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Racial Identity and Political Vision in the Black Press of Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1930-1947

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Michael Mitchell

RACIAL IDENTITY AND POLITICAL VISION IN THE BLACK PRESS OF SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL, 1930-1947

AS THE DECADE of the 1980s drew to a close Brazilians celebrated two centennials which bore a close chronological proximity to one another. In 1988 Brazilians commemorated the one hundredth anniversary of the abolition of slavery; the following year they observed a century's passage since the founding of Brazil's first republic.¹

These two centennials share a link that goes beyond mere chronological occurrence. They represent a coinciding of Brazilian national politics and its race relations whose paths have intersected at more than one point in contemporary Brazilian history. In periods of large-scale political and social transformations, such as the complex chain of events that linked in indirect and direct ways the abolition of slavery with the proclaiming of the first republic, the issue of race appears as a major axis around which Brazilian politics turns.²

In the recently completed transition towards democracy racial issues have again surfaced, reinforcing this pattern of coincidence between politics and race in Brazil. Greater awareness of racial cleavages has gained currency through a growing body of revisionist scholarship that has challenged with increasing intellectual force the whole notion of Brazil's being a vaunted "racial democracy."³

Afro-Brazilians as well have contributed to this growing awareness through forceful assertions of their collective racial identity.⁴ They have used various means available to them to challenge entrenched notions of racial democracy, the presumed benign effects of the process of miscegenation, and the subordination of racial interests to interests of class in movements of mass insurgency.⁵

The range of this expression has been nothing short of prodigious. It encompasses a variety of mediums and forms of expression. In newspapers, poetry, popular songs, and scholarly monographs Afro-Brazilians have asserted their identity as people of African identity on the one hand, and as Brazilians with special claims to make on Brazilian society for the inequities suffered as a consequence of slavery's legacies. J. Michael Turner, a long time observer of the Afro-Brazilian community, explains the recent resurgence of Afro-Brazilian identity in the following way:

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“[Afro-Brazilians] have come to understand that the first ethnically-based definition that society imposes most often serves as a final identification of being Black despite proclaimed ideologies and popular myths. That is, the identification of being Black, even when one is termed brown or *moreno*, eventually comes to serve as the label used by society—there always comes a point at which the society refuses to look beyond that epidermal exterior. For Afro-Brazilians that is the point when brown again becomes Black.”⁶

Any serious appraisal of the recent florescence of expressions of Afro-Brazilian identity should properly begin with an examination of its historical antecedents. These can be traced to a previous period in Brazilian history, similar in several respects to the present circumstance of regime transition, in which Afro-Brazilians produced an extraordinary outpouring of expression reflecting their attempts at asserting their collective identity. The two decades of the 1930s and 1940s, a period of successive regime changes in Brazil, coincided with initial attempts made by Afro-Brazilians at formulating their collective identity in ways that would inspire collective political action and national debate.⁷

Writings on Afro-Brazilian identity began to appear in the tabloids associated with the era’s social movements. These writings demonstrate how Afro-Brazilians went about constructing what Brazilian Sociologist Florestan Fernandes has termed the counter-ideology of demystifying the notion of racial democracy.⁸ As such, these antecedents represent a sort of classical model of the expressions of Afro-Brazilian collective identity, and on this basis they merit serious review. It is the aim of this article to survey this classical expression of Afro-Brazilian racial identity.

THE BLACK PRESS OF SÃO PAULO

The discussion which follows examines a group of tabloids or journals published in the 1930s and 1940s that were linked to several of the more important Afro-Brazilian social movements of the time, among them the Frente Negra Brasileira [Brazilian Negro Front] and the Association of Brazilian Negroes.

Sifting through these tabloids brings to light several significant similarities as well as surprising contrasts. As a group they emphasize in their social commentary the commonality of the elements of Afro-Brazilian identity, particularly with regard to Afro-Brazilians’ historical experiences. In this respect they hold up these common experiences as challenging rebuttal to the widely held notion of racial democracy. On the other hand these formulations of Afro-Brazilian identity lead to different forms of political vision, one heading in the direction of black nationalism, another leaning towards—ironically—European fascism, and still another embracing liberal democracy. This survey, therefore, demonstrates a continual search to translate this identity into visions that would induce Afro-Brazilians to assert their identity in collective and political ways.

This analysis will illustrate these formulations drawing largely from two of the major tabloids of the 1930s and 1940s. These are *A Voz Da Raça* [The Voice of the Race], organ of the Frente Negra Brasileira, and *Alvorada* [Dawn], the newspaper of the

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Association of Brazilian Negroes. Before conducting this review a brief description of the origins of the Black Press of São Paulo will be sketched.⁹

The Black journals of São Paulo were originally intended as a source of entertainment for members of the Black social and recreational clubs that began appearing in the city around the 1920s. Their purpose at this early stage of development was to report social events and friendly gossip; serious social commentary was rarely carried. Only one of the earliest Black journals, *O Menelike* [*The Menelik*], founded in 1916 and named after the then reigning monarch of Ethiopia, projected any sustained sense of racial consciousness. These early journals were of modest length (no more than four to six pages) and carried no advertising.¹⁰

While elements of the Black press eventually emerged as periodicals of racial consciousness and social commentary, certain features from its earliest stage survived this transition. Except for a few independent ventures, notably *O Clarim D'Alvorada* [*The Trumpet of the Dawn*], the Black press remained closely tied to the Black social clubs of São Paulo and was supported almost exclusively by membership contributions from them. Subscriptions were minimal and none of the major journals established in the 1930s and 1940s reached a circulation of more than a few thousand issues per month. Several individuals who were involved in the Black press at the time have observed that because of their meager resources it was considered the height of technological achievement for a journal to own and operate its own printing press.

The Black Press' relatively small financial and circulation base is an indication of how it figured into the calculus of power between Blacks and Whites. Black journals operated on a much smaller scale than the established commercial press not only because the audience for which it was intended possessed meager resources, but also because it was perceived by whites to be the instruments of unwelcomed racial agitation. José Correia Leite narrates an incident that illustrates this point:

When Jaime De Aguiar and I were beginning a new phase of the *Clarim D'Alvorada*, I went to a white fellow whom I thought would be sympathetic to our cause and I asked for his support. When I began explaining the purpose of the *Clarim D'Alvorada* he threw a few bills at me and told me never to bother him again with "nigger causes."¹¹

Nevertheless, despite limited resources, these ventures comprising the Black press of São Paulo represented an extraordinary attempt to insure that Black opinion on social and political issues circulated on a regular basis within the Black community which it served.

However, one of the Black tabloids, *A Voz Da Raça*, founded in 1933 as the official organ of the Brazilian Negro Front, managed to acquire the circulation of a mass publication. *A Voz Da Raça* was distributed monthly, free of charge, throughout the approximately 20 branches of the Front and constituted one of the few links that made the latter a national organization. The format of *A Voz Da Raça* combined elements of older tabloids by devoting roughly half its space to social notices and half to social commentary, speeches made by Front leaders, and official communications such as by-

laws and recent organizational directives. Factional disputes which plagued the Front also stimulated the appearance of a number of rivals to *A Voz Da Raça*. But while its competition was sundry, it was also weak. Tabloids such as *Brasil Novo* [*The New Brazil*], *A Cultura* [*Culture*], *O Clarim D'Alvorada*, and *A Tribuna* [*Tribune*] lacked the support of a large organization like the Front to project them into mass circulation.

During the period of the repressive *Estado Novo* (1937-1945) [see note 7—ed.], the Black press of São Paulo ceased its activities. However, by the time the *Estado Novo* came to an end, several tabloids appeared which continued the efforts of those publications that circulated within the Black community in previous decades. The most important of these were *Alvorada*, which was launched as the official organ of the Association of Brazilian Negroes in 1945, and *O Novo Horizonte* [*The New Horizon*], begun in 1945 without associational affiliation. *Alvorada* became the most respected journal of its period due in no small measure to its consistent advocacy of Black independence from the political entanglements which proliferated in Brazil's multi-party system after 1945. Because of its close contacts with ward healers such as Governor Adhemar de Barros of São Paulo, *O Novo Horizonte*, on the other hand, acquired the reputation of being compromised by the electoral machines that proliferated under the post-1945 democratic regime. But despite its reputation, *O Novo Horizonte* was able to operate on a regular basis for more than fifteen years while *Alvorada* survived for only three. Other noteworthy publications that appeared after 1945, but whose production was sporadic, include *Senzala* [*The Slave Quarters*], founded in 1945; *Cruzada Cultural* [*Cultural Crusade*], founded in 1953; and *Niger*, founded in 1960 as a publication of the Negro Cultural Association.

The Black press of Brazil evolved from a vehicle of light diversion into one of social commentary. In comparison with the Black press in the United States which, in order to maintain a relatively large circulation, has tended to act as a "mirror image" of the community, the Black press of São Paulo has represented a small-scale operation whose purpose has been to provide a sustained forum for Black commentary on contemporary issues, particularly those affecting the vision of their racial identity.

The discussion which follows will focus on two tabloids which were published during two distinct periods in the political evolution of modern Brazil: *A Voz Da Raça*, published during the 1930s when Getulio Vargas experimented with new corporatist political arrangements, and when European fascism held a special attraction for Brazilian political elites; and *Alvorada*, which flourished during the 1940s when the ideals of liberal democracy and unrestricted political participation emerged as the prevailing ideology in Brazilian political culture. Here we shall see examples of the ways in which articulators of Black identity, as represented by the writers of *A Voz Da Raça* and *Alvorada*, analyzed the common racial experiences of Afro-Brazilians. Secondly, an outline will be provided of the manner in which racial reality presented in these two journals dictated the course of political action advocated by the journalists involved.

A VOZ DA RAÇA

The writers who articulated Afro-Brazilian identity attempted to establish the basis for common racial experiences in a variety of ways. One of these was to challenge the

so-called miscegenation thesis, sometimes referred to as the ideology of *branqueamento*. One of the few binding agents that has held Brazilian political culture together until recently has been the belief that Brazil's singularity as a nation stemmed from its special racial tolerance. This belief rested in large part on a thesis regarding the social and political consequences of an unrestrained process of miscegenation which was presumed to have occurred historically in Brazil. The miscegenation thesis as articulated by Brazilian intellectuals and ordinary citizens alike, maintained that Brazilians had effectively dissipated the potential for racial conflict by allowing, and even promoting a biological process of race mixture that would make rigid racial classifications or institutional attempts at racial subordination superfluous at best, or at least unfeasible to implement as public policy.

On its surface, the miscegenation thesis appears benign, liberal even, in its presumed tolerance of the intimate racial mingling required for a miscegenation process to evolve in the way intended. Nevertheless, it presumes both a biological as well as cultural superiority in miscegenation's accomplishing the eventual disappearance of any African trace from the Brazilian population. The articulators of Afro-Brazilian identity felt it important to challenge this belief because it was thought to be the justification for excluding Blacks from participation in all phases of national life. Commenting in *A Voz Da Raça* on white criticisms of the Brazilian Negro Front, Arlindo Alves Soares challenged the miscegenation thesis in these words:

An editorial in the *Diário Carioca* [*Rio de Janeiro Daily News*] which criticized the Brazilian Negro Front has recently come to our attention. The editorial argues that the Brazilian Negro Front is creating artificial social tensions where none exist in Brazil. There can be no racial discrimination in Brazil, the paper asserts, where 80 per cent of our population is of mixed ancestry.

My reply to the *Diário Carioca* is this. If the Brazilian Negro Front is creating "artificial" social tensions, how is it possible that one can find advertisements in our newspapers stating, "wanted: domestic, white only?" Why is it that groups and institutions of all kinds constantly bar Blacks with the classic response of "sorry, no vacancies?" If indeed we are a nation of *mestizos*, then the *Diário Carioca* must explain the thousands of discriminatory assaults on our race which we Blacks experience.¹²

Soares was not content with confronting supporters of the miscegenation thesis with evidence of widespread racial discrimination. He was also quick to note the effect of its constant reiteration on Blacks themselves. "If the *Diário Carioca* wishes to believe that racial discrimination does not exist," Soares wrote further, "that is its opinion. But let me observe that because of this attitude whites have never concerned themselves with the problems of Blacks ever since Abolition. And with all the progress that Brazil has achieved in this century, the situation of Blacks has actually worsened as a consequence of their being neglected, humiliated and discriminated against."¹³ And for Soares the conclusion to be drawn from this was simple: "The Negro will always be ridiculed so long as he lacks his own banner and union to defend himself against the pitfalls that beset his life."¹⁴

Challenges to the miscegenation thesis were not always directed against whites who used it as a justification for ignoring Black problems. Afro-Brazilians who had assimilated this ideal were also the subjects of attack. In one acerbic statement Arlindo Veiga dos Santos lashed out against those Blacks who refused to participate in the Brazilian Negro Front. He warned: "Those bourgeois Negroes, the intellectuals and the pretty girls who do not come out to the Front because they are afraid of what their white friends might say . . . are committing a grave sin of omission for which they will have to answer on judgment day."¹⁵

The writers of *A Voz Da Raça* did not focus exclusively on the incongruities of the miscegenation thesis in their efforts to create an Afro-Brazilian *Weltanschauung*. Other themes bearing on their common racial experiences also occupied their attention. One theme which attracted considerable concern was the relationship between race and class. These writers realized that if they placed too much stress on the miscegenation thesis their opponents would answer their challenges by pointing out that the exclusion of Blacks from some areas of Brazilian society was the result of low socio-economic status and not of race. The writers of *A Voz Da Raça* therefore declared openly and simply that the social status of Blacks was directly attributable to their being an oppressed race and to the disabilities that were the legacy of slavery. As one writer put it, "the perennial problems of the Negro can be summed up like this: when a Black child is born, his father cannot afford the fee for a birth certificate; and when a Black man dies, his children cannot afford to hire a funeral hearse. And this vicious cycle is all due to the color of a man's skin."¹⁶

Having established in their minds the relationship between class and race, the writers of *A Voz Da Raça* perceived a social phenomenon which today is referred to as "institutional racism." On more than one occasion they complained of the unequal application of justice with regard to Blacks. One case reported by *A Voz Da Raça* involved a Black employee who had assaulted his employer for not paying his back wages. While the employee was sent to prison for assault, the employer was absolved of his debt. By describing this incident in terms of "an insult to the Black community," *A Voz Da Raça* indicated that the ostensible injustice dispensed in the case of one individual was considered a racial experience shared by all Blacks.¹⁷

The racial reality constructed by the articulators of Afro-Brazilian identity was linked closely to politics. In fact, there seemed little question in their minds that politics offered a way to racial redemption. It was, after all, the area where individuals could demonstrate their power by organizing in large numbers even though they possessed few other resources with which to affect the course of events. And the common racial experience of Afro-Brazilians was to have conferred on Blacks a single-mindedness of purpose which could be converted into political power. Raul J. Amaral, editor of *A Voz Da Raça*, expressed the issue this way: "No race has advanced until it has achieved a unity of spirit, or an internal discipline, or until it is organized around a common goal . . . and if anyone were to take the trouble to examine the thought of each and every Negro, from the well-lettered to the illiterate, he would find a perfect communion of ideas."¹⁸ Still another writer made the point more explicitly by stating that "only the most

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near-sighted statesman would deny that Negroes constitute a considerable electoral force capable of destroying the vanities of any candidate."¹⁹

This realization of the political power which Afro-Brazilians possessed in their "unity of spirit" was nevertheless tempered by an analysis of the racial beliefs of dominant society. The articulators of Afro-Brazilian identity could not advocate complete participation in politics alongside those who affirmed the miscegenation thesis and denied the existence of exclusionary practices in Brazilian society. The writers in the Black Press, therefore, urged that Afro-Brazilians take a cautious and independent course in competing for power in the political process. "For us to be strong and respected," warned Aristides Assis Negreiros, "we must be sure not to involve ourselves in the partisan struggles of others because these struggles can only bring in their wake over-ambition, futile agitations and racial misunderstandings."²⁰ Negreiros became especially petulant about whites attempting to capitalize on the political consciousness of Blacks. In one statement he effectively gave the miscegenation thesis an ironic twist in order to alert Blacks to the dangers of building political alliances with whites. "It seems curious to me," Negreiros stated, "that the clowns who have appointed themselves as the 'protectors of the race' deny that their blood is crossed with the African's . . . By denying this fact they reveal themselves to be vile and treacherous prevaricators."²¹

The question of how Blacks ought to enter the political process led to a call for the establishment of a separate, independent Black political party. In defense of such a move, Pedro Paulo Barbosa summarized the position which made the founding of the Black party inevitable:

Today's Negro is not the same one as yesterday's. Yesterday's Negro had to console himself in his miserable surroundings with the kindly words of his slave mistress . . . Today the one place where the Negro can find comfort is in the Brazilian Negro Front . . . And the Front will march in any direction to protect the Negro from the descendants of the slave masters who would tie the Negro back to the old whipping post with new restraints.²²

On still another cognitive level, the writers in the Black Press reinforced their visions of race and politics by appropriating the symbols and doctrines of other political ideologies. What concerned them was investing their attitudes and beliefs with some semblance of power. Writers of *A Voz Da Raça* therefore flirted with European fascism because they saw in it an ideology which justified the quest for power by an entire race. These writers were especially intrigued by the fascist emphasis on the role of the charismatic leader. Cesario Gonçalves, for example, wrote, "The Negro has yet to bring his full creative force to the assembly of human races because he lacks a fundamental organization." Gonçalves saw the solution to this problem in the emergence of a great leader. "The next step toward our autonomy," he wrote further, "will be to discover a führer who can channel the easily stirred and dissipated energies of the masses . . . When this superman appears . . . the Negro race will shake the world."²³

In addition, the writers of *A Voz Da Raça* were careful to note that the fascist preoccupation with Aryan superiority, interpreted by them as an expression of racial

pride, was perhaps worthy of emulation. "Does it really matter to us," asked one commentator, "that Hitler takes an aversion to Black blood? His dislike simply demonstrates that the New Germany is a proud race. We Brazilians also have a race to be proud of. It is not the Aryan race, certainly, but it is the race of Negroes and *mestizos*."²⁴

These excerpts from *A Voz Da Raça* have attempted to show that the racial perspectives of the articulators of Afro-Brazilian indentity conditioned their political outlook. Their perceptions of a social reality divided by race permitted the construction of a political consciousness based on the contention that the common experience of racial exclusion created the necessity for concerted political action among Blacks. But the illustrations thus far presented were culled from the writings of a period when the popularity of fascism and corporatism in Brazil might have contributed to the crystalization of a group awareness among Afro-Brazilians.²⁵ It may be instructive at this point to turn to the writings of another period when the popularity of fascism had given way to the establishment of a democratic regime in Brazil. The question to be asked at this point is whether Afro-Brazilian political attitudes underwent correspondingly significant changes. For that purpose we will examine the newspaper, *Alvorada*, published during the late 1940s, soon after the creation of a liberal democratic regime.

ALVORADA

The racial issues analyzed in *Alvorada*, in fact, were not substantially different from those which appeared in *A Voz Da Raça*. It might even be said that the editors of *Alvorada* had grown weary of debating the miscegenation thesis and the question of whether racial discrimination existed in Brazil. This weariness surfaced on at least two occasions when incidents of racial discrimination were reported with wide-spread notoriety throughout the country. One incident involved Assis Chateaubriand, the São Paulo newspaper magnate, who had begun a press campaign against the "gentleman's agreement" of the Brazilian Foreign Ministry to deny visas to American Jews. The editors of *Alvorada* thought little of Chateaubriand's campaign and questioned the sincerity of his motives. "It is surprising to us," went an *Alvorada* editorial, "that the magnate of a newspaper empire had to go abroad to discover the 'Jewish problem' in the Foreign Ministry. But could Mr. Chateaubriand have been so naive not to have noticed that there are no consuls with burned skin [sic] serving in our legations? While Mr. Chateaubriand concerns himself with the 'Jewish problem' he remains silent on the 'Black problem'." The editorial concluded with a bitter denunciation of the miscegenation thesis: "The attempts to hide our national origins go back a long way but these efforts are all in vain. Brazil is known abroad for what it really is: a country of Blacks and *mestizos*."²⁶

Another well-publicized incident to which *Alvorada* responded involved the Black American sociologist, Irene Diggs. Diggs had been barred from certain Rio hotels on her visit to Brazil in the late 1940s, and the *Alvorada* used her unfortunate experiences to comment on the miscegenation thesis. "We must agree with the conclusions of Irene Diggs," wrote Jose Correia Leite,

who sees a tendency for racial discrimination to intensify here . . . Evidently, the Negroes of the United States are asserting themselves to break the barriers of discrimination while we in Brazil are still weighed down with the sentimental lie that discrimination does not exist here. We are responsible for our own predicament because in this land of *mestizos*, the only individuals who are considered Negroes are those who have the courage to admit it.²⁷

Alvorada thus drew clear lines of racial debate by reminding its readers of the implications of the miscegenation thesis. But just as *A Voz Da Raça* had done, *Alvorada* went beyond this to join the issues of class and race: "We are the poorest of all communities as the result of our condition as ex-slaves, and of our having been unaided in our struggle to overcome the difficulties that discrimination has imposed on us. . . ."²⁸

Alvorada's analysis of the Brazilian political process and the role that Blacks ought to play in it was based on the premise that the historical and institutional neglect of the Afro-Brazilian community proved that Blacks could not expect assistance in their quest for racial advancement from any quarter save their own. It was this premise on which *Alvorada* based its defense of liberal democracy in 1945. Liberal democracy, so the argument went, would restore a climate in which Blacks could wage their own independent campaigns for collective social advancement without fear of encroachment by the state.²⁹

However, liberal democracy alone would not uplift the race, especially since Blacks were susceptible to the abuses of a democratic regime in which political candidates would be tempted by "the most absurd ambitions" to make fraudulent appeals that would confuse and seduce an inexperienced electorate.³⁰ "Nevertheless, we simply cannot protest from the sidelines," the editors of *Alvorada* stated. "Our plan of action must include the development of our [own] spirit of association."³¹

The sense of racial isolation and the circumspect endorsement of the democratic regime led *Alvorada* to advocate a neutral stance in the political process. But the neutrality called for by *Alvorada* went deeper than that counseled by its predecessor, *A Voz Da Raça*. While *A Voz Da Raça* argued for the establishment of a Black political party, *Alvorada* could endorse the new democratic regime while simultaneously insisting that Black political organizations be neutral in partisan affairs. Was *Alvorada* closing an avenue of collective expression which in former times had awakened the consciousness of thousands of Afro-Brazilians?

Alvorada denied that it had advocated a withdrawal from the political process, but insisted on its own neutrality and that of its parent organization, the Association of Brazilian Negroes, so that both organizations could reflect a broad cross-section of Black opinion. If *Alvorada* were drawn into the partisan debates, which a democratic regime tended to foment, it might very well become the cause of division within the Afro-Brazilian community. Furthermore, because the Negro occupied an extremely weak social and economic position in Brazilian society, *Alvorada* could not afford the luxury of excluding any Black from its political movement simply on the basis of ideological or partisan preference. Moreover, any attempts to form an independent Black party would expose the Black community to manipulation and exploitation by more powerful

political organizations. Despite the change of regimes from the corporatist and repressive *Estado Novo* to more open democracy, Blacks still had to protect the autonomy of their political actions. This position was stated in an article entitled “Linha da Frente” [“Front Line”] which, because it so clearly outlined *Alvorada’s* argument for political autonomy, made a considerable impact on *Alvorada’s* readers:

Certain individuals have accused us and we believe unfairly, of being against Black participation in partisan political affairs . . .

The *Alvorada* has never been against Black participation in politics. It cannot be against this involvement since the *Alvorada* serves as a forum for Black collective sentiment which by definition has to be an expression of political concerns. Nevertheless, the *Alvorada* does oppose her banner flying next to those which humble the Black community . . .

Alvorada (and its parent organization, the Association of Brazilian Negroes) represents a socio-political force which includes members with a variety of political ideologies. Yet while the task of Black advancement and the protection of the Black community must be conducted in the framework of democracy, *Alvorada* and the Association of Brazilian Negroes, nevertheless, operate independently of any other group in promoting the integration of the Negro into Brazilian society . . .

No one can deny the fact that we Negroes represent a considerable force. However, it is ridiculous to advance the argument that we must elect a representative of the race to congress . . . This insistence on having our own elected representatives lends itself to begging for candidacies from political parties under the supposition that we merit such recognition by dint of the fact that we control some hundreds of thousands of votes or because we control some other political resources . . .

We guarantee that anyone who makes this argument will be laughed at even though the party chiefs might condescendingly throw a few coins to the impertinent liar who claims to have such enormous political power.³²

CONCLUSION

Despite their shortcomings, the perspectives on Afro-Brazilian identity articulated by writers in the Black Press of São Paulo endured through two distinct stages in the political history of Brazil. It is suggested here that these attitudes survived major political changes because they gave Afro-Brazilians a rationale for attempting to maximize their power in a dominant-subordinate relationship. This Afro-Brazilian “opinion-elite” consistently emphasized several themes which were thought to go to the heart of the power maximizing functions of Brazilian political culture. They focused on the miscegenation thesis as the mechanism which fostered the institutional and historic neglect of the problems of Afro-Brazilians. They argued that because of this neglect Blacks would have to fashion independent strategies of political action in order to redress longstanding social grievances.

This glimpse of Afro-Brazilian political attitudes also indicates that analyses found in the work of other commentators may not be entirely correct. Bolivar Lamounier, an observer of Afro-Brazilian political behavior, has suggested that Afro-Brazilians

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generally have failed to develop a collective political consciousness because their grievances are coopted by the miscegenation thesis. According to Lamounier, racial tensions in Brazil will remain latent as long as the State can continue to generate symbolic resolutions to racial conflicts in the form of constitutional provisions, legislation, and edicts which reaffirm the principle of "racial democracy."³³ Our review of Afro-Brazilian political attitudes, however, has provided several illustrations of how Afro-Brazilians have seized on the symbolism of the miscegenation thesis and inverted it to build a political consciousness suited to their needs. This was the thrust of Arlindo Alves Soares' answer to white criticisms of the Brazilian Negro Front and Pedro Paulo Barbosa's defense of the Front as a political party.

Another commentator has suggested that Afro-Brazilian political attitudes have not dealt with the struggle for political power because the primary objective of the movements with which these political attitudes are closely associated was simply to claim an equal place in Brazilian society, not to foment revolution.³⁴ But one can argue that the Afro-Brazilian political attitudes examined here displayed a preoccupation with the means of acquiring political power, and that the strategies offered to do so reflected unique and indigenous perceptions of Brazilian racial realities. White neglect of Black issues and problems, of which the miscegenation thesis was symptomatic, dictated an independent course of political action which both *A Voz Da Raça* and *Alvorada*, in somewhat different ways, advocated.

It may be instructive at this point to call attention to Karl Marx's admonition regarding the consciousness of exploited groups. Speaking of the proletariat, Marx cautioned: "The question is not what goal is envisaged for the time being by this or that member of the proletariat . . . The question is . . . what course of action will [the proletariat] be forced historically to take in conformity with its own nature."³⁵ With regard to Afro-Brazilian political behavior, one answer to Marx's question might be this: So long as whites continue to deny the importance of racial issues Afro-Brazilians are compelled to articulate these issues forcefully and openly, and to use them as a basis for fashioning political visions that seem the most compatible with their racial identity.

NOTES

¹ For a report on the Brazilian centennial of abolition see *The New York Times* (May 14, 1988): 1.

² The historical links between abolition and the creation of the First Republic are discussed in Emília Viotti da Costa, *Da Monarquia À República* (São Paulo: Grijalbo, 1977), 243-326.

³ Some examples of this revisionist literature are: Florestan Fernandes, *Circuito Fechado* (São Paulo: Hucitec, 1976), chaps. 1 and 2; Carlos A. Hasenbalg, *Discriminação e Desigualdades Raciais No Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, Graal: 1979); Thales De Azevedo, *Democracia Racial* (Petrópolis: Editora Vozes, 1975); and Emília Viotti Da Costa, *Da Monarquia À República*, pp. 227-242. For an English language version of the revisionist approach see Pierre-Michel Fontaine, ed., *Race, Class, and Power in Brazil* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, 1985). And, for a revisionist approach to Brazilian slavery, see Robert Conrad, *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Slavery in Brazil* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1983).

⁴ A collection of personal statements on Afro-Brazilian identity is contained in Haroldo Costa,

Fala Crioulo (Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1982).

⁵ Analyses of contemporary Afro-Brazilian protest movements can be found in Lélia Gonzalez, "The Unified Black Movement: A New Stage in Black Mobilization," in Fontaine, *Race, Class, and Power in Brazil*, 120-34; Michael Mitchell, "Blacks and the Abertura Democrática," in Fontaine, *Race, Class, and Power in Brazil*, 95-119; Elisa Larkin Nascimento, *PanAfricanism and South America* (Buffalo, NY: Afro-Diaspora, 1980), 99-106.

⁶ J. Michael Turner, "Brown Into Black: Changing Racial Attitudes of Afro-Brazilian University Students," in Fontaine, *Race, Class, and Power in Brazil*, 87.

⁷ Between 1930 and 1945 Brazil underwent three distinct changes of regime. The Revolution of 1930 dismantled the oligarchical First Republic, culminating in the establishment of the *Estado Novo*, or New State by Getulio Vargas in 1937. In 1945 the *Estado Novo* was replaced by a liberal democratic regime, which functioned until 1964.

⁸ See Florestan Fernandes, *The Negro In Brazilian Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), chap. 4.

⁹ The following description of the Black press is based on Roger Bastide, *A Imprensa Negra de São Paulo* (São Paulo: Universidade de São Paulo, Escola de Comunicação e Arte, 1972), and supplemented by interviews with José Correia Leite, Jaime D'Aguiar, Henrique Cunha, Raul J. Amaral, Geraldo Campos, Aristides Barbosa, Odacyr Mattos, Arnaldo Camargo, Fernando Goes, and Oswaldo Camargo. Textual analyses of the Black press can be found in Bastide, and Florestan Fernandes, *A Integração do Negro na Sociedade de Classes II* (São Paulo: Editora Dominuis, 1965), 70-95. All interviews cited in this article were conducted by the author during field research in 1972. Recordings of these interviews are part of the author's private archive.

¹⁰ Among the better known journals of this period were *A Rua* [*The Street*] and *O Xaute* [*The Guide* (its original meaning denotes a guide of Mecca)], founded in 1916; *O Alfinete* [*The Pin*] and *O Bandeirante* [*The Flag Bearer* (reference is made to the 17th century pioneers of São Paulo who explored much of Brazil's interior. Their activities included searching for gold and slave hunting. Modern usage refers to the enterprising spirit of the people of São Paulo)], both founded in 1918; and *A Liberdade* [*Liberty* (refers to a Black neighborhood in early 20th-century São Paulo)] and *A Sentinela* [*The Sentinel*], founded in 1919 and 1920 respectively.

¹¹ Interview with José Correia Leite, São Paulo, February 1972.

¹² *A Voz Da Raça* (March, 1934). This and subsequent translations of Portuguese texts are the author's. Note: the adjective, "carioca," in *Diário Carioca* refers to the city of Rio.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *A Voz Da Raça*, I: 14, as quoted in Bastide, *A Imprensa Negra*, 60. Another statement of this theme was written by Jorge Prado Teixeira in *O Novo Horizonte* in 1954. Teixeira wrote: "Today's Negro occupies the same position that he did during slavery. He has simply changed his legal status from slave to freeman . . . but even though some Blacks may be able to achieve their own personal success today, their achievements are overwhelmed by the enormous number of Blacks who suffer from disease and sexual corruption and by those who make up the vast ranks of the malnourished and the wretched." *O Novo Horizonte* (September, 1954).

¹⁷ *A Voz Da Raça* (February, 1934); similar commentaries are noted in Bastide, *A Imprensa Negra*, 56-57.

¹⁸ *A Voz Da Raça* (June, 1936); also quoted in Fernandes, *A Integração do Negro*, II, 80.

¹⁹ *A Voz Da Raça* (August, 1937).

²⁰ *A Voz Da Raça* (October, 1936).

²¹ *Ibid.*

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²² *A Voz Da Raça* (December, 1935).

²³ *A Voz Da Raça* (November, 1936).

²⁴ *A Voz Da Raça*, I:27, as quoted in Bastide, *A Imprensa Negra*, 54.

²⁵ Carl Degler, however, suggests that the Frente Negra, the parent organization of *A Voz Da Raça*, reacted negatively to European fascism. See *Neither Black nor White* (New York: Macmillan and Company, 1971), 179-80.

²⁶ *Alvorada* (July, 1947).

²⁷ *Alvorada* (March, 1947).

²⁸ *Alvorada*, (February, 1947).

²⁹ *Alvorada* (January, 1946); see also the *Manifesto in Defense of Democracy*, quoted in both Elisa Larkin Nascimento, *Pan Africanism and South America*, 85 and Michael Mitchell, "Racial Consciousness and the Political Attitudes of Blacks in São Paulo, Brazil" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 1977), 142-43.

³⁰ *Alvorada* (July, 1946).

³¹ *Alvorada* (January, 1946).

³² *Alvorada* (January, 1947); for reactions to this editorial, see *Alvorada* (March, 1947).

³³ Bolivar Lamounier, "Raça e Classe na Política Brasileira," *Cadernos Brasileiros*, 10:3 (May-June 1968): 39-49. Fernando Henrique Cardose and Octavio Ianni, *Côr e Mobilidade Social em Florianópolis* (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1960), have gone much further in claiming the racial ideology of Afro-Brazilian to be essentially accommodationist and accepting of the miscegenationist ideal. This is also the thrust of the "mulatto escape hatch" argument proposed by Carl Degler in his *Neither Black nor White*.

³⁴ Fernandes, *A Integração do Negro*, II:76. It should be pointed out that Fernandes has re-assessed his original analysis of Afro-Brazilian political culture and now believes that the political attitudes articulated in the 1930s and 1940s were a more effective instrument of power maximization than he had previously thought. Thus our analysis is more consistent with Fernandes' later discussions of this subject. See Florestan Fernandes, "Aspectos políticos do Dilema Racial Brasileiro," in Fernandes, *O Negro no Mundo dos Brancos* (São Paulo: Difusão Européia do Livro, 1972), 256-83.

³⁵ *The Holy Family*, quoted in Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1971), 49.

