CHAPTER TWO
THE NEW CITIZENSHIP AND COUNCILS FOR THE BLACK COMMUNITY

2.1 The New Citizenship

The fight of Black social movements for the inclusion of racial issues on the new democratic government’s agenda was one component of the broader push for citizenship and a more inclusive democracy occurring in the late 1970s, early 1980s. During the Abertura and the creation of the new Brazilian Constitution of 1988, Black social movements, along with other segments, made demands for the inclusion of policies and provisions that addressed issues of social inequality and political access. The new citizenship involves several components that redefine rights, citizens, and the political system (Dagnino 1998: 50-52; all italics in original; Dagnino 2003):

1. A redefinition of the notion of rights where the point of departure is the conception of the right to have rights. This conception includes the “invention and creation of new rights, which emerge from specific struggles and their concrete practices” (50). The determination of the meaning of rights, as well as the assertion of a value or ideal as a right, are themselves objects of political struggle. This redefinition includes not only the right to equality, but also the right to difference.

2. The new citizenship “is not linked to strategies of the dominant classes or the state for gradual political incorporation or excluded sectors,” … “it requires the constitution of active social subjects (political agents), defining what they consider to be their rights and struggling for their recognition” (50-1).