

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**EXAMING THE EXPERIENCE OF THE COUNCIL AND PARTICIPANTS’**  
**PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROCESS**

**3.1 The Council Experience as the New Citizenship in Action**

*3.1.1 Institutionalization and Political Legitimacy*

One of the most important achievements for members of the Council is its establishment in law in the municipality, which guarantees that it cannot be abolished or dismantled by municipal leadership. Having a permanent forum for debate and dialogue is a step towards more participation and further legitimizes claims of the Black community as its creation broadens the field of particular issues and formerly excluded populations that are brought into the democratic process. As an official forum assembling various segments of the Afro-Brazilian community, the Council unifies those that have been confronting issues for some time. Furthermore, it exposes the government to perspectives offered by ‘veterans’ of the struggle for racial equality and the diversity they represent in this respect.

The Council’s permanence regardless of which political party is in city hall is a key point to be considered, as the president of the Council indicates:

“I think the Council is an important forum. It can’t be excluded from sight ... [I]f this government ends and another one starts, it 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... This fact of the Council already being created [officially in law] is the most important thing that I see” (Personal interview with Juliana Nicomedes, June 24, 2004).

The CMCN represents a guaranteed forum for representation within the municipal government of Campinas. One example illustrating the importance of