbols rooted in their own non-western struggles, which have been suppressed since the Enlightenment become paramount. Why so much anxiety about the possible emergence of reverse racism when African-descended people articulate their Afro-descent? Why the allegation that such expressions are, or could very well be preludes to essentialism[12]?

A brief glance at the interfacing of Afro-Brazilian activism and the role of state agencies is revealing. Fundação Cultural Palmares, an official entity within the ministry of culture has the mandate of articulating and supporting the historical and present contributions of people of African descent in Brazil. Part of this mandate is the securing of titles to lands designated as historical spaces, which had been inhabited by descendants of slaves who had established these places of refuge. Legalizing their tenancy would provide security from the threats of landowners. The ultimate objective is to empower African descended Brazilians to exercise their dual citizenship rights within the political, economic and social structures of Brazil, and to overcome racial discrimination, which has characterized Brazilian history and development. Consciousness-raising for the whole nation implicates an international engagement, for example the recognition and celebration of the International Day Against Racial Discrimination (March 21). Supporting the activities of young blacks by providing them with resources, promotion of capacity-building programs for artists, technicians and individuals within the work force, capacity-building programs for leaders of Black Movement and support for University Centers for the study of Afro-Brazilians and their interests, as well as establishing and maintaining links to African peoples and issues[13].

Preparation for Durban 2001 Conference involved Afro-Brazilians participating in both national and international gatherings aimed at the development of common agenda for the Durban conference. The sheer numbers of Afro-Brazilians participating in these meetings and those who ultimately went to Durban is an indication of a dramatic increase in the numbers of Afro-Brazilians/Afro-descendants increasingly involved domestically and internationally Brazilian public discussion about race relations and society.

What accounts for this dramatic development? To answer this question adequately necessitates re-visiting earlier international gatherings and the misadventures therein for both official and unofficial Brazilian representation. Dakar, 1966 and Lagos, Kaduna 1977 were Congresses of the Black World at a time when the question of Brazilian representation was not conceptualized in such a way as to have made for significant input for Afro-Brazilian activists, especially those whose vocality in attempting to offer contrary vision of the much celebrated national uniformity *in* race relations rankled. Consequently, the leading advocate of Afro-Brazilians and his (TEN) organization were excluded from the Brazilian delegation. Ina very bold gesture of trans nationalizing the issue, Nascimento sent an open letter to the gathering, thereby ensuring that participants became sensitized to a non-official Afro-Brazilian reality. The point here was not that Afro-Brazilians were totally absent. It

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[12] See Carlos de La Torre's study.
[13] See Carlos de La Torre's study.

was much more the circumscribed nature of Afro-Brazilian representation, in those meeting the test of good behavior. Ironically, perhaps, nothing in 1966 could have prepared either Brazilians or those gathered in Nigeria for the Second Festival of Black Arts and Culture for the inseparability of the national and the broader international context within which the drama was played out. What might have been conceptualized as a pre-emptive measure to contain a particular kind (troublesome) of Afro-Brazilian radicalism, one which was not fit for international representation because of its incompatibility with normative race relations, morphed into a full and unexpected critical discussion of Brazilian race relations[14]. Since silencing the present as a continuation of silencing the past, though such a view might be contested because the whole rhetoric of Brazilian Africa connectedness and its representation in Africa was couched within a voicing of the past and a particular rendition of the present. The bone of contention was not the past or the present per se, but the variability in interpretations, which could be articulated. Since the mid 1940s, conjoining varying interpretations of Brazil on the one hand, and Afro-Brazil on the other hand~ without in anyway implying that Afro-Brazil's contrariness constituted a negation of Brazil or Brazilianity has been an issue. What Afro-Brazil was demanding was for state and society to live up to its claims about exemplary race relations and thereby rescue all Brazilians from the pitfalls of national celebration, which was emptied of all reality where critical Afro-Brazilian voices were concerned[15]. Furthermore, such gap bridging carried distinct possibilities for liberation for Afro-Brazilians to the extent that they would be able to engage in critical discourses about the society's representation of its race relations order and the expectation that Afro-Brazilians would universally support the coincidence of ideals and realities of Brazilian race relations.

In as much as ruling class, hegemonic ideas do not exclusively inhabit their particular universe but penetrate the thought and actions of subalterns, (how far or deeply is not easily determined), it would be simplistic to pressure any unanimity among Afro-Brazilians opining on elite claims of Brazilian race relation's exceptionalism. There is an implication here of some Afro-Brazilians partially or wholly subscribing to the view of idealized race relations. What is intriguing, however, is the virtual absence of a critical mass of evidence and testimonies in which Afro-Brazilians proclaimed their adherence to a view of successful practices of racial democracy[16]. A recent development has been the reconfiguration of racial democracy articulated as a dream, an objective to be labored for, an inspiration, which can be judged in the future, and not simply as a failed project whose time has passed. So conceived and so articulated, racial democracy assumes a new identity whose pre-

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[14] See Carlos de La Torre's study.

[15] Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the past* provides an excellent discussion of power, and the production of history.

[16] Afro-Brazilian demands for state arid society to meet its obligations to Afro-Brazilians/Afrodescendents has been re-energized through the lively discussions on Affirmative action and Quotas currently taking place in Brazil.

sent and future appears to be disconnected from the specificity of its history and its usage up to the present moment in Brazilian society[17].

Fundação Cultural Palmares (FCP) organized eleven meetings to discuss issues to be incorporated into the 'official' Brazilian position (paper) and the formulation of public policies pertaining to the black populations in Brazil to be presented at the World Conference against Racism, etc. in 2001. They ranged from a gathering of the community of Portuguese-speaking countries (Belo Horizonte, November 2000) racism, gender and education, differences in sustainable development, Africa-Caribbean, culture of development, racism and equality. Regional seminars throughout Brazil provided multiple opportunities for discussions of measures for combating racism.

These preparatory meetings for the Durban Conference were a clear indication of the ways in which the prospect for a transnational encounter within a globalized context has contributed to the re-evaluation of the states relationship with Afro-Brazil[18]. The first Post-Durban meeting of Black organizations in Santos (the State of São Paulo) took place from July 26-28, 2002 under the sponsorship of the Regional Commission for Monitoring Post-Durban developments. In her presentation to the meeting, Edna Roland, president of the NGO Fala Preta and one of the official rapporteurs at Durban noted that the subject of slavery and its consequences for slavery descended and people had been one of the most polemical topic of discussions at Durban. The Affirmative Action initiatives undertaken by the Brazilian government in the wake of Durban constituted small), victories in a barren land of almost one hundred years. What was missing was an institutional body with the requisite resources for effecting equality in Brazil, she argued. (E. Parei, 2. semester 2002)[19].

Helio Santos, rapporteur of the Interministerial Group created in 1995 by President Cardoso opined that many social scientists in Brazil have spoken favorably in support of quotas for the poor that in Brazil, affirmative action has been described as quotas. Black Movement members do not want radical quotas, which already exist 100% for whites. Affirmative Action for Blacks was a matter of Brazilian society paying its debts to the Black population. Drawing attention to Brazil's obligations under international treaties such as the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights would, help to remind the Brazilian government of its obligation to guarantee the full exercise of rights contained in the inter-American Convention. Full rights and equality under the law was necessary. The Brazilian government should include an international concept of racism in the laws of Brazil. National and

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[17] See Sherrif, (2001) for a recent discussion of dreams and racial democracy. Also, Antonio Sergio Guimares, (2003) unpublished for a review of recent developments in the discussion.

[18] Fundação Cultural Palmares played a leading role in organizing nation-wide Pre-Duran Conferences.

[19] E. Parei, Publication of a black women's organization in Santos (São Paulo) discussed Post-Durban reflections (July 26-28, 2002) in its recent issues.

International conventions pertaining to human life and access to social goods and the protection of blacks should become public policy[20].

The as unexpected consequences of globalization have not always produced practical results for Afro-descendents of Brazil in international gatherings. Reflecting on the achievements and the challenges of Durban, an Afro-descendant in São Paulo protested what was perceived to be a certain discrimination against Portuguese speakers in international forums because of the almost total absence of translations of speeches and texts into Portuguese.

In 1975 during the Fifth Pan African Congress in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) the only way that Abdias do Nascimento's intervention in the proceedings could be conveyed to the assembled delegates was to call upon the services of a non-Portuguese-speaking French interpreter who struggled to capture the essence of Nascimento's speech for an English and French-speaking audience. Nascimento had drawn attention to the absurdity of the situation and the effective silencing of Portuguese speakers[21].

Peter Wade (1997) has argued that contrary to Benedict Anderson's claim that dreams of racism have their real origins in ideologies of class rather than those of the nation, the Latin American and Caribbean experiences reveal a different reality. People labeled as blacks, Indians, whites and *mestizo*s have a significance of long duration in representation of nationhood. Colonial value system, which have historically privileged lightness of skin, color as a sign of social status or whitening as eventual national destiny, are still pervasive. The insistence on lightening implied that the final product would be different from the original mesticizing, culture/racial fusion both as official ideology and popular representation. It also meant that blackness and indianess not ignored, they have, historically, formed part of national representation but they have not been projected as the acceptable face of national representation. Mesticizing in place of whitening did not mean the displacement of whiteness[22].

Increasingly the state has assumed a more pro-active role in offering officially directed alternative to blackness with complex consequences and emerging questions pertaining to the reasons for such state-sponsored initiatives and their beneficiaries and discontents. Wade sees a reification, a naturalization of blackness whose future has (as equal to resistance) less to with what blackness was and much more to do with what blackness may become.

Under the circumstances the possibilities for individuals changing identities, say, moving from mulatodom to blackness is not a return to the fold but more a reflection of changing social context, solidarizing with individuals making similar identifications. It is a political course of action, which can resist essentialist notions of authentic black identity. But, what is political action beyond individual identity?

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[20] Helio Santos is a leading Afro-Brazilian University Professor (São Paulo) who had been to the Coordinator of the Interministerial Group appointed by the government after the 1995 public recognition of a racial problem by President Fernando Henrique Cardoso.
[21] See, Abdias do Nascimento *O Brasil na Mira do Pan Africanismo 2002* in which various encounters in international forums are discussed.
[22] See Wade, 1997.

If the notion of the political suggests interaction with others, does essentialism, or variant of essentialism, characterized as strategic essentialism, have any role in the mobilization of outsiders, victims of discrimination, organizing to overcome disadvantages[23]. Wade appears to be caught on the horns of a dilemma, on the one hand he writes approvingly of political action on the part of the individual, on the other hand, he begins to see an emerging essentialism in the very political act. Because of his concern about reification, he misses the critical difference between tactics or tactical action and ultimate objectives in political struggles. In an effort to shift the discussion about race relations in Latin America and the existence or the lack thereof of exceptional patterns which have historically constituted the antipode to the United State of America, the suggestion in this paper is that recent changes in the world order have provided new opportunities for Latin Americans of African descent, Afrodescendents to reposition themselves within their respective countries and also to participate in transnational relations in ways which could not have been imagined two decades or so ago. The intention is not to revisit some of the historical and ongoing disputations about the validity or invalidity of the concept of races and its usage, the appropriateness of the distinction between origin and appearance, and the imposition of foreign models on specific race relation orders in Latin America. There is no doubt whatsoever that these discussions have provided ample evidence of the dynamic and constantly shifting nature of the subject of race relations and the increasing visibility of Afros in Latin America and the consequences for both state and society.

Some of the most revealing discussions on the visibility of Afro-Latin Americans pertain to nations where official ideologies of race mixture as a common national characteristic inadvertently or not, impose a negative value on attempts by Afros to assert their connectedness to African origins and sometimes to Continental Africa. Africanity becomes a challenge to *Mestizaje* and compels new discussions about the meanings of national belonging and, ultimately the issue becomes the extent to which national normativeness, national uniformity, or a unilateral conceptualization of nationality is compatible with Africanity[24].

In view of the complex history of the relations between Afro-Latin America and Latin America, the very fact that such debates are taking place is encouraging. It is an indication of the heuristic value of increasing visibility of Afro-Latin Americans as a benefit to nation and society in Latin America as well as the international system because national developments have repercussions in the international system and vice versa[25].

When Paulo de Carvalho Neto discussed the predicament of Blacks in Latin America (1977) his focus had been on the deconstruction of everyday forms of behavior and speech, which tended to naturalize noxious sayings about and treatment of Blacks by Latin American societies. He had concluded that such aggression had

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[23] On strategic essentialism see Omi and Winant 1994.
[24] Challenging mestizaje See, England on Honduras for an insightful discussion on how Afro-Hondurans negotiate identity at home and abroad.
[25] See Silvio Torres, 2003, Anani Dzidzienyo, 1995, 2001, 2003.

not enlicited vigorous responses from Blacks by way of collective action[26]. The actions initiated by Afro-Latin Americans discussed above point to a more pro-active stance, one which has compelled Latin American societies to enter into new discourses about the meaning of nationality and the role of Afro-descendents within this national history and context. Hemispherically considered, at a time of increasing migrations of Latin Americans in unprecedented numbers to the mainland United States, and the changing demographics in this country, there have been predictions, of the inevitability of the radical transformation of US race relations as a result of Latin Americanization. The historical binary of USA versus Latin America is evoked with the implication that the well-known elasticity of the Latin American model of race relations within which a multiplicity of options have historically existed would, more than likely contribute to the undermining of the other binary, the one usually perceived to distinguish US race relations[27]. The existence of historical and contemporary variants of in-house rainbow coalitions or mixed families are offered as possible mediators for the increasingly fractious US model of race relations.

Furthermore, there is the suggestion that for some reason or the other, individuals emerging from specific Latin American polities and cultures, being the beneficiaries of racer elations orders or systems which have and continue to privilege multi-racialism are immediately affected by the particular contagion which has made the United States infamous globally for its racism, especially in the other Americas. What then, does the interfacing of the Latin American and USA models of race relations mean for Afrodescendents.

How would Cubans, Venezuelans, Dominicans, Colombians, Mexicans, Brazilian stand to have their relations orders so easily unscrambled? Were these virtues in tact in the first place? Did the forging of idealized national race relations images predicated much more on not being replications of the United States than actually offering visions of specific nations intersections of race, color, history and nationality? In pursuance of answers to these questions, a recurrent trope emerges: if the antipodes of all race relations orders in the Americas in those nations with significant black populations were and continue to be black and white (making allowances for the labyrinthian webs of definitions of blackness and whiteness), for the black end, the inevitability of inserting Africa in the discussion or configuration must be faced squarely. Without detaining ourselves unduly on the existence or absence of a universally acceptable definition of African, we can, minimally, note that historically, African and blackness in the Americas, from the earliest Euro-American African encounter, quickly became emblematic of non-desirability. The cultural religious and political attributions of such Africaness or Africana continues to be disproportionately weighted in the direction of the negative[28], the locus from which flight is sought in the long process of national identity formation and presentation.

What has become patently clear is the process, aptly characterized by Robin Moore (1997) nationalizing blackness in which American nations which have his-

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[26] See Carvalho Neto, 1977.
[27] See Torres, *op. cit.*, and Dzidzienyo, *op. cit.*
[28] Negativeness about Africa, See Thompson, 2002 29. See Robin Moore, 1997.

torically frowned upon and actively persecuted outward manifestations of Africana then proceeded to incorporate erstwhile silenced, punished practices into acceptable or presentable national modes of behavior without necessarily privileging the collective or individual bearers of such Africana[29]. The nationalizing of Africana in the Americas has not resulted in any dramatic or even perceptible increase in the numbers of Afro-Brazilians, Afro-Cubans, Afro-Dominicans and others in the specific national contexts. Therein, precisely, lies one of the major ironies of the USA - Latin American comparison. Neither *mestisagem*, interracial fraternity or sorority, rainbowness within one family have constituted a sufficient barrier to the historic and continuing disadvantaging of Africana.

As Jackson (1998) has observed the determination to maintain black consciousness is often stronger in Latin American society precisely because blacks there have to contend with constant pressures to minimize or to distort their presence. Furthermore, recognizing racial mixture while articulating a black perspective, attacking white myths about blacks are recurrent themes in the writings of black writers. Recognizing that blackness as a viable concept in both Latin American and North American literature and criticism instead of assuming difference is critical. Concentrating more on what Hispanic black writers themselves are saying about their own Hispanic black literature could be a start[30].

If for no other reason at all, the gatherings of all the other Americans in the United States and the interactions with the history, structures and practices of race relations USA introduce or heighten a new reality which demands a deeper interrogation of the meanings of Africana, one which cannot be ignored.

That American nations, in their generality, have not historically been havens for continental African immigration in the post-abolition or post-independence cum post-abolition periods in the nineteenth century, the intimate connection between immigration laws and anti-Africana more than likely increases the probability that the gathering in the USA provides the first real opportunity for Latin Americans to come face-to-face with present-day Africans and Africana. Here inlies the significance of the unexpected consequences for Afro-Americans. Afrodescendents and the Americas as a whole.

Ultimately, then, pertinent questions remain: What is the real test of Africana in the Americas? Is the answer to be found in the empirical evidences of historic Africana, which are not linked to present day Africa? Or is there an equally compelling case to be made for searching in the direction of present-day political and socio-cultural activities not obviously predicated on direct linkages to historical traditions? For the above reasons, it *is* to be hoped that far from dreaming a process of Latin Americanization, efforts might be more heuristically directed towards a new critical comparative analysis in which neither Latin America nor the United States is freighted with exclusive responsibility in their race relations. The shared commonality of blackness, Africana/Africaness and the transformations which have been

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[29] See Robin Moore, 1997.
[30] See Jackson, 1998.

brought about by greater inter-American contact might very well suggest fresh research agendas and courses of action.

What characterizes Afro-Brasiliana today is the impressive dynamism of multiple discourses, publications and disputations, which have succeeded in placing the subject matter of Afro-Brazilians within Brazilian society into public discourses. Caroso and Bacelans two volumes on the fifth Afro-Brazilians Congress in 1998 offered a suggestive title (volume 1), "Brasil, um pais de Negros?" (1999) In the same year Darien Davis's "Avoiding the Dark Race and the Forging of national culture in Modern Brazil" (1999) drew attention to the kind of tension about Blacks and blackness in Brazilian national life. An insightful contribution came from Kabenguele commenting on the tension between Brazilian national identity and black identity. It is a tension with a new twist to it, in the wake of the increasing disposition to employ the designator Afro- (African Americas) into African descended which is remarkable for its elastic and which shifts attention from outward appearance to identification with origins. Hence the distinction made by Gracy Nogueira between prejudice of origin and prejudice of mark/appearance remains questionable.

Wade (2003) observes that in today's world of increasingly globalized neoliberalism national and racial identities are once again being jointly refigured. The affirmation of race can have two possible consequences: bolstering political and economic inequalities, but it may also serve those committed to overturning inequality and injustice.

"Tirando a máscara" (2000) from racism in Brazil demonstrated that a new stage had been inaugurated in Brazilian race relations by pulling off the mask which had tended to hide the realities of racial discrimination and racist practices that Afro-Brazilian activists had been railing against for a long time. If in 1977, as per Fontaine (1980 even the respected weekly magazine *Veja*, had not published an article by one of its own respected journalists, by 2000 *Veja* published race related matters with some frequency. President Cardoso spoke out an subject; he admitted the existence of a racial problem, compared it to the USA and then conflated Affirmative Action with quotas, ending with the sheer difficulties the Brazilian state faced in trying to ameliorate the situation.

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