

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Racial Democracy and the New Citizenship

On the 26th of April, 2001, the *Conselho Municipal do Desenvolvimento e Participação da Comunidade Negra de Campinas*, or Council for the Development and Participation of the Black Community of Campinas (CMCN), was established in Campinas municipal law. The formation and establishment of the Council was carried out by members of the Black community in collaboration with then city councilman Sebastião Arcaño, or Tiãozinho, a staunch advocate for issues of the Black community. Its main duties are to advocate for measures to address issues affecting the Black community, particularly policies and projects involving the affirmation, valorization, and development of the Black community. The Council signifies a forum where Afro-Brazilian citizens and those concerned with issues affecting blacks can dialogue with government representatives, deliberating over how to improve conditions for Afro-Brazilians, address racial inequality, and increase citizen involvement in local government decision-making processes that directly affect them.

The CMCN is part of the broader struggle of Afro-Brazilians for racial equality and is significant as a legitimate, guaranteed forum for representation within the municipal government:

“I think the Council is an important forum. It can’t be excluded from sight ... [I]t is a forum that will remain. It is a space that we need to cultivate, preserve, a space for the creation and implementation of public policies” (Personal interview with Juliana Nicomedes, June 24, 2004).

“This is a project that is in the law, approved by the city council, so it is legitimate...” (Personal interview with Sergio, April 27, 2004).