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Re-Africanization and the Cultural Politics of Bahianidade

Tianna S. Paschel

This article examines racial politics in Brazil by analyzing the city of Salvador da Bahia's cultural policies over time and their relationship to national ideology and racial identity in Brazil more generally. It argues that the re-Africanization of Salvador's Carnival and its historical center, the Pelourinho, although initially products of the mobilization of Afro-Bahians themselves, have become institutionalized and ironically serve today as testaments to Brazil's diversity, tolerance, and integration. In light of increasing "ethnic" tourism to Bahia, this article highlights the paradox behind and the fundamental contradictions in a culturalist approach to race-based political mobilization in the Bahian context, and perhaps Brazil more generally. Because African culture has been such a central part of constructing modern Brazilian national identity and racial democracy, a culturally based movement, even one challenging the deeply embedded racial hierarchy, can paradoxically reify the myth of racial democracy.

Keywords: Bahia, Black movements, Brazil, cultural commodification, culture, Latin America, nationalism, Race, racial democracy

*Do cabelo enrolado
Todos querem imitar
Eles estão baratinados
Tambem querem enrolar*

Voce rir da minha roupa
Voce rir do meu cabelo
Voce rir da minha pele
Voce rir do meu sorriso

A verdade e que voce
(Todos Brasileiros)
De Sangue Criolho
De cabelo duro
Sarará Criolho

With curly hair
Everyone wants to imitate
They are deceived
They want to curl their hair too

You laugh as my clothes
You laugh at my hair
You laugh at my skin
You laugh at my smile

The truth is that you
(All Brazilians)
Have black mixed blood
With rough hair
You white person with black blood

The words of this Brazilian song ring strong as not only an affirmation of negritude but also a denunciation of the denial of Brazilian society to recognize questions of race, identity, and mixture. Originally recorded by Afro-Brazilian Soul singer Sandra de Sá as part of the Black Soul movement or Black Rio of the 1970s, it was politically charged. Now it is revived in chic bars and clubs throughout Brazil, where mostly white Brazilians have access. For many years, one such place was the Candyall Ghetto Square in Salvador da Bahia. On Sundays, hundreds of people, mostly elite, white Brazilians, gathered in the Candyall Ghetto Square to see the renowned Afro-pop ensemble Timbalada. Along with a multitude of Afro-Brazilian drummers, its members would sing the powerful words of songs similar to this one, affirming, among other things, negritude. Because of the historical context of nation building and identity in Brazil, this affirmation of Blackness by whites in a space where the performers are among the only Afro-Brazilians not socio-economically marginalized from the event, rarely presents itself as a contradictions within Brazilian society.

The Candyall Ghetto Square had flourished due to the efforts of Afro-pop phenomenon Carlinhos Brown, who was born and raised in this community. These typically sold-out performances cost 50 reais, the equivalent of one-fourth the monthly minimum salary of Brazil at that time, making the members in the surrounding community virtually excluded from the event. Tickets were conveniently

available at the most upscale malls and international tourist agencies. Although they generated much-needed profit for this community, they presented inherent inconsistencies between socioeconomic and therefore racial segregation in Bahia and racial equality through the affirmation of an Afro-Brazilian identity. These contradictions are ones that extend beyond the “Ghetto” (as it is popularly called) and even beyond the city of Salvador. They reflect the complexity of race relations, ethnicity, and national identity in Brazilian society.

Race, ethnicity, and national identity are in themselves extensive discourses that are never mutually exclusive and fundamentally represent overlapping, and often fluid, ways an individual can identify themselves. Whether it colonial North America or present-day Brazil, aspects of race and ethnicity are explicitly incorporated into and influenced by the formation of the “nation.” The idea of national identity as it is commonly used is very much tied to the concept of the modern nation-state. The emergence of this modern nation-state effectively promoted cultural homogenization as a means to develop a stronger political state. It would serve as the all-encompassing body of a national identity and by doing so homogenized the natural cultural pluralism present in any society (Hobsbawm 1990). Richard Jenkins asserts, “Nationalism is rooted in, and is one expression of, ethnic attachments, albeit, perhaps, at a high level of collective abstraction. The ‘nation’ and ‘national identity’ or ‘nationality’ are, respectively, varieties of ethnic collectivity and ethnicity, and are likely to be historically contingent, context-derived, and defined and redefined in negotiations and transaction” (Jenkins 1997: 143).

Ethnicity and national identity, therefore, are not simply static, fixed, ever-present concepts, but they are also subject to re-formation, re-definition, and re-interpretation based on ever changing contexts and conditions. Often, the origins of a particular ethnic group do not emerge out of a specific historical context, but through its many transformations, out of many occurrences that, like national identity, can be strategic and intentional. The creation of the term “Latino” as it is used in the North American context is a case in point to how ethnicity can be re-defined, consolidated, and narrowed under specific political conditions—where, in this case, the role of the state is fundamental in its manifestations. In Brazil, this function of the state has also been an integral part of the development of everyday notions of race, ethnicity, and national identity. Implicit in the ideology of national identity in Brazil is the articulation of the state’s economic and political interests through policies and institutions either defining or manipulating aspects of racial and ethnic identities, making culture profoundly politicized.

Through the implementation of specific re-Africanization policies in the Pelourinho, Bahia's historic and tourist center, the Bahian state has demonstrated continuity in the historical role it has played in promoting national ideology through institutions and policies. Owing to the institutionalization of certain aspects of formerly marginalized Afro-Brazilian identity, we have to question the impact that these policies have had on these individual and on collective ethnic and racial identities. Race in Brazil has always been conceptualized and defined by the state and its ideology, making even social movements rooted in cultural resistance problematic, in that the distinction between dominant culture and marginalized culture is not clear. The myth of racial democracy praised Brazil for its high rates of miscegenation, which was responsible for creating a culturally homogenous Brazilian "meta-race." This mixture was thought to wipe away ethno-racial distinctions; however, many scholars have argued that this simply marginalized such distinctions from discourse. What it was and is to be Brazilian was conceptualized as inclusive of European, African, and indigenous roots, and thus Afro-Brazilian culture and identity was infused in every Brazilian's experience and history. In order to understand the way these policies have been linked to the historical development of national identity in Brazil one must first understand the pervasiveness of racial democracy as a national ideology and State policy.

In the early part of the twentieth century, Brazilian views on race and ethnicity changed. The landmark work of Gilberto Freyre (1933), *Casa Grande e Senzala* is undoubtedly the most fundamental work in understanding national ideology of race in Brazil, affirming the already popular notion that Brazil had somehow achieved what he called a "racial democracy." Although this ideology has recently been termed the "myth" of racial democracy, it is still very much embedded in not only popular ideas of race and ethnicity, but also part of the foundation of policies and institutions in Brazil. Freyre held Brazil's racial mixture as proof of a racial democracy in Brazil. He among other influential intellectuals of his time thought that miscegenation, both social and biological, was the fundamental element in a process of creating a truly homogenous Brazilian race. The complexity of this miscegenation did not provide clear distinctions between racial or color categories, giving even more sustenance to the argument denying the existence of racism.

Ideology of a racial democracy claimed an equality of races by valorizing the contribution of not only the European elements of Brazilian society but also the African and Amerindian while at the same time reifying Eurocentric ideas of a racial hierarchy. Nobles reveals this implicit contradiction: "Freyre rescued African and Indians from

permanent denigration while affirming the superiority of Europeans” (Nobles 2000: 97). The backward, barbarous nature of Indian and African populations was attributed to the historical context of slavery, but also implicit were primordial notions of European superiority. It was only through mixture, then, that Brazil achieved progress that aimed to whiten the population through miscegenation and state-sponsored campaigns to offer incentives to European immigrants and limit non-European immigration. Still, Brazil was thought to have solved the problems of racism that other nations, namely the United States, could not escape.

Combating racism, therefore, in a society with indistinct color lines, purportedly free of racism, makes political mobilization a battle of revolutionizing the misconceptions of dominant national ideology. As Anthony Marx asserts, “Brazil’s racial democracy encouraged submissiveness to a social order in which there is no legal racial domination against which identity formation and mobilization can be targeted” (Marx 1998: 260). This absence of legal racial domination does not suggest an absence of other forms or racial domination, but rather indicates the subversiveness of domination and discrimination. In a comparative study of ethnic boundaries between Brazil and the United States, Edward Telles emphasizes, “Institutions and social structures are essential in supporting or reinforcing ethnic identity, and those that support separate ethnic identities and cultures, particularly residential segregation, are stronger in the United States” (Telles 1999: 83). This absence of social structures and state policies promoting separate ethnic identities was replaced with a model of inclusion on some levels and exclusion on others. The emergence of the Brazilian nation relied on three essential roots—the European, the African, and the Amerindian—where miscegenation was the fundamental unifying element. The creation of an inclusive national identity with policies promoting social mixing and miscegenation left little space for assertions of separate ethnic identities.

Such cultural and biological miscegenation was thought to have fostered an inclusive sense of nationhood, in contrast to the racial fragmentation and exclusionary practices of the United States. Still, as many have argued, *mestizagem* or biological and cultural race mixture was inherently, and often explicitly, about whitening (Wade 1997; Telles 2004; Sawyer, Peña, and Sidanius 2004). Consequently, these scholars have argued that race mixture does not actually erase the notion of races and even preclude racial hierarchy. Instead, unlike in the United States, by creating the space to transcend racial categories, opened up the possibility for Brazilians to “whiten.” This notion of whitening (*blanqueamiento*) is the attainment of whiteness through either intermixing or the attainment of status or class

associated with whiteness. Highly linked with class, whitening has and continues to permeate both social relations and state policy. In this context, Blackness and indigeneity are a central part of the nation, but are simultaneously devalued often as part of the nation's past. Thus, in the context of racial democracy in Brazil, a celebration of African ancestry often happened alongside practices and ideologies that made whiteness a viable and highly sought after possibility.

The myth of racial democracy infiltrated all aspects of Brazilian society, including the manner with which race would be officially addressed, where the role of the state in its perpetuation becomes more and more central to the question of hindrance to social and political mobilization of Afro-Brazilians. The population census and its use represents one example of the many ways in which this ideology became fundamental in policy concerns in Brazil. The question of *cor*, or race, has been the most controversial topic of the census, making its inclusion or exclusion and specific articulation a central battle from authoritarian dictatorships to military regimes to more democratically elected governments. Although a majority of the census surveys ultimately included the question of race, they faced heated resistance that upheld the notion that race was not relevant to indicators of the Brazilian population. Among them was even Gilberto Freyre himself, who well into the 1990s census opposed the use of racial categories in a country where everyone was part of the Brazilian race. Nobles writes, "For most of this century, the Brazilian state not only ignored deep inequities compounded by color discrimination by deliberately promoting racial democracy. IBGE's reluctance to produce official socioeconomic data along color lines, coupled with the insistence that the plasticity of *cor* terms made such data unreliable, ensure and sustained the idea of racial democracy" (Nobles 2000: 128).

The census is merely one example of the way in which the state's policies are extremely relevant to conceptualizing race, ethnicity and national identity in Brazil. It does not, however, reflect the less systematic and indirect ways in which the state's policies perpetuate ideas of racial democracy. The salience of Afro-Brazilian culture in the formation of the Brazilian nation can be best demonstrated through analyzing the specific ways in which the affirmation of this identity can some times be consistent with the myth of racial democracy. Although it is questionable the existence a separate Afro-Brazilian identity that has not been in some respect incorporated into the national Brazilian identity, the intentional project by the state to create an inclusive national identity above ethno-racial identity was simultaneously a censorship of discussions about the real racial inequality present in Brazilian society.

The role of the state in casting Afro-Brazilian identity under the flag of nationalism could not be more apparent than in the administration of Getúlio Vargas and the Estado Novo of the late 1930s. Vargas's administration has been closely linked to the affirmation of many aspects of Brazilian culture including the centralization of formerly marginalized expressions of Afro-Brazilian popular culture. From samba to capoeira to candomblé, Vargas's populist style opened up unexplored space for Afro-Brazilian culture to be valued. This, however, did not come without certain restrictions. As Tom Skidmore, a leading historian on Brazilian history, describes it, "He wanted, first and foremost, to build a strong central government. . . . Second, he wanted to project Brazilian power abroad, which would require a stronger position in international trade" (Skidmore 1999: 115). Neither of these goals, one rooted in domestic policy, the other in international relations and trade, could be articulated without the backing of the Brazilian people. With political centralization came a sort of centralization of Brazilian identity. The Vargas dictatorship understood well the ways in which the promotion of popular culture would strengthen the political support of the people, presenting Brazil as a unified nation on the international front. His policies promoting Afro-Brazilian culture, then, did not emerge out of a desire to valorize the obvious African roots in Brazilian society, but rather reflect a well-executed strategy to win popular support and to develop a specific political agenda.

Essential to this process of centralization, political as much as social, was the promotion of Brazil's national soccer team, the institutionalization of Carnival and also of Rio de Janeiro's largely *afro mestiço* samba schools. All of these factors would ultimately contribute to the intensification of national unity in Brazil, but would also serve economic interests in the form of tourism. Writes Skidmore, "This policy, which was clearest after the coup of 1937, had not only an economic rationale (to attract tourism) but also sought to play a role in strengthening the nation's new sense of its own identity as at least partly Afro-Brazilian through such powerful instruments as music and dance" (Skidmore 1999: 118). This valorization of Afro-Brazilian elements was not only in the instruments, but rather affirmed the richness of these elements in Brazilian blood and culture at large. The support that Vargas offered, however, came with its own price, nationalism. Samba schools, along with Carnival, were becoming institutionalized, with a base of financial support never before experienced, and in exchange, they were sanctioned to present only themes of Brazilian nationalism (Augras 1998). The ideology of racial ideology was not unpacked, but rather continued to be embedded in nationalism and perpetuated through the affirmation

of once-marginalized traditions, making samba, capoeira, and Afro-Brazilian religions symbols of Brazilian miscegenation.

Bahia's Dubious Space in Brazilian Nationalism

The importance of Afro-Brazilian culture in this newly reconstructed variation of national identity becomes even more relevant when analyzing the state of Bahia that has been said to “anchor national cultural identity” (Armstrong 1999a: 71). Bahia represents the birthplace of fundamental elements of Brazilian society and is the most salient example of the process of miscegenation and the resulting ideology of racial democracy due to its historical relevance as the place of “discovery” and its status as the first capital of Brazil. Bahianidade, the idea of a regional Bahian identity, is very much tied to a Brazilian national identity as a whole.

Bahia, the state with the highest percentage of *pretos* (blacks) and *pardos* (browns) (IBGE 2000), has a unique history of continuous transnational interaction with West Africa allowed for a dialectical process that fostered the preservation of elements of African culture while paired with structural factors encouraged a true Afro-Brazilian identity. With an undeniably prevalent African cultural influence in Bahian food, music, dance, language, and religion, Bahia as a state and more specifically, the city of Salvador, had no other option but to acknowledge this contribution. The high rates of miscegenation present in Bahia are particularly demonstrative of the process of acculturation and syncretism in many elements of this culture and identity.

Still, while ideas of miscegenation and racial democracy are central to Bahian nationalism, it simultaneously promotes and occupies a space of pure African-ness in the broader Brazilian nation. According to Piers Armstrong, “Bahianidade celebrates both the creativity of miscegenation and the purity of the African legacy as fundamental characteristics of society, through the two phenomena evidently infer differing views of organic development” (Armstrong 1999a: 74). This contradiction present in Bahian society is complex, but these opposing concepts are on one hand reflective of the structural and institutional factors that in some ways allowed for the formation of an Afro-Brazilian identity, and on the other, the consolidation of cultural element creating a true monolithic Bahian identity where nonwhites and whites alike were somehow Afro-Bahian, if not by blood then by experience.

The process of formulating a truly inclusive sense of Bahianidade on the part of individuals and the Bahian state has been a central

but disputed question in Bahian society, where the outcome has not always favored the affirmation of these African roots. How identity ultimately is constructed and reconstructed is based on a set of factors including policies and structural factors either instituted or maintained by the State. Whether African roots are acknowledged and how their proclamation manifests in the public sphere depends to some extent on the current government and their approach to cultural politics. In a country marked by extreme and abrupt changes in political regimes, this factor becomes even more significant in discourse of state appropriation of Afro-Brazilian culture. In order to understand the ways in which the state has proved fundamental in this process of identity formation, one must not simply examine the recent efforts made to re-Africanize Bahia, Carnival, and its historic center, but also reach further back into the polemic of race and ethnicity in the formation of a modern state in Brazil and Bahia's stake in this process.

In the early part of the twentieth century, just prior to Vargas's implementation of populist-directed policies promoting popular culture, many of which could be termed Afro-Brazilian, on the local level, Bahia, along with Brazil as a nation, was engaging in debates surrounding its entrance into modernity. This process of building a modern Brazilian state, as Michael Hanchard articulates in *Black Cinderella*, essentially did not include Black Brazilians (Hanchard 1999). The African element, although presently conceptualized as a fundamental part of Brazilian society, was not so in the process of modernization.

While explicitly a process of whitening, this was implicitly one of "de-Blackening" Bahian society, represented in the form of de-valuing the purported "backwardness" of the African elements and by the promotion of European immigration in order to "*melhor a raça*" or better the race. Thus, more than offering incentives in the form of subsidies to immigrants, a number of laws and policies simultaneously restricted immigration of people of African descent. Albuquerque (1999) is one of the few works that addresses the duality in this process, inasmuch as it addresses the inherent counter-notion to encouraging European blood and immigration, which was also essentially a discouraging of not only non-European immigration but also more specifically Black/African blood and culture. She argues that the "de-africanization of the city was seen as fundamental for the achievement of Bahian modernity. The immigration of the European [immigrants] would free Bahia from its 'pernicious elements', or African elements, which were retarding their entrance into modernity." (38) This objective was made explicit by white elites of this time, and it became evident in the fear of Black North Americans' immigration to Brazil. Albuquerque (1999) points to a newspaper

article published in 1923 (*O Diario de Noticias*), which she argues made the dominant opinion clear: “Frankly, we need another type of immigrant, which works for us and that betters [whitens] the race” (39). Thus, this possible influx of African American was seen as counter-productive, if not catastrophic, for achieving what Albuquerque calls the goal of “disguising the local African descendent population over time through racial miscegenation” (39).

Thus, while today, the majority of white Bahians assert their Afro-Brazilian-ness through popular culture and other spheres of valorization of Bahianidade, they were not always delighted by the idea of the presence of or further proliferation of “africanisms” in Bahian culture (Butler 1998: 171). The perspective behind these policies contrasts drastically with the recent re-Africanization policies that among other things sought to market the image of a revived Africa in Bahia to Black North Americans (Santos 1998: 123).

Although Bahian identity set the stage for arguments of miscegenation as somewhat of a cultural democracy, the circumstances under which that identity was formed relates to structural factors. Telles writes, “A separate Afro-Brazilian community in Bahia favors the formation and maintenance of a truly Afro-Brazilian culture and the construction of a separate identity that is reinforced through daily (endogamous) interaction” (Telles 1999: 94). Although I would question the existence of a truly separate Afro-Bahian identity outside of certain religious activities, the establishment of *nacões* as a way of social organization (Butler 1998: 189) paired with residential isolation rooted in the disproportional amount of black and brown people in some sense did foster an alternative cultural space for the development of an Afro-Bahian identity. This geographic isolation can be seen today as an increasingly salient process of peripheralization continues to perpetuate racial discrimination against Afro-Brazilians, who predominantly live on the outskirts of Salvador.

Even though African culture was maintained in somewhat isolated regions in Bahia creating a distinctly Afro-Bahian identity based on religious practices and other interactions, we have to also acknowledge that clearly Afro-Bahian cultural markers are almost universally present in the lives of white Bahians as well as black and brown Bahians, even if to varying degrees. If a truly separate Afro-Brazilian identity emerged out of structural factors such as residential isolation, then how do we explain the difficulty experienced by Black movement organizations to mobilize Bahians around ethno-racial identity? As Telles asserts, “cultural political orientation, arising primarily out of residential concentration, would seem to be a stimulus to ethnic mobilization for Salvador, but not necessarily for other large metropolitan areas” (2004: 95). But as he notes, this seemingly possible stimulus

has not been incited, causing Michael Hanchard and other scholars to question the prominent culturalist approach taken by Afro-Bahian activists as a viable means to equality for Afro-Brazilians. To better conceptualize the roots of ethnic mobilization in Bahia we must analyze the activities of *blocos afro*, Carnival groups of drummers and dancers in African dress, the embodiment of the approach that holds cultural affirmation as an indirect means of political mobilization. Because of the proliferation of idea of an inclusive culture of Bahianidade, even the emergence of these *blocos afro*, contrary to their fundamental intentions, reify Bahian ideology of racial democracy that is packaged up in terms of cultural equality.

A sense of Afro-Bahianidade emerges that is an identity based neither on Blackness nor Africanness but rather is absorbed under the umbrella of Bahian identity at large. For this reason, clear distinctions in the ways words such as “Blackness,” “negritude,” and “Africanness” have to be made before they are applied to the case of Bahia. Blackness, for instance, has been historically used as racial and political consciousness that, although it affirmed “Black” culture, was politically charged in its context in the United States, Europe, and other parts of the world. Owing to the way in which the state has appropriated the African aesthetic at various times in history, its use, even if by Afro-Bahians themselves, does not imply racial consciousness. This is particularly important in the case of Salvador, where pan-African colors easily become known as the colors of either Olodum, the most renowned of the *blocos afros*, or as Bahian colors, dreads, braids, and other afrocentric hair styles are not widely seen out of the tourist center, and popular songs affirming Black identity are not only sung, but also felt by Bahians, irrespective of color. Besides the early efforts by the activists of *blocos afro*, there exists very little correlation between this assertion of Afro-Brazilian identity with political mobilization or even political consciousness. In many ways, the Afro-Bahian aesthetic has developed out of many factors including the increasing dependence on the tourism industry and the consequential state appropriation of this aesthetic.

While not explicitly writing on Bahia, Hanchard (1994) analyzes Afro-Brazilian activism as a way of testing the limits of racial hegemony in Brazil. In the 1980s, many Black movement activists whom had been part of the organized left felt that in order to address issues of racial inequality, they needed what Hanchard has termed a “third way,” since neither the Left nor the Right was willing to broach the topic. Still, Hanchard (1994) attributes the ineffectiveness of the Afro-Brazilian mobilization movement to their “culturalist approach.” The emphasis on culture by many Black movement organizations in Brazil could not be clearer than in the Bahian context.

Racism and the Fight to Reclaim Carnival

The first *bloco afro*, Ilê Aiyê, was founded in 1974 in a neighborhood appropriately called Liberdade (Freedom) in response to continuing racial discrimination against *afro mestiços* in the Carnival of Salvador (Guerrero 2000: 29; MNU 1988: 9). This group, marked by elaborate African costumes and powerful drums affirming negritude, set the stage for what would become a cultural revolution in Salvador's Carnival and would eventually lead to the institutionalization of this African-inspired aesthetic. After it would come many other *blocos*, including Olodum, but none with the stigmatization that Ilê would have to face for its policies of exclusion of non-Blacks. Although many factors had inspired Ilê Aiyê to mobilize using culture as the central point of strength, the way in which Bahian society would react to its emergence was very much a reflection on the widespread belief in racial democracy. On February 12, 1975, *A Tarde*, a well circulated newspaper, published an article condemning what they saw as racism:

Carrying posters with expressions like "Black World, Black Power, Black for you, etc.," the Bloco Ilê Aiyê, nicknamed "Bloc of Racism," performed an ugly spectacle in this year's Carnival. Because racism is prohibited in this country, we have to hope that the members of Ilê Aiyê come back in a different way next year, and instead use the natural liberation and instinct of Carnival. We are happy that we do not have a racial problem. That is one of the great prides and happinesses of the Brazilian people: the harmony that reins in the divisions between different ethnicities.

Ilê Aiyê was accused of being racist because it continued to affirm Black pride and denounce racism in a society that was thought to not only have a separate Black identity, but more importantly, no racism. The economic interests of the state and white elites, however, would help reshape this stigmatization into a mark of Bahianidade, making this aesthetic a crucial aspect of marketing Bahia as a unique, exotic destination on the global stage.

In the last twenty years there has been a drastic change in Brazil's economic policies in the development of the tourism industry. In *Tourism and the Less Developed World*, David Harrison addresses the causes of these changes: "The case of Brazil, especially, is instructive in demonstrating how changes in the tourism industry are linked to wider economic and political developments. During 21 years of military rule (1964–1985), widespread corruption and decades of 'unwise' economic policies, Brazilian tourism remained in obscurity" (Harrison 2001: 84).

The end of the military regime in 1985 not only marked an intense change in the political climate in Brazil, but also indicated the first

stages in its transition into a more democratic political system that would make many changes in economic policies, including giving precedence to the development of the tourism industry. These changes reflected a transnational dynamic of increased world globalization which would be experienced through tourism not only in Rio de Janeiro, the city that had seen the most revenue from tourism, but would have a crucial impact on the city of Salvador.

The establishment of Bahiatursa, the state agency responsible for marketing and promoting tourism to Bahia, and the restoration of the Pelourinho would be the leading factors in transforming Bahia from a struggling agriculturally based economy to the second-most-visited destination in Brazil. The restoration of the historic center, however, would serve as a metaphor in the re-Africanization of Salvador. The underlying process in restoring the Pelourinho is one of state appropriation of the Afro-Bahian aesthetic to feed the tourist boom, and in that the commercialization of *blocos afro*. Although there is an official recognition of the African culture in Bahia, as is demonstrated in virtually every piece of tourist propaganda, the African culture is folklorized and classed as an exotic aspect of Bahian society while European values continue to be the basis of Bahian society (Nascimento and Nascimento 1992: 210). This fundamental contradiction in the state's policies of promoting negritude is reconciled through the ideology of racial democracy as inherent to the character of Bahianidade.

The Pelourinho is a microcosm of the process of Bahianidade in Salvador and acts as a cultural space for Afro-Brazilians characterized by resistance (Pinho 1998). The word *Pelourinho*, whipping post, was a place designated in the colonial period as a location where slaves were brutally beaten and punished. This important aspect of history in the Pelourinho is not widely advertised through tourism, since it would present a less romantic view of Salvador and Brazilian society in general. What is apparent today is that whereas historically this space of resistance had been marginalized, today it has been incorporated into mainstream Bahian society and been transformed by it—indeed representing the incorporation and transformation of Bahian society itself. The unions made between the Afro-Bahian activist and the state represent a collaboration that does not challenge the established system, but as the state exploits its economic vested interests in Afro-Brazilian culture, what becomes more important in the Pelourinho is not necessarily this culture of resistance, but rather an affirmation of Bahianidade. Demonstrating negritude is not only an affirmation of the inclusiveness in Bahianidade, but a wise business endeavor for the state and to a lesser degree Afro-Bahians themselves.

The area around the Pelourinho was once considered one of the most dangerous parts of Salvador. Plagued by extreme poverty, its mostly Afro-Brazilian residents lived in buildings with extreme decay that in recent years have been completely restored and painted into an array of beautiful colors that can act as a metaphor of Brazil's racial diversity. The area's transformation into the tourist center of Bahia was the result of the efforts by Afro-Brazilian activists mainly associated with Olodum in cooperation with the Bahian local government. It is the global stage for assertions of Bahianidade that are consumed by foreigners that expect these exotic elements of African culture. Renato Almeida writes, "Cultural tourism is not done for fun, but as an instrument of education that is not in charge of organizing shows, but more importantly to reveal the present reality, that translates the ways that people think, and feel about a given society" (1970: 199). But in the case of the Pelourinho, it can be disputed as to what extent this cultural space really does represent a present reality, a "*realidade viva*," or if it merely exoticizes the African element of Bahian society in the name of tourism. "Authenticity, real or imagined, is central to the experience of 'ethnic tourism.' The desire and perception of authenticity is articulated according to conscious or sub-conscious frames of cultural reference" (Armstrong 1999b: 155). This reference, for the average international tourists, is often one based in the detoxification of African culture.

The president of Olodum considers the Pelourinho "an open, cosmopolitan neighborhood. There are many people from all over the world here. If we say, 'this area is only for blacks,' then in ten years there will be no cultural life here. This exchange is necessary to find solutions" (Dunn 1994: 33). It can be argued, however, that this exchange has been detrimental to the development of finding real political or sustainable socio-economic solutions for local people, and instead has been critical in the promotion of an afro-Brazilian aesthetic on which the tourism industry in Bahia is now dependent. The activities of *blocos afro* such as Olodum as they have become increasingly institutionalized have essentially failed to challenge the institutions and structures that have infiltrated even their systems of organization. Although there are indications that a heightened racial consciousness has come out of a culturalist-driven agenda taken by Afro-Bahian activists, the role of the state in institutionalizing this process paired with the increasingly conciliatory approaches taken by *blocos afro* have had but a superficial effect on Afro-Brazilians at large.

Piers Armstrong shows that the incorporation of *blocos afro* into the concept of Bahianidade was articulated under the sign of globalization: "The blocos afro have moved toward the societal mainstream in aesthetic terms, and, reflecting their emerging dependence on

government and corporate patronage in a process of capitalization and commercial distribution of their cultural product, have been integrated to varying degrees into the city's political establishment" (Armstrong 1999a: 67). This incorporation has in many ways silenced the militant voice traditionally present in the ideology of the *blocos afro*, with Ilê Aiyê presenting somewhat of an exception in their radical policies that continue to exclude nonblacks. Carnival can be taken as a mirror of this change in ideology on the part of the *blocos afro*, whose efforts would eventually become the proof of a racial democracy despite the fact that their existence emerged out of racial discrimination.

Antônio Risero argues that although *afro mestiços* "are not owners of the Bahian cultural industry, of the means of production and circulation of this industry, black mestiços occupy almost all the space and time of the mass media" (1999). This is definitely true, but what we must question is if this domination of Afro-Brazilian culture in the mass media really represents a change in ideology in Bahian society (Armstrong 1999b). The commercialization of *blocos afro* in Bahian Carnival has transformed a marginalized segment of Bahian society into the principal focus of media and international attention. This transformation represents the way that the process of national identity in Brazil in Bahia is one of continuance and that the very act of focusing on the activities of *blocos afro* in a week that marks Brazilian identity exemplifies the openness in Bahian society that celebrates its cultural diversity.

Conclusion

One key element in this process of inclusion of the *blocos afro* in Carnival is that they begin to fall into its already established elite patterns. Commercialization attracted white Brazilians and foreigners, transforming the *blocos* from cultural spaces of marginalization to spaces of mainstream participation. Participating in a *bloco afro* during Carnival has come to exemplify the Bahian experience, one that is rarely experienced by Afro-Bahians themselves. *Blocos afro*, with the exception of Ilê Aiyê, are now elite, predominantly made up of white *mestiço* and, to a lesser degree, Black middle-class people who are separated from the general population (Guerrero 2000: 244). This inclusion of whites and the presence of high economic barriers to the participation of Blacks and *afro mestiços* demonstrate that the level of incorporation of *blocos afro* into Brazilian society has had the ability to make them fall into the same traps of exclusion and segregation. This questions then the effectiveness of what João Jorge, founder of Olodum, calls his "indirect route" to political mobilization.

This indirect political mobilization has been effective in raising the visibility of and centrality of African culture to Bahian culture, but it has also reified the myth of racial democracy, which can be seen most visibly in Bahian Afro-pop music. Although *blocos Afros* set the stage for the celebration of this identity, it was appropriated and made famous historically through images like Carmen Miranda and now through figures such as Daniela Mercury, Ivete Sangalo, Caetano Veloso, and other white Brazilians who become the more mainstream and digestible image of Bahianidade. Even the most militant of *blocos afro*, Ilê, which once prohibited non-Blacks from participating in their *bloco*, paraded with Daniela Mercury, an international Afro-pop phenomenon and self-proclaimed white woman with a Black soul, as the main attraction. This celebration of inclusiveness of Brazilian society is paradoxically the effect of a negritude movement emerging in response to real racism and the inequality of Blacks and what some researchers call *afro mestiços*. The socio-economic inequalities that are implicitly linked with race and discrimination continue to be prevalent in Brazilian society and certainly in Bahia.

One gain that could be attributed in part by the *blocos afro* and the re-Africanization of Bahia is the 2000 census indication of an increase in the number of Bahians classifying themselves as *preto* (Black) and a decrease in the number of *pardos* or *afro mestiços*. This growing acceptance of the term “Black” is important, considering that shared racial identity has been one of the main struggles for the Movimento Negro Unificado. For João Jorge, however, the main accomplishment of this process is not one of racial consciousness. He asserts: “the concrete result of re-Africanization is that today we have considerable sums of money at our disposal” (Rodrigues 1999: 50). This access to money is a direct result of the commercialization of Afro-Bahian culture and does not necessarily reflect any changes in the real socio-economic situation or racial consciousness of the average Afro-Brazilians in Bahia.

What is central to the discourse on ethnic tourism in Bahia is the question of whose ethnicity is being commercialized. Rather than deconstruct what is authentically Afro-Bahian and what is simply Bahian, we must first ask the question that Michael Algier raises as to whether the racism and social discrimination facing Blacks is a product of their being a true “cultural other” or just racism. The expansion of an idea of Black identity inherent in Bahian society is problematic in its relation to the ideology of racial democracy and the process of Bahianidade. The result of the transformation of Bahian society effectively reaffirms racial democracy by demonstrating the embracement of a cultural miscegenation that is ultimately perceived as an equal contribution of European and African cultural elements.

The formation of the Brazilian national identity demonstrates that politics of culture can allow marginalized culture to be absorbed under the flag of nationalism. This leaves little space for cultural resistance, and less room for the articulation of a subaltern identity outside of the inclusive meaning of Brazilianess. Even the most political of cultural movements unintentionally create anthems of Brazilian nationalism that implicitly perpetuate the ideology of racial democracy. The way in which race and ethnicity have been incorporated into the formation of a Brazilian nation is fundamental in understanding ethnic boundaries today. The myth of racial democracy, although recently refuted within the academic realm, is still very much part of the national ideology in Brazil. In a land of miscegenation, still with little evidence of racial equality, social mobilization is in many ways hindered by historical national myths of origins and what one's proper place is within the society. If cultural resistance could truly be a means to political mobilization and racial consciousness in Brazilian society, there would have to be an evaluation of which culture is dominant and which is marginalized and a recognition of the ways in which one is often absorbed in the other, especially in the Bahian context.

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