

An examination of human rights, anti-racism, and affirmative action policies in Brazil

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Abstract

This article sets out to provide an analysis of the relationship between human rights, public policies and ethnic-racial inequality in Brazil from a contemporary perspective. Public policies have emerged as an effective means of achieving human rights and citizenship for historically discriminated social groupings in a society like Brazil's marked by enduring structural and structuring inequalities. The article specifically addresses the racial violence perpetrated against the black population in the country, who still endure the legacy of a colonial past. A central point highlighted is that the agency and interactions of the black population have had a positive impact by destabilizing social relations characterized by racism. In this sense, anti-racist actions are central factors in the promotion of Afro-reparatory policies, one of the motivating reasons for the interest in studying affirmative actions for black people.

Keywords: human rights, anti-racism, inequalities, affirmative actions

Direitos Humanos, Antirracismo e Ações Afirmativas no Brasil: Algumas reflexões

Resumo

A proposta deste manuscrito é apresentar uma análise atualizada da relação entre direitos humanos, políticas públicas e desigualdades étnico-raciais no Brasil. Em uma sociedade caracterizada por desigualdades estruturais e estruturantes, as políticas públicas elevam-se como uma possibilidade efetiva de realização de direitos humanos e de cidadania a segmentos sócio historicamente discriminados. Neste artigo o interesse mais específico está enfocado no racismo que violenta cotidianamente a população negra brasileira, herdeira de prejuízos vinculados a um passado de domínio colonial. Importa enfatizar que indivíduos pertencentes à população negra têm assegurado agência e interação que podem ser lidas como desestabilizadoras de relações sociais caracterizadas pelo racismo. Neste sentido, ações antirracistas impulsionam uma mobilização em prol das políticas afro-reparatórias, vem daí o interesse pelo estudo das ações afirmativas para pessoas negras.

Palavras-chave: direitos humanos, antirracismo, desigualdades, ações afirmativas

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Presentation

One of the questions running through this article is determining the extent to which basic human rights, such as those contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) remain completely or partially denied to discriminated groups, considered as minorities. From the outset, it should be noted that minorities are not defined solely in terms of demographic percentages, but also in terms of their under-representation in sociocultural and political settings, their lack of access to power or decision-making, and the barriers preventing them from making a positive impact in more general cultural contexts. On December 10, 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was proclaimed by Resolution 217 A (III) of the General Assembly of the United Nations. However, it has yet to be fully implemented in Brazil. When we consider the black population, this fact becomes even more significant.

The purpose of this article is to discuss some aspects of the promotion of universal rights and freedoms as outlined in the UDHR, as well as examine the inequities experienced by members of the black community. It is crucial to emphasize that these universal principles should provide the grounds for a legal-political system that defines specific rights and duties, which in turn enables the effective implementation of citizenship to be determined. In order to develop a more detailed and specific analysis, the text highlights two articles from the UDHR that textually express the need for security, whether personal or social. The first, Article 3 (UN, 1948), states that “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.” In the same vein, Article 22 (UN, 1948) emphasizes:

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Citizen rights encompass a universe of rights and responsibilities won over the course of history and require a position from individual nation states regarding the provision of basic services to its citizens and their protection from arbitrary measures (Ramayana, 2005). Security, both personal and social, is achieved through the adoption of a set of social policies designed to assist citizens living in situations of social vulnerability. When engaging in these discussions, it is imperative that we reflect on the relationship between ethnic-racial interactions and public policies for promoting citizenship, in particular the actions needed for the development of more solidary, equitable and just sociocultural relations – that is, the promotion of human rights.

In order to understand the social interactions between black and white individuals who make up 99.5% of Brazil’s national population as a whole (Waiselfisz, 2006), we also need to examine the diverse conflicts, controversies, inequalities and alterities that imbue these interactions with meaning. The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) reports that the black population constitutes 54% of the Brazilian population, which represents a numerical majority that is nonetheless marginalized and discriminated against. In addition to exposing how various forms of racism are still deep-rooted, the historical and statistical data

demonstrate just how far black people frequently are from being considered full citizens in Brazil. Analyzing the reality experienced in a societal context, the reflexive challenge is to understand how the nation state, when implementing its public policies for citizens' rights, works to create a sense of security for its citizens, irrespective of their ethnic-racial identity.

A number of conceptual points need to be clarified if the subsequent discussions are to avoid becoming lost in generalizations or intangible abstractions. It is essential to recognize that ethnic-racial prejudice is an indisposition, a preconceived and negative judgment that reflects intolerant attitudes based on stereotypes that are combined with discrimination. Ethnic-racial discrimination, which is tantamount to racism, concerns the acting out of prejudice through actions, or omissions, against a person or a group of people (see, for example, Hasenbalg & Silva, 1992; Guimarães, 1999; Munanga, 2004).

In Brazil, the elements that drive prejudice and racial discrimination, of which black people have been primary targets, are justified by their perpetrators on the basis of phenotypic traits (Nogueira, 1985) that contribute to the consolidation of a morality strongly correlated with the subalternized group (Fanon, 2008). Based on these initial considerations, ethnic-racial relations can be seen as an expression of sociocultural interactions representative of individuals who construct themselves and, in turn, construct others in the process. A more in-depth investigation is required to determine the extent to which these alterities are viewed as bearers of universal rights or citizenship.

A clear understanding of race relations in Brazil depends on recognizing that racism and racial discrimination are a reality in the country and that black populations and individuals are subject to racially hostile and discriminatory practices. A second observation to make is that neither miscegenation nor miscegenation-syncretism or any other sociocultural phenomenon indicative of "cultural hybridization" (Canclini, 2003) impaired the capacity to identify and label black people or prevent racism against them. This makes it possible to determine who is black and who is not black in the dissimulated "racial paradise" that is Brazil. Third, racism favored the institutionalization of vulnerability among black populations and individuals, depriving them of rights and excluding them from decision-making spaces, which highlights the need for intervention in this context of subalternization and the need to repair historical losses.

As part of the process of building a society free from racism and imbued with ideals and actions that are less prejudiced and discriminatory towards the black population, one collective actor in particular has become increasingly important due to the diversity of its resistance strategies (Ortner, 1995) and the struggle for a less subalternized form of inclusion: the black movement. The black movement regards race – a sociocultural construct with no biological basis – and racial identity as crucial elements of political mobilization. Historiographical accounts of the organized black movement, such as those made by Petrônio Domingues (2007), have stressed the need to deconstruct the harmonious view of race relations within the collective imaginary, an idea based on the belief that a "racial democracy" prevails in Brazil. The myth of racial democracy must be dispelled so that individual, institutional and collective measures can be taken to reduce inequalities in rights and opportunities.

Notably, the focus here is on actors and actions identified as eminently political and thus capable of characterizing citizenship in a given society. It should be stressed that actions as important as those undertaken by the black movement can also be carried out by society in general, civil society and public authorities. The implementation of affirmative actions, whether public or private, individual or collective, emerges as a public policy for promoting citizen rights that is essential to successful intervention in processes marked by discriminatory practices. There is, however, a fundamental debate regarding the legality of affirmative actions, as well as the impossibility of violating the principle of merit, since it is not merit that is at stake but inequality.

When it comes to meritocracy, it is worth emphasizing that a society like Brazil, where sociocultural relations are founded on privileges and discriminatory practices, does not support the idea of merit as an exclusive

explanation for the entry and permanence of specific individuals into power and decision-making spaces. Furthermore, on the point of legality, affirmative actions are lawful and do not contradict the constitutional principle of equality, which requires that equal treatment be applied to equal situations and, conversely, that cases of inequality should be treated unequally to the extent that they are unequal. In addition, Brazil has been a signatory to international agreements for decades and is committed to implementing anti-racist measures to counter racism in the country.

Race relations in Brazil: historical assumptions and contemporary debates

Studying race relations in Brazil demands that we reflect on alterities that allow sociocultural interactions to be more clearly expressed. Throughout its history, the black population in Brazil has experienced all kinds of exclusions and discriminatory practices indicative of the strong rejection to which they are subjected. Nelson Rodrigues¹ noted that “in Brazil, white people don’t like black people, nor do black people like white people” (Rodrigues, 1993, p. 50). Reflecting on the stark observation of this author, known as “the pornographic angel,” incites us to explore race relations within an often abstruse cultural complex in which the individual is portrayed as “an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun” (Geertz, 1989, p. 15).

Understanding race relations entails recognizing that alterities are often constructed as radical since they emphasize an absolute distance between the “I” and the “other.” Elisabeth Fernandes Souza explores the intrinsic relationship between racial discrimination and the characterization of powerlessness. Analyzing the school environment, she observes that “in the school selection process, it still seems difficult for people to believe a priori that a black child is capable of significant cognitive achievements. Children with lighter skin are encouraged to achieve these goals, and although exceptions exist, this is what occurs, even in the peripheries” (Souza, 2001, p. 61). A radical distance is constructed as a barrier separating two alterities. Yet this radical perspective that polarizes Brazil’s black and white populations does not exclude an understanding of blackness that is diluted, for example, in processes of miscegenation, which allows a more proximate alterity to be effected. Adopting a comprehensive and explanatory approach to ethnic-racial relations thus allows us to perceive the combination of the two coexisting perspectives in the understanding of alterities that can be either proximate or radically distinct (Peirano, 1999).

Does racism exist in Brazil?

To better understand the specificities of race relations in Brazil, three questions, or assumptions, can help us better understand interracial experiences. The first assumption is that racial discrimination exists in the country. Clearly, racial bias plays a significant role in the perception of black people as inferior, impoverished and marginalized. The black population in Brazil has been living in a situation of subalternity since colonial times, where they were positioned at the bottom of a society dependent on slave labor. After slavery was officially abolished in the later nineteenth century, these individuals, in addition to having few or no professional qualifications and little social standing, did not encounter a socioeconomic and political environment capable of absorbing them on an equitable basis.

According to historians Flávio Gomes and Carlos Eduardo Moreira de Araújo (2008), after the Lei Áurea (Golden Law) was issued on May 13, 1888, the descendants of enslaved Africans “won their freedom, but not civil rights” since the elites replaced the slave quarters with the institutionalization of racial discrimination.

¹ Nelson Rodrigues (1912-1980) was a Brazilian writer, journalist and influential playwright. He was born in the state of Pernambuco, moving to the state of Rio de Janeiro while still a child. In Rio de Janeiro, he established himself as a police reporter and writer. Politically, he called himself a reactionary and even supported the military regime in Brazil (1964-1985).

Although the black population was indeed absorbed into national society, no actions, policies or initiatives of any kind were implemented to free these individuals from stigmatizing stereotypes. The abolition of slavery did not result in the advancement of civil rights for the population concerned. With regard to stigma, we can observe that this is “a special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype” (Goffman, 1988, p.13) with the potential to extend beyond the limits of the individual and apply to an entire group.

One inference that should not be ignored is that black individuals suffered from marginalization as a result of a system – slavery – that refused to recognize any equity in the sociocultural and labor relationships between the enslaved population and slaveholders. Black Africans and their descendants were inextricably linked to the stigmatization and inferiority associated with the slave labor imposed on them by the Portuguese. Beyond the generation of stigmas in relation to black people, the panorama that emerged indicates the reaffirmation of an understanding in which biological factors were cited to explain phenomena of a strictly sociocultural, political, historical and ideological order.

In the collective imagination even today, the legacy of sociocultural representations rooted in slavery means that stereotypes linked to black people are justified based on their blackness rather than their marginalization. Derogatory expressions such as “black people who don’t screw up immediately will screw up eventually” (Gonzalez, 1984) or “a black man who stands still is a suspect and who runs is a thief” (Castro & Abramovay, 2006, p. 332) are examples of the persistent belief that black people are inherently degenerate.

Illustrating this point, statistics show that black people (meaning here black and brown) represent 42.8% of the working-age population and 50% of the unemployed contingent in the country. The *Atlas da Violência 2020* (Cerqueira, 2020) reports that the number of homicides committed against black people has increased by 11.5% in eleven years, whereas the number of homicides committed against other racial groups has fallen by 13% over the same period. According to a recent survey conducted by the Rio de Janeiro Public Security Institute (ISP-RJ), the number of deaths resulting from police intervention has risen in Rio de Janeiro over the past 20 years with 78% of the deaths resulting from police intervention occurring among the black and brown population. Even when considering more positive indicators, it is important to take racial inequalities into account. Again according to *Atlas da Violência 2020*, for example, the overall number of homicides committed against women decreased by 8.4% from 2017 to 2018, but these figures mask a strong racialized difference. For non-black women, the homicide rate decreased 11.7%, while for black women it actually increased 12.4%. Examining the intersection of diverse indicators enables a more sophisticated analysis of discrimination: black people are the most affected by violence among the LGBTQIA+ community according to SINAN (Information System for Notifiable Diseases); 49.4% of the LGBT+ population affected by violence is black or brown, while 44.7% is white. We can observe, then, that the lives of women, the poor and LGBTQIA+ people are even less likely to matter if they are black.

Who is black in Brazil?

A second assumption relevant to understanding interracial relations is the idea that it is difficult to identify who is black in Brazil. It has been repeatedly argued that miscegenation contributed to making racial identification problematic. These claims are primarily based on an ill-informed reading of genetic studies, which show that many Brazilians classified as white have black African genetic markers. From this viewpoint, the argument goes, any Brazilian could claim to be an Afro-descendant. Afro-descendants, however, are descendants of Africans who came to Brazil during the course of the diaspora in contexts of cultural and political approximation: hence Afro-descendants are considered black.

Kabengele Munanga (2004, p. 52) argues that being black is more than just a matter of melanin or phenotype. It is also a political question involving a “painful process” of self-identification and identification by others.

Brazil effectively developed the concept of whitening as an ideal. Consequently, black identity, in addition to ethnicity and race, also encompasses semantics, politics and ideology, leading to an inextricable combination of physiological, sociological and psychological aspects that can be seen from a “triple point of view, that of the ‘total man’” (Mauss, 1974, p. 405).

Apropos the sociocultural and political processes through which miscegenation has been expressed in Brazil, we can turn to the ideas of João Pacheco de Oliveira (1999, p. 126) and his analysis of ethnic presences in demographic terms. The author highlights the need to acknowledge that “the indigenous presence has a great importance in the formation of the Brazilian State and in the process of building a national identity.” Moreover, Oliveira argues, national censuses from 1872 to 1970, whether specific, regional or global, tended to dilute the particularities of ethnic-raciality in the theme of miscegenation, projecting the idea of a modern and integrated country. It should be noted that these kind of homogenizing mechanisms tend to exacerbate the invisibility of socially discriminated segments of the human population, as well as making it difficult to assert identities. In a counter-hegemonic direction, the black movement in Brazil has led avant-garde actions since the 1990s that have valorized self-declaration and a moral reordering of the social world (Szwako & Gurza Lavalle, 2019). These actions had repercussions on the 2010 Census, such as the campaign entitled *Não deixe sua cor passar em branco* (Don’t leave your color blank/white).² This campaign promoted the recognition of an African past and encouraged black people to declare themselves black or brown.

The constitution of a mixed society does not eliminate inequalities rooted in the relationship between oppressors and oppressed, discriminators and discriminated, or based on social models that assert the superiority of white people over black. Although reactions that imprison black people in a web of prejudice and discrimination are often moderated in the name of amicable social coexistence, they are manifested in actions, whether conscious or not, that repel black individuals – that is, those without the bodily marks that determine the limits between the acceptable and the unacceptable. As Milton Santos (2000) asserts, the victims of racism are black, since being black involves being labeled and imprisoned by a biased view of the world.

Brazil is a country where black people are quickly identified in conflict situations, especially when conflicts escalate into aggression. The recourse to verbal abuse that emphasizes racial inscription is a constant occurrence when the offended individual is black (Castro & Abramovay, 2006, pp. 194, 209). In Brazil, the widespread use of verbal abuse highlighting racial markers such as “monkey,” “roasted peanuts,” “asphalt popsicle,” “voodoo candle” and “steel wool hair” can be interpreted as an indication of the possibility of knowing who black people are in Brazil.

As well as the above – and with the exception of a gaze informed by hypocrisy or a desire to create a radical otherness that acknowledges a spectrum of colors and traits – we can assume that the population identified in IBGE surveys as brown (*pardo*) and black (*preto*) in color terms are also black (*negro*) in an ethnic-racial sense. There is no denying the fact that black identities are also used as tools of political mobilization. Even in situations of subalternity, black people with affirmed identities perceive themselves as having citizenship rights, which foster a whole contemporary struggle (Dias, 2006). The purpose of political mobilization is to reduce or annul the effectiveness of a specifically “Brazilian” racism, which, even when undeclared, naturalizes the superiority of white people and, via the same logic, inculcates the inferiority of black people.

The black movement is analyzed by Petrônio Domingues (2007, p. 101) as a struggle of black people to solve their problems within the surrounding society, in particular those arising from racial prejudice and discrimination, which marginalize this population in educational, political, social and cultural contexts. As the author stresses, racial identity has historically served as an element of mobilization and mediation of political claims. Clearly, this is a fundamental point in demonstrating that self-identification cannot be compromised

² A play on the fact that the Portuguese term branco can mean “blank” or “white.”

in the service of a dilution of sense of belonging based on a universalism that weakens the ability to claim citizen rights for oneself. The struggle of black people, through involvement in the black movement, provides a point of convergence with the UDHR, which recognizes dignity as inherent to all human beings and as a foundation for freedom, justice and peace in the world.

Are public policies that benefit black people necessary?

Last but not least, affirmative actions and Afro-reparatory policies are important to ensure a less subalternized inclusion of the black population in our educational, political, social and cultural systems. The university presents itself as a legitimate and obligatory path towards professional qualification and social advancement. Hence, it is vital to understand that the emancipation of black people in a racist society requires their entrance and continuation in formal educational institutions, including higher education. It is through public policies such as affirmative actions that equality, social justice and the redistribution of material and symbolic goods can be provided to racially discriminated individuals.

When no specific actions are taken to target historically marginalized and discriminated groups, social justice and the advancement of equal participation in political and sociocultural affairs tend to progress extremely slowly. Without racial reparations, in other words, social justice cannot be achieved. Programs need to be developed to combat racist institutional practices, therefore, as well as correcting and providing reparation for acute and secular discrimination. Those who benefit from public policies designed to promote democratic citizenship experience a process of identity empowerment that enables them to claim rights and freedoms such as those proclaimed in the UDHR, without distinction of race, color, sex, language, religion or political beliefs.

Antônio Sérgio Alfredo Guimarães (1999) discusses affirmative actions and encourages reflection on what constitutes differentiated treatment for those who are, in practice, not considered equal but deemed instead to belong to an inferior “estate of the realm.” Affirmative actions are intended to counteract the cumulative effects of discrimination practiced over time and the resulting economic, educational, political and sociocultural inequalities. Quotas, for instance, are affirmative actions designed to achieve equality by placing black individuals in specific positions. The Inter-Ministerial Working Group (GTI) for the Valorization of the Black Population developed a concept of affirmative action in 1997 that has been used since as a reference point for the implementation of public policies. According to this concept:

Affirmative actions are special and temporary measures, taken or determined by the State, spontaneously or compulsorily, aimed at eliminating historically accumulated inequalities, ensuring equal opportunities and treatment, and compensating for losses resulting from discrimination and marginalization, regardless of racial, ethnic, religious, gender or other factors. In other words, affirmative action is meant to counteract the accumulated effects of discrimination that occurred in the past. (GTI, 1997, quoted in Santos, 1999, p. 42)

Several Brazilian institutions have adopted affirmative actions and quota systems that have shown positive results. In 2010, the Department of Economics at the University of Brasilia (UnB), in collaboration with Emory University in the United States, conducted a study to assess the performance of quota students at UnB,³ which has adopted the quota system since 2004. According to research, the performance of quota students is only 0.14 points lower than that of students who joined through the universal system. This result indicates that, in terms of performance, there is no statistically significant difference between the groups of quota students and non-quota students. Given conditions of equal opportunity and treatment – though this is not always the

³ Research on racial quota policies at the University of Brasilia. Realization: UnB and Emory University. Source: <http://www.fac.unb.br/campusonline/sociedade/item/87-estudo-avalia-rendimento-dos-cotistas-da-unb>

case since black quota students have also been the targets of violence in academic settings (Dias, 2006) – white and black students achieve very similar academic outcomes. Furthermore, if differences in race or ethnicity cannot be linked to differences in cognitive, academic or intellectual abilities, then nothing is more urgent than ensuring that students from all ethnic and racial backgrounds are admitted to Brazil's educational institutions.

Brazil's black movement and human rights: actions and relevant social actors

Petrônio Domingues (2007) has studied the republican period (from 1889 to 2000) analyzing the trajectory of the black movement, the actors involved, the different stages and their proposals for overcoming racism in Brazilian society. The author provides a historical overview of the movement, highlighting the fact that race is a sociocultural construct, with no biological basis, that still nonetheless influences individual and collective behavior today. His discussions draw from the intellectual production of black leaders such as José Correia Leite, Francisco Lucrécio, Abdias do Nascimento, Hamilton Cardoso and Lélia Gonzalez, among others. The historian has described the Brazilian black movement as a combination of political organizations, intellectuals, black brotherhoods, *candomblé* schools, capoeira schools and samba schools. Over the course of history, movements of black political mobilization have acquired extreme sociocultural dimensions.

Petrônio Domingues (2007) divides the organized black movement into three phases, presented in a comparative table that illustrates the trajectory of the movement during the Brazilian Republic. Additionally, the author discusses the black movement after the 2000s, which he refers to as the “Fourth Phase,” and presents an interpretative hypothesis concerning hip-hop and its social character, notwithstanding hip-hop's tendency to modify the profile of black movement activists. A First Phase of the organized black movement (1889-1937) spans the period between the First Republic, characterized by marginalization of freedmen, former slaves and their descendants, and the *Estado Novo* (New State). The author describes the proliferation of entities such as the *Clube Negro da Cultura Social* (The Black Club for Social Culture, 1932) and the *Frente Negra Socialista* (Socialist Black Front, 1932) in São Paulo, the *Sociedade Flor do Abacate* (Avocado Flower Society, 1932) in Rio de Janeiro, the *Legião Negra* (Black Legion, 1934) in Uberlândia, Minas Gerais, and the *Sociedade Henrique Dias* (Henrique Dias Society, 1937) in Salvador.

During the First Phase of the organized black movement in São Paulo, a number of organizations were founded, among them the *Clube 13 de Maio dos Homens Pretos* (13 May Black Men's Club, 1902), the *Centro Literário dos Homens de Cor* (Literary Center for Men of Color, 1903), the *Sociedade Propugnadora 13 de Maio* (13 May Proponent Society, 1906), the *Centro Cultural Henrique Dias* (Henrique Dias Cultural Center, 1908), the *Sociedade União Cívica dos Homens de Cor* (Men of Color Civic Union Society, 1915) and the *Associação Protetora dos Brasileiros Pretos* (Black Brazilian Protective Association, 1917). In Rio de Janeiro, there was the *Centro da Federação dos Homens de Cor* (The Federation of Men of Color Center); in Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul, the *Sociedade Progresso da Raça Africana* (Progress of the African Race Society, 1891); and in Lages, Santa Catarina, the *Centro Cívico Cruz e Souza* (Cruz e Souza Civic Center, 1918). Various black organizations united a considerable number of “men of color,” some based on the formation of classes of black workers, such as dockers and railroad workers. There were already black women-only associations at that time, including the *Sociedade Brinco das Princesas* (Princess Earring Society, 1925) in São Paulo and the *Sociedade de Socorros Mútuos Princesa do Sul* (Princess of the Southern Mutual Aid Society, 1908) in Pelotas, Rio Grande do Sul.

It was also during this period that the “black press” emerged with newspapers published by black people and addressing issues relevant to the black population at the time, including employment, housing, education and health. Among them were the newspapers *A Pátria* (1899) and *Clarim da Alvorada* (1924), which provided a space for thinking about and proposing concrete solutions to the problem of racism in Brazil. The *Frente Negra Brasileira* (Brazilian Black Front) or FNB was founded in São Paulo in 1931, which represented a qualitative

leap for the black movement insofar as FNB presented political demands, while also running schools, a legal department, soccer teams and artistic groups, and offering medical, dental and several other courses. The FNB was the most important black entity in the country with “delegations” and homonymous groups in several states (Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, Espírito Santo, Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Sul and Bahia), adding thousands of “people of color” (estimates indicate around 20,000 members). Through the FNB, the Brazilian black movement was transformed into a mass movement. There was a strong presence of black women in the FNB, and its “Cruzada Feminina” (Female Crusade) mobilized black women to perform welfare work with the same intensity as its “Rosas Negras” (Black Roses) commission organized cultural activities.

The Second Phase (1945-1964) of the black movement covers the period between the Second Republic and the military dictatorship. During the Estado Novo (1937-1945), violent political repression prevented protest movements from demonstrating publicly, but with the fall of the “Vargist” dictatorship, the organized black movement revived. One of the main groups was the União dos Homens de Cor (Men of Color Union), also known as the Uagacê or UHC. Founded in 1943 in Porto Alegre, it expanded to include the states of Minas Gerais, Santa Catarina, Bahia, Maranhão, Ceará, Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo, Espírito Santo, Piauí and Paraná throughout the 1940s. The purpose of the organization, as stated in its charter, was to increase the economic and intellectual development of people of color throughout the country, so that they could participate fully in the social and administrative life of the country, in all aspects of its activities. This purpose was accomplished by promoting debates in the local press, publishing their own newspapers, providing legal and medical assistance and literacy classes, voluntary actions, and participating in political campaigns. In 1964, UHC was subdued by the military dictatorship.

A second important organization was the Teatro Experimental do Negro (Black Experimental Theatre) or TEN, which was founded by Abdias do Nascimento in Rio de Janeiro in 1944. Although the intention had been to form a theatrical group composed solely of black actors, TEN gradually acquired a broader profile. In pursuit of these aims, the group published the newspaper *Quilombo*, started to offer literacy, cutting and sewing courses, established the Instituto Nacional do Negro (Black National Institute), the Museu do Negro (The Black Museum), organized the First Congress of the Brazilian Negro, promoted a beauty pageant to choose the Rainha Mulata and the Boneca de Pixe (referring to a fable from Brazilian folklore), and held an art competition with the Black Christ as its theme. Defending the civil rights of blacks as human rights, the TEN advocated the creation of anti-discrimination legislation for the country. The organization was one of the pioneers in bringing the proposals of the French *Négritude* Movement to Brazil, which attracted the attention of the international black movement at the time and later served as the ideological foundation for national liberation struggles in Africa. After the establishment of the military dictatorship in 1964, TEN weakened, practically disappearing in 1968 when its main leader, Abdias do Nascimento, went into self-imposed exile in the United States.

In addition to TEN and UHC, the Conselho Nacional das Mulheres Negras (Black Women’s National Council, 1950) was established around the same time. In Minas Gerais, the Grêmio Literário Cruz e Souza (Cruz e Souza Literary Guild, 1943) and the Associação José do Patrocínio (José do Patrocínio Association, 1951) were both created. In São Paulo, the Associação do Negro Brasileiro (Black Brazilian Association, 1945), the Frente Negra Trabalhista (Black Labor Front) and the Associação Cultural do Negro (Cultural Association of the Black, 1954) all emerged, integrated into the more traditional black environment. In Rio de Janeiro, in 1944, the Comitê Democrático Afro-Brasileiro (Afro-Brazilian Democratic Committee) defended the convening of the Constituent Assembly, amnesty and the end of racial prejudice. The “black press” acquired a new rhythm and published several protest newspapers throughout the country. Among the publications that emerged were *Alvorada* (1945), *O Novo Horizonte* (1946), *Notícias de Ébano* (1957), *O Mutirão* (1958) and *Níger* (1960) in São Paulo, *Union* (1947) in Curitiba, and *Redenção* (1950) and *A Voz da Négritude* (1952) in Rio de Janeiro. There was

an important political moment in 1946, when Senator Hamilton Nogueira (National Democratic Union party: NDU) presented an anti-discrimination bill to the National Constituent Assembly, which had originally been formulated in the National Black Convention in 1945. When the bill was put to a vote, the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) opposed it, claiming that it would “restrict the broad concept of democracy.” As a result, the black movement was practically abandoned for decades, even by the most progressive political sectors. The Afonso Arinos Law was the country’s first anti-discriminatory legislation and was passed by the National Congress in 1951, following a scandal involving the black American dancer Katherine Dunham, who was prevented from staying in a hotel in São Paulo.

Petrônio Domingues (2007) describes the Third Phase (1978-2000) as the period following the beginning of the redemocratization process. A military coup in 1964 dismantled the black movement and demobilized black leaders, accused by the military of creating what they claimed to be a nonexistent problem: racism in Brazil. It was not until the late 1970s that black militancy was revived in conjunction with the popular, trade union and student movements. The Center for Black Culture and Art (CECAN) was founded in 1972 in São Paulo by a group of students and artists; the “black press” timidly resurfaced with the newspapers *Árvore das Palavras* (1974) and *O Quadro* (1974) in São Paulo city, *Biluga* (1974) in São Caetano/SP and *Nagô* (1975) in São Carlos/SP. The Palmares Group was founded in Porto Alegre in 1971, the first group to support the change the day of commemoration of Brazil’s African-descendant population from May 13 to November 20 (date of the death of Zumbi, leader of the Palmares Quilombo in 1695). In Rio de Janeiro, the Soul movement, later named Black Rio, was inaugurated by the black youth. The Instituto de Pesquisa das Culturas Negras (IPCN: Black Cultures Research Institute) was also founded in Rio de Janeiro in 1976. Although these fragmented initiatives did not openly confront the military regime, in 1978, with the formation of the Movimento Negro Unificado or MNU (Unified Black Movement), an organized black movement returned to the political scene.

The MNU was both inspired by the African American civil rights movement, with its prominent leaders such as Martin Luther King, Malcom X and black Marxist organizations like the Black Panthers, and by the liberation movements of African nations, particularly in Portuguese-speaking countries, such as Guinea Bissau, Mozambique and Angola. A strong inspiration within Brazil, which became a political and ideological training school for several MNU leaders, was a Marxist organization with a Trotskyist orientation, the Socialist Convergence. Black militants within the Socialist Convergence argued that anti-racist struggles had to be coupled with anti-capitalist revolutions. Activists attracted by the principles of racial justice and class equality played an important role in founding the MNU. These included Flávio Carrança, Hamilton Cardoso, Vanderlei José Maria, Milton Barbosa, Rafael Pinto, Jamu Minka and Neuza Pereira. In 1978, the Movimento Unificado Contra a Discriminação Racial or MUCDR (Unified Movement Against Racial Discrimination) was founded in São Paulo. It was during its first National Assembly of Organization and Structuring held the same year that the word Negro was added to the movement’s name, changing it to Movimento Negro Unificado Contra a Discriminação Racial or MNUCDR (Unified Black Movement Against Racial Discrimination). Since the movement was primarily focused on combating racial discrimination, its name was simplified to Movimento Negro Unificado or MNU.

In its 1982 Action Program, the MNU advocated the following “minimal” demands: demystification of the idea of a Brazilian racial democracy; political organization of the black population; transformation of the black movement into a mass movement; establishment of an array of alliances against racism and worker exploitation; organization to combat police violence; organization of trade unions and political parties; promotion of the inclusion of African and black history in school curricula; and the procurement of international support against racism in the country. In accordance with the UDHR, the MNU sought to invoke rights and freedoms without distinction, which would result in the actual acquisition of these rights on a practical level. Additionally, in 1988, the Geledés – Instituto da Mulher Negra (Geledés Black Women’s Institute) was created, a political

organization of black women dedicated to fighting racism and sexism, recognizing and promoting black women and the black community as a whole.

During this period, along with the reorganization of black entities, there was the reemergence of the “black press.” Some of the main newspapers were: *SINBA* (1977), *Africus* (1982) and *Nizinga* (1984) in Rio de Janeiro; *Jornegro* (1978), *O Saci* (1978), *Abertura* (1978) and *Vissungo* (1979) in São Paulo; *Pixaim* (1979) in São José dos Campos/SP; *Quilombo* (1980) in Salvador/BA; *Tiçã* (1977) in Rio Grande do Sul; and the magazine *Ébano* (1980) in São Paulo. In this new phase, the black movement used the slogan “black people in power!” May 13, the anniversary of the abolition of slavery, was declared National Day of Denunciation Against Racism. As mentioned earlier, this date of commemoration was later altered to November 20 (the probable day on which Zumbi dos Palmares died) and became National Black Awareness Day. Zumbi was chosen as a symbol of resistance to racial oppression. In order to encourage black people to assume their racial status, the MNU resolved to divest the term *negro* (black) of its pejorative connotations, adopting it officially to designate all descendants of enslaved Africans in the country.

The black movement began to intervene in the educational field, proposing to revise prejudiced content in textbooks, train teachers for inter-racial pedagogy, reconsider the role of black people in Brazil’s history, and finally to include African history in school curricula. Concomitantly, they demanded the emergence of a “black literature” to counteract the dominant Eurocentric literature. African aesthetics of beauty and apparel, as well as African cuisine, were incorporated. Petrônio Domingues (2007) notes that many black infants were registered with African names, especially those of Yoruba origin. Beyond its own self-image, the adoption of this African heritage should incorporate elements of “African culture” such as music, dance, games and food, translated in newspapers into recipes attributed to the descendants of former slaves.

In terms of religiosity, while the black movement in its earlier stages was predominantly Christian, a moral obligation was placed on the new generation of activists to adopt religions of African origin, particularly Candomblé. The Third Phase was also marked by a campaign against miscegenation, presenting it as an ideological trap that would dilute the identity of black people. For this generation, miscegenation was historically associated with whitening, which is why they condemned the official pro-miscegenation discourse, interpreted as a strategy to cause the “genocide” of black people in the country. As a group, they advocated for endogamous marriages and the building of black families. In this conception, interracial marriage would result in miscegenation, eventually leading to ethnocide.

The notion that a racial democracy prevailed in Brazil, with individuals of the most diverse racial and cultural backgrounds coexisting peacefully, was shaken. The new scenario was characterized by the conquest of a place of speech that would represent the beginning of a struggle undertaken by the contemporary black movement. A fundamental aspect of the trajectory and intervention strategies of the black movement was, and still is, the deconstruction of a harmonious view of ethnic-racial relations within Brazil’s social imaginary. By promoting debates and denunciations, the black movement exposed the existence of endemic racism in Brazil, as well as its harmful effects on black people.

The concept of Brazil as a racial democracy has yet to be erased from the collective unconscious, although it has been problematized. Notwithstanding the lack of consensus, this view of the nation widely persists and provides a blueprint for actions that prevent a more equitable participation between the white and non-white populations. In the contemporary era, the subalternization of black people is perceived as a sociocultural problem of political participation and neglected rights. In this sense, the “problem of the black person” must be understood as a racial issue that impacts all aspects of Brazilian society. Today, entities and institutions, both public and private, are being pressed to adopt a political stance in the search for effective solutions to differentiated problems for which everyone is responsible.

The disparity between rights and opportunities perturbs activists and intellectuals who propose compensatory measures for the injustices faced by the black community in Brazil. Here it is important to emphasize the importance of public policies in facilitating the formation of educational, political, communicative and citizen rights. The Human Rights Secretariat of the Ministry of Justice convened an international seminar at UnB in 1995 to discuss racial relations in Brazil and propose solutions to eliminate the racism that victimizes non-whites and keeps them in the lowest social stratum. Scholars and activists from all over the country presented a variety of proposals with an emphasis on affirmative actions, particularly quotas for black students in universities (Carvalho & Segato, 2002). Affirmative action programs are currently adopted by the vast majority of higher education institutions in Brazil. Law 12,711, of 2012, known as the quota law, requires these institutions to progressively allocate a portion of the student places available in universities and federal institutes. This law was amended in 2022 and further efforts should be made to improve its necessary application.

It is important to point out that Law 12,711 provides for admission to federal universities and federal technical education institutions (high schools), urging them to reserve, in each selection competition for admission to undergraduate courses, per course and year group, at least 50% (fifty percent) of their places for students who have completed high school in public schools. In a sole paragraph of Article 1, this legislation also emphasizes that when filling places, 50% (fifty percent) must be reserved for students from families with an income equal to or less than 1.5 minimum wages per capita. The law also provides for sub-quotas of places for students who have completed high school in public schools, for self-declared black, brown and indigenous candidates, and for people with disabilities. Racial quotas are thus a type of sub-quota (Deus, 2020) within the scope of Law 12,711. In this article, the analysis focuses on racial quotas.

Affirmative action policies: merit and legality

It is important to make clear that, in the Brazilian experience, affirmative action policies are not limited to entry into higher education. Law 12,990 has been in force since 2014, which reserves 20% of the places offered in public competitions for black people to fill permanent job positions in the federal public administration, as well as in autonomous government agencies, foundations and public companies and mixed-capital companies controlled by the federal government. In 2023, the Ministries of Justice, Racial Equality, and Management and Innovation forwarded a proposal to the National Congress to expand the allocation of vacancies for black people in the Executive Branch to at least 30%. The new draft Law on Quotas in the public service should replace Law 12,990/2014, which expires in 2024. Considering the specificity of affirmative action policies in Brazil, it should be stressed again that the specific interest in this text is in affirmative actions implemented in Brazilian universities.

An article co-authored by José Jorge de Carvalho and Rita Laura Segato (2002) discusses proposals for the implementation of a quota system for black students at UnB, a measure approved in 2004. The authors stress the importance of establishing and implementing policies in higher education institutions to provide reparation for the injustices committed against black people throughout Brazil's history. Racial discrimination is characterized by a tendency to be repeated and reproduced in society over time. Mechanisms must be developed, therefore, that modify the behaviors leading to such discrimination. According to Carvalho & Segato (2002, p. 4), the quota system adopted by UnB constitutes "[...] a concrete intervention program against racial discrimination in Brazil."

According to the authors, who provide numerical data on the presence of black professors in higher education institutions in the country, "academic life" retains an "implicit racial segregation" (Carvalho & Segato 2002, p.5) which leads to the absence or under-representation of black educators in higher education institutions, thus transforming the Brazilian university into "[...] a shelter only for the white elite that created it"

(Carvalho & Segato, 2002, p. 6). Based on this perspective, only specific interventions, such as affirmative action policies, can transform a reality characterized by the exclusion or under-representation of black individuals from positions of power, education, training and decision-making.

As of today and following the approval of Law 12,711/2012 on quotas, most affirmative action measures adopted by higher education institutions take the form of quotas (Munanga, 2022): a system of allocating a certain number of places at a university to guarantee admission to a certain group of students. The bonus system, which offers more points to a specific group in entrance exams without allocating a percentage of places, has been virtually abandoned. Additionally, there is a prevalence of quotas for black students. In this case, universities opt to favor both black and brown students in their affirmative action policies. It seems that, despite more than ten years of the quota law and the decision to amend it, the representation of black students in higher education is not yet equal to that of the black national population. This demonstrates the impact of structural racism across institutions and bodies, which causes these to impose a sequence of barriers difficult to overcome without a coordinated effort to combat racism.

Discussions of affirmative action policies for black people, particularly in universities, often result in arguments that lead to confusion and render actual debate impossible. Developing a more critical reflection that highlights the full implementation of racial quotas and supports the ability to counter opposing arguments is imperative (Munanga, 2022). One of the arguments to be addressed is the idea that affirmative action disregards merit. By examining the sociocultural reality experienced by people of diverse affiliations, it can be shown that meritocracy is only possible if and when cultural capital, family capital and intellectual endowments are equal. This implies an unambiguous understanding that competing individuals can only reach a position of prestige, appealing to their own merit, if they start out from the same position. The question is: when considering entrance exams at Brazilian public universities, for example, are we taking into consideration all the historical, political, cultural and economic factors that influence admissions? Or do we continue to insist on explaining approvals for admission as a reflection solely of individual merit – which is nonexistent when detached from the set of highly significant everyday phenomena observable in the reality of sociocultural interactions? To overcome “niches of meritocratic privileges” (Guimarães, 1999), which occur when applying for a place at Brazil’s public universities, it is crucial to consider the relationship between privileges and the reproduction of accumulated discrimination.

These privileges and discriminations provide a clearer insight into the ethnic-racial interactions in Brazil and the cruelty of exclusion resulting from them, requiring in turn a serious discussion, problematization and deconstruction of racial inequalities of the kind experienced in Brazil. In this respect, specific policies that guarantee citizen rights become problematizing tools for addressing issues that remain unchanged by the implementation of universalistic social policies. In analyses of ethnic-racial inequalities, racial differences persist in explanations that consider income, education, housing and health inequalities. The understanding, therefore, is that universalizing rights policies are ineffective, or insufficient, when it comes to alleviating the racial discrimination that affects black people, even though they do contribute to overcoming social inequalities and ethnic-racial inequalities to a smaller degree. In a society dominated by one color, there is an urgent need to adopt policies aimed at ensuring the inclusion of subalternized sectors of the population. Again it should be emphasized that dominant groups in Brazil rely on sensitive topics, such as individual merit, to justify their privileges.

Secondly, the argument against the adoption of reparatory measures for racial inequalities contends that affirmative action contradicts the principle of equality enshrined in the 1988 Federal Constitution. When this principle is interpreted in a biased or naive manner, it is read simplistically as affirming that “all persons are equal before the law.” There is a disregard for what the text of the Constitution actually asserts, a point echoed by Ives Gandra da Silva Martins (1992) when he argues that every citizen has a right to equal treatment before

the law, in accordance with the criteria established in the legal system. In other words, what is forbidden are arbitrary distinctions and absurd discrimination, because unequal treatment of unequal cases, insofar as they are unequal, is a traditional requirement of justice.

Social equality entails material freedoms. This equality, which is a reflection of equity, cannot be achieved solely through legislation, but also requires state-driven policies and programs, as Fábio Konder Comparato (1996) cogently argued. It is also important to emphasize that inequality in the law occurs when the norm unreasonably or arbitrarily differs in treatment between individuals. What can be inferred, therefore, is that differentiated normative treatments are compatible with those outlined in the Federal Constitution when they are shown to the legislator or the executive power (the interpreter, that is the public authority and the private individual) to be reasonably proportionate to their intended purposes.

Extrapolating from the constitutional dimension and turning to global issues, it is vital that we remember that Brazil has signed various international commitments since 1968, whereby the country undertakes to create and apply compensatory policies to compensate black Brazilians for the losses suffered by them during the slavery era. One important commitment signed by the country dates back to 2001, agreed at the World Conference against Racism, held in Durban, South Africa. During the Durban Conference, the impacts of which still reverberate today (Geledés, 2021), the signatory states were also encouraged to establish national affirmative action programs to promote access to basic social services such as education, health and adequate housing for groups suffering racial discrimination. Paragraph 100, in addition to acknowledging that the fight against racism is primarily the responsibility of national states, advocates the establishment of such programs. It is important to note that Article 1, paragraph 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which was adopted prior to Durban, specifies that special measures taken to benefit groups subject to racial discrimination are not considered racially discriminatory measures.

These observations indicate the need for an intervention that generates citizen rights in the context of the chronic disadvantages faced by black Brazilians as a result of discriminatory practices. As Paulo Freire (1996) reminds us, education presents itself as an emblematic sector for such interventions due to its potential to enable individuals to emancipate themselves through the acquisition of knowledge. As Carvalho & Segato (2002, p. 15) note, the Brazilian population improved in terms of education throughout the entire twentieth century. They emphasize the fact that black children attend school for 2.2 fewer years than white children. In the data compiled by the authors, white pupils attended school for an average of 6.6 years, while black pupils attended school for an average of 4.4 years. In their conclusion, the authors estimate that it will take 20 years to achieve equal schooling levels among white and black children if public policies continue to prioritize their universalistic nature. According to this hypothesis, the black population would require “two decades of stable and uninterrupted growth of current education policies to complete their basic education” (Carvalho & Segato, 2002, p. 15).

The application of affirmative actions for black people in Brazilian universities is not limited to undergraduate courses. Anna Carolina Venturini (2021) reports that postgraduate programs at Brazilian public universities have adopted affirmative actions in their admission processes since 2002. Postgraduate courses (at both master's and doctoral levels) at public universities with a diverse range of students, including in terms of their racial affiliation, are more likely to achieve a higher quality of research, in addition to enhancing the science produced. This is because, in assuming social responsibility, the movement towards institutional change (Venturini, 2021) also involves assuming procedural responsibility for affirmative action managers. One example of such procedural responsibility is the establishment of hetero-identification commissions to verify the self-declarations of black candidates.

The application of affirmative action policies in Brazilian universities has resulted in diverse successful experiences that present substantial and qualitative increases in representation, with the notable presence of

black and indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, trans people and transvestites in university environments. In this sense, the university is becoming a more pluralistic institution with a more diverse student body that is more representative of society as a whole. It is still possible to observe historically concealed instances of racism, but when these manifestations are exposed, they are more effectively confronted, indicating that the conflict should not be covered up but openly challenged as part of an empowered anti-racist agency. Following affirmative actions, universities have shown the practical possibility of tackling niches of privilege, including meritocratic privileges, and establishing an academic environment that is thematically challenging, encouraging a confrontation of epistemic racism. Finally, affirmative actions in universities have made it possible to problematize the idea of a single tradition of scientific knowledge and have provided insights into the plurality of knowledge.

Final considerations

Policies promoting citizen rights, such as affirmative actions, are legal and legitimate, but their effectiveness requires auxiliary measures and complementary actions. The historical and political threads that bind what we experience today, tying together the most diverse experiences and interactions, cannot be overlooked. Various historical, sociocultural, economic and political factors enable and authenticate belongings, positions and affiliations. The emergence of social actors such as the black movement in the process of implementing affirmative actions strengthens the possibility of reparation for the historical experiences of racial discrimination and injustice suffered by black Brazilians. In addition, it should not be overlooked that public policies offer pedagogical value by supporting the diversity of affiliations and belongings among individuals who assume a proactive role in determining their own lives.

The political advocacy carried out by black people in Brazil who had direct experience of the Durban Conference (Geledés, 2021), including Jurema Werneck, Lúcia Xavier, Sueli Carneiro, Zélia Amador, Ivanir dos Santos, Wania Sant'Anna and many others referenced in the book *Brazil and Durban: 20 years later*, published by Geledés, still reverberates as a legacy today. A legacy that mobilizes and drives an anti-racist struggle in defense of affirmative actions for black people. In other words – and as Sueli Carneiro argues (Geledés, 2021, p.278) – the challenge now is to “enforce the Durban Action Program,” which recognizes the leading role of Afro-descendants in the Americas in recognizing: (a) the existence of populations of African origin in the Americas; (b) prevalent, systemic and inequalities-generating racial discrimination; and (c) the cultural, economic, political and scientific contributions made by these populations. It is important to remember that the Durban action plan urges nation states to adopt public policies in the various social areas aimed at the social promotion of people of African descent.

As for affirmative action policies in Brazil, some projections can be made based on the applied experiences, the subsequent evaluation processes and the amendment to the quota law introduced in 2022. In the short term, there was evidence that the implementation of affirmative action for the black population resulted in institutional spaces that were numerically significantly more representative of the national ethnic-racial composition. Since there is an emergency dimension to this type of policy intervention, policies such as racial quotas, for example, should not be considered as a substitute for other longer-term measures and policies that need to be adopted concurrently. Furthermore, affirmative action policies may act as a catalyst for black people to “dare” to participate in selection processes and, upon approval, enter a space in which knowledge operates more effectively and professionals are better qualified.

In the medium term, it was possible to observe a public exposure of racism that, in many cases, had been perceived to be invisible, “camouflaged” or “veiled” but never completely absent. By raising awareness of racist practices, it is easier to adopt punitive actions against racist acts and to promote educational initiatives for those

involved in or close to such acts. Following the implementation of racial quotas, universities began registering hostile reactions towards quota students. Further, they stressed the need to mediate certain conflict situations, demonstrating the importance of complementary measures to ensure the retention of quota students and foster a sense of belonging. Hostile here refers to instances such as aggressive messages in social networks; verbal abuse in university hallways and even in classrooms; direct or indirect physical or verbal offenses in restricted spaces, such as bathrooms and elevators; and superficial and often angry statements made by writers, journalists, politicians, and professionals. These and many other examples have been covered in the media, showing the opposition to affirmative action with a racial focus. The revelation or open emergence of something that already exists, racism, renders the search for the eradication of racist behavior more effective, since the fight against what has been declared becomes more direct and specific and hence more effective.

When public policies for citizen rights are implemented, any sociocultural environment tends to experience transformations, making historically discriminated and subalternized individuals more inclined to consider occupying positions of power and competing for prestigious positions as something “normal.” The establishment of positive references, such as black professors, doctors, engineers and lawyers, among others, is imperative for new black generations to feel inspired and aim for a future with more independent political and cultural participation, as well as possess a stronger sense of citizenship, ensuring solidarity and equality within society. Lastly, experience has shown that all individuals, institutions and groups can and should become active participants in their own history as part of the consolidation of an antiracist and thus more just and inclusive society.

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