

The Workers' Party and the Elimination of Racial
Inequality: a New Stage in the Politicization of Race
in Brazil

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Introduction

At the present, Brazil is undergoing a process of democratization that has allowed social movements to have a voice in the political arena. This process, which has been taking place since 1985, came as a reaction to the military dictatorship that lasted from 1964 to 1985.¹ During this time, Afro-Brazilian² activists and the political left were for the most part opposed to the dictatorship, but were unable to agree on the issue of racial discrimination. The left perceived race as a divisive issue for the working class and understood discrimination to be derivative of class, where race, gender and sexual orientation were secondary factors. On the contrary, Afro-Brazilians perceived discrimination primarily as derivative of race.

Twenty years after the end of the dictatorship, the Workers' Party (PT), which emerged from the labor movement at the end of the 1970s, is the political party that has accomplished the most for Afro-Brazilians in terms of implementing policies that promote social justice and racial equality for all Brazilians. These accomplishments fly in the face of a history of denial of the existence of racial discrimination through the propagation of the myth of racial democracy.³ The shift between race as a divisive issue within the working class and race as a target for special policies for the leftist PT is the subject I wish to investigate in this paper.

¹ By democratization, I am referring to the end of the military dictatorship, the presence of unrestricted elections, and the freedom of social movements to mobilize with little repression from the government.

² Brazilians who consider themselves black, or 'negro', comprise 6.2% of the population, according to the 2000 census. However, there is also a population of 'pardos', or browns, who comprise 38.4% of the population. Together, this 44.6% of the population that is of African descent or considers themselves to be Afro-Brazilian is the population on which I seek to focus when I use the term Afro-Brazilian.

³ The myth of racial democracy, articulated in Gilberto Freyre's 1933 book, *The Masters and the Slaves*, asserted that the institution of slavery encouraged racial tolerance and intermingling so that Brazilians inherently had no racial prejudice, contrary to what he had observed in Europe, the United States and Africa. Freyre emphasized how Brazil's three races contributed to formation of the nation, giving them a reason to feel proud of their unique, ethnically mixed tropical civilization.

With regard to the politicization of race, I seek to discover which factors have influenced the PT's willingness to propose legislation that promotes racial equality, considering that President Fernando Henrique Cardoso's 1996 Human Rights Plan was the first time that the Brazilian government admitted the presence of racial inequality in their country by identifying an ethnic group as the target for affirmative action. The very admission that racism exists in Brazil contradicts decades of denial and oppression and now presents a target against which Afro-Brazilians can mobilize. In the following paragraphs, I will show how the frequency of events concerning race in Brazil, the percent of Afro-Brazilian *petistas* within the legislature, the number of years of experience Afro-Brazilian *petistas* have in the legislature, the PT's control of the presidency, and the party's inclusion of social movements have influenced the PT's current support for legislation that promotes racial equality.⁴

Methodology

I have chosen to study the PT's approach to the problem of racial inequality although Afro-Brazilians have no strong allegiance to the PT and often vote for any of the parties of the political left, such as the PDT (The Workers' Democratic Party) and the PTB (Brazilian Workers' Party). However, the difference between these parties and the PT is that the PT does not tolerate corruption or clientelism, but promotes transparency and internal democracy, which has allowed social movements to participate in policy formation within the party. The PDT and the PTB, like other Brazilian parties, tend to co-opt and weaken the Afro-Brazilian civil rights movement, which is why I wish to determine the possible future of the movement with the legislative support of the PT.

⁴ A *petista* is a member of the Partido dos Trabalhadores.

Because of Brazil's distinct regional differences, I sought a national approach to this paper, and thus did not explore the PT's actions at the state and municipal levels, although many decisions concerning racial equality have started at these levels. I chose not to explore the PT's relationship with particular nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) because the most logical choice, the *Movimento Negro Unificado* (MNU), is no longer a cohesive organization, but rather an umbrella organization for other NGOs that focus on rights for Afro-Brazilian women, children, workers, and homosexuals. Instead, I have chosen to use John Burdick's definition of the Afro-Brazilian civil rights movement in a very general sense as "groups that place an explicit emphasis on struggling against racism and building a positive black identity." (Burdick, 1998: 137).

To determine which factors have influenced the PT's openness to the issue of race, I have selected PT support for legislation that promotes racial equality as my dependent variable and the frequency of events concerning race in Brazil, the percent of Afro-Brazilian representatives in the PT in Congress, the number of years Afro-Brazilian *petistas* have been in Congress upon entering a new legislature, the party's control of the executive office, and the party's inclusion of social movements as my independent variables.⁵ All variables will be observed through time between 1983 and the present, with the 47th legislature lasting from 1983-1987 and the present 52nd legislature lasting from 2003-2007. I chose to begin my observation in 1982 because race was important in these elections and they were the first multiparty elections in almost forty years. I continued my observation throughout the entire 1982-2004 period to demonstrate how

⁵ I did not include percent of PT reps in Congress as an independent variable because the PT does not have a majority in the legislature and must therefore form coalitions with parties that are less disciplined. Thus, as long as the PT must form coalitions, one cannot assume that the more representatives the PT has in the national legislature, the more impact they will have on the legislation that is passed.

the independent variables have affected the dependent variable over time. Since the PT started out extremely weak in the legislature, the focus on the PT and its commitment to racial equality will only be visible in later legislatures.

The dependent variable refers to the creation of any ministerial position, an official program to combat racism, or regular legislation that specifically combats racism. The frequency of events concerning race in Brazil refers to the country's involvement in international and national conferences to promote racial equality, Afro-Brazilian political protests, and other events of this character. The frequency of these events during each legislature will serve as an indicator of the salience of racial issues at the national level.

The percent of Afro-Brazilian members of the PT in Congress will also be monitored because one can assume that the more Afro-Brazilian *petistas* there are in Congress, the more they will direct the PT's policies. Because it takes time for Afro-Brazilian politicians to gain seniority within the PT and Congress, I will also monitor the number of years spent in Congress prior to the legislature in question as an indicator of how much seniority they have acquired.

The PT's control of the presidency will serve as an indicator of executive support for the goals of the party and the impact that the powerful Brazilian presidency has on the PT's support for racial equality. Finally, the PT's inclusion of social movements will be an indicator of how movements such as the Afro-Brazilian civil rights movement were incorporated into the party and have a legitimate voice in party politics.

Brazil: Race Relations and Politics

In order to provide the reader with a framework with which to understand the current racial atmosphere in Brazil and the enormity of the PT's support for racial equality, I will

now give a brief background as to the history of race in Brazil and the political system within which the PT presently operates.

Slavery in Brazil started in 1531 and was abolished in 1888, at which point Brazilian elites believed that the newly freed Afro-Brazilian population, which was assumed to have retained its “backward” culture, would impede Brazil from taking its place among the developed capitalist nations of the world. Consequently, the Brazilian government embarked on a program of “whitening” by subsidizing European immigration to Brazil so that immigrants would breed out the “inferior” African blood. As a result of the whitening ideology and its emphasis on the acquisition of a lighter skin tone, contemporary Brazil has quite a unique color spectrum. Since Brazilians classify themselves by phenotype, the results of a 1976 survey show evidence of 134 different ways to self-classify one’s race. Consequently, there is a stigma attached to belonging to a movement for the rights of *negros* when the term itself is pejorative and many Afro-Brazilians would prefer to self-classify as *moreno*, *mulato*, or *café com leite*.⁶ Although people who live in cities that are rich in Afro-Brazilian culture, such as Salvador da Bahia, have taken measures to create pride in *negro* identity and heritage, the Afro-Brazilian civil rights movement must still negotiate the lack of a common racial identity as an obstacle to mobilization.

Fifteen years of authoritarian rule by Getúlio Vargas (1930-1945) replaced the elitist, oligarchic, Republican regime (1889-1930). Prior to this, the first Afro-Brazilian civil rights movement, the *Frente Negra Brasileira* (Black Brazilian Front), had begun to mobilize, but its activities were cut short by Vargas’ proclamation of an *Estado Novo* (New State) in 1937. During Vargas’ rule, the ideology of racial democracy was

⁶ The terms *negro*, *moreno*, *mulato*, and *café com leite* translated into English mean black (ethnicity), brown, mulatto, and coffee with milk, respectively. The term *preto*, which refers to the color black, is sometimes used in place of *negro*, but it is sometimes also a pejorative term.

developed and became the solution for Brazil's problems. Brazil before Vargas was a country that was barely being held together because of strong regional politicians and ethnic identities. Like Vargas' quest for social and political unity, racial democracy asserted the unity of the Brazilian people and gave them a right to feel pride in the fact that they had created a mix of three races- European, African, and indigenous. This meta-race was unique among the races of the world and emphasized the contributions that all three races had made to the greater meta-race. The exceptionalism granted Brazil by the racial democracy ideology allowed Brazilians to take pride in the miscegenation of their past and to discredit the theories of scientific racism that had infiltrated Brazilian society.⁷ International acceptance that Brazil was a racial democracy strengthened the country's claim that all Brazilians lived in racial harmony, which has deprived the Afro-Brazilian civil rights movement of its solitary target for mobilization (Skidmore, 1990: 27).

From 1964 to 1985, Brazil was controlled by a conservative military dictatorship. During the period 1978-1985, many previously oppressed social movements took advantage of the *abertura*, or democratic opening, that the military had made for the transition to democracy. Among these movements were the labor movement, from which the PT emerged, and the *Movimento Negro Unificado* (Unified Black Movement), which was one of the organizations associated with Afro-Brazilian civil rights.

In Brazil's most recent democratic period (1985-present), the country has maintained its history of patron-client ties that dates back to the 19th century. Consequently,

⁷ Brazil's ability to "avoid" racial strife was a contrast to advanced capitalist nations, such as the United States, Germany, and Italy, where legislated racism and racist nationalist movements made Brazil stand out as a country that had escaped racism.

many of the political parties provide material benefits in exchange for votes and voters often vote for individual candidates instead of for the parties they represent.

Brazil uses an open-list proportional representation system in order to elect members of the legislature, which has 513 seats in the Chamber of Deputies and 81 seats in the Senate. Because this system encourages party-switching and competition among candidates of the same party and decreases incentives for party discipline, political parties in this type of system are usually extremely weak (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995: 395). In such a system, particularist politicians push regional policies, as opposed to national policies, making national government ineffective (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995: 393).

Brazilian political parties also have low coherence, because there are few incentives for politicians to subjugate regional interests to national ones. Although Brazilian parties have specific ideological niches on the spectrum, they are undermined by the degree to which party-switching occurs (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995: 376). Since politicians are elected based on personal traits rather than party affiliation and there is no stigma attached to multiple party-switching or multiple party memberships, party discipline is low, making the party system in this country insignificant and ineffective for governance (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995: 378). At the level of the electorate, party identification is low, due to particularist politicians (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995: 385).

In a party system such as this one, the PT stands out as an exception because of its commitment to morality in politics and to party ideology. Furthermore, the PT is one of the most disciplined parties in the legislature, with only 2% of its politicians voting against the party platform (Mainwaring, 1999: 139). The PT is a mass-based political party, and while many of its members are also members of labor unions, the unions are autonomous from

the party (Branford, 1995: 7). Similarly, Afro-Brazilian activists are politicians in the PT, but the movement is autonomous from the party. Having emerged in the waning days of socialism, the PT does not seek to be a socialist party in a one party state, and is instead understood to be a party of socialists (Baiocchi, 2003: 10).

Since its emergence in the late 1970s, the PT has been the target of recent studies on the Brazilian party system particularly for its uniqueness. The party is anti-clientelistic, anti-corruption and promotes transparency and internal democracy as a means to ensure that democratic ideals are present in their policymaking as a governing party. *Nucleos* are internal organizations that are the means by which social movements have a voice in the party and help the party maintain its ties to civil society. As a symbol of the importance that issues of citizenship and racial equality have in the PT, the party was one of the first to have a nucleus of Afro-Brazilians within the party.

The 1982-1985 period was a very critical turning point for the PT because it was a time in which the party shifted ideologically towards the center, broadening its appeal beyond the working class to encompass all wage earners. The impetus for this shift was the disappointment resulting from the unexpected electoral failure faced by the party in the election of 1982. This ideological shift, typical of a governing party of the left, enabled the party to reinvent itself so as to embrace many of the emerging social movements of that era. This shift occurred around the same time that other emerging political parties began to grant some of the demands of the re-emerging Afro-Brazilian civil rights movement with the intent to demobilize it (Hellman, 1992: 55). Because of its internally democratic structure, the PT has allowed previously co-opted social movements to have a voice within the party.

One could argue that this ideological shift created a space for the Afro-Brazilian civil rights movement within the PT because of the latter's commitment to internal democracy. Because the party was no longer restricted to the working class, the Afro-Brazilian civil rights movement did not alienate as many potential supporters by joining an ideologically constrained party.⁸ In fact, one could argue that most Afro-Brazilians fall within the category of wage earners, so the party could be seen as one in which the movement would not be as ideologically polarized as it had been in the past. On the other hand, one may interpret the PT's commitment to social justice as the umbrella under which the Afro-Brazilian movement's demands have been granted.

Obstacles to Afro-Brazilian Mobilization

According to Michael Mitchell, The Afro-Brazilian civil rights movement has four options in their pursuit of racial equality (Mitchell, 1999: 68). They can form alliances within the existing party system, build alliances with parties that have shunned clientelist arrangements with their constituencies, develop strategies that would provide them relative autonomy in the electoral arena such as establishing independent political parties based on appeals to racial consciousness, or withdraw completely from the electoral arena and rely solely on the efforts of nongovernmental organizations to advance the cause of Afro-Brazilians. The part of the Afro-Brazilian civil rights movement that has aligned itself with the PT has built an informal alliance with a non-clientelist party, which will be shown later in the paper.

However, the part of the Afro-Brazilian civil rights movement that has not pledged allegiance to the PT may still be facing some of the problems that have presented

⁸ It is critical to differentiate between the PT's ideological strength as a part of the left and their electoral appeal that is necessary to ensure a broad constituency.

themselves to the Afro-Brazilian movement in the past. One of the problems that has confronted the movement since the 1930s has been with its involvement in the political arena. It has been said that for social movements to be successful, they must remain independent of political parties or other governmental interference (Spanakos, 2000: 254). In the 1930s, the *Frente Negra Brasileira* faced not only ideological polarization once it attempted to politically mobilize, but was also closed down by Getúlio Vargas' *Estado Novo* in 1937 because of its sympathy for the fascist-inspired Integralist movement.⁹ In the late 1970s, the military regime passed a law changing the political system from a two party system to a multiparty one, hoping to split the official opposition party, the *Movimento Democrático Brasileiro* (Brazilian Democratic Movement). Consequently, in the elections of 1982, the black vote was highly courted as the new parties recognized the recent emergence of the *Movimento Negro Unificado* and that racial issues could no longer be ignored. During this time, any potential Afro-Brazilian voting bloc stimulated by the actions of the *Movimento Negro Unificado*, was splintered by the activists' support for various new parties (Davis, 1999: 23).

Beyond the issue of the movement's relationship with political parties, the Afro-Brazilian civil rights movement's adoption of a place on the political spectrum during the dictatorship alienated many potential supporters. While some activists saw the place of the movement on the political left, others were discouraged by the left's refusal to acknowledge that race was a cause of discrimination (Andrews, 1991: 195). The movement also tended to dislike the Catholic Church and Evangelicals, which alienated

⁹ The reason Afro-Brazilians sympathized with a fascist-inspired movement is that both they and the Integralists resented the influx of European immigration. However, not all Afro-Brazilians sympathized with this movement, which caused the FNB to lose support from moderate and leftist activists.

religious Afro-Brazilians (Burdick, 1998: 147).¹⁰ Finally, the movement became so ideologically narrow that it lost much of its strength and support by the end of the dictatorship (Andrews, 1995: 228).

Because of Brazil's history of patron-client ties, the Afro-Brazilian civil rights movement, once courted for votes, has been co-opted and thereby weakened by corrupt, clientelistic political parties. This practice, which dates back to the days of the *Frente Negra Brasileira*, allowed Brazilian politicians to promise material benefits to poor Afro-Brazilian communities in exchange for electoral support (Mitchell, 1999: 67).¹¹ A grander, more widespread version of this practice is populism, as characterized by Getúlio Vargas' Brazilian Workers' Party in the 1930s and Leonel Brizola's Democratic Workers' Party in the 1980s. Consequently, the Afro-Brazilian civil rights movement lost much of its autonomy as a social movement through its cooptation by such parties (Mitchell, 1999: 78).

During the military dictatorship (1964-1985), both the political left, which was in opposition to the government, and the right, which supported it, continued to insist that there was no racial discrimination in Brazil.¹² What was interesting about the political left is that many Afro-Brazilian activists were also Marxists and were against the dictatorship. However, the left, not wanting to divide the working class, explained away the presence of racial discrimination as a consequence of capitalism. In other words, the

¹⁰ Elite activists tend to practice African religions, while the masses are Christian and most recently, Pentacostals.

¹¹ In essence, community leaders in *favelas*, Brazilian shanty towns, secure the building of a community center, the paving of roads, or provision of electricity to the community from the highest bidder and then tell the community who to vote for. At the end of this process, the politician's commitment to the residents of the *favela* is finished until the next election, if he offers the most material gain, and Afro-Brazilians are left without political recourse until then.

¹² The right insisted this because although they had eliminated political democracy in order to save it, they felt that if they promoted Brazil as at least a racial democracy, then the fact that Brazil was not a political democracy at this time would be overlooked.

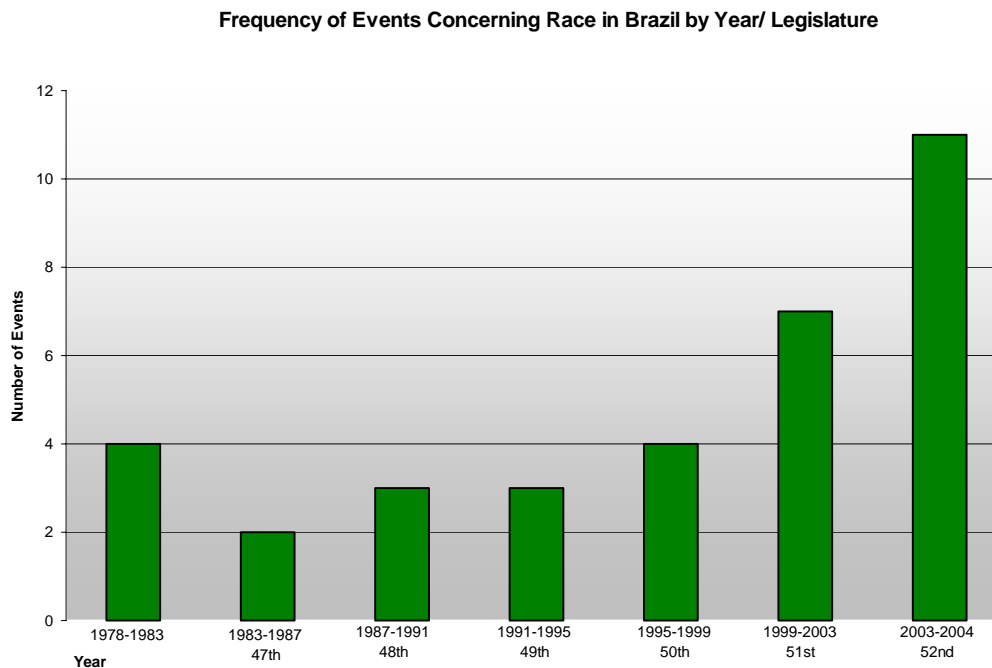
left perceived racial discrimination as a function of class and the Afro-Brazilian activists perceived it as a function of race (Skidmore, 1985: 17). This disagreement between Afro-Brazilians activists and the political left is especially pertinent to current events, considering the commitment the PT has made to the creation of racial equality in Brazil. It is, as I will discuss later, a dramatic turn towards understanding race as a pertinent variable in explaining the overwhelming poverty of the Afro-Brazilian people.

The PT's Record on Race

In the last years of the military dictatorship (1978-1983), there were four instances in which the issue of race captured national attention in Brazil. The formation of the *Movimento Negro Unificado* and the proclamation of November 20th as the National Day of Black Consciousness in 1978, the inclusion of race in the 1980 census, and the pertinence of race to political campaigns for the 1982 elections were instances that demonstrate the frequency of the issue of race during this time period.

In the 47th legislature (1983-1987), there were only two instances where the issue of race was presented: the creation of Palmares National Park in 1986 and when the *Movimento Negro Unificado* applied pressure on the government to outlaw racial discrimination. When compared to the preceding period, the issue of race lost importance during Brazil's transition to democracy. One explanation for this is that prior to Brazil's return to democracy in 1985 with the election of the first civilian president in twenty years, political parties were more receptive to the explosion of civil society that occurred. However, the focus shifted away from the Afro-Brazilian movement and towards creating political order once it became clear that Brazil was even closer to democratization. Another explanation is that Afro-Brazilians became complacent following the transition

to democracy, hoping that their desires for true racial democracy and social inclusion would be realized through electoral politics. In other words, the absence of the dictatorship as a target for mobilization contributed to the movement's loss of momentum (Marx, 1998: 263).



The PT performed worse than anticipated in the election of 1982 and consequently spent the duration of the 47th legislature attempting to address its problems and broaden its electoral appeal. The resulting shift from a party of workers to a mass-based party of wage-earners resulted from the failure of the class-based appeals from the 1982 election and was a sign that the PT needed to change its appeal in order to gain electoral power (Branford, 1995: 58). At the same time, the PT broadened its appeal, opening itself to the opinions of various social movements within civil society. This characteristic of the PT stays constant from the period in question until the present day (Keck, 1992: 15).

During this time period, a group of centrist *petistas*, determined to preserve the relationship between the party and various social movements, formed a group called *Articulação 113*. *Articulação* wished for party members to increase membership in social movements and for party leaders to promote internal democratic debate and thereby maintain the openness of the party. They encouraged the contribution of smaller social movements to the construction of the party so that it would remain a party-movement with a broader constituency and allowed demands put forth by such movements to be incorporated into the party platform.

The PT was extremely weak in Congress during the 47th legislature and Afro-Brazilian congressional representation in the PT was nonexistent. Furthermore, the party did not yet control the executive office and the PT was in the midst of an internal identity crisis, so it is not difficult to imagine why race was not an important issue for the PT to tackle in the 1983-1987 period.

Compared to the previous legislature, the issue of race entered into the public sphere three times during the 48th legislature (1987-1991), with the election of Benedita da Silva as the first Afro-Brazilian female to serve in the Chamber of Deputies in 1987, the 1988 Brotherhood Campaign to protest the celebration of the centenary of Abolition, and the creation of the Palmares Cultural Foundation in 1990.

During the 48th legislature, two Afro-Brazilians, Paulo Paim and Benedita da Silva, entered Congress with an average of 0.0 years of prior experience in the legislature. Since Paim and da Silva were novices, one can expect that they did not have much impact on the policymaking of the party in the legislature. As the reader will recognize in the following legislatures, the amount of legislative experience that Afro-

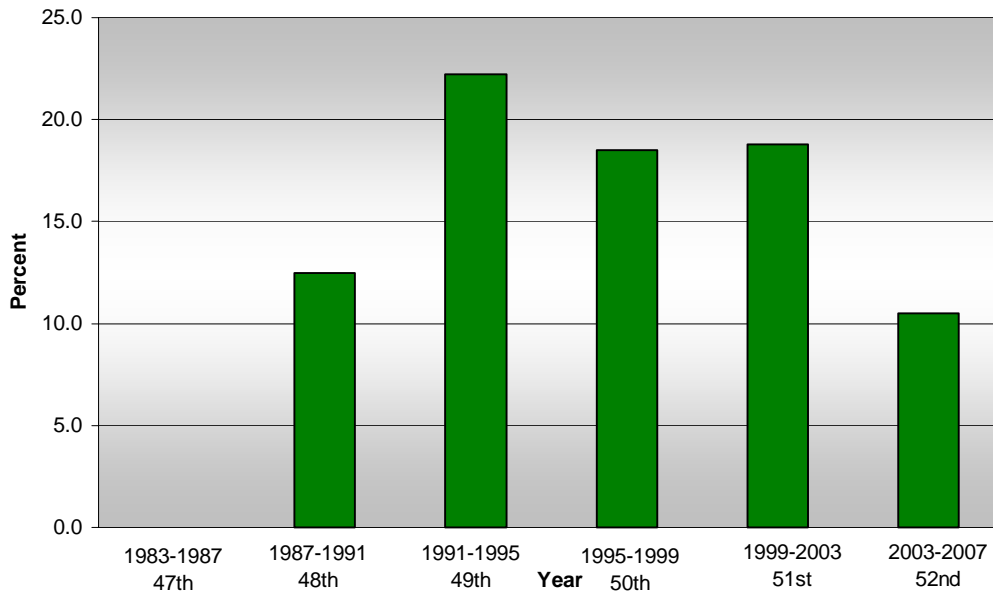
Brazilians have within the PT will have a great impact on whether or not the party places its weight behind legislation that promotes racial equality.

In 1989, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva ran for president as an outsider, only to lose to Fernando Collor de Melo's elite outsider appeal.¹³ The loss of the presidential race, which was first in a series of four such attempts, demonstrated that the PT had not yet proven its ability to govern at the national level. Thus, the small number of Afro-Brazilian representatives and their lack of experience at the national level, combined with the party's lack of control of the executive office prevented race from being a priority for the party during this legislature.

There were three instances during the 49th legislature (1991-1995) when the issue of race entered the public sphere: the first National Meeting of Afro-Brazilians of the PT in 1993, when Zumbi was chosen as a theme for carnival in 1995, and the celebration of the 300th anniversary of Zumbi's death, which was also in 1995. While the PT more than doubled its representation in Congress during this legislature, Afro-Brazilian politicians in the PT still lacked representation in the Senate, although they had four times the number of Afro-Brazilian *petistas* in Congress than in the previous legislature. Additionally, the Afro-Brazilian *petistas* who were part of the 49th legislature entered it with an average of 1.0 year of experience, which may have been an impetus to mobilization for Afro-Brazilian *petistas* who were involved in the National Meeting for Afro-Brazilians of the PT in 1993.

¹³ While Lula campaigned as a complete working-class outsider, Collor campaigned as an outsider who was still an elite member of society.

Percent Afro-Brazilian Petista Congressional Representatives in PT by Year/ Legislature



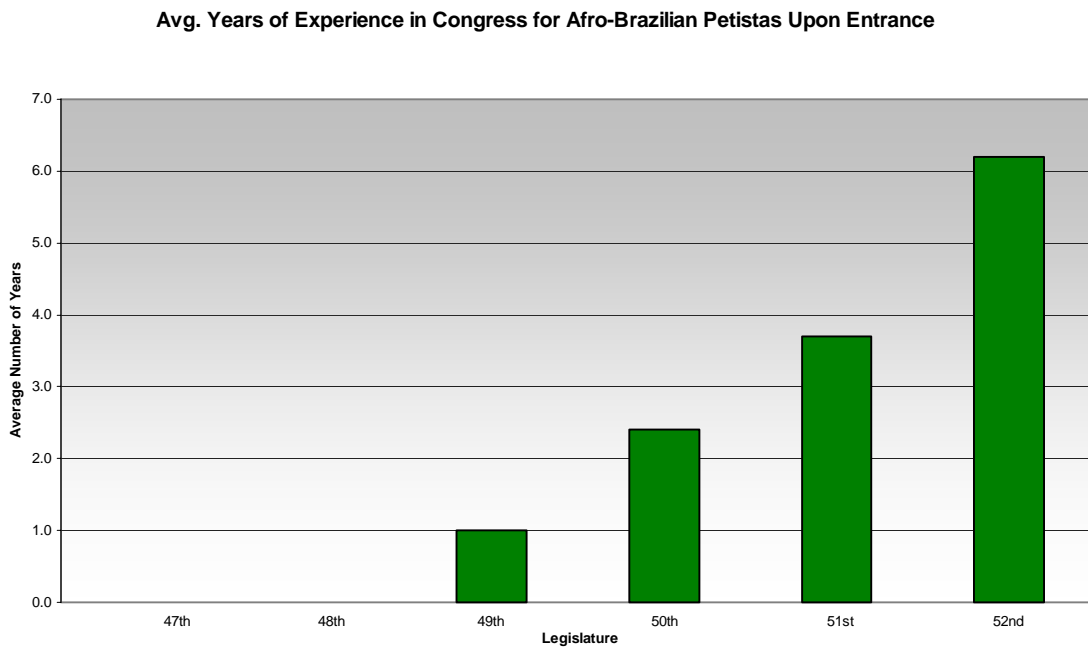
SOURCE: Derived from Ollie A. Johnson, III (1998: 104-105) and Brazil Senate and Chamber of Deputies

During this legislature, the PT grew in strength at all levels of government except for in the executive office, as a result of Lula's aforementioned loss in the presidential election of 1989. Within the PT, *Articulação* temporarily lost control of the party as the PT slid towards the left in reaction to Brazil's economic problems. Luckily for the party, this shift was reflected at the level of the electorate, which voted for the PT during economic crises as a vote of protest. Hoping to solve Brazil's social and economic problems and take advantage of the protest vote, Lula ran for president again in 1994 only to lose to Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

For the first time since the pre-democratization period, there were more than three instances during the 50th legislature (1995-1999) in which the issue of race entered the public sphere: the election of Benedita da Silva as the first Afro-Brazilian female in the Senate and the March Against Racism in 1995, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso's

1996 Human Rights Plan, and the 1999 Minority Rights Group International report that showed that racism still existed in Brazil.

The number of politicians from the PT in Congress increased during this time, continuing the trend of growth that increased the party's support base. The percent of Afro-Brazilian *petistas*, however, decreased to 18.5%. Among these representatives, there was now an average of 2.4 years of experience upon entering the legislature, as opposed to the previous 1.0 year. At the level of the executive office, Lula had lost the presidential race for the second time in 1994 because the Brazilian voters felt that Cardoso, being an economist, was more competent to solve Brazil's economic problems.



SOURCE: Brazilian Senate and Chamber of Deputies

Thus, the increase in the pertinence of race in politics during the 1995-1999 period can be attributed to the increased seniority of Afro-Brazilian representatives within the PT and not to the increase in the percent of Afro-Brazilian representatives, as that proportion decreased. The occurrence of the 300th anniversary of the death of Zumbi

required national attention and may have also influenced the government's actions. Had there not been an increasing Afro-Brazilian influence in the legislature in parties such as the PT that allowed them to have a voice, such a controversial event may not have been so publicly celebrated.

Influenced by his view that race could no longer be ignored as a politically significant variable, President Cardoso was the first president to publicly acknowledge that racism existed in Brazil. President Cardoso's recognition of the necessity for affirmative action policies opened the door for more of these policies during his second term (1999-2003) and during the 51st legislature, which also occurred during the same time period. One might even argue that Cardoso's actions paved the way for the PT's appeals for racial equality as part of a broader program of social justice in the following administration.

The issue of race gained national attention eight times during the 51st legislature (1999-2003), as indicated by the implementation of affirmative action at the state university of Rio de Janeiro and when Afro-Brazilians protested the 500th anniversary of Portuguese settlement and in 2000, the United Nations proclamation of 2001 as the International Year of Mobilization Against Racism and Brazil's participation in the World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance, the National Meeting of Black Parliamentary Politicians, the adoption of affirmative action policies at the state university of Bahia in 2002, and when Benedita da Silva became the governor of Rio de Janeiro state in the same year. Additionally, one of the slogans for PT political campaigns was "Vote with Race, Vote with Class."

During this legislature, Afro-Brazilian *petista* representation in Congress increased to 12 representatives and they had an average of 3.7 years of experience upon entrance. The party still lacked control of the executive office because Cardoso won re-election in 1998. In this instance, the increase in Afro-Brazilian *petista* experience in Congress did not play as much of a role in government support for racial equality as it would in the subsequent legislature.

In the election of 2002, the PT won control of the presidency with the election of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. Perhaps more important than the percent of Afro-Brazilian *petista* representatives and their years of experience was the fact that after three unsuccessful campaigns for the presidency, Lula had been elected to the most powerful office in one of the most powerful countries in Latin America and could now control a great deal of the legislation concerning social justice and racial equality.

Lula's election may be seen as a vote for the left, a vote against Fernando Henrique Cardoso's neoliberal economic policies, or a vote for a political outsider because he was not part of the elite class and was from the "backward", poverty-stricken, and miscegenated northeast. While it is debatable how much of an impact Lula's identity as a northeasterner influenced his support for racial equality, the combination of his support and the strength of the PT within the legislature allowed him to openly make appeals for racial equality, which in the past was seen as one of the sources of PT electoral weakness (Fontaine, 1985: 8).

In the first two years of the 52nd legislature (2003-2007), government support for racial equality seemed to explode in comparison to all preceding legislatures. In the first year alone, the Special Secretary for the Promotion of Policies to Promote Racial

Equality (SEPPIR) was created, the state university of Mato Grosso and the University of Brasília implemented quotas, the National Council for the Promotion of Racial Equality was created, the Meeting of Black Parliamentary Politicians of the Americas and the Caribbean took place, the Parliamentary Front in Defense of Racial Discrimination was founded by Luiz Alberto, and the Zumbi dos Palmares University opened. In 2004, the city of São Paulo celebrated the National Day of Black Consciousness for the first time, and the Black Women of the PT held a seminar to celebrate the life of Lélia Gonzáles and her contributions to the PT before her death in 1994. Most recently, the Lula government has designated 2005 as the Year to Combat Racism, which involves the Congressional approval of the Statute of Racial Equality and the creation of the Intergovernmental Forum for the Promotion of Racial Equality. Additionally, the First National Conference for the Promotion of Racial Equality will take place in Brasília in May 2005.

The difference between the 51st and 52nd legislatures that may explain the more aggressive stance the government took towards combating racial discrimination could be a result of the growing importance of race in the Brazilian public sphere as well as the continuing rise of the PT and its experienced Afro-Brazilian representatives. Here, we begin to see how the increased in years of experience for Afro-Brazilian *petistas* and the PT's occupation of the executive office aided in their assertion of race-specific policies during the first half of the 52nd legislature.

As part of the PT's 2002 presidential election, *petistas* listed which policies the party would work to implement if elected in a document entitled, "Brazil Without Racism". Based on their campaign promises, the PT has committed to establishing racial equality in Brazil by ensuring that the descendants of fugitive slaves (*quilombolas*)

receive legal ownership of their land and by implementing programs to provide basic infrastructure to these communities. The PT also pledged to create financial incentives for businesses to implement quotas, to create research nuclei to discover treatments for illnesses that are prevalent among the Afro-Brazilian population, and to develop job-training programs to prevent the feminization of poverty.

With regard to education, the PT planned to stimulate juvenile and adult literacy, broaden the system of quotas to the rest of Brazil, create financial incentives for families to send their children to school and for those families to become more active in the community, and ensure that African history and culture are part of the curriculum. In the realm of culture, the PT pledged to locate and preserve archeological sites of the fugitive slave settlements (*quilombos*), to protect Afro-Brazilian cultural manifestations, and to guarantee the representation and visibility of racial groups in the campaigns and activities of the government and entities that have political support or economic investment of the government. Internationally, the PT promised to strengthen cultural and economic ties between Brazil and Lusophone Africa in pursuit of mutual development and has participated in international conferences to promote racial equality, such as the Meeting of Black Parliamentary Politicians of the Americas and the Caribbean in 2003.

Since he was sworn into office in January 2003, Lula has created the Special Secretary of Policies to Promote Racial Equality that is directly subordinate to the Office of the President to supplement the preexisting National Secretary to Combat Racism. These positions are currently held by Matilde Ribeiro and Martvs das Chagas, respectively, and they have actively encouraged Afro-Brazilian *petistas* to make appeals

to racial consciousness while campaigning and have worked to expand affirmative action in Brazil's universities.

At the moment only the first half of the 52nd legislature has occurred, so it may even be too early to assess what the full impact of the PT's policies will be, although it appears that the PT has moved like lightening to implement policies promoting racial equality. Many of these policies, however, benefit other socially excluded groups, such as all poor people, women, and indigenous people, and are thus tied to the PT's central nucleus of socially excluded persons. The PT's policies to promote racial equality can be understood as part of their desire to see Brazil develop socially, politically, culturally, and economically and as part of their commitment to social equality for all groups.

Most importantly, the PT's commitment to ending racial discrimination in Brazil is the most significant commitment that any party has made to the promotion of racial equality in that country. The fact that the PT is made up of leftists who, during the dictatorship, insisted that racism did not exist in Brazil have now made such a difference at the national level in the way that race is seen is even more remarkable.

Groups such as the Nucleus of Black Politicians of the PT and the multipartisan Parliamentary Front in Defense of Racial Equality that have appeared quite recently are indicators of Afro-Brazilian politicians' growing power within the PT and the national legislature. However, it is interesting to note that while Afro-Brazilian *petista* representation plummeted between the 51st and 52nd legislatures, their impact on policymaking was greater during the 52nd legislature.

In the 52nd legislature, experience seems to be the most important independent variable, as it almost doubles when compared to the previous legislature. Here, we see

Afro-Brazilian *petistas* with an average of 6.2 years of experience, and some for whom the 52nd legislature is their fourth. In contrast to the early legislatures, more representatives are returning for consecutive terms, as opposed to dropping out of the legislature after only one term. This leads me to conclude that despite the lower proportion of Afro-Brazilian *petistas* in the 52nd legislature, a combination of increased experience, the increased frequency of events concerning race in Brazil, the support of the executive office, and the PT's inclusion of social movements affected the PT's willingness to openly promote racial equality.

Conclusion

Will the PT pass their electoral test and maintain/ increase their electoral strength in the election of 2006? Will there be electoral repercussions for the PT's appeals to end racial discrimination? Will the PT inadvertently succeed in creating a loyal Afro-Brazilian constituency? These are all questions that may be answered after the next legislative and presidential elections because it will be interesting to see if Brazil will eventually become a true racial democracy through the policies the PT has promoted. For the moment, it is far too soon to answer these questions.

It appears that the PT has balanced itself both as a governing party and as a party-movement through its appeals for racial equality. While this is a dramatic shift in the status quo and may be perceived as threatening to the elite and the political right, the PT has been able to make appeals for racial equality as a means for the socioeconomic development of a greater Brazil. This explains why the PT openly supports racial equality from the classist point of view, which may present a future conflict between Afro-Brazilian politicians who wish to make race-based appeals and the rest of the PT.

While my hypothesis that the more Afro-Brazilian *petistas* there were in Congress, the more the PT would support racially-oriented legislation is not at all correct based on empirical evidence from the 52nd legislature, I have shown how the increased seniority of Afro-Brazilian *petistas* in Congress, the increased frequency of events concerning race in Brazil, and the PT's inclusion of social movements contributed to the party's stance on racial equality and how the backing of the executive office aided in the promotion of policies to combat racism. As seen, the impact of the independent variables depended on the time period, with the variables relating to the political power of the PT and the seniority of Afro-Brazilians within it being the most pertinent in recent legislatures when the PT had increased in strength.

In addition to the questions I posit above, the next step in the quest for racial equality in Brazil is to determine what it is that individual Afro-Brazilian politicians within the PT have done in order to ensure that their policies to end racial discrimination are acknowledged in the national legislature. High-profile politicians such as Benedita da Silva and Paulo Paim who have made appeals to racial consciousness since the late 1980s should be interviewed, as well as newer politicians such as Carlos Santana, Paulo Rocha, and Luiz Alberto for a definitive scholarly work on race in electoral politics so that we can discover how individual Afro-Brazilian politicians within the PT have made space for appeals to racial consciousness.

In addition, academics should research the involvement of activists from specific Afro-Brazilian NGOs within the PT to determine the effect that political involvement has on NGO autonomy, fragmentation, and the granting of the organization's demands. Another question for future research would be to determine the impact that the PT's

policies have on the creation of a racial consciousness, as opposed to the pre-existing class consciousness, and whether or not other political parties will seek to address issues of racial equality and social inclusion in subsequent elections.

For the moment, we can conclude that the issue of race is no longer taboo in Brazil, as the government has acknowledged that contrary to prior beliefs, Brazil is not a racial democracy. The recent surge in the significance of race as not only a political issue, but specifically an electoral issue is indicative of this shift in the Brazilian perception of their country's history of race relations. It is even possible that what is happening in Brazil is indicative of a regional recognition of the injustices suffered by African populations in Latin America and the Caribbean, which was demonstrated by these countries' desires to create a transnational community of African-descended parliamentary politicians through annual meetings and an eventual transnational congress. While there seems to be a domestic and international dialogue on racial inequality, it is possible that this progress could easily disappear if the years of legislative experience or presently minimal Afro-Brazilian *petista* representation decrease in the future or if the party loses the presidency in 2006.

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