

The process of constructing a civic culture that is sensitive to difference is filled with certain tensions and difficulties, as manifest in the interview data. The construction of new citizenship is a relatively recent phenomenon in Brazilian politics and encompasses a range of populations that have been excluded from active participation in, and access to, political forums. In the Afro-Brazilians case, the difficulty lies in attempting to assert this new citizenship through the formation of a racial identity that is inclusive, dynamic, and can engage in politics to further the cause of equality. Creating this identity involves not only convincing government officials that Afro-Brazilian claims for race-based policies are legitimate, but also being able to articulate a political identity that all Afro-Brazilians can relate to at some level. The forging of a black political identity in the current conjuncture is a strategic move in the evolving political and social context of race relations in Brazil.

One important consideration in creating a politics of identity through the Council is that the Black community is indeed composed of many individuals and groups with varying identities, ideologies, conceptions of inequality, and conceptions of culture. This diversity leads to various responses to racial inequality. How does such a diverse community within a context of racial democracy and historical ambiguity in racial identification construct a distinct, singular identity for the purpose of making claims for equality? Is it possible to construct a politics of identity that accounts for diversity of approaches and power differentials within the Black movement? How can/do groups who see themselves as distinctly 'political' or distinctly 'cultural' articulate their demands jointly and in an organized manner as proponents of equality for a broad community? What are the difficulties and issues in creating a political identity for Afro-Brazilians?

The Council engages these tensions and difficulties directly through the process of deliberation, articulation, and consultation. Within a process that articulates

a diversity of opinion as well as engages political processes of participation critically, Council members struggle to advocate for, and empower, the black citizenry. The Council process also spreads notions that Afro-Brazilians can participate not only as general citizens, but as unequal citizens whose citizenship is mediated by their racial background. This helps foster the new citizenship as the notion of a right to difference is cultivated and demanded.

Because of its work, the Council is a component of the political and social struggle of anti-racism. In the formation of a politics of identity, Antonio Sérgio Alfredo Guimarães (1995) conceptualization captures the work with which Council members are engaged, as well as the processual aspect of the politics of the Council. He argues that anti-racism must first mean the admission of race amongst blacks, “that is, a perception of themselves—the racialized others—as the racialized ‘we’” (224), which means the reconstruction of the self drawing upon some of the things mentioned and represented by the Council organizations above, such as African heritage—the Afro-Brazilian culture of *candomblê* and *capoeira*, etc. In addition, as described above, Afro-Brazilians must draw on the “cultural and political reservoir of the ‘Black Atlantic’ legacy—the Civil Rights Movement in the United States, the Caribbean cultural renaissance, and the fight against apartheid in South Africa” (Ibid.). Only through this reidentification in ethnic terms and a racialized discourse can “a sense of pride, dignity, and self-reliance largely destroyed by a century of invisible, universalist, enlightened racism, be sustained” (Ibid.). The politics of the Council originates in the notion of the specificity of race and the need for projects specific to the community, the ‘racialized other.’ The inspiration of many of those involved draws on a common black experience both within and beyond Brazil. In the Council, the reidentification with a sense of pride serves as the foundation for the valorization of the black community.

Guimarães is advocating for the construction of a political identity that can lead to a concrete means to fight inequality, an identity accounting for the variation within the Afro-Brazilian community, as well as the diversity of signifiers and sources available for mobilizing a political identity, such as cultural and religious practices and common diasporic experience. The mobilization of a Black political identity amongst the broader population has not been an easy task for social movements, activists, and scholars, as the history of racial democracy and the varying subjectivities within the community have made difficult the possibility of defining clear needs, claims and priorities within the struggle for racial equality. These struggles show that, “‘Community’ is never simply the recognition of cultural similarity or social contiguity but a categorical identity that is premised on various forms of exclusion and constructions of otherness” (Gupta and Ferguson 2001: 13). The process of exclusion and othering are what form both collective and individual subjects (Ibid.). These formed, ‘othered,’ and excluded subjects’ citizenship is mediated by the characteristics of their collective and individual subjectivity. The new citizenship seeks to account for these subjectivities in the claims for rights. The black community in Campinas is formed in part *through* the struggle for the formation of the Council as well as in the articulation of people’s differing views on its political efficacy. While the space of the Council is an articulation of a common experience of exclusion, the space is also formative of black identity because it provides regular opportunity for understanding racial inequality and constructing racial equality.

As Guimarães (1995) indicates:

“a critical challenge for those who struggle against racism in Brazil is to show not only inequalities, but their daily reproduction by institutions of production (public and private enterprises), institutions of public order (the police, the judicial and correctional systems), and educational and health care institutions. This is an important way through which one can hope to displace the centenary, invisible veil that wraps the dichotomies of elite/masses and White/Black in Brazilian society” (224).

Through its politics, the Council engages this critical challenge and struggles to build a more participatory democratic system. Its work exposes areas where racial inequality is reproduced: schools, businesses, government offices, the health care field, and judicial system. In addition, it articulates a notion of inequality that reaches beyond pointing out its existence towards strategies that build the abilities and pride of Afro-Brazilians, as well as valorize and modify societal perceptions of the meaning of race and characteristics of Afro-Brazilians.

The CMCN, and many of the organizations that have representatives there, are attempting to forge a notion of an Afro-Brazilian community that includes the broad range of people involved in the struggle. As with any entity formed to represent a diverse community, there are representational issues that arise due to the different needs of the members and segments of participants. In addition, there may be differences in terms of how individuals and organizations conceive not only of the problem of addressing racial inequality, but the actual way they conceptualize and negotiate race, culture, and identity day to day in individual experiences and in the work of their organizations. The CMCN brings together the diverse segments into one institutional forum with a particular structure and goals agreed upon by all those interviewed with differences lying in the particular means by which these goals will be

achieved, the perception of the political context in Campinas and Brazil more broadly, and the political affiliations that inform particular strategies.

Articulating identities and institutionalizing a politics of difference are complex processes. In the Brazilian case, there are many changes underway in official and societal discourses on race, and due to a relatively recent redemocratization, legacies of social authoritarianism are still present and being negotiated. In articulating claims that they see as legitimate, Afro-Brazilians are constructing new citizenship. Their actions unify politics and culture on two levels: the concrete level where the defense and strengthening of cultural forms and spaces are part of the broader struggle for legitimacy and inclusion, as well as the level of civic culture where citizens create and legitimate new rights in society, particularly a redefinition of what political participation should mean. There are many other Councils that exist and are being created at the municipal and state level with the intention of institutionalizing the new citizenship. As these forums increase and more individuals become involved, a new political culture is being created. A true avenue for previously muted voices is solidified in these types of institutions and a civic culture that understands that the citizenry is diverse and has a variety of needs will take shape.

Finally, the CMCN, as well as organizations and individuals in the Black movement more broadly, are targeting particular areas in their advocacy and policy formulations that they see as needing the most attention. These choices are often based on strategic decisions about which policies have the possibility to be implemented or would not have a difficulty in garnering multi-party support. Afro-Brazilians, through a politics of identity and the promotion of the new citizenship, make strategic choices in areas where gains can be made. The CMCN is itself a strategic forum for articulating claims as it necessitates deliberation and compromise. In the wake of the

current debates over race and race-based policies, the CMCN may be able to take strategic advantage of particular deliberations and formulations of policies.

Although the insitutionalization of the Council is the manifestation of a claim on a political right to ensure formal equality for Afro-Brazilians, the Council members see it as a means and first step to substantive equality and the construction of cultural redefinitions of Afro-Brazilians. In order to create a forum such as the Council, Afro-Brazilians in Campinas mobilize race as a means to make claims. In doing so, they negotiate a historically essentialized identity to represent and constitute their identity in ways essential to their sense of self and history. Council members assert a black political identity and their need for a community council in order to enable the substantive reconstruction of citizenship. By reclaiming blackness in political identity terms, the Council acknowledges that formal citizenship is necessary but not sufficient to address racial inequality and seeks to redefine representations of race that have imputed particular historical meanings onto the category “black.” This substantive reconstruction taking place through the Council rewrites Afro-Brazilian history and culture in public texts and imagination, delegitimizing the myth of racial democracy, fighting racial stereotypes, and debunking negative connotations attributed to being black. In other words, the formal institutional space of the Council is a platform for the struggle over representation and respect—the kernel of substantive citizenship.

Research on policy and race in Brazil needs to further examine forums such as the Council because they offer rich information on how Afro-Brazilians are attempting to address policy, how participatory democratic institutions are being created and used, and how notions of community and equality are being constructed, understood, and negotiated by those affected by discrimination and inequality. Regardless of what occurs in the near future, the foundations have been laid in both local and national politics for the continuing attention to Afro-Brazilian concerns. There will be

continuing engagement from activists, intellectuals, politicians, and other citizens in observing, studying, and understanding the processes of identity construction and the consolidation of the new citizenship “on the ground.” The Council and institutionalized forums are only one dimension of the broader struggle for racial equality, but these forums embody a wealth of opportunity for creativity and action, as they bring together members of diverse organizations and positions within local politics and society.