

The success and crisis of the identity wave in Brazil

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ABSTRACT

The experiments inspired by multiculturalism and the cultural practices developed by enforcing affirmative action saw their heydays in the period 2002-2016, within a new configuration that created opportunities for an identity movement hinging upon the positive evaluation of heritage and recognition of the formerly subaltern culture of large sections of the population that had been historically discriminated against. The essay scrutinizes the key terms and a few dynamics in this process, and a set of turning points that led to a crisis of the process itself. The main argument is that such crisis originates from both the internal weakness of the identity movement and the dangerous conservative outright attack on the multicultural mindset and on the right to diversity.

KEYWORDS

Multiculturalism, identity politics, racism, reactionary

O sucesso e a crise da onda identitária no Brasil

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THE INTERMITTENT FORTUNE OF ETHNO-RACIAL IDENTITY IN BRAZIL

Both multiculturalism and affirmative actions are cause and effect of what I call the "identity wave", which in the last two or three decades has meant a general transformation and dynamization of identity processes in this country. The great sociopolitical change we are going through forces us to deeply reflect on sectorial identities and inequalities and, more specifically, the relatively short but impactful trajectory of multiculturalism and reparatory policies regarding the population historically discriminated against in Brazil¹.

Here I want to rethink the last 30 years, 15 of which were with a government led by the Workers' Party (PT)². This also means reviewing the development of research on this theme, in awareness that in Brazil the identity configuration is, once again, in motion.

It is necessary to start by pointing to the fact that the terms "ethnic" and "ethnicity" has become part of popular culture and the languages of the State and the media, in fact, in a relatively recent period in Brazil. As is known, we had an ethnophobic past. There was a denial of a racial issue after 1888, the year of the Abolition of slavery, although the intellectual elite in the Old Republic was preoccupied with three dilemmas that did not support the notion of progress: the fact that Brazil was almost all located in the Tropics, a large part of the population was of African origin and there was a growing number of mestizos. The Berlin Conference of 1883-1887 had established that civilization was not inherent in the Tropics, that Africans needed "help" to develop, and that the mestizos, when not simply ignored, would be "inappropriate" from a civilizing point of view because they did not fit into the racial geography of the time, in which each, so-called, great race (white, yellow, red and black) was from a certain continent. The context changed radically, when, as from the 1930s, based on modernism and with greater force in the Estado Novo, the State promoted the narrative (or myth) of racial democracy in a discourse that, substantially, was also used by the 1964 Military Dictatorship.

After the Second World War, in terms of both the identity policies themselves and their studies, we have had several phases. The first phase starts approximately in the early 1950s and goes on to the re-democratization process in the mid-1980s. These are the years of substantiation, in fact, of the myth of racial democracy by most of the anthropological research that, starting with the great Unesco/Columbia Project, in the state of Bahia in the years 1950-1953 (Wagley, 1952; Chor Maio, 2000; Pereira; Sansone, 2007), argues that Brazil would be a country with strong cleavages of class, but weak racial division and discrimination. Although some sociologists involved in the same project (Roger Bastide, Florestan Fernandes and Luís Costa Pinto) emphasized the relevance of racism in the organization of social hierarchies, even for them, the process of emancipation from racism did not go through some

¹ | The core of this essay was presented at a seminar organized by the Graduate Program in Social Sciences of the Pontifical Catholic University of Minas Gerais (PPGCS/PUC Minas), in November 2018. I want to thank the anonymous reviewers for the suggestions, as well as Felipe Bruno Martins Fernandes and Sueli de Souza Borges, for their careful review of the text and of the concepts used in it.

² | A confession: this window of time corresponds also to my experience in Brazil, where I live and I've been working since 1990. Well, if it was always important to ask who and why we investigate a topic, this is even more important when the theme is ethnic identity and its relationship with socioeconomic status, with class, and in a country with strong tensions along ethnic and racial lines like ours. It's also worth noting that the fact that I'm white and born and raised in Italy, although long engaged with anti-racism in Brazil, puts me in a particular position in the debate on anti-racism and the kind of multiculturalism we want for this country. This is a debate in which, implicitly or explicitly, we all participate and within which, to paraphrase Geertz, we are all "natives" — we all participate in it with both our brain and guts.

kind of resurgence of ethnic-racial identities. In fact, for almost everyone, with few exceptions – Clovis Moura (1959) and Abdias do Nascimento (1982)³ –, Brazil and the rest of Latin America, until the 1980s, was described as one of the most "ethnophobic" regions in the world. For the North American sociologist Talcott Parsons, Latin America was the rest continent from the point of view of ethnic processes (Parsons, 1969), contrary to a worldwide trend. In this part of the world, he argued, the feeling of belonging of an ethnic nature would have less strength and there would never be identity politics because of the force of Catholic (ecumenical) thought that would not favor them, a long time tradition of miscegenation and popularity - both among the subalterns and, although in a different light, in the elites – the discourse centered around belonging to a class. It was the discourse corroborated by most US and European philanthropy⁴ (Dzidzienyo; Casal 1979; Davis 1999).

In those years in Brazil, as in most other contexts, having an African appearance, being discriminated against and being poor was not, in itself, enough to "become black". In the same way, being of indigenous descent did not make the individual, let's say, automatically, an indigenous person. A black community, a black vote or a black movement were not – and still are not – a natural fact, but creations of certain contingencies; something similar would apply to the indigenous people. That is why in Brazil one could and still have blackness without ethnicity (Sansone, 2003a), as well as in other contexts, especially in the United States, where one could also have a black ethnicity without blackness – without Africanisms, as already pointed out by Melville Herskovits, in the 1940s. For new black and indigenous identities to emerge massively in our context, they needed something more, an "ethnic chemistry" that was not always available.

With the re-democratization, above all due to the pressure of the new black movement (which includes political organizations, carnival associations and Afro cultural groups, Pastoral do Negro – blacks groups within the Catholic church), a new wave of denunciations of racism and an opinion campaign around themes like "black is beautiful" or "don't let your vote go blank" took place. From approximately the mid-1980s onwards, there has been one more general change. In a process both quick and surprising, several nations in Latin America have become the part of the West where in recent decades there has been more experimentation with redistributive measures or affirmative action in favor of ethnic and/or racial discriminated groups, and where many interesting projects have emerged in terms of production and revitalization of ethnic identities of both indigenous and African matrix. I am referring to changes of the legal nature, with the gradual incorporation, from 1990, in the wording of the text of the constitution, of the term "multicultural" and even "multiethnic" (in the constitution of, at least, Colombia, Nicaragua, Mexico, Argentina and Ecuador), as well as to the increase in cultural production associated with ethnic-racial identities. I think, among the many examples available, of the new "Aimarist"

3 | For texts that are more specifically academic, but with a great impact on black activism, see the work of sociologist Octavio Ianni and, further on, the paradigmatic book by Carlos Hasenbalg (1974).

4 | For a good example, it is interesting to follow the reports of the organization Minority Rights Group, based in Great Britain. Initially in print, in recent years these reports have been available at <https://minorityrights.org/country/brazil/>. Access on: May 11, 2020.

style and fashion in Bolivia (Maclean, 2019) that developed along with the rise and consolidation of the indigenous and Aymara president, Evo Morales, until his violent deposition in 2019 (Pennain, 2018); or the huge growth of self-produced humorous films by Quechua-speaking comedians in Peru that circulate by YouTube⁵. There was, in fact, a rapid and complex change of meaning of icons and terms associated with indigenous and black identities, such as clothes, ways of wearing hair, speeches, musical genres and even consumer styles. Quickly, these icons stopped being a burden – stigmas historically associated with practices of exclusion and racism – to become a bonus – factors that can positively contribute to a broader process of social inclusion and that can be associated with new collective rights. I refer, for example, to a new set of land-rights for quilombolas (maroon communities), riverside dwellers and indigenous groups recently recognized by the State as such or to the preservation of a certain aspect of cultural heritage associated with popular and/or Afro culture, even in museums (Santos, 2004).

The Fernando Henrique Cardoso government had the merit of publicly acknowledging that Brazil has a racism problem. It organized a conference in Brasilia to announce this to the nation and, in 1995, established the Interministerial Working Group for the Empowering of the Black Population (Salles, 2014). It was, however, with Lula in the period from 2002 to 2016 that great changes took place (Lima, 2010), with the gradual transformation of what was historically a burden – things African and the black race – into a bonus – Africinity and being black. Characteristics such as blackness, which historically have been experienced as a burden or a stigma factor, began to be presented as possible bonuses. It is, of course, a process that is not free from contradictions. It is necessary to reflect on what it means, for those who have always been discriminated against and forgotten in the organization of the official narrative of a country and its regimes, becoming an interesting phenomenon, deserving support, preservation and even musealization. It was often a transition from invisibility to new visibility, sometimes hypervisibility (Sansone, 2019)⁶.

Well, things can change and, in the current contingency, Brazil is about to move into another ethnic configuration. After the ethnophobic posture of the 1964 Dictatorship and the more ethnicity-prone attitude of the FHC Era and, above all, Lula/Dilma, Brazil is moving towards a third configuration, characterized by a new authoritarian version of the universalist discourse and a much more violent denial of the right to diversity.

ETHNICITY

To continue my reasoning, we need to establish some common understanding around two important terms: "ethnicity", or its synonym, "ethnic identity" – terms the sudden popularity of which in the Humanities from the 1950s owes a lot to the

5 | See, for example, comics in Quechua during the Foncodes Contest (Andahuaylas, Apurímac). Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PzHf_mmkDil. Access on: May 13, 2020.

6 | The popularization of the term "ethnic" was quick and powerful. As an example, I'll tell you a personal episode. In 1992, shortly after my arrival as a visiting researcher at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), during an interview about the civil war in the former Yugoslavia, live on TV, the journalist asked me, candidly, what was ethnicity and what was the remedy against it, giving me 30 seconds to answer. Less than a decade later, I came across in my bathroom the fact that the term "ethnic" had already migrated to the world of beauty creams and shampoos. This change was due, to a large extent, to our incipient experiment with multiculturalism.

fact the term was emphasized by Unesco in its famous and striking statement about the non-existence of races (Unesco, 1950).

For Unesco, the term "ethnic group" would be the most appropriate way to define those population groups that until those years were easily labeled with the term "race (s)" (Sansone, 2014). From the late 1960s onwards there has been a consensus in the Social Sciences that ethnicity is one of the possible forms of collective identity (Barth, 1969; Cohen, 1974; Carneiro da Cunha, 2009). Like all identity processes, nationalism and ethnicity are always more relational and "impure" than how they present themselves in their public discourse. This is also since ethnic identity is always combined with other forms of collective identity, especially those inspired by class, gender, age or generation. In other words, a person is never just black, white or Indigenous, just as no one is just straight or gay. The same thing goes for class consciousness, something that has a lot to do with the process of identity formation. I think of Marx's notion of class in and for itself (Sansone, 2003). Class does not exist as a "natural" fact, but arises or is produced as class consciousness in certain contexts and moments – but not in all.

Ethnicity can be based on behavior, language, religion or biotype and a combination of all of these. It is characterized and distinguished from other forms of collective identity because it almost always has to do with the idea of an origin and/or common history or journey, with notions such as blood, ancestors and territory. Therefore, in this process, there is always a political use of history, which is selectively rediscovered depending on the priorities of the present. Ethnicity and the use of the category "race" – is a way of doing politics or it can be a language mobilized to give voice to concerns that, in other contexts and moments, would be characteristic of the class condition or that in another configuration of power they would be represented as an expression of workers' culture (Hall, 1982: 341). As in all identity processes, for this to develop, an internal perspective is not enough, but an external gaze is needed - what the others think and say about you and your group (Arruti, 2014).

Furthermore, in the processes of ethnic identification, there is always a social and symbolic dimension. The social dimension can be based on a territorially limited community or, on the contrary, even a diasporic connection; it can manifest itself in everyday life, but also predominantly on weekends or nights (in the domain of leisure). For the rest, ethnicity is the use of diacritical symbols to constantly redefine the "we" versus the "them" category – something that can be done intensely or, so to speak, part-time, episodically.

Late modernity, or hypermodernity, theorists argue that today ethnicities tend to be more and more deterritorialized, eclectic, and complex: community less identities, networked identities (Castells, 2000), intermittent identities. These neo-identities would tend to be less absolute, more easily combined with the rhythms and obligations of modern urban life. The success of many of the new large ethnic

projects (Agier, 2001) is due precisely to the fact that they are less centered on the roots, genealogies, being rooted in local history and a given territory, the socio-cultural idiosyncrasies of a given population group, and more on routes, networks, the aesthetic of difference that is intelligible to all those "outside". The preservation of localized heritage - the memory, the secret or the precepts that characterized various identities of a more communitarian type, for which participating was constantly referring to the past or remembering - has become less important. There is a new investment in the aesthetic and the spectacular in these new forms of ethnicity, which are theatre-like identities, the strength and attraction of which come more from horizontal movements in space, such as the search for alliances with other communities in different regions, than from some specific ability to show a depth – vertical – connection concerning a specific territory, time and history. The political use of the ethnic-racial difference in the struggle for civil rights in Brazil in recent years has created better conditions for the construction of "new communities", new forms of social organization around ethnic difference the aim of which is the struggle for (new) rights, rather than strengthening and cohesion of old communities and expressions of historically discriminated groups – although these neo-community forms have often invoked as part of their identity the celebration of ancient traditions or genealogies (French, 2009; Lifschitz, 2011).

In short, ethnicization processes are always relational – they need an adversary group for them to manifest – and phenomena in constant change and movement. So, ethnicity does not develop in a vacuum, but in a context determined by history and contemporary circumstances – a set that I, paraphrasing Norbert Elias, call "ethnic configuration", that is, a field of (in)possibilities that develops its ethnic-racial habitus. This would be a certain situation that defines both the limits and the opportunities for the identity processes. Not all times or epochs are equally fertile for the emergence of new identity processes of an ethnic, racial or nationalist nature. Furthermore, although they are constitutive of the ethnicization processes, which always present themselves as unique, eternal and holders of a long and glorious future, not all ethnic or nationalist projects have a long life, quite the contrary. It follows this reasoning that ethnicity is not, therefore, something natural or perennial, but something that manifests itself under certain conditions, when actors, as theorists of Rational Choice Theory (Banton, 1983) or "transactionism" would say (Barth, 1969), think that mobilizing the ethnic charter is worthwhile.

MULTICULTURALISM

It is now necessary to place multiculturalism in its historical context, even if in a summarized way. Multiculturalism can be understood as a set of discourses and/or practices that emerged, in the first place, in societies and cultures with myths of origin, different from Brazil, which over the last century has emphasized

miscegenation and the myth of racial democracy. As described elsewhere (Sansone, 1998; 2003; 2007a), this phenomenon emerged during the 1980s as an ideal in European countries (especially Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands), but also in Canada, Australia and New Zealand, which are often identified with the notion of plural society and that were trying to deal with ethnic, racial and cultural difference through a set of public actions. These are countries that, in addition to having internal minorities or those from the former colonies, have received strong immigration, especially after World War II. These are countries where an organic relationship between discourse, law and multicultural practices is verified.

At the basis of this multiculturalism, there are three classic sources: social pact (the commitment of the State and part of the elites to take care of the excluded and the poor); colonial past (that is, how the organization and sometimes even the militarization of confrontation in the face of cultural diversity proceeded in the colonies); and tradition (which concerns the ways of dealing with the internal ethnic and regional differences of these European countries). Some of these countries assert themselves as a nation-state based on their liberal stance towards regionalism, through the public celebration of a commitment to regionalized cultural differences, redistributing resources and political power to minorities and internal "colonies". I refer to the Catalans, Basques, Britons, Welsh, Sardinians, Corsicans, etc. Not every country in Europe is affected in the same way by these three phenomena. A given country may show generosity and tolerance towards the social pact, but not towards regionalism and vice versa.

Although multicultural measures have also been taken in public employment and the world of advertising, it is in the world of education that the process is centered. The essence of these measures is the reconfiguration of school curricula, the hiring of teachers specialized in resolving ethnocultural conflicts among students and in the relationship between parents and school, the psycho-pedagogical teachers counseling, students, parents and, more generally, activities in the direction of what can be called "education for inter-ethnic tolerance" (and sometimes about discriminated groups such as homosexuals, the obese and the disabled). What is common to these countries is the centrality of public primary and secondary education in the development of practices, methods and cultures of multiculturalism. Multiculturalism reached the universities after or along with a process that began in schools and local and national articulations of the welfare state. It is, therefore, a process interconnected with the history of the welfare state and its ways of controlling and, somehow, mitigate the impact of social inequalities. A process by some even described as a political-cultural movement, which peaked between 1980 and 2000 and then became one of the great enemies of the new conservative right in Europe, as well as in the United States and Australia. These (new) conservatives accuse multiculturalism of not favoring the cultural integration of immigrants into

the mainstream of society and of encouraging disunity and even racial hatred, especially when multicultural measures were associated with forms of redistribution of scarce resources (housing, jobs, gratified functions in public employment, etc.). For thinkers of the right, the State should be much more reticent in this area, abandoning affirmative action and leaving it to the invisible hand of the market, while limiting itself, at most, to the promotion of diversity, for example, in the command positions of large companies or universities. Preaching in favor of diversity, insisting on improving and making more tolerant the internal culture of a company or university, but without questioning structural and systemic racism and without a direct link to affirmative action measures, characterizes, especially in the United States, the conservative shift towards the position of the State towards ethnic-racial minorities, which started with the Bush administration, but was consolidated and radicalized during the Trump administration⁷.

In short, anti-racism, affirmative action, multiculturalism and diversity management have been different but interconnected phenomena with different degrees of radicality and impact on extreme and durable inequalities. In general, Social Democratic governments, more interested in using the State as a mediator of social tensions, have invested much more both in affirmative action, as a remedial measure, and in the multicultural approach to managing the relationship with their ethnic or racial minorities. It should therefore come as no surprise that the relative crisis of social democracy and laborism in Europe—and also in Australia—is related to a certain crisis of multiculturalism. In the last decade, countries that had been champions of multiculturalism, such as the Netherlands, have even introduced "cultural integration" exams as a requirement not only for obtaining citizenship but even for the renewal of residence permits for immigrants workers⁸.

What we have had in Brazil, but also and with greater strength in other Latin American countries, from the 1990s onwards, has been the development of multicultural practices and affirmative action of a different nature, because they are generally detached from the State social policies and concentrated in the university environment, much more than in schools. Although there had been a set of pilot experiments in schools in the main capitals promoted, above all, by activists of the black movement, it was as a result of the approval, in 2003, of Law No. 10,369 that there was a great and until then in schools and universities unprecedented increase in interest in the history of Africa and of African descendants in the Americas—and, shortly thereafter, due to yet another law, in the reality of indigenous populations. Furthermore, there was a synergy relationship between multicultural practices and affirmative action measures. Between 2003 and 2016, there were two programs in schools that created conditions for multicultural activities, those promoted by the Secretariat of Continuing Education, Literacy, Diversity and Inclusion (Secadi), which created the new National Curriculum Guidelines for Basic Education Diversity and

7 | There is already a field of research in the United States often called "trumpology", with numerous scientific and journalistic publications, including those concerning affirmative action and diversity. One of the so many interesting sites is available at: https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/archived/realworldresearch/world_events/inclusion-and-diversity-in-the-age-of-trump.htm. Access on: 11 May 2020. On that same date, there were more than 50,000 entries in the voice Trump in the Amazon catalog.

8 | For someone like me who lived for 13 years in the Netherlands and did a master's and doctorate there in the 1980s-1992, the change in policy keywords about the flow of immigrants is particularly shocking. In the early 1980s the State slogan was "integration with the maintenance of the own culture and identity", by the mid-1990s, the emphasis had shifted to the "assimilation process" (inburgeringsproces).

Inclusion and promoted the campaign "Gender and Diversity at School", and the ProExt program, both of the Ministry of Education (Fernandes, 2011)⁹. Quotas and other measures for historical reparation, together with a great effort to increase the number of places at universities, made them much more inclusive from both a class and ethnic-racial point of view.

In recent years, affirmative action has reached the admission to Master and Ph.D. programs, representing a new advanced frontier in the struggle against inequalities. With the significant increase in the percentage of black and indigenous students, better bases were given for a reform of education in the direction of multiculturalism, introducing new content, knowledge and practices. Unfortunately, in recent years there has not been enough investment and support from the Ministry of Education (MEC) for this synergy to flourish in the best possible way.

⁹ | On May 13, 2020, I noticed the page Secadi on the MEC site had been deactivated and that the ProExt page was no longer updated as of 2016.

FOUR "REVOLUTIONS"

The "identity wave", which I talked about before, makes up the ethnic revival which, in turn, forms part of a broader process that encompasses at least four more "revolutions". These are typical of a society in rapid transition to new forms of modernity, in which identities are gradually more chosen, as part of a new process of recognition than, say, inherited because they are derived from the experience of statutory relations within relatively cohesive communities (Melucci, 1996; Honneth, 2003). It is about the demographic revolution, which has rapidly reduced the number of young people and opened up opportunities for the emergence of youth consumption, also of culture, styles and technologies. This kind of opportunity only happens in societies where fewer young people receive more attention from parents and adults in general - youth as a category and sociological type is something more recent than many people think.

There has also been an educational revolution whereby more young people are in school, although this is probably less important today than in the past, in terms of shaping students' personalities, with the school having to compete with peer groups and social media. Within this increase in schooling, in Brazil, as in previous decades it had already happened in the black population of the United States and throughout the Caribbean (Davis 1981; Mac Donald & MacDonald 1978), the gender gap has increased. In the lower strata, it is already evident that women are better educated than men. However, the gap between women of different ages has also increased: illiteracy is concentrated among elderly women, while among young people, especially in the poorer classes, women have better school performance. The third revolution consists in the fact that there is, or there was, an advance in the quality of life and the consumption pattern of the lower layers. This is, in itself, a major factor in changing the identity process about gender, generation, ethnic-racial

identity and, above all, class: it changes the horizon of that which is possible and desirable. It is a phenomenon that frightens the elites for whom the masses always want more! And we know that Brazil has a gigantic social deficit, being one of the most unequal countries in the world and, certainly, the most unequal in the region. This change in perspective on work is associated with a revolution in expectations and the globalization of desire in terms of possible consumption – which becomes global much faster than actual opportunities. Fifteen years ago I published a text in a collection organized by Carlos Hasenbalg and Nelson do Valle Silva (Sansone, 2004) whose central argument was that the phrase "they no longer make housemaids as they used to". This popular say, which is heard in many contexts, reveals some real change in Brazil. The text went on to indicate that, concerning the perception of work, there was a large and growing generational difference. Faced with a generation that struggled to have a work permit, there is a new generation that "does cleaning", but does not consider themselves a house cleaner and often, rather than taking any job offer, chooses for waiting for a "proper job" that allows them to dream of citizenship, consumption and modernity. The identity wave did not leave perceptions about work and class position untouched, also because a profound change is taking place in the world of work itself, afflicted by a further process of precariousness, within a context characterized by a historical precariousness of a large part of the workforce, by many today called "uberization", summarized in the idea of (micro) entrepreneurship as a survival strategy.

There is yet another revolution in the field of communications technologies. It went from the community telephone to the public telephone, from the popularized family subscription plans for a landline at home to the cell phone and the smartphone (with applications that soon acquire a "native" name like "zap" (for Whatsapp), or that become popular with exponential force, such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok). Today, the world is no longer divided between those who have and those who do not have a phone, but, more and more, between those who have a smartphone with or without credit. What today divides the world is no longer access to communication technology, but rather the ability to know how to surf the waves of this new globalization of lifestyles and expectations. This process says a lot about social change in most of the Third World (Sansone, 2017) and because of that, also in Brazil, where social relationships become more individualized, but communication and mobility are increasingly important – regardless of the quality of communication itself (in fact most, for example, "zap" or activity on Facebook is with people who live close by and who think alike). We need to reflect deeply on Information Technologies, without demonizing them: if the WhatsApp application was decisive in the vote in favor of Brexit and the election of Trump, Modi, Duterte, Duque and Bolsonaro, Facebook was also decisive in the Obama campaign and has already been considered by many progressives as an instrument of a new global conviviality.

Although I do not agree that social media are, in themselves, villains of democracy, it is clear that interference in important electoral campaigns of companies, such as the famous Cambridge Analytica, with robots that shoot in mass fake news, and alt-right's strong presence on the internet forces us to take a more critical stance as regards the field of mass communication and the way to do politics and win elections in the era of social media.

It is curious that, in this context, another value inversion has taken place with the term "globalization". For the so-called Sovranists, today the term "globalization" has become almost an equivalent of "Marxist culture", although when it began to be used in the Social Sciences, around 1990, it immediately aroused the harshest criticisms of social movements on the left – we think of the movements No Logo (Klein, 1999) –, which identified it as the highest point of the project of expansion and universalization of capitalism. Finally, but without claiming to have exhausted the list of possible "revolutions", I cannot fail to refer to the authentic revolution of intangible heritage, the process of empowering popular cultures and ethnic identities through the patrimonialization of intangible culture by various state agencies. A little more than ten years ago, the Brazilian Federal Supreme Court's voted in favor of the territorial claims of indigenous and quilombola communities and unanimously approved the constitutionality of affirmative action policies in access to higher education. This indicated that a new horizon for emancipation and the formation of identity was in sight. Here, for the sake of brevity, I have highlighted the most relevant changes, but it is evident that, concerning the past, there are both ruptures and continuities.

Assessing a posteriori the movement that started with affirmative action, aiming at a multicultural intervention in schools and universities, I see a set of obstacles. There has been a ferment in terms of new multicultural experiences in the curricula, although there have been relatively few antiracist campaigns and little education for tolerance. The State, more than promoting anti-racist projects and education for tolerance, found it easier to educate for identity, producing in past years an interesting new vocabulary in themselves: diversity, territories of culture and identity, practical knowledge, masters of traditional knowledge, intangible heritage, points or hubs of memory/heritage, etc.¹⁰. It can be argued, with good reason, that this was what could be done and that it was important to make the then restricted Brazilian universities more inclusive, that the non-white population is the majority and that is why it was necessary to quickly take some compensatory measure. There is no way to disagree with this, but I emphasize that part of the problems we have been facing and that we will face, for example, about the relatively difficult popularization of education associated with Law No. 10.639, is precisely the result of the partial character of our multiculturalism, the lack of connection with redistributive measures, its little insertion at the core of the school curriculum and its excessive emphasis

¹⁰ | In 2018, the State Planning Secretariat of Bahia divided the territory of Bahia into 27 Territories of Identity. Available at: <http://www.seplan.ba.gov.br/modules/content/content.php?content=17>. Access on: 11 May 2020.

on the need to strengthen identity processes of an ethnic type – something which tends to fail when it is part of public policies designed in a centralized way, instead of emerging from below, based on local demands. It concerned that phenomenon that Martins Fernandes (2011) has called the "Inducer State": a State that promotes not only economic development, but also certain social groups. Martins Fernandes, in his doctoral thesis (2011), uses as an example how the Lula government "induced" the creation of a political group named "LGBT youth", which was non-existent in the movement and was created for responding to government policies and open applications or calls. In terms of analysis, three orders of problems can be considered¹¹:

a) the movement towards affirmative action and multiculturalism cannot serve as a way to avoid the broader issue of the extreme and lasting inequalities that seem to characterize the modernity of some countries, including Brazil. As Nancy Fraser (2002) has already indicated, in her reply to the theses of Axel Honneth (2003), deep down there cannot be recognition (a determining element in identifying the beneficiaries of affirmative action measures) without redistributing resources and without fighting for the improvement of the common good, just as we cannot speak of ethnocultural diversity disconnected from the issue of the-racial and social inequalities; b) the rhetorical-ideological dimension of action affirmative, because I am concerned about the theatrical dimension of the debate around affirmative action, especially during the presidency of Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Today, when quotas are a reality, albeit threatened, it is perhaps worth thinking that a project for the effective incorporation of Federal Law No. 10.639 into the academic world - the biggest multicultural project for the time being - will work much better if it is thought of as an anti-racist education project for tolerance rather than as de facto ethnic project, centered on strengthening sectoral identities through the culturalization of diversity; c) the type of content to be given to the eventual transformation of curricula in a multicultural sense – what is understood, for example, by Afro-Brazilian culture or indigenous culture? When it comes to icons loaded with values and emotions such as Africa, Africans, "races", blackness, racism, being Indian and indigenous thought, I think it is crucial to emphasize plurality, rather than insisting on talking about culture and identity in the singular.

The reconstruction of the curricula should take place in the sense of showing the variety of cultural forms and identity processes, making, precisely of such variety, a factor of strength and creativity. According to the most current interpretations in the humanities, "culture" and "identity", more than as concrete entities or products, should be seen and analyzed as projects and processes. Therefore, it is not worth insisting on defining what would be, for example, Afro-Brazilian culture through endless lists of items and traits that never manage to incorporate the immense variety of orientations of the large Afro-Brazilian population¹². Rather than making something that is always in motion static, it seems to be more interesting to develop

¹¹ | For a breakdown of my position on this, see Sansone (2007).

¹² | This is what some manuals produced by the Palmares Foundation of the Ministry of Culture in the 2000s tended to do.

methods that illustrate how different actors have produced culture, resistance and identity in different contexts. The real challenge is to apply these more modern notions of what culture and identity are at all levels of education, escaping the praxis that has left intellectual sophistication to the university, and making primary and secondary schools an environment where culture and identity, when approached, are treated in a too traditional and rigid way – contributing to a loss of interest in these themes among many students who, with a more dynamic teaching method, could very well be interested.

Teaching, for example, African stories and cultures can be very fun and stimulating, but it can also be something quite "boring", as students say, if done without the proper sophistication¹³. In addition to this multiplicity, it is also worth insisting on greater attention to individuality and individuals. I consider it inappropriate always and only to speak of Afro-Brazilians or indigenous peoples as populations, because this suggests that blacks and Indians only function as collective entities and never also as individuals, with all the uniqueness that characterizes the human being. A language is needed in teaching the theme of African history and cultures and Afro-Brazilian history and cultures that account for both collective demands and experiences and individual trajectories and desires. There are, of course, exemplary characters (for example, illustrious figures like Milton Santos or Manuel Querino) of blacks and Indians, as well as many common people, until now "without a name". This has led to an authentic contradiction. The vocabulary of multiculturalism is centered on the notion of majority versus minority, as well as community and ethnic identity because it originates in societies where these practices are thought of as a way to deal with and incorporate those practices into civil societies that where there are groups defined as ethnic minorities, who are supposed to organize and behave as a community, if not residential at least in terms of behavior.

In the Brazilian context, however, where the mixed-black population represents, in many regions, the majority, or at least a large percentage, it is difficult to take advantage of the term "community" or "minority". In the field of ethnic studies, the term "identity" has historically been used more to refer to (search for a) national identity than to refer to specific groups. Perhaps it is necessary to think of a terminology centered around the notion of exclusion-inclusion: it is necessary to think of Brazil in a culturally, in addition to socially, more inclusive way.

Once again, perhaps the strongest bias should be that of education in and for tolerance, rather than an emphasis on cultural diversity on the part of this country's population. When emphasizing cultural diversity, care must be taken about how to define notions such as "Afro-Brazilian culture" or "indigenous culture". There are strong regional differences, as well as between urban and rural and between different social classes. Notwithstanding this, the iconography of blackness, present in documents, manuals and publications associated with the proposal of the Fundação

13 | I saw this in my research in public schools in the cities of Salvador and São Francisco do Conde, Bahia

Cultural Palmares of the extinct Ministry of Culture, in the years 2002 to 2015, reflects mainly the reality of two cities, Salvador and Rio de Janeiro and, almost exclusively, the lower social classes¹⁴.

Due to the need to guarantee a plurality of expressions and not force, once again, people to identify with representations from without of what it means to be black or Indian - that are external to these people's reality -, I am convinced of the need to think about the identification process as little as possible as a matter of state. In principle, I am in favor of granting (new) rights and also cultural rights to all those groups and individuals who have had a history of ethnic-racial discrimination and organize to claim such rights. However, I would like the groups and individuals themselves to be able to say which cultural rights to demand and in what form. My impression is that, in most cases, they will call for equality rather than emphasize the fact that they are (culturally) different. In this sense, the State must pay attention to these demands, but not anticipate them.

FROM THE INDUCING TO THE REPRESSIVE STATE

After having schematically evaluated the processes and changes that led to what I have defined as a wave of identity, it is important to make some considerations about the current, new and tense configuration that is being outlined around the ethnic-racial issue in Brazil. We need to learn to deal with this new complexity.

A possible solution proposed by black or non-white feminism has been the intersectional approach. This, which can be considered the main feminist paradigm of the last decades, has been affirmed above all since the Women World Conference in Beijing in 1995. The term points to the multiple discriminations that a subject tends to suffer (because of gender, race/color class, age, etc.), which can accumulate and create a set of impossibilities or blocks (Segato, 2012), but can also result in forms of resistance co-produced by two or more identity conditions (Bachetta, 2009). Several authors postulate that emphasizing intersectionality raises the question of alliances as a project and method to transcend the barriers erected by oppression and can boost cooperation, in the organization of resistance of what could otherwise be a potential zero-sum game. This would be the competition between identity projects inspired by ethnic or class selfishness, by which each group feeds for itself. Against these corporatist identities, it would be possible and desirable to create coalitions of conscience, an expression of intellectual activism (Hill Collins, 2013: 242). However, radical critiques such as Houria Bouteldja (2016) or Sirma Bilge (2015) point to a growing "white" use of intersectionality, used by white feminists, in fact, as an instrument to question the centrality of racial cleavage in society, including among women.

Although it is undeniable that discrimination is always multifaceted and that it determines – negatively – the course of life, and that the functioning of discrimination

14 | Just browse the issues of the Palmares Magazine, published between 2010 and 2015 and accessible on the website http://www.palmares.gov.br/?page_id=6320. Now, starting with the Temer government and with more force in the Bolsonaro government, the Palmares Foundation drop that active role and unfortunately has become a sad simulacrum of what once was.

needs to be analyzed, I see some limitations in the intersectional discourse: a) it tends to be ahistorical because it does not focus on the relationship between identity processes and the development of opportunity systems and ethno-racial configuration and habitus; b) it tends to be cumulative and always presuppose a context, in which the discrimination would be constantly growing – there would be no negotiations and adjustments as a result of political pressure from the discriminated groups, which would be condemned to the status of eternal losers; c) it does not account for the evidence that the identity process, in addition to being a reaction to discrimination, can also be a creative project, through the incorporation and simultaneous or intermittent use of various costumes and identity images; d) although I find it useful and necessary to think about the interface between the various ingredients of an individual's identity project (class versus race/color etc.), what bothers me is enunciating the complexity of the identity process, without effectively attempting to explain and understand how color/race, class, generation and gender and sexuality, but also styles and models of consumption, are interrelated. As mentioned before, there is no way to understand what drives the identity process without an empirically based qualitative and quantitative perspective, diachronic and not only synchronic, and that also highlights the opportunities and limits provided by the current ethnic-racial configuration.

Furthermore, I don't know if we can generalize and say that Brazil is a more ethnic country today than it was three decades ago. Without the shadow of a doubt, more people define themselves as black, but also, as an analysis of the last three censuses points out, there is an increase in the record of miscegenation even, at long last, in the middle class – thus, in what seems to be a contradiction, there are, at the same time, more browns and more blacks. Notwithstanding this important change in self-declaration of color/race, until recently there was no noticeable increase in any kind of ethnic-racial polarization – in 2014, all three main candidates for the office of the president were in favor of affirmative action. However, from the preparatory phase of the 2018 elections, this changed radically. If in the recent past there was a new protagonism of blacks and Indigenous, with great and objective advances, today there is a political context that represses the masses that claim indigenous and quilombola rights, quotas and affirmative actions are questioned, investment in education is contained, and there are new tensions and violence in rural and urban areas. These new barriers create a different context, which is not in itself a simple return back to the past: this society in recent decades has experienced strong identity movements and ferments, the awakening of affirmative action measures, the promotion and even the patrimonialization of popular culture and the expansion of rights associated with the condition of indigenous peoples and quilombolas. Those collective movements and projects have had, moreover, a strong impact on the individual trajectories of many black and indigenous people, especially in the young generations, who in these years have changed their perspectives on various spheres of life, consumption patterns and

15 | Nota sobre os dados do Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística: aumento do percentual de pardos que, nas pesquisas mais qualitativas, anda junto com o aumento das pessoas que se autodefinem com o termo "negro".

styles, ways of dressing or using hair and enjoying their leisure time.

Repressing this wave of identity after a long opening season, damming the collective protagonism into individual confinement, with virtual socialization as almost the only and partial relief, can lead to great frustration and new social tensions. What is the near future of Brazilian-style multiculturalism, of Law No. 10.369/2003 – which enabled the strengthening of African studies and greater cultural openness in the curriculum – and affirmative action that, with the availability of quotas and scholarships for needy students, meant more inclusion and better conditions and opportunities in undergraduate and later also graduate higher education? Of course, promoting social and racial quotas within a generalized growth of university vacancies is much easier than implementing quotas in graduate studies with far fewer scholarships than before. The deconstruction of affirmative action and the process of inclusion in universities by the government has provided us with new challenges. Are we going into a hideous zero-sum game of competition between minority and majority or even between minorities, as is often the case in the United States? Are we moving towards a movement of *mors tua, vita mea* – does my strength and identity grow if yours weaken?

What answer can and should we give? First, I suggest carefully analyzing what was built and developed during the identity moment, from its beginnings in the FHC era until its consolidation in the years 2003-2016. We have to make greater efforts to make the enforcement of Law No. 10639 interesting, useful and fun – so that it fits the language and priorities of the young generations – more than insisting that they identify with the proposal and philosophy of the law, as tended to happen in the PT government, also due to the mistakes of many of the activists who developed their plans in a very centralized fashion from Brasilia. We need to learn to explain and show why studying and getting to know Africa is important. After all, this kind of interest has always been the result of political economy and never a natural fact.

Therefore, we need an ethnographic and anthropological look at the phenomena related to this process that I would call "New Dissatisfaction". It is in this sense that the research by Rosana Pinheiro Machado (2018; 2019) goes, freed from a useless tone of condemnation, while driven by the desire to understand what is behind this (new) conservative behavior or posture and the relative support they have received even by the popular sectors¹⁶. These ways of doing politics and exercising power are completely new and anti-political and propose radical reforms of both socioeconomic and educational-cultural-religious nature. In various countries and continents, they are frontally opposed both to the previous projects for the reduction of extreme and durable inequalities and, above all, to the projects that I would call "emancipation by mosaic" and identity welfare. This is a welfare system in which the condition of "ethnic minority" is somehow rewarded and rights and resources depend, to a certain extent, on the ability to perform, aestheticize and preserve the

16 | I've been thinking, in these times, how it could be interesting to repropose in Brazil, and perhaps in other countries tormented by the same authoritarian convulsions, a type of quantitative and qualitatively survey inspired by the famous F Scale (F of Fascism), the psychological test developed by Theodor Adorno and his collaborators in 1947, in the United States, to measure the quantum of authoritarian personality that can be identified in various groups of individuals or ideal types. Research in this direction, although without the same sophistication, carried out recently in University of São Paulo, in the capital of São Paulo (See Folha de S. Paulo, October 23, 2019), indicates the complexity of this relatively new context: the population is relatively progressive in social terms, including with university quotas for blacks and the needy, but conservative in terms of identity, with greater approval for the hardening of sentences as a way to fight crime and high rates rejection of abortion and the granting of more rights and visibility to the LGBT population – whereby rejection is even stronger in the most popular layers, where the mestizo and black population is overrepresented.

diversity of an ethnocultural nature.

It is necessary and urgent to ask how the new populist governments affect the structure of inequalities, the identity processes of subaltern groups and the broader construction of collective identities. Which are the winners and losers in these processes? We will need to detail the analysis by identifying both global traits and singularities by context or country (India, Philippines, Colombia, Brazil, etc.), by traditional or new media and technologies (social media, flash mobs, religious cults, etc.) and by the specific domain of society (religion, politics, cultural production or intolerance - for example, violence directed at foreigners and the LGBT population). For this, it is necessary to create collaboration networks with the most outstanding researchers who face what can be called the "new era of extremes" in countries such as India, Colombia, the United States, South Africa, Italy, the Philippines and Brazil¹⁷. Unfortunately, in terms of possible international exchanges, the context has also changed and for the worse. In terms of international policy, Brazil moved from multipolarism and a certain emphasis on South-South relations to a strange and singular alignment with Trump¹⁸.

The question is how all of this affects the panorama of identities and their construction in Brazil and what will happen with the rapid decline of the so-called "identity wave", that is, the period of the revival of social identities based on gender, ethnicity and generation during which the term "diversity" ceased to be a burden associated with inequalities to become a term associated with egalitarian and redistributive measures. This wave started to take shape around 2002, during the most exciting stage of the first Lula government but entered into crisis with the consolidation of the Temer government in 2017. As in all radical processes, there was a conservative counter-reaction and the country quickly changed its official narrative, from an emphasis on the positivity of (new) identities of subaltern groups to their complete denial. Just think of the change that means moving from the federal government slogan "Brazil, a country for all", in the PT governments, to Bolsonaro's slogan "Brazil above all, God above everyone". The most extreme evidence of this reactionary attitude is found in the anti-identity posture coalesced by the super-conservative presidential candidate - and later President Bolsonaro - and in the climate of hatred towards the rights of minorities fed by fake news circulated on numerous websites that commented on the most important political assassination of the last decade in Brazil, that of Marielle Franco. If an important part of the population recognizes itself in Marielle's personality and even revere her, many others reject her precisely because they consider her biography too much centered on identity.

This new tension between (new) progressive and conservative identity processes does not only concern Brazil, but also other Latin American countries, as shown by the mobilization against the externalization of indigenous culture and identity within the process that led to the violent removal from power of President

¹⁷ | A successful attempt in this direction has been the 20th edition of the advanced course *Fábrica de Ideias*, held in August 2019, in Salvador, whose theme was "The new era from the extremes". Our intensive and advanced course aims at discussing in a progressive key and through a South-South as well as a South-North dialogue the emergence and growth of new and particularly exaggerated forms of populism. Available in: www.fabricadeideias.info

¹⁸ | I wonder how this conservative shift might affect projects such as the Interdisciplinary Studies Graduate Program Ethnic and African (Posafro) at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), whose thematic area, ethno-racial and regional studies (Africa), ceased to be a priority already in the Temer government to become the focus of verbal and political aggression in the Bolsonaro government.

Evo Morales in Bolivia in 2019, or the defeat of the referendum in favor of the peace process in Colombia in 2017. In that country, there was strong opposition to the peace process and the amnesty project proposed by the Santos government, especially in the interiors and among the neo-Pentecostals. The discourse of opposition to the peace process was a conglomeration of slogans against any type of minority, such as homosexuals, feminists and Indians (Restrepo, 2019).

The real increase in religious intolerance against any form of religiosity of African-American and indigenous origin, in a region, that until not so long ago had been considered relatively tolerant in terms of religious freedom, is worrying. It can be understood, at least in part, as a reaction to the process of inclusion from the part of the State's of narratives of this religious experience of minorities that occurred over the last two decades as a component of a new and growing multicultural posture developed in general by progressive governments.

Indeed, it is necessary to debate the relationship between, on the one hand, the identity policies and the (new) demands of citizenship and, on the other hand, the State, party politics and the democratic system more generally. Latin America is experiencing a radical and populist rejection of the State itself, as well as its codes, language and rules¹⁹. This rejection ends up negatively influencing and disempowering multicultural policies, which are identified by many, even in the lower social strata, more as an integral part of the state machine – the establishment – than as an expression of the will of subordinate groups that have historically been discriminated against, or as a way to remedy old injustices.

In Brazil, as in Trump's United States and elsewhere in the Americas, we need to learn to deal with the evidence that the new formats of conservative populism are essentially opposed to practically any multicultural experiment that tends to be seen as the result of an all-too-close association between progressive policies and the promotion of new sectoral identities – even when they were thought of as measures in favor of population groups that have historically been discriminated against. This is of course a challenging contradiction and is no coincidence that one of the best-selling social science books in the United States in the Trump years received a subtitle that makes a lot of sense: *After Identity Politics*, by author Mark Lilla (2017).

In short, I believe that today there is no way to think about more inclusive and democratic cultural policies on the part of the State without a careful analysis of the opportunities and failures of the new Latin American multiculturalism. I confess that, after a few years of enthusiasm with the emancipatory power of both affirmative action and multiculturalism in the Brazilian context, I am now more pessimistic. I have become, again, an ethno-skeptic (Sansone, 2007). Although I certainly recognize that Brazil still presents not only a social deficit but also an identity deficit (the new identities in question are an expression of subordinate groups that claim for very just rights and due and legitimate recognition), I am not (anymore) convinced

19 | Vale a pena salientar que parece ser característico desse novo populismo de direita na América Latina um duplo movimento pelo qual, dentro da retórica eleitoral, se endeusam as eleições, mas se demoniza a política partidária.

of the intrinsically emancipatory and anti-racist power of ethnic-racial identity politics. The problem, in my opinion, is not itself, the radicality of the identity projects in question, but their genesis. More than the aestheticization of these projects – the exterior forms and the rhetorical style in which these projects manifest themselves – what matters is why and through whom they are created. Its emancipatory character depends on this. We need to problematize the path of identity politics and its process of reification of words and categories, as it was experienced in Brazil, and focus our efforts on thinking about anti-racist education and practice, against intolerance. If it is necessary to highlight the new citizenship demands embedded in these collective identities, it is equally necessary to learn to deal with the new set of contradictions they present to our Latin American modernity.

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