

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Alexandre Emboaba Da Costa was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in the United States of America. He received his B.S. in Rural Sociology from Cornell University in 2000. After receiving his degree, he moved to Brooklyn, NYC and assisted the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) in their campaign for the Working Families Party/Democratic candidates in the congressional and federal elections of 2000. After his brief time with ACORN, he joined the staff at the Legal Aid Society of New York's Brooklyn Office for the Aging. As a paralegal casehandler for Legal Aid, he advocated for elderly Brooklyn residents in relation to public benefits issues, such as Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, and Food Stamps. His clients were from a range of places in Brooklyn as well as immigrants and refugees from many Latin American, Caribbean, Eastern European, and Central Asian countries. While in New York City, he also translated audiovisual materials from Portuguese to English for the Witness organization. These materials were included in a "witness alert" for to publicize and request investigation of the massacre of members of the Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement, or Movimento Sem Terra (MST).

In 2002, Alex returned to graduate school, enrolling in the Department of Development Sociology at Cornell University (formerly Rural Sociology). As a graduate student, he has sought training in various subjects including political sociology, sociological theory, citizenship, race and racial politics, quantitative and qualitative methods, and Latin American studies. His research interests involve examining racial and identity politics in Brazil as it relates to governance, racial equality, and political participation. His dissertation project will involve fieldwork examining these processes in citizen-created institutional councils at the municipal and state level in Brazil.

Alex's parents moved to the U.S. from Ribeirão Preto, a city in the state of São Paulo, Brazil in the early 1970s. His Brazilian heritage influences him in many ways, particularly in his desire to explore issues of identity, political participation, and equality both in Brazil and the United States. It also influences his culinary and musical tastes, two of the hobbies in his life. When not busy furthering his academic career and enriching his mind intellectually, Alex deejays under the name Fictitious Commodity at local venues in Ithaca, New York, as well as at the occasional house party.

This thesis is dedicated to my uncle Manoel Emboaba Da Costa, who passed away in
November 2002.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MNU – Movimento Negro Unificado (Unified Black Movement)

CMCN – Conselho Municipal de Desenvolvimento e Participação da Comunidade
Negra (Municipal Council for the Development and Participation of the Black
Community)

PT – Workers' Party

PREFACE

The analysis in the thesis involves an examination of the construction of racial politics in institutionalized political forums that are designated as participatory in nature—they are formed with the purpose of including citizens in democratic administration processes beyond electoral politics. These official forums are initiated by citizens desiring to include formerly excluded issues on the governmental agenda. This is particularly important in the Brazilian case as many citizens were politically excluded during the military regime, which lasted from 1964 to 1985. The significance of the councils as official forums goes beyond the formal authoritarian nature of the Brazilian government during the military dictatorship.

The thesis uses the framework of the new citizenship and its intersection with Black identity politics to understand processes of political participation in the municipal council for the Black community in Campinas, São Paulo. A study of the council illuminates how racial inequality and discrimination has played and plays a role in how racial identity is being constructed and how policies are being pursued within the Council. This thesis is part of a larger project eventually involving fieldwork in two locations in Brazil: Campinas, São Paulo and Salvador, Bahia. The larger project will consist of a comparison between the Municipal Council for the Development and Participation of the Black Community in Campinas and the State Council for the Participation and Development of the Black Community. In the larger project, I hope to examine aspects of the councils and the participants that I am unable to capture within the purview of this thesis and the available data.

The history of race relations and the contestation over meanings and rights are fundamental for understanding relations between the government and organizations in civil society as they deliberate over projects and policies to address racial inequality. This study elucidates aspects of this process through interviews with council members.

However, the limited nature of the data prevents a profound examination of class, race, and gender relations within the council. Understanding how these other characteristics affect both participation and identity formation of Afro-Brazilians will reveal issues of access, knowledge. The theory and practice of participatory politics are also not considered below, as the main focus is on citizenship and racial politics. Class and gender, as well as education and political affiliation, often play a role in deliberative interactions in forums such as the council. Further understanding and observation of how these factors may influence deliberative processes will permit a more profound look at intra-community relations. I aim to address these remaining questions about the councils in my dissertation through a more comprehensive methodology that will seek to capture as well as observe what is missing below.

A preliminary examination of racial politics and participatory processes in the municipal council for the Black community of Campinas provides insight into contemporary constructions of the new citizenship amongst Afro-Brazilians and the difficulties they perceive and encounter with the local government administration. It also provides a window into how racial discourses and policies that have been changing since redemocratization are manifest in the contemporary conjuncture. The struggle has been long, and despite the racial democracy ideology being debunked, Council members still confront everyday forms of racism that are ignorant of the specificity of race as a characteristic that affects people's lived experiences. I hope that the perception that this thesis imparts is one of the tension-filled contradictory terrain of citizenship negotiation. Moreover, I hope that the political struggles resulting in victories and defeats within deliberative councils allows us to foresee a future of full citizenship and an end to racial inequality.