

THE POSITION OF BLACKS IN BRAZILIAN AND CUBAN SOCIETY

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Report No. 7
New edition
\$ 75⁰⁰

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- To secure justice for minority or majority groups suffering discrimination, by investigating their situation and publicising the facts as widely as possible, to educate and alert public opinion throughout the world.
- To help prevent, through publicity about violations of human rights, such problems from developing into dangerous and destructive conflicts which, when polarised, are very difficult to resolve; and
- To foster, by its research findings, international understanding of the factors which create prejudiced treatment and group tensions, thus helping to promote the growth of a world conscience regarding human rights.

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THE POSITION OF BLACKS IN BRAZILIAN AND CUBAN SOCIETY

by Anani Dzidzienyo
and Dr. Lourdes Casal

CONTENTS

I The Position of Blacks in Brazilian Society	2
Footnotes to part I	10
II Race Relations in Contemporary Cuba	11
Footnotes to part II	25
Films	28

From the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10th December 1948:

Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.

Article 10

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20

- (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.
- (2) No one may be compelled to belong to an association.

Part One:

THE POSITION OF BLACKS IN BRAZILIAN SOCIETY

by Anani Dzidzienyo

Introduction

In 1500, Pedro Alves Cabral of Portugal landed in Porto Seguro, near Salvador, the capital of the state of Bahia. But it was not until 1530 that the first Portuguese colonists arrived. Two years later the Portuguese founded São Vicente (near Santos, the port of São Paulo), later destined to become an important sugar cane centre. In 1548 a government for the new possession was created in Salvador Bahia, which became the first capital of Brazil in 1549 and was to remain so until 1763.

African slaves were imported into Brazil by the colonists to work in the sugar cane plantations, just as they were brought to other parts of the New World. Slavery was to continue in Brazil until 1888, sixty-six years after Brazil had attained independence from Portugal and one year before it became a republic. During the course of the transatlantic slave trade it is estimated that about 3,647,000 men, women and children were imported into Brazil, of whom about 1,200,200 went to Bahia alone. Salvador Bahia was thus to become the most African of Brazilian cities, and even today aspects of African culture and customs (Afro-Brazilian religious cult-houses, folklore, dietary habits, etc.) are very visible in everyday life.

Close connections were maintained between Brazil and the West coast of Africa, and some ex-Bahians (Baianos, Baianas) who returned to West Africa became master craftsmen, traders, and so on. Brazilian influence is especially noticeable in Lagos, which has a Brazilian quarter where Bahian customs are observed and where buildings have a distinctive Bahian flavour. A similar situation exists in Dahomey, while in Nigeria, Ghana and Togo there are families which descend from the Brazilians who returned to West Africa in the last century.

Other parts of Brazil which had received sizeable numbers of African slaves are Rio de Janeiro, Minas Gerais, São Paulo, Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Sul and Paraná. In the early 1870s Brazil's population was estimated to be about ten million, of which the following were slaves:

BRAZIL'S SLAVE POPULATION IN THE EARLY 1870s

State or province	Number of slaves
Rio de Janeiro	304,744
Minas Gerais	235,155
Bahia	173,639
São Paulo	169,964
Pernambuco	92,855
Rio Grande do Sul	69,366
Paraná	10,560

According to the 1872 Census, which was the first general census taken in Brazil, the population consisted of 3,787,289 (38.14%) whites, 1,954,543 (19.68%) blacks, and 4,188,737 (42.18%) of mixed blood. In 1890 the figures were 6,308,198 (43.97%) whites, 2,097,426 (14.63%) blacks, and 5,934,291 (41.40%) of mixed blood. By 1940 the figures were: 26,171,778 (63.47%) whites,

6,035,869 (14.64%) blacks and 8,744,365 (21.20%) of mixed blood. In 1950, when it was estimated that the Brazilian population had risen to 51,944,397, there were 32,027,661 (61.66%) whites, 5,692,657 (10.96%) blacks and 13,786,742 (26.52%) of mixed blood.¹ At this time, in terms of geographical regions the East had 15.6% blacks in a population of over eighteen million, the North East had 11% out of more than twelve million, the South 6.5% out of nearly seventeen million, and the Central West 10% out of almost two million. No census since 1950 has sought racial origins, so accurate up-to-date figures are not available. In 1960 the Brazilian population was 70,967,185 and in 1978 112,240,000². With this number of people and an area of 8,515,965 square kilometres, Brazil ranks as one of the largest countries in the world, and as a potentially major power. Projecting the 37.5% from 1950, it is estimated there must be over 42 million 'people of colour' in 1979.

It is said that the black or 'blacker' proportion of the Brazilian population has been decreasing as a result of *branqueamento* (whitening), or the tendency for marriages and unions to involve greater racial and colour mixing, which results in more people of mixed blood, or of generally whiter complexion. There has also been a significant European migration. In the case of São Paulo, for example, it is estimated that in 1854 foreign immigrants constituted only 3% of its population (922 people); by 1886, however, the figure had increased to 25% (12,985 people). The period between 1872 and 1886 continued to show a rapid rise in the city's white population. The proportion of foreigners in the national population as a whole reached its peak in the 1900 Census when it had grown to 6.16%. Thereafter, however, the figures showed a downward progression, reaching 2.09% in 1950. One factor in this decrease is the large number of those, originally classed as foreigners, who have chosen to take on Brazilian nationality. Portuguese, Italians, Spaniards and Germans form the largest immigrant groups who have done so. There is also a large Japanese community, centred mainly in São Paulo (both the city and state). It may be said that there has been no significant black migration to Brazil since the days of slavery and that blacks in the population today are descendants of the slaves. The terms 'black' and 'dark' are used throughout to refer to those who are recognizably black, and is more accurate than the expression 'people of colour' which is the umbrella expression commonly used in Brazil to describe all non-white people, with perhaps the exception of Chinese or Japanese (of whom there are 600,000)³.

Colour in Brazilian society

'In Brazil, there is no racism: the Negro knows his place.'

(A popular Brazilian saying)

The view of Brazil as the one country in the world where people of different races live together in harmony and where opportunities are open to all irrespective of racial background is definitely a misleading, if not a completely inaccurate, description of the Brazilian racial situation. The most effective way of ascertaining the reality is to look at the socio-economic and political positions of black or dark Brazilians in their society. But before doing this it is necessary to question the validity of another widely-held opinion about the Brazilian racial situation, which-

¹ Footnotes for part one are on page 10

is, that the successful intermingling of the races has gone on for so long that it is now impossible to say with any degree of certainty who is black and who is white in Brazil. In fact, a sizeable proportion of the Brazilian population — approximately 10% of 96 million people — are recognizably black or distinctly dark. Their presence does not belie the extent to which racial intermingling has taken place, but it does bring out the bias which has been a hallmark of the much-vaunted Brazilian 'racial democracy' — the bias that white is best and black is worst and therefore the nearer one is to white, the better.

The hold which this view has on Brazilian society is all-pervasive and embraces a whole range of stereotypes, role-playing, job opportunities, life-styles, and, what is even more important, it serves as the cornerstone of the closely-observed 'etiquette' of race relations in Brazil. This etiquette dictates strongly against any discussion, especially in a controversial manner, of the racial situation, and thus it effectively helps to perpetuate the pattern of relationships which has been in existence since the days of slavery. Traditionally the blacks are expected to be grateful to the whites for the kindnesses shown to them and to continue to depend on the whites acting as patrons and benefactors to them; it is also expected that the blacks will continue to accept the whites as the nation's official mouthpiece, explaining to outsiders the 'unique' nature of Brazilian race relations. The etiquette also decrees that official platitudes used to describe the Brazilian situation, the 'racial democracy', are to be accepted without question, while critical analysis or open discussion of this delicate subject are strongly discouraged.

Until the Brazilian society frees itself from this self-imposed prohibition against open discussion, the present idyllic picture of Brazilian race relations will continue to predominate. Until then, the black Brazilian's position will indeed continue to be unique among New World blacks, in that he alone will appear not to have profited from the new consciousness which Africans and other blacks throughout the world are experiencing, nor will he seem to have attained a greater consciousness of his position in relation to the overall society in which he lives. The growth of black consciousness is discouraged by the society's refusal to grant the black citizen the opportunity to realize his whole identity — including his black self — by denying the significance which black development (political, social and cultural) holds for him in particular and for Brazil in general.

At present the black man's position in Brazil can only be described as being virtually outside the main stream of society. He is almost completely unrepresented in any area involving decision-making; with relatively few exceptions he is not to be seen in government, administration, business, or commerce, except at the lowest levels where manual labour is required. The only areas where he plays a significant, rather than menial, role are in football and entertainment; the reasons for his prominence here will be explored later. It is enough to note here that the availability of these two particular avenues to blacks who wish to have a successful career and thereby benefit socially and economically is not peculiar to Brazil; nor is this a new phenomenon. The implication here is that there are more parallels between the racial situation in Brazil and that in other multi-racial countries than is generally acknowledged. Until there is an opportunity for blacks to assert themselves in all sectors of the society, any

claim that *as a group* they possess equal rights must remain highly questionable; the voice of a solitary Pelé in a white wilderness, or that of the exceptional musician or entertainer who has 'made it' through his unusual ability or good fortune, is not enough to validate such a claim.⁴ The situation of black women is inexorably more complex, and more painful.

Until Brazilians stop reacting, both officially and unofficially, with 'hurt pride' and dismay when questions are asked about the position of black citizens, Brazil will continue undisturbed in its present ostrich-like posture, making any real improvement in its racial situation unlikely, if not impossible.⁵ There does exist a real opportunity to create a more egalitarian society, but the way to achieve this is not by reiterating often meaningless and misleading statements about the absence of overt racist practices in Brazil, the existence of a thirty-year old anti-discrimination law,⁶ the greater interracial friendliness and mingling to be seen on the streets, particularly at carnival-time.⁷ Even if all this were true, such things are not in themselves conclusive proof that racial discrimination does not exist in Brazil, particularly in its more subtle manifestations. In a society where social control mechanisms have traditionally been used with great effect to ensure that one group remains dominant and the other dominated, it has not been found necessary to enact rigid rules in order to ensure the continuance of the dominant-dominated relationship. Were legal precepts alone proof that racial justice and harmony exist, it would be a completely different story. The distinction between theory and practice is very important in an assessment of the black Brazilian's position, because there are no legal provisions which force him to remain in a disadvantaged position; there is, in fact, no need for them because the economic, social and political structures of Brazil are such that, by their very nature, they operate against the interests of the blacks. This kind of politico-socio-economic structure can effectively handle the rare black person who manages to succeed despite all the odds against him, because his example does not threaten to upset the fixed nature of existing unequal relationships. If anything, because he has managed 'to make it', he will be used by the society as a 'pin-up' to support the contention that Brazil is indeed a racial democracy. In fact a roll of honour exists from which names are often cited to show that some 'people of colour' have been successful — the implication being of course that the rest could follow suit if they would only try harder. Ignored here is the fact that had these few black Brazilians not been exceptionally gifted or fortunate, they would not have attained success.⁸

The term 'people of colour' is itself probably the greatest single factor contributing to the myth of the 'racial democracy'⁹ for it is used to describe all non-white people or 'mixed-bloods' — a group which ranges from those completely black to those almost white. What must be noted here is that, in practice, Brazilians make extremely fine distinctions between subtle variations in skin tone, and that lighter-skinned Brazilians do not consider it a compliment to be classified with dark or black people. So, to group all of them together under a blanket term is to distort the real situation.¹⁰ In theory a third category is recognized — that of the *mulato*, which embraces those neither black nor white. This middle category, however, is further broken down into light and dark *mulatos*, with the lightest-skinned passing over to the 'white' category,

and the darkest being included among the 'blacks'. Further, it must be noted that even this tripartite classification does not mean that the dark-skinned *mulato* would consider himself to be black; quite the contrary in fact. Moreover, because of this Brazilian obsession with whiteness and blackness and the shades in between, with a concomitant emphasis on features such as people's hair texture, nose shape and size of lips, there exist further race and colour break-downs to the point where Brazilians have more than twenty different expressions to distinguish colour variations between the two extremes of black and white.¹¹

Therefore, when the claim is made that Brazil has always offered the 'person of colour'¹² or mixed blood equal opportunities, there is an ostensible lumping together of all these people who are not in fact generally considered to be in the same racial/colour category and who are not therefore accorded the same treatment. Hence, the claim that 'people of colour' are to be found at all levels of society is inaccurate if black or dark people are included in the term. Another factor which has contributed to creating a false impression about the Brazilian situation is the practice of denying the existence of significant racial similarities between Brazil and the United States. This has been done on the one hand by choosing to emphasize certain points about the Brazilian racial scene which invariably bring out its better aspects, while on the other hand stressing the worst aspects of the racial situation in the USA. It is thus argued that what distinguishes Brazil from the United States is the fact that in Brazil there is 'prejudice against appearance', while in the United States one finds 'prejudice against origins'. The validity of this claim can best be tested if we apply it to the Brazilians who look black; in their case, appearance and origin cannot meaningfully be separated and the distinction is therefore found to be false.

There is a further element involved in this distinction: the existence of 'prejudice' may be admitted, but not the action to which it leads — that is, 'discrimination'. 'Prejudice' is a state of mind while 'discrimination' involves prejudicial action, so that prejudice need not necessarily be followed by discrimination nor be concomitant with it. People can thus be prejudiced without translating their prejudices into discriminatory action, i.e. making distinctions in one's treatment of others that are not based on fair and objective criteria equally applicable to everyone.¹³ In a situation where it is considered inadvisable to indulge in overt discrimination, refuge may be taken in the explanation that it is prejudice, not discrimination, which exists. In the Brazilian case in particular, although it is often admitted that a certain amount of prejudice is felt against dark persons, it is claimed that such prejudice does not involve actual discrimination.

It is argued further that this prejudice is not really directed against darker people as such (that is, not on the basis of their colour), but rather against their low position in society (that is, their socio-economic standing): The blacks, having originally been brought to Brazil as slaves, were of course at the very bottom of the socio-economic and, by implication, political pyramid; and with the abolition of slavery in 1888, they were immediately thrown into a competitive socio-economic situation for which they were quite unprepared and, hence, they were handicapped even before they could begin.¹⁴ As

individuals begin to move up economically, it would be assumed that, with their value enhanced, those blacks and dark people who began to acquire technical and professional skills could gradually move away from the base and edge upwards in the socio-economic pyramid. If, then, the majority of blacks and dark-skinned people remained at the very base — as has happened — this would not necessarily be regarded as having a connection with their appearance and racial origins; instead the assumption would be that they were suffering because they were poor. The expression generally used in Brazil to characterize this phenomenon is 'money whitens', meaning that once an individual of dark colour acquires money, he can literally buy himself out of the black category and into the white category; because, the argument goes, along with money come all the social benefits which are commonly associated with whiteness and success in Brazil.

The reality, once again, is more complex. For example, the experience of one black professional in Salvador Bahia (the city with the largest recognizable black population in Brazil) attests to the fact that for blacks professional qualifications and economic status are not always synonymous with social success as is normally the case with near-white and light-skinned people: the truth is, of course, that an individual's blackness does not suddenly become invisible simply because he has acquired some wealth.¹⁵ Of course it is unlikely that many blacks will be able to accumulate wealth, and therefore some of the exceptional few who do may be accepted within the fold. Because of their small numbers and because they have achieved a certain measure of success within the existing system, such people are not likely to upset the overall pattern of relationships between whites and blacks. Indeed, if anything, these people are more likely to conform to than to challenge the patterns of the group to which they have been admitted: firstly, because their success and inclusion in 'white' society is proof of their personal abilities; and secondly, because it is unlikely that they will criticize the system which has just accorded them so signal an honour. They thus become captives of the situation and are often called upon to testify to the efficacy of the 'racial democracy' which has enabled them to reach their relatively high positions.

This is one example of how most observers of the Brazilian racial scene can be, and have been, seduced by outward appearances. Also contributing to the image of racial equality is the mingling of the races in the streets and public places where people of the most beautiful colour combinations are to be seen, and in the shantytowns (*favelas*). There also seems to be a general acceptance of the myth that the Portuguese somehow managed to initiate good race relations in Brazil, in spite of their own history as slavetraders and the inegalitarian nature of their own society.

The Portuguese are said to have been much less bigoted than their Anglo-Saxon counterparts in North America about mingling their blood with that of Indian and African slave-women. Furthermore, the Catholic religion is thought to have had a humanizing influence on the slave-masters, in that it recognized the humanity of the slave and the possibility that he had a soul which could be saved. Along with this ecclesiastical recognition that the slave was not wholly without human rights in the secular sphere, his rights were acknowledged in law. Thus,

in theory and in law, the slave was allowed the right to buy himself out of bondage, to get another slave to take his place (presumably by coercion or persuasion), and even to lodge complaints against his master. Because these legal rights were known to exist, the position of black Brazilians has often been described in a way which makes no distinction between theory and practice; in reality the two have not been identical.¹⁶ For example, legal rights notwithstanding, in practice a slave could not lodge a complaint against his master, could not testify in court, and, even if he were freed, his freedom was subject to revocation at his ex-master's discretion. Furthermore, since Brazilian society was governed and led by slave-owners themselves for the greater part of the period during which slavery was legal in Brazil (it was not abolished until 1888), it would be naive to expect that these slave-owners would be concerned about the legal rights of slaves when such concern would not only damage their own economic interests but would also undermine the very system upon which their power had been built.

The sexual relationship between the slave-master and his slaves was, moreover, intrinsically unequal. With few Portuguese women in the colonies, it was not uncommon that the male colonists should have had sexual relations with their slave women who, of course, were in no position to repulse their master's advances. Such behaviour would be common even in the case of slave-masters who did have European wives. A slave-woman, being in a weak, unprotected and 'inferior' position, was considered by white males to be easy prey; this view of her has lasted, through succeeding generations, to include her descendants even today. The *mulata*, who is the subject of many popular Brazilian songs, is the living example of this: despite the contention that she is the symbol of Brazil, she is in fact commonly spoken of and treated as being sexually approachable and promiscuous; these attributed qualities are thought to make her desirable as a sexual partner, but unsuitable as a wife. The term *mulata* is now used so loosely that it means any non-white woman who is relatively dark; it is even used to describe a near-black woman and is a polite way of avoiding the term 'black' (*prêta* or *negra*), which is considered uncomplimentary. For this reason, in a magazine claiming to present the 'hottest *mulatas* in Brazil', some of the women photographed were obviously black but had been called '*mulata*'. In 1960 when a 'people of colour' club in Rio de Janeiro decided to enter a girl for the 'Miss Rio de Janeiro' contest — a preliminary round for the 'Miss Brazil' contest — some other clubs threatened to withdraw from the competition. They seemed to fear that if a *mulata* was allowed to enter the contest that year, then before long really black girls might join as well.¹⁷ It is clear from this that while *mulatas* may be considered suitable as dancers during carnival-time, they are not thought to be proper representatives of Brazilian beauty, whose epitome is generally considered to be *morena* (sunburnt in appearance but not actually black or very dark).

The praises sung to the *mulata* in many Brazilian songs do not, either, reflect the position of the majority of dark black women in Brazil. Most *mulatas* have to work as housemaids and cooks in a clearly-defined role which remains essentially unchanged despite the acts of friendliness on the part of their employers. Here too, a historical precedent is cited in an attempt to show how warm and friendly master-slave relations have been in Brazil: the

mãe prêta (black mother), who nursed her master's children, is still spoken of sentimentally by many who were brought up by her and who claim, for that reason, to be free from racial prejudice. What appears to have been forgotten here is the fact that the *mãe prêta* was looked upon with affection because of her fidelity and service to her master and his family, regardless of her own wants or comfort; her counterpart was to be found in the Southern United States as the 'black mammy' or 'Aunt Jemimah'. And although mutual affection might have existed, her role was firmly fixed and there was no question of her ever improving the unequal basis of her relationship with her master and his peers. The existence of the *mãe prêta* cannot, therefore, be said to confirm the absence of racial discrimination in Brazil — particularly when one remembers that, in this role, her instincts and feelings as mother to her own children, and to her own family life, were deliberately stifled.

All this, however, is not to dispute the existence of a few Brazilians who have publicly expounded views contrary to the accepted traditional, official and popular concept of Brazilian race relations. The works of people like Florestan Fernandes, who carried out a pioneer study of the *Relationship between Blacks and Whites in São Paulo*¹⁸ (the industrial capital of Brazil) in conjunction with the French scholar, Roger Bastide, have examined in a new and critical way the Brazilian 'racial democracy'. In his subsequent works, including *A Integração do Negro na Sociedade de Classes*¹⁹ and *The Weight of the Past*,²⁰ Florestan Fernandes has raised serious questions about racialism in Brazilian society. Following in his footsteps, Otavio Ianni and Fernando Henrique Cardoso have studied *Colour and Social Mobility in Florianópolis*,²¹ and Costa Pinto has examined the conditions of the *Negro in Rio de Janeiro*.²²

All these works share a recognition of the marginal position of the black in Brazilian society as a result of several major factors. The most important of these is the fact that abolition of slavery was not accompanied by any measures which would enable the ex-slave to take a place on equal terms in a highly competitive and rapidly expanding economy; thus he was left handicapped and unable to compete with even the newly-arrived immigrants from Europe. This has been especially true of São Paulo.

Through the work of Florestan Fernandes and others, as well as recent historical research on Brazilian slavery (Vioti Costa, Stein, Degler, Graham, Jones²³), enough evidence has been presented to show the true nature of Brazilian race relations, both in the past and today; yet the old myths are still believed by Brazilians as well as foreigners. For instance, it is often said in Bahian intellectual circles that the analyses and conclusions of Fernandes and the 'São Paulo group' are applicable only to the southern part of Brazil, where it is said relations are much worse than in the north-east (i.e., Bahia itself); the difference is attributed to the greater number of new European immigrants in the south, who are thought to have brought their prejudices with them.

Racial or socio-economic prejudice?

The work of Donald Pierson, the American sociologist who wrote *Negroes in Brazil: the history of race contact*

in Brazil, and that of the well-known Bahian social scientist Thales de Azevedo,²⁴ may be said to represent the Bahian school of thought which holds that, slavery having ended, relations between whites and blacks and (in Bahia) all those in the *mulato* (mixed) group, have been determined primarily by social and economic factors and that therefore it is not so much a question of racism as of social prejudice. It would follow that as soon as the blacks and dark Brazilians improve their low socio-economic status they will have no further problem in integrating fully into society. This school of thought agrees that there are rich and poor people and that the overwhelming majority of rich people are white, while most of the blacks are poor, so that a rich black man becomes an 'honorary white' and a poor white man is considered to be 'black'.

Two important points are to be noted here. The first is the acceptance of the view prevalent in Brazil that to be white is desirable and that 'whiteness' should be the eventual goal of all those unfortunate enough to be born black or dark. The second point about this school of thought is its view that the root of the problem is personal or social prejudice against low socio-economic status, which happens to be identified with being black but which, nevertheless, involves no racism or racial discrimination. Adopting this point of view means that any prejudice against, and negative stereotypes about, blacks — and their lack of participation at levels other than the lowest in Brazilian society — can be explained away with a minimum of discomfort to everyone.

In August 1971, a leading Bahian newspaper carried an article entitled: 'Where is Prejudice — in colour or in social position?' — thus putting the emphasis on *prejudice*, and not discrimination. In this article the existence of prejudice was admitted, even in the form of *racial* prejudice; however, it was added as usual that such prejudice has much more to do with class than with race. The article further admitted that some racism did exist, along with common racist expressions like 'He is black but intelligent'; 'A black man with a white soul'; and, of course, the ubiquitous question 'Would you let your daughter marry a black man?' A black maid was then quoted as saying: 'My white bosses treat me well but I know my place.' The article also quoted Professor Thales de Azevedo who referred to the greater number of inter-racial marriages taking place and said that he himself believes racial prejudice is on the decrease; that is, there are now fewer obstacles in the way of 'people of colour' who wish to move towards integration in the white, class-based society, and that there is even a greater tendency towards such integration. 'Racial prejudice is something children learn from their elders; so, if it can be learned, it can also be unlearned', the writer of this newspaper article affirmed, concluding: 'The contribution of people of colour in various fields of art, popular music, theatre, the arts, and especially in football, where they have become idols, will permit greater racial integration with less sensation'²⁵ (Author's emphasis throughout). The limitations imposed on black people will be evident from the fact that their 'contribution' is confined to the worlds of entertainment and football, which are quite remote from the decision-making areas of the Brazilian socio-economic and political structures.

The process of 'whitening' is, of course, occurring in a more literal sense through more frequent inter-marriage and miscegenation which in time will make it increasingly

difficult to distinguish with certainty those who have black origins. This tendency towards 'whitening' is embodied in the Brazilian policy of *branqueamento* (whitening), by which it is hoped that continued miscegenation will eventually produce a new Brazilian all-white prototype; certainly the encouragement given to European immigration will contribute to this end.

In a society which officially denies all existence of discrimination, accusations of racially discriminatory acts can be countered by the offender in two ways. If black or dark people complain that they are experiencing racial discrimination with regard to educational and employment opportunities, or housing, reasons other than the most obvious are advanced in explanation. For example, one finds that the expression *boa aparência* (good appearance) recurs in advertisements for salesmen, shop assistants, secretaries and other positions which involve contact with the public. It is commonly accepted that this expression means that the applicant is more likely to be successful if he is white or near-white. There is nothing actually illegal about including the requirement *boa aparência*, and the employer can always say that discrimination on the basis of race or colour was far from his mind. In one instance, the owner of a boarding house in Salvador, Bahia, who was advertising for lodgers stipulated that people who were unemployed or dark-skinned need not apply; this restriction, he explained, arose simply from his concern for the well-being of his other lodgers who, in the past, had had occasion to complain about the behaviour of blacks in his boarding house. He agreed, however, to accept as a lodger any black applicant who could prove his ability to pay the rent. 'Rich blacks' were therefore eligible, but whites or near-white applicants would not need to undergo any such means test.²⁶

A second type of reaction often elicited by accusations of discrimination is one of great shock at the discovery of unfair practices; and it is pointed out that such behaviour is completely contrary to the Brazilian tradition of race relations: 'How could any Brazilian do such an inhuman thing which goes against the very grain of our racial democracy?' or 'The guilty person should bear the full force of the anti-discrimination law'.²⁷

In 1970 the BBC televised a documentary 'Panorama' programme on race relations in Brazil which submitted that racial discrimination did exist. Following this an official protest was made to the BBC by the Brazilian government, and the Brazilian press was aroused.²⁸ Great exception was taken to the fact that no black Brazilian had been interviewed on the programme, and that it was a black American girl (i.e., a foreigner) who had talked about discrimination. A columnist for the magazine *O Cruzeiro* wrote: 'It is unfair of the BBC to accuse us of racial discrimination when we have the pride of being the only truly multi-racial society created in the tropics by the white man'.

Two important points emerged from the protest. The first was that no black Brazilian had been interviewed. In this regard it should be noted that in Brazil today, when even white political dissenters are forced to go underground, it would be difficult to find black Brazilians willing to risk making public statements on television about their actual position in society for fear of possible reprisals against them. Two notable exceptions are Abdias do Nascimento and Gurreiro Ramos, who, apart

from voicing their critical opinions on the Brazilian racial situation, also hold political views which have caused them (like certain other Brazilian intellectuals) to live outside Brazil since the military takeover of 1964. Abdias do Nascimento is a playwright, author and founder of the Experimental Black Theatre in Rio de Janeiro (which he organized in 1944). He has been uncompromising in his denunciations of what he calls the 'Kafkaesque nature' of the racial situation, and has lectured at the State University of New York at Buffalo in the United States as well as the Department of African Languages and Literature, University of Ife, Nigeria.²⁹ After 'pressures exercised by the powers that be', he was prevented from presenting papers at the 1966 and 1977 Festivals of Negro Arts and Culture (FESTAC).³⁰

Another interesting point was raised during the protest directed against the BBC: the claim that the white man had created a 'world in the tropics'. This is, in fact, the dominant and most popular concept of Brazilian race relations, as orchestrated by the establishment sociologist Gilberto Freyre (*The Masters and the Slaves; New World in the Tropics*). Freyre's vivid descriptions of life in the slave-master's house, and the affectionate relations between master and slave, have been highly effective in establishing Brazil's 'reputation' as a multi-racial society free from racism. The Portuguese are alleged not to consider dark people their inferiors, as a result of having themselves been ruled at one time by the Moors. Proof of Portuguese open-mindedness is supposed to be their favourable attitude towards miscegenation: they mated freely with their slaves, producing the *mulata* — symbol of Brazil. No one can discuss race relations in Brazil without paying due attention to Freyre's views but his approach, limited as it is, is adopted without question by the majority of Brazilians.³¹ It must be added, however, that even in Brazil itself the Freyre approach is questioned by some historians and sociologists; but so pervasive are his views generally — and so convenient to supporters of the status quo — that both Brazilians and foreigners tend to accept this as a quasi-official description of Brazilian race relations. In June 1971, Freyre was quoted as saying that 'Negritude' (i.e., black consciousness among Africans and people of African descent) is, no matter how it is defined, 'a mysticism which has no place in Brazil'. This is an effective way of reasserting the traditional explanation of the 'racial democracy' theory and firmly shutting the door on possible 'deviations' from it. Negritude, according to Freyre, may be relevant for the people of Africa who as a result of 'tribal' divisions over the years could use it to strengthen national consciousness and encourage political integration: it might even be beneficial to black Americans who are seeking a new identity. As far as the black Brazilian is concerned, however, he thinks this movement has no relevance at all. To Freyre, Brazil is a land made up principally of mixed racial and ethnic groups, who live together on equal terms in hybrid culture.³² In 1972 he too was a focus of the BBC.³³

The black Brazilian's position in white-dominated Brazil differs from that of blacks in similar societies elsewhere only to the extent that the official Brazilian ideology of non-discrimination — by not reflecting the reality and, indeed, by camouflaging it — achieves without tension the same results as do overtly racist societies. As for the position of the black Brazilian himself to a critical assessment of his position, it must be remembered that

black and dark Brazilians have been colonized and brought up to accept the 'new world in the tropics' myth, so that they show signs of discomfort at any open and controversial discussion of the subject. More importantly, they have been encouraged to believe that they are the most fortunate blacks in the New World — especially in comparison with the 'poor black North American' — and, perhaps for that reason, they faithfully observe the 'etiquette' of race relations and will readily point out the brotherly feelings which exist between them and white Brazilians. Of course, an essential element in this attitude is the black's long-term subjection to racial stereotypes promulgated by the whites. Having been imposed upon the black man for so long, these negative images of himself have come to be accepted by him as being true.

Those blacks and dark people who have been successful are regularly cited as evidencing the equality of opportunity which is said to exist in Brazil. Thus, because of his acceptance of the orthodox line, Pelé, the 'King of Football', was an invaluable ally of the Brazilian authorities, constantly used to demonstrate the validity of their 'racial democracy' propaganda. He himself claimed that there is no racism in Brazil and that he personally had never experienced any acts against himself which could be construed as racist. Pelé happens to be the best known of these tokenist 'honourable exceptions', but he is by no means the only one. There are others in the world of football and entertainment who, having themselves succeeded, avoid making any controversial pronouncements about the racial situation. It is not that these people lack racial consciousness; it is just that they prefer not to put themselves in the firing line. Thus Pelé can talk about racism in the United States and declare his agreement with the politics of Muhammad Ali, yet at the same time he cannot see that similar tactics might be equally applicable in Brazil, because, after all, racism does not exist in his country.³⁴ Yet in 1974, he too was called a 'dirty black bum' by an official during a civic ceremony in a provincial town. In 'retirement' he has moved to the United States.

It has been said of Pelé that 'No black person in the whole world has done more to break racial barriers. He who claps hands for Pelé claps hands for black people.'³⁵ It is difficult to see how this statement could be justified: applause for a football player is in no way a denial of racist or discriminatory practices in society. In fact a black sportsman or musician may be required to play for audiences from which blacks have been deliberately excluded; the players themselves are present to provide entertainment for the white audience who, in return, may deign to admit the black players to their club-house and might even fete them as 'symbols'. None of this, however, will upset the basic relationship between the white and black races.³⁶

What however about the black person who, although relatively successful, begins openly to question the assumptions of 'racial democracy' in Brazil? How does the society respond? The following appeared in *A Tarde*, a Bahian afternoon paper:³⁷

'Frentes Negras (Black Fronts) — A new problem — Why? Men of colour and Brazil — Bahia and artificial problems — Anachronistic Impertinence . . . The problem does not exist. It is new, it is imagined, it is not real.' The article further maintained that it had always been a cause of surprise and admiration to foreigners visiting Brazil that any differentiation (discrimi-

nation) based on race (colour) was absent and that the black person, by virtue of his intelligence and ability, could freely reach any position including the highest offices in the political hierarchy, administration and commerce; and that this had been the case even before the abolition of slavery. There was therefore no need for 'black fronts' in Brazil. The idea was an artificial one, foreign-inspired, and it would only serve to upset the harmony of Brazilian (and Bahian) race relations.

This article was written in response to the launching in the 1930s of *A Frente Negra Brasileira* (The Black Brazilian Front) in São Paulo. This group proposed to unite 'people of colour' — blacks and *mulatos* — in order to secure better political, social and economic treatment for them all. The Front gained considerable support and was registered with the supreme Electoral Tribunal as a political party. But its political activities were suspended following a coup d'état and when the ban was eventually lifted, it re-emerged without its political programme; the emphasis was placed instead on organising cultural and recreational activities. However, in its original announcement about the opening of a branch in Bahia, a spokesman had said that the Front was an 'organization with the principal objective of educating and socializing the race' and that 'in the field of political action, we will vote for black candidates'.

Jorge Amado, himself a Bahian and a leading Brazilian author, now world-famous for his vivid accounts of Bahian life, wrote in *Pastores da Noite* (Shepherds of the Night):

'Any child could have blue eyes, even when its father is black, because it is impossible to separate and classify the various bloods in a child born in Bahia. A blond appears amongst *mulatos* and a little black among whites. This is how we are.'³⁸

Despite the extensive racial mixing which characterizes Bahia, it is nevertheless true that there is so great an obsession with whiteness or near-whiteness among Bahians that a term exists — *branco da Bahia* (Bahian white) — to describe a near-white person who would be offended if he were referred to as a *mulato*, although strictly speaking the latter might be a truer description.³⁹ Similarly, in the streets of Bahia the unusual sight of a couple drawn from opposite poles of the race/colour spectrum will cause passers-by to stare and make disapproving comments. Yet even such occurrences can be explained away, if rather illogically: 'Bahia is too traditional; patterns of relationships, ideas and behaviour have not responded to changes of the times'.⁴⁰

Even in the streets of São Paulo, however — a sophisticated metropolis and the economic capital of Brazil — identical reactions to the sight of such racially-mixed couples are noticeable; indeed a Bahian would comment, 'In São Paulo and in the South there is more racism generally'. It would be more accurate to say that here, unlike Bahia, relationships have been challenged by changing economic patterns (e.g., blacks competing with whites on a large scale for skilled jobs). Because of this increased competition with whites some of the subtler racist practices have given way to more overt manifestations of racism.

These more pronounced racist practices in the South are commonly attributed to the presence there of large numbers of non-Iberian European immigrants (Germans,

Italians and East Europeans) and their descendants, who are thought to have imported their racist ideas. However, Florestan Fernandes has demonstrated that, far from this being so, the immigrant who comes to São Paulo is much more likely to be influenced by the existing patterns of interracial relationships which he finds there. In São Paulo, for instance, there have been different stages in the white immigrant's relationship with blacks. Initially, there has been some feeling of solidarity between them since both were, in different senses, outsiders in Brazilian society. In time, however, as the immigrant raised himself from his initially low socio-economic position, he realized that continued association with blacks retarded his own upward mobility. At this point he tended to seek out new white and near-white friends as being more compatible with his improved circumstances.⁴¹

From the point of view of the blacks the upward mobility of the white immigrant is, on the one hand, a source of encouragement and inspiration, for he is known to have arrived only recently and with nothing and yet, in a comparatively short period, has managed to better his situation. On the other hand, the white immigrant's success reinforces the blacks' existing suspicions and doubts: why can the white immigrant advance so quickly when they, as Brazilians, have not succeeded in doing so despite all their efforts; is not this proof of the prejudice and discrimination against them as blacks?⁴² To say that they are victims of a competitive class society which places the highest premium of saleable skills is true. But this overlooks the fact that the vast majority of blacks were handicapped before they could even begin to compete with their fellow Brazilians in the private enterprise economy and that they continue in this position because of their colour. Simply to group them with other poor members of society (though undoubtedly they do share most of their problems) is merely to avoid acknowledging the special problems experienced by the blacks today in an environment of confirmed racism. An important study, confirming the critical economic importance of racial discrimination, but operating through social relations, was published in 1975 by R. Penn Reeve. In a small town of 21,000, he found that blacks occupied 1% of higher status (clerical, skilled, managerial, semi-professional) jobs, although they comprised 15% of the population. Conversely, whites, who made up only 20% of the population, occupied 55% of these occupations.⁴³ *Newsweek*, reporting another study, quoted that only 5% of Brazil's military officers were black, only 2% of the civil service, and 3% of college students.⁴⁴

Brazil, of course, is a rigidly-stratified society within which upward mobility is quite difficult for all members of the proletariat. Nepotism is pervasive as, of course, the most secure way of retaining any economic or social status and influence; this, too, hinders social mobility and equal access to employment at almost any level. Decision-making and effective power remains the prerogative of a tiny elite; this was traditionally composed of the large land-owners but now includes new members drawn from industry, the armed forces, the church and intellectuals on the faculties of universities, colleges and secondary schools. About 50% of the adult population is illiterate, and with a literacy bar most adults excluded from the ruling class are not even permitted to vote during elections. Furthermore, since April 1964 the country has been ruled by a military elite and there political parties operate strictly within a framework

dictated by the armed forces. Many of the people who were actively involved in politics and in administrative and economic planning between 1960-1964 were deprived of their political rights — others have been who were thought to have 'leftist, demagogic' leanings. Those suspected either of actively opposing the regime or of endangering the 'honour' of Brazil are greatly harassed, and most of this group have been forced to go into exile in Europe or elsewhere on the American continent. Censorship or the threat of repression has prevented the publication of all but the briefest and most innocuous of references to race.⁴⁵

There has been a consistent if perhaps not entirely intentional alliance of politicians, administrators, the aristocracy, academics, workers, artists and others — politically and ideologically at variance though they might be — vis-à-vis the plight of the black Brazilian: for their own reasons they all refuse to recognize that the special problems a black person encounters as a result of his colour and his heritage require special solutions. Those who support the status quo — because they remain the chief beneficiaries of the inegalitarian socio-political and economic systems and are concerned about Brazil's image abroad — find it highly desirable that no challenge is made to the status quo. The attitude of such people is that 'Brazil is a racial democracy and the subject is not open to discussion'.

On their part politically and socially conscious intellectuals, students, progressive sections of the church and workers recognize the gross inequalities in the socio-economic and political structures, and want a just and egalitarian society with benefits and opportunities available to all. They are concerned primarily with the poor, the unemployed and the illiterate, but believe that to single out the black Brazilians for special (i.e., preferential) treatment would be to deviate from the main course of reform. They certainly are not among those who believe that Brazil is a racial democracy, and they would agree that there is great prejudice as well as discrimination directed against the blacks; but they believe that society as a whole must be seen and analyzed in class terms. For this reason they regard blacks as part of the large sub-proletariat and not as a separate group meriting special treatment.

There is a third group in Brazil — and these people are in the majority — who accept without question the premise that racial prejudice and discrimination are not present. They feel that any problems experienced by blacks are a function of social and economic status alone. Such people believe in the 'money whitens' phenomenon, but unlike the second group, they do not see their society in terms of class and consequently do not think in terms of restructuring it as a whole in a more egalitarian way.

And the blacks themselves? Those who have attained some upward economic and social mobility would also divide among the three categories above — probably with the majority in the third, simply because continued personal advancement is not possible unless one avoids controversy. Those who have not attained comfortable economic and social positions — and the vast majority come into this category — range between those who are hopeful, trusting that the future will bring an improvement in their position, or more probably in that of their children and grandchildren; those who are convinced that

racism exists and is responsible for their continued low position in society; and those who regard these questions as irrelevant to their daily lives. 'And that, in itself, is a problem', according to John Henrik Clarke, the black historian.

The future

On 7 July 1978 the first demonstration within living memory against racism took place in São Paulo. Five thousand people met together, organized by the Unified Black Movement Against Racial Discrimination, and parallels were immediately drawn with events in the United States ten years ago — in the world press, although the Brazilian press reported very little.⁴⁶ The immediate cause had been an overt act of discrimination at a sports club, but this had been only one of a series of reported incidents.

Whether this unique event will be repeated will depend not only on the awakening consciousness of discrimination among the black people, but also in Brazil's role in the world, and particularly its relations with the United States and Africa. Brazil moved symbolically, though not in actuality, from total identification with Portuguese colonial policy to a pro-African nationalist policy in response to the winds of change there, and proceeded to woo African nations with considerable intensity. The commanding presence of African culture in Brazil, and the official respect and honour paid it, were behind the reasoning. Brazil also sought to become a spokesman for the Third World in international fora. Between 1973 and 1975, Brazil recognized Guinea-Bissau before notifying Portugal, and led other nations in recognizing the MPLA as the sole and legitimate government in Angola. The independence of Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and especially Angola had a direct impact on Brazil, but its intensity and long-term effect cannot yet be assessed. It is reasonable to predict a role for Brazil in Lusophone Africa on account of commonality of culture and her capacity to offer technical assistance: and some Angolans have taken refuge in Brazil.⁴⁷

The effects on the blacks in Brazil — 'now increasingly called Afro-Brazilians' — remains to be seen. While there is an increase in the symbolism of black resistance, in music and dress, for example, it cannot be assumed that a sudden or widespread 'Africanization' will occur, although it may 'unfreeze' the static Afro-Brazilian heritage — perhaps to an extent unacceptable to the Brazilian government. Heated arguments have emerged in black cultural circles because the dynamic Africanity could imply denationalization, seen as divisive since it racializes politics and society.

The comparisons with black Americans remain meaningful, despite the overt differences in the nature of racism as perceived in the US. The American historian, Carl Degler, demonstrated that there is much more to be compared about the two situations than is suggested by posing them as opposites.⁴⁸ An increasing number of North American scholars have turned their attention to Afro-Latin Americans, in the wake of the development of ethnic and black studies programmes. The spectre of Black Power and concomitant race hatred remains a strong deterrent, however, to Latin-American scholars or political activists acquiring a North American tag. The government response might well be repressive.

Unlike the US, no attempt has been made to adjust the position of blacks by legislation. It is eschewed because in itself it could be construed as singling out for preferential treatment a specific group from the greater body of the poor and deprived. There are, too, limits to the effectiveness of laws in this connection, precisely because of their powerlessness in the face of informal and subtle discrimination practices. If acts of discrimination, such as those that propelled the 1978 demonstration, are taken more seriously and radicalize more blacks, perhaps this view of legislation may change. Black Brazilians are not totally ignorant of the gains of black Americans in recent decades, though they are woefully ignorant concerning specific details. They have generally believed that the tactics of confrontation adopted by blacks in the US have proved themselves appropriate for a relationship that was adversarial. As most black Brazilians themselves accept the myth of non-racialism in Brazil, they do not believe such tactics would prove particularly useful. Such tactics as are generated will be specific to Latin America, but paradoxically the impetus towards their development will be set in an international context whether the government of the day likes it or not, as Brazil seeks to claim a major power role.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 do Nascimento, Abdias, *O Negro Revoltado*, Edições GRD, Rio de Janeiro, 1968, p.31.
- 2 *Sunday Times*, London.
- 3 *The Economist Diary*, 1979, figures for 1977.
- 4 *Diário de Notícias*, Salvador, Bahia, 11 October 1970.
- 5 *O Cruzeiro*, Rio de Janeiro, 8 September 1970. Article by Theophilo de Andrade.
- 6 The Afonso Arinos Law, passed in 1951, Lei no.1.390, 3 July 1951. This law makes discrimination based on race or colour in public establishments, education and employment a criminal offence punishable by jail term or fine.
- 7 Edwards, Franklin, ed., *Franklin Frazier on Race Relations*, The University of Chicago Press, 1968, pp.98-99.
- 8 *A Tarde*, Salvador, Bahia, 6 December 1932.
- 9 Pereira, João Baptista Borges, *Côr Profissão e Mobilidade: O Negro e o Rádio em São Paulo*, São Paulo, 1967. Between pages 17 and 35 the terms 'negro' (black), 'prêto' and 'de côr' (coloured) are used 45 times: negro - 27 times, de côr - 12 times, prêto - 6 times. These terms are used interchangeably.
- 10 Harris, Marvin, *Pattern of Race in the Americas*, Walker & Co., New York, 1964.
- 11 Ianni, Octávio & Fernando Henrique Cardoso, *Côr e Mobilidade em Florianópolis*, São Paulo, 1960. Florianópolis is the capital of the state of Santa Catarina, in the South, and has a large European element in its population.
- 12 In Brazil the term 'black' is rarely used to mean 'Negro'. Hence the resort to words and terms denoting non-whiteness or darkness. 'Pessoas' or 'gente de côr' (people of colour, coloured people) is thus very convenient as a descriptive term.
- 13 Pierson, Donald, *Negroes in Brazil*, Southern Illinois University Press, 1967 and Feffer & Simons Inc, London and Amsterdam, 1967.
- 14 (a) Fernandes, Florestan, *A Integração do Negro na Sociedade de Classes*, São Paulo, 1965. The English edition is: *The Negro in Brazilian Society*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1969.
(b) Ianni, Octávio, *As Metamorfoses do Escravo*, São Paulo, 1962.
- 15 Pierson, *op.cit.*
He observes that the indelible character of colour makes it somewhat different from other criteria of rank.
- 16 (a) Freyre, Gilberto, *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilisation*, Alfred Knopf, New York, 1946 and *New World in the Tropics: the Culture of Modern Brazil*, New York, 1959 or Secker, London, 1972.
(b) Tannenbaum, Frank, *Slave and Citizen: the Negro in the Americas*, New York, 1946.
- 17 *Cadernos Brasileiros*, special edition entitled '80 Anos de Abolição', Instituto Latino Americano de Relações Internacionais, 1968. Contribution by Paula Assis.
- 18 Bastide, Roger & Florestan Fernandes, *Relações Raciais entre Negros e Brancos em São Paulo*, São Paulo 1955.
- 19 Fernandes, *op.cit.* See also, *O Negro no mundo dos Brancos*, Europa do Livro, São Paulo, 1972.
- 20 *Daedalus*, special issue entitled 'Colour and Race', American Academy of the Arts and Sciences, Harvard University, Spring 1967. Article entitled 'The Weight of the Past' by Fernandes.
- 21 Ianni & Cardoso, *op.cit.*
- 22 Costa Pinto, L., *O Negro no Rio de Janeiro*, Companhia Editora Nacional, São Paulo, 1952.
- 23 Rhett S. Jones, 'Trifling Patriots and a Freeborn People: Revolutionary Ideology and Afro-Americans', *Brown Alumni Monthly*, December 1975. Says Jones, 'In Brazil and Venezuela some historians frankly declare that the Maroon (coloured) rebellions were the fore-runners of their nations' struggles for independence'.
- 24 de Azevedo, Thales, *As Elites de Côr: Um Estudo de Ascensão Social*, São Paulo, 1953.
The socio-economic factor is the decisive one according to de Azevedo. There is an elite of coloured people in Bahia at the highest socio-economic and political levels. He also contends that in Bahia there is a two-fold division, rich and poor. White was identified with the rich and black with the poor.
- 25 *Jornal da Bahia*, 1 and 2 August 1971.
- 26 *Jornal da Bahia*, 20 May 1970.
- 27 *Jornal da Bahia*, 28 May 1971. *Fatos e Fotos*, 17 June 1971.
- 28 *Jornal do Brasil*, 18 August 1970. Ref: An official protest delivered to the BBC by the Brazilian Ambassador in London.
- 29 *Racial Democracy in Brazil: Myth or Reality*, Ile-Ife 1977.
- 30 Anani Dzidzienyo, *Afro-Brazilians, Other Afro-Latin Americans, and Africanity: Frozen and Dynamic*, unpublished paper, 1978.

³¹ Freyre, *op.cit.*
(NB. Carl Degler rightly points out, in an article entitled 'Slavery in Brazil and the United States: an Essay in Comparative History', published in the American Historical Review, no.4, April 1970, that Freyre's views constitute a highly conservative explanation of the Brazilian situation.)

³² *O Estado de São Paulo*, 30 May 1971. Article by Freyre.

³³ *The Listener*, 1972.

³⁴ *O Estado de São Paulo*, 16 April 1971. *Manchete*, 9 September 1971.

³⁵ Freyre, *op.cit.* (footnote 31).

³⁶ This is relevant not only to the Brazilian situation but also to the USA, Britain and France.

³⁷ *A Tarde*, 6 December 1932.
The *Frente Negra Brasileira* was launched by Arlindo and Isaltino Veiga Santos, Jose Correia Leite, Gevasio Morais and Alberto Orland.
Fernandes, *op.cit.* (footnote 14) has written at length on black movements of that era in São Paulo.

³⁸ Amado, Jorge, *Os Pastôres da Noite*, Livraria Martins Editôra, São Paulo, 1970.

³⁹ Pierson, *op.cit.*

⁴⁰ Dzidzienyo, Anani, *Afro-Brazilians, Other Afro-Latin Americans* etc. as 30.

⁴¹ Morner, Magnus, ed., *Race and Class in Latin America*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1970. Article entitled 'Immigration and Race Relations in São Paulo' by Fernandes.

⁴² (a) *Ibid.*
(b) Bastide & Fernandes, *op.cit.*

⁴³ 'Black Mobility in a Brazilian Town', R. Penn Reeve, in *Journal of Plural Societies*, Autumn 1975.

⁴⁴ *Newsweek*, 6 November 1978.

⁴⁵ *International Herald Tribune*, 18 October 1978.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Dzidzienyo, Anani, 'African (Yoruba) Culture and the Political Kingdom in Latin America', 1976, and attached references.

⁴⁸ Degler, Carl, 'Neither Black Nor White', Collier-MacMillan, New York and London, 1971.

Part Two:

RACE RELATIONS IN CONTEMPORARY CUBA

by Dr. Lourdes Casal

It is the purpose of this report to attempt to draw a coherent picture of the status of blacks in pre- and post-revolutionary Cuba and an analysis of the changes which have transpired since the Revolution. Both tasks are rather difficult and fraught with perils. First of all, the descriptive task is hard, given the scarcity of systematic studies about the status of blacks in post-revolutionary Cuba and the lack of appropriate attitudinal surveys.

The task of comparing the present position of blacks with the pre-revolutionary society is even harder, because the paucity of contemporary 'hard' data is more than matched by the lack of reliable, serious studies of race relations in pre-1959 Cuba.

In spite of significant ethnological and folkloric works, there is a remarkable lack of empirical studies on race attitudes and race discrimination in Cuba from the vantage point of the sociologist or the social psychologist. Even solid historical investigations of race relations are scarce: among the few exceptions, a history of the 1912 race war which illuminates otherwise obscure aspects of race relations during the early years of the Republic,¹ Thomas's integrative attempts² and a most remarkable exemplar of scholarly research, Verena-Martinez-Alier's historical study of racial attitudes and sexual values in nineteenth century Cuba³ — an absolutely essential reference for any student of the evolution of racial attitudes and female status in Cuba.

Just as important as the paucity of systematic studies or reliable data, pre- or post-1959, are the difficulties implied by the highly charged nature of this topic, in an ideological sense. Any attempt to analyze this issue will immediately force us to face complex questions about the 'neutrality' of science and the immediate socio-political context in which scientific activity takes place. For example, while discussing race relations in Cuba, a seemingly unrelated issue, such as Cuban involvement in Africa, will inevitably be implicated. Even if one does not explicitly refer to Cuba's African activities, whatever one says about race relations in Cuba becomes an element in the debate about Cuba's foreign policy. Whatever is said about the position of blacks in post-revolutionary society can be used as an indictment of Cuba's positions (Cuba as a 'white' nation, sending its blacks to die in Africa to get rid of them, as Cuba's detractors would have it) or as a justification for them (Cuba as an Afro-Hispanic nation, a *mulatto* country, with historical and ethnic ties to Africa). Furthermore, the comparative analysis of the position of blacks in pre- and post-revolutionary Cuba inevitably impinges on the debate about the Cuban Revolution itself, its nature, characteristics and impact. Particularly because of the paucity of data, it is easy to distort the 'baseline' information about the status of blacks in pre-revolutionary society. Without an adequate description of this 'baseline', it is not possible to make a fair judgment of how the status of blacks has changed since the Revolution. It is my opinion that, given the characteristics of the pre-revolutionary system of race relations, the level of oppression of Cuba's blacks and the barriers to their mobility have traditionally been minimized. They have been minimized in the literature about race relations coming from liberal academicians in the U.S. (i.e., Nelson Amaro and Carmelo Mesa Lago's essay in *Revolutionary Change in Cuba*⁴) but they were also minimized in Cuba's dominant ideology before the Revolution. These beliefs, about the non-problematic nature of race relations in Cuba, affected both white and black in pre-1959 Cuban society. They are part of the baseline description of race relations in Cuba which I will have to outline later. A position which understates the level of oppression of blacks in pre-revolutionary society will, automatically, tend to minimize the changes brought about by the Revolution.

Finally, and to complicate things further, there is the

¹ Footnotes for part two are on page 25

underlying contradiction between an analysis of social reality in ethnic or culturalistic terms and a class analysis, with their host of associated issues, both theoretical and practical. These issues range from questions about the relationship between ethnic consciousness and class consciousness to concrete questions of revolutionary strategy in Third World countries or among colonized minorities in developed societies.

In spite of the many difficulties outlined, it seems an urgent task to attempt to answer, within the confines of a very limited number of pages, some basic questions about the position of blacks in post-revolutionary Cuba. The questions are:

- 1) What was the status of blacks in pre-revolutionary society; and which were the characteristics of the dominant racial ideology?
- 2) What impact has the Revolution had upon the status of blacks in Cuba; and which changes have occurred at the attitudinal and value levels?
- 3) Which are the problems in race relations which remain at present and in which direction does Cuba's society seem to be moving?

In the attempt to answer these questions, I shall move freely from hard data to analysis of qualitative materials (including literary sources) to informal observations of Cuba's racial realities. Thus, this report is an 'interpretative essay'.

Race relations in pre-revolutionary Cuba

As a young black Cuban, many things puzzled me about the complicated set of rules governing relations between the races in my country and particularly about the codes which regulated communications on race relations. I still remember how I listened, wide-eyed and nauseated, to the stories — always whispered, always told as when one is revealing unspeakable secrets — about the horrors committed against my family and other blacks during the racial war of 1912. A grand-uncle of mine was assassinated, supposedly by orders of Monteagudo, the rural guard officer who terrorized blacks throughout the island. Chills went down my spine when I heard stories about blacks being hunted day and night; and black men being hung by their genitals from the lamp posts in the central plazas of small Cuban towns.

The stories terrified me, not only because of their violence, but because my history books said nothing about these incidents. The racial war of 1912, in which thousands of blacks lost their lives was, at best, a line or a footnote in the books. And even then, it was dealt with condescendingly. Typically, it was referred to as '*la guerrilla del '12*', (the little war of 1912), as if it had been a minor, quasi-farcical episode which could be dismissed or ignored. And yet, thousands of blacks, both rebels and civilians, had died in war actions, race riots and massacres.⁵

The stories terrified me even more, because they conflicted with the '*no hay problema, aquí no ha pasado nada*' ('there's no problem; nothing has really happened') attitude about race relations which was communicated to me, even by my family. The horrifying stories were not to be told. Only on two or three occasions I managed to cajole some member of my family into talking about

these things. In general, they seemed to share with the rest of Cuba in some sort of gentleman's agreement: not to speak 'disagreeable' things concerning race.

I could not understand. It seemed aberrant to me, that memories which were still alive in participants and witnesses, even in victims and relatives of victims, could have been so completely obliterated from the collective consciousness, so completely erased from everyday discourse and from history books.

This puzzlement led me to an early obsession with the issue of race relations in Cuba; an obsession which was not then academic or scholarly, but a burning set of questions deeply related to my own identity. At the same time, I also answered them in a non-conflictual way: as a Cuban of mixed ancestry (white, black and Chinese), I considered myself to be like Cuba — a mulattress in an essentially mulatto country. But the questions have come back many times during my lifetime, in different guises and with different degrees of urgency.

The typical position with respect to the status of blacks in pre-revolutionary Cuban society is presented by Masferrer and Mesa Lago⁶: 'In Cuba racial prejudice on the individual and institutional level has always existed to a lesser degree, both in scope and intensity, than in the United States.'⁷ As variables explanatory of the difference between Cuba and the U.S. they mention: greater intermarriage of the races, structural differences in the institutions of slavery, the presence — since colonial times — of a larger number of free Afro-Cubans in Cuba's wars of independence. Thus, the integration of blacks into Cuban society allegedly took place at a much faster rate than in the U.S.

Another element in this typical position is the allegations that racial discrimination in Cuba during the twentieth century was mostly (or exclusively) an upper class phenomenon and to a large extent a reflection of the orientation of this class towards North American values and mores. In Masferrer and Mesa-Lago's words: 'The legal system of the Republic banned all institutional forms of racial discrimination at the beginning of the twentieth century, but subtler ways of discrimination customarily exercised against Afro-Cubans, mainly by the upper class, persisted. These racial prejudices and discriminatory practices were incorporated into the policies of social clubs and commercial establishments that catered to the Cuban high stratum and the American Tourist...'⁸

This position tends to confuse the issues of legal status of blacks and the existence of institutional racism which are related but separate. It is naive in assuming that the verbal affirmations of equality in legal documents meant that there was no institutional racism in pre-revolutionary Cuba. This is refuted by reference to simple facts: for example, the black-white differentials in occupation, education and income (see discussion below) obviously reflect structural barriers in the access to full equality by blacks which cannot be completely explained away by resorting to historical factors. Furthermore, there is evidence of specific discriminatory barriers beyond access to social clubs, beaches, private schools and the like. For example, blacks were not allowed to work as attendants in Havana's major department stores until an 'affirmative action' ordinance of sorts was passed in the early fifties (1950). It is not useful to identify institutional racism with legal discriminatory practices, as Masferrer and Mesa-Lago do, because racist practices can be embedded in the institutionalized practices of a society at a level different than the legal.

However, in all fairness, it must be said that this tendency to minimize social differentials prior to 1959 and the extent and nature of traditional Cuban racism is not restricted to emigré scholars. Thus Hugh Thomas remarks: '(In) so far as it did exist, racial discrimination was chiefly a middle class phenomenon, the Cuban middle class was always rather conscious of North American habits. Such racial discrimination as there was appears to have been imitative of North America rather than to have sprung from anything special to Cuban circumstances...'⁹

Even radical U.S. writers on Cuban race relations such as Gil Green¹⁰ tend to identify pre-revolutionary racism with the middle or upper classes, minimizing the extent to which it permeated pre-revolutionary Cuban social relations, regardless of class. Although it is probably true that racism was more prevalent among the upper sectors of Cuban society, it cannot be considered an exclusive phenomenon. It may even be misleading to describe the Cuban pattern of race relations in terms of the U.S. variant.

Booth¹¹ has remarked that a source of problems in the understanding of Cuba's race relations, before and after the Revolution, has been the tendency to consider that Cuban traditional racism was just a milder, watered down, and less visible variant of North American racism. He has argued that the pattern of racial oppression in twentieth century Cuba is best described as falling within the category of a 'colour-class' system. Booth characterizes such systems — examples of which would be Brazil and Cuba — as societies in which 'no sharply defined racial groups... may be said to interact with one another'... because two decisive features permeate black-white relations:

1) the absence of a rule of *hypo-descent* of the type which, in the United States, requires that any individual who has a known Negro ancestor be regarded as Negro and hence as a member of a single subordinate group of "caste", and 2) the presence of a system of racial typing based on gradations of *Physical appearance* on a continuum from pure caucasoid (valued positively) to pure negroid (valued negatively).¹²

Booth may be partially right. But to me, his explanation raises at least as many issues as it solves. A study of terms employed to denote race in a sample of pre- and post-revolutionary Cuban novels¹³ suggests that Booth is correct in pointing out that racial typing in Cuba has never been dichotomous (black-white) but rather based on a graded series established on the basis of physical appearance.

It is possible that this may be related to the absence of a rule of hypo-descent. But the burning question then becomes as Booth himself analyzes:¹⁴ Why wasn't a rule of hypo-descent imposed by the dominant whites? Booth's answer, which is substantially limited to a consideration of the role of a large free coloured population throughout the nineteenth century, seems insufficient. My own opinion is that the pre-revolutionary Cuban variant of race relations was a rather puzzling mixture of elements which Booth describes as a colour-class system and elements closer to the North American variant. The harder aspects of race relations during the Republic cannot be attributed exclusively to mimetism of North American institutions or ingratiation with North American tourists. Prejudice and discrimination in colonial times, even among those traditionally considered as the main thinkers¹⁵ in the creole tradition make it impossible to

blame everything on the American intervention. Deeply felt racism, even if it allowed for convenient reclassification of light mulattoes as whites, is behind the immigration policies followed by the early Republic and the massive attempts to import white workers from Spain. Even the relative facility of reclassification can be considered as an assimilationist weapon which effectively functioned against the development of race consciousness among Cuba's blacks.

One of the most pervasive features which I found in the dominant pre-revolutionary racial ideology was the unwillingness to discuss racial issues. This taboo was linked to a tendency — among whites — to minimize Cuban racism and among blacks to accept racism as a fact of life which you simply tried to circumvent or avoid. An insidious and pervasive form of racism is embedded in what Booth describes as a graded system of infinitely varied steps between white (highly valued) and black (with characteristics regarded as defects).¹⁶ This subtle racism affected even blacks which tended to deprecate black features as much as whites or even more.¹⁷ However, the Cuban dominant ideology was imbued by racial egalitarian values, very close to the core of the definition of *cubanidad*, thanks to the role of black men, such as Antonio Maceo, in the independence struggle, and to the conceptions of independence leader José Martí (to whom Cubans of all persuasions feel that they owe, at the very least, verbal allegiance). This contradiction lies at the centre of any attempt to describe or understand the Cuban pattern of race relations.

To understand Cuba's pre-revolutionary pattern of race relations it is necessary to survey (however briefly) the history of the Republic. The history of Cuba is so deeply interwoven with the history of black Cubans that one cannot be told without the other (in spite of the efforts of white bourgeois historians). Cuba's late independence and the development of annexationist and reformist ideologies in the nineteenth century seem to be linked to the 'black scare', the spectre of another Haiti which afflicted the Cuban bourgeoisie and which was skillfully nurtured by Spain. Race relations during the Republic were deeply affected by the legacy of slavery (the legal abolition of which did not come in Cuba until 1886). In spite of the fact that a large percentage of the Cuban liberation army was black,¹⁸ black Cubans did not achieve the desired equality with their achievement of independence from Spain. The Cuban Republic soon betrayed the egalitarian ideology of José Martí, who had been the architect of the independence struggle. The long tradition of prejudice and the proximity of the abolition of slavery, to which we must add the further negative impact of U.S. influence and practical domination during the early years of the Republic, led to discriminatory practices which belied the formal equality guaranteed by the Constitution of 1901. Thus, restrictive statements in the Constitution about the franchise effectively limited the rights of blacks to vote.¹⁹ In the words of Portuondo Linare: 'A very significant fact occurred during the constitutional Convention of 1901: even those who were concerned about black equality tended to remain within the confines of a formalistic approach, far removed from the true essence of the problem...'²⁰

The Liberation Army was not considered by the U.S. occupation forces as an appropriate basis for the Army of the young Republic. Thus, the Liberation Army was

disbanded and the weapons of the old fighters bought for a few pesos. In the meantime, the Havana police and the rural guard were developed, strictly with white personnel.²¹

The black fighters of the Liberation Army were thus excluded from important administrative appointments (on the alleged basis that they did not have the necessary educational qualifications) and from appointments in the developing military establishment.²² A General in the Liberation Army, Quintín Banderas, was offered a position as postman by the Estrada Palma administration and in general, the first administration of the Cuban Republic was marred by discriminatory practices in employment and other areas. Even black congressmen were the targets of offensive practices by the Administration. Thus, A. Poveda Ferrer and Generoso Campos Marquetti, elected members of the House of Representatives of the young Republic, received invitations to a reception at the Presidential Palace which excluded their wives. They returned the invitations and the incident was one of many which incensed blacks²³ during the Estrada Palma administration.

Exclusion from the governmental payroll was a serious handicap in a country devastated by war and affected by serious unemployment. Blacks attempted to gain access to employment by fighting for power within the structures of the existing Parties and by 1908 through the organization of an association of black voters²⁴ which became the *Partido de los Independientes de Color*. However, the Morúa Amendments to the Electoral Reform Law of 1910 closed the doors of legality to the organization of Parties along race lines and eventually led the Independientes to take arms against the José Miguel Gómez Administration. The ensuing racial war, still insufficiently studied,²⁵ led to a nationwide extermination of blacks of quasi-genocidal proportions.

The black Cuban community never recovered from the heavy losses inflicted upon its most race-conscious male leadership. Since the *Independientes* were hunted down during the war and its aftermath, no other political organization of blacks emerged in the neo-colonial Republic.²⁶ As Domínguez has pointed out, 'the ethnic cleavage... was not reflected in the party system, and the parties were alike in opposing black affirmations of identity as well as in courting their votes.'²⁷

In spite of a few leading black politicians, black representation in elected offices remained at a dismal low throughout the Republic. Domínguez²⁸ has estimated black proportion in the House of Representatives, as of the mid-20s, as less than 5%; with no blacks represented in the Senate. During the 1933 Revolution against Machado, when Cuban radicalism tasted power for the first time during the first Grau Administration, a *Ley de Nacionalización del Trabajo* was passed by the radical wing of the Administration led by Antonia Guiteras. The law established that all industrial, commercial or service enterprises had to employ at least 50% of Cuban natives among its personnel. Although the law did not have an explicit racial intent, it had a great impact upon the structure of employment opportunities for blacks.

Arredondo describes occupational discrimination on the eve of the promulgation of the Law as follows: 'Blacks could not be tramway conductors, salesmen in any department

store or ten cent, railroad conductors or employers of commercial establishments or foreign enterprises. They found the doors closed to jobs as nurses, typesetters, hat makers, etc. Even in industries such as tobacco, the best paid jobs were closed to blacks. For him, the only jobs open were the most brutal jobs — such as dock-workers — and the most menial positions such as shoeshine boy, newspaper sales . . . , etc.'²⁹

The 50% Law, as it was popularly called, improved somewhat the employment situation of black Cubans, although it did not alter radically their objective discrimination. Arredondo himself comments: 'When certain stores or commercial establishments were forced to provide employment to Cuban natives instead of foreigners, their administrators have always chosen whites instead of blacks. When hundreds of foreign tramway conductors were fired, not a single black could occupy any of the vacant positions. The enterprise argued that "many ladies of our society would have complained at the possibility of touching black hands during the operation of fare collection".'³⁰

Batista's domination of Cuban political life brought certain changes to Cuba's blacks: the former sergeant was obviously mulatto and regardless of his betrayal of the 1933 Revolution, his willingness to become a tool of the U.S. interests in the island and his many crimes, particularly in his later (1952) administration, Batista accomplished — wittingly or unwittingly — certain tasks of revolutionary importance. For example, the rank-and-file Army rebellion against the officialdom which he eventually came to lead (and his assault upon the resisting officers which had taken refuge at the Hotel Nacional), effectively liquidated the Army elite and opened the doors for a significant process of mobility within the Army ranks which led to the promotion of many blacks to officer status.

Thanks to the participation of radical delegates in the Constitutional Convention, the 1940 Constitution was a fairly progressive document which established full equality for all Cuban citizens. However, in the racial as well as in other areas, the post-1940 Administrations were very slow in enacting the complementary legislation which was needed to put a cutting edge on the verbal statements of the Constitution. For example, a draft law concerning racial equality and establishing sanctions for discriminatory practices, was presented to the House of Representatives by Members of the *Partido Socialista Popular* (Cuban Communist Party) as late as 21 December 1951 as never passed.³¹ The role of a very significant group of black leaders associated with the PSP, ranging from Salvador García Agüero and Jesús Menéndez to Lázaro Peña and Blas Roca, must be underlined here.³² Thus, the PSP followed a clear egalitarian policy within its own ranks, becoming the only Party in the neo-colonial Republic which could boast a fully integrated leadership — a point not lost on the masses of black workers.

Race relations on the eve of the revolution³³

According to the last pre-revolutionary census — the 1953 Census — blacks and mulattoes represented 26.9% of the Cuban population. Table 1 summarizes censal information on the racial composition on the Cuban population since the nineteenth century. The progressive process of 'whitening' of the Cuban population reflects a number

TABLE 1

Composition of the Cuban population, by race (Censal years 1827-1953)

Censal Year	Whites		Blacks and Mulattoes		Asiatics	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
1827	311,051	44.15	393,436	55.85		
1841	418,291	41.51	589,333	58.49		
1861	793,484	56.82	603,046	43.18		
1877	988,624	64.97	489,249	32.15	43,811	2.88
1887	1,102,889	67.59	528,598	32.41		
1899	1,052,397	66.91	505,543	32.14	14,857	0.95
1907	1,428,176	69.70	608,967	29.72	11,837	0.58
1919	2,088,047	72.28	784,811	27.16	16,146	0.56
1931	2,856,956	72.10	1,079,106	27.23	26,282	0.67
1943	3,553,312	74.37	1,206,342	25.24	18,929	0.38
1953	4,243,956	72.81	1,568,416	26.90	16,657	0.29

Source: Cuba, Oficina Nacional de los Censos Demográficos y Electoral, *Censo de Población, Viviendas y Electoral*, 1953. P. Fernandez y Cía, La Habana, 1955, and Oficina del Censo de los E. U., *Censo de la República de Cuba bajo la administración provisional de los Estados Unidos*, 1907, Washington, D.C., The Capitol City Press, 1908.

of demographic historical and social processes, such as white immigration (especially marked during the first years of the Cuban Republic), widespread 'passing', and different criteria used for race assignment in the different cens. (For example, in the 1943 Census, race was entered according to self-definition; in the 1953 Census according to census-taker opinion.) The 'peak' of the white population occurred in 1943. This peak is difficult to interpret due to the just discussed change in criteria for race assignment but at least partially, the decrease in the 1953 Census reflects the abrupt decline in white migration which was strongly fostered during the early years of the Republic³⁴ and which changed markedly with the nationalistic laws concerning employment which were enacted during the forties.

Racial distribution varied from province to province, with the greatest concentration of blacks in recent cens occurring in Oriente province. Lack of cross-tabulations by race of various factors (educational level, occupation, etc.) in most Cuban cens (with the exception of the 1943 Census which was very comprehensive in this respect) makes it difficult to discuss trends in the evolution of structural indices of discrimination, such as white-black differentials in various indicators. Furthermore, as it was indicated before, censal definitions of race were not uniform.

Table 2 summarizes 1919 and 1943 censal information concerning occupational breakdown by race. As blacks, mulattoes, and Asiatics constituted 25.62% of the population in 1943 (with blacks and mulattoes representing 98.5% of the total), it is clear, by inspecting the table, that blacks were seriously underrepresented in Banks, Commerce, and Professions, while they were overrepresented in Construction and Personal and Domestic Services. Thus, the 1943 Census provides clear indication

of race discrimination manifested in occupational distribution differentials.

There were significant differences in the participation rate of black and white women in the labour force. While only 9.6% of all white Cuban women aged 13 or over were employed; 11.6% of all 'coloured' women aged 13 or over were thus classified.³⁵ 'Coloured' includes blacks, mulattoes, and Asiatics. Unfortunately no comparison with the 1953 Census is possible, given the lack of occupational breakdown by race in the last pre-revolutionary census. However, it is possible to compare the 1943 figures with those corresponding to the 1919 Census. Thus, some tentative conclusions can be drawn about the changes in black occupational status during that intercensal period.

Black participation in construction and manufacturing was maintained at high levels but there was a significant decline in the Agriculture, Fishing and Livestock category and moderate progress in black participation in Transportation and Communications, Banks and Financial Institutions and Professional Services (although in all these categories the black participation index even by 1943 remained below 100). Thus, the 1919-1943 intercensal period witnessed some improvement in black access to certain occupational categories but no dramatic changes in pattern (with the exception of the changes in the Mining category). In other words, in spite of quantitative changes, the same categories which found blacks underrepresented in 1919 found them underrepresented in 1943. In a study of pre- and post-revolutionary novels conducted by Casal,³⁶ the status of blacks as presented in the novels was analyzed using a variety of indicators. As the quasi-totality of the novels dealt with the pre-revolutionary period or the first years of the Revolution, it could be considered that the indicators referred mostly

TABLE 2

Distribution of Cuban labour force by occupational group and race and nativity: 1919, 1943

Occupation	1919				1943		
	Native White %	Foreign White %	Coloured %	Coloured Index	White %	Coloured %	Coloured Index
Agriculture, Livestock and Fishing	55.9	14.7	29.3	106	81.0	19.0	73
Mining	23.7	63.5	12.7	46	67.3	32.7	126
Construction	32.6	21.4	46.0	166	56.4	43.6	168
Manufacturing, and Mechanized Industries	44.0	18.9	38.0	137	65.5	34.5	133
Transportation and Communications	57.0	27.6	15.3	55	77.7	22.3	86
Commerce					89.1	10.9	42
Wholesale	38.4	50.0	11.6	42	83.6	16.4	63
Retail					89.6	10.4	40
Banks and Financial Institutions	66.7	27.2	6.1	22	91.8	8.2	32
Personal and Domestic Services	30.6	23.7	45.6	165	58.2	41.8	161
Recreational Services and Similar	36.8	32.4	30.7	110	61.5	38.5	149
Professional Services	74.0	17.4	8.6	31	86.8	13.2	51
Government	74.0	6.6	19.4	70	80.8	19.2	74
Diverse Services (Renting, Repairs)	49.9	24.5	25.7	93	73.6	26.4	102
Not Classified	47.8	25.7	26.5	96	75.6	24.4	94

Source: Aguirre, *op. cit.*, pp.107-9, and *Index*; Index is obtained by dividing the percentage of 'Coloured' in each occupational category by the percentage of population (27.7% in 1919; 25.9% in 1943).

to the status of blacks in the pre-1959 period. An analysis of the occupations reported in the novels for all Race-Sex groupings suggest a tremendous restriction on the number of different occupations available to blacks (157 different occupations for white males; 43 for white females; 49 for black males and 21 for black females) and significant differences in the socio-economic level of the occupations available to the two races, with a concentration of blacks in the lowest status occupations, particularly in the service sector.

Race differentials in income were also found in the 1943 Census data; although only two thirds of the labour force answered the income question, the available data shows blacks' overrepresentation in the upper income levels. Table 3 summarizes the data. In brief, blacks were more likely than whites to be found at the lowest income levels. The 1943 Census also provided information concerning 'coloured' and white unemployment in different occupational categories, and although given the problems of pre-revolutionary Cuban economy there were high rates of unemployment for both races, the available 1943 data suggest that the average 'coloured' unemployment rate

TABLE 3

Monthly income by race — 1943

	Percentage of white workers in each income bracket	Percentage of coloured ¹ workers in each income bracket
Less than \$30.00	37.4	46.6
30 — 59	42.8	41.4
60 — 99	13.4	9.4
100 — 199	4.7	1.7
200 — 299	0.7	0.4
300 plus	0.8	0.5
	100.0	100.0

¹ includes blacks, mulattoes and Asiatics.

Source: Cuba, Dirección General del Censo, *Informe general del Censo de 1943*, La Habana: P. Fdez y Cía, 1945, p.1098.

was higher than the average white unemployment rate with significant differentials appearing in major areas of employment such as the sugar industry and government.³⁷ The 1943 Census data on education by race was limited to information on literacy rates (this was more than offered by the 1953 Census which did not provide any). A black-white differential in literacy rates was also in evidence, with roughly 73% of all whites age 10 and older being able to read while only 67.4% of all 'coloured' in a comparable age bracket could do so.³⁸ Masferrer and Mesa-Lago,³⁹ who emphasize the 'gradual integration of the black' in Cuba, compare the Censi of 1907, 1919 and 1943 (in spite of the fact that they admit to the non-comparability of the categories) and conclude that the rate of literacy among blacks was gradually increasing and the white-black differential was decreasing. The paucity of data and the lack of uniformity in reporting among the few censi which provide racial breakdown for information such as income, education, unemployment rates and occupational categories make any attempt at quantitative comparison a very risky operation.

It is, however, probably a sound conclusion to state that most quantitative indicators suggest a gradual improvement in the status of blacks, but a rather slow one, with significant differentials obtaining in all categories up until the eve of the Revolution. However, gradual improvement in certain quantitative indicators for blacks does not necessarily mean that their position, with respect to whites, was improving; that is to say, the gap between the races was closing. Thus, Domínguez has reviewed data from physical anthropological surveys made between 1900 and 1964; changes in average height can be considered as indirect indicators of living standards. The findings suggest that 'Although the improvement in living standard benefited all three racial categories surveyed, both sexes, and all age groups tested, it was shared unequally: whites profited the most, and, as a result, the gap in life changes between whites and blacks widened considerably.'⁴⁰

Qualitatively, Cuban patterns of discrimination have been described as different from the U.S. in many significant respects: the 1940 Cuban Constitution explicitly forbade discrimination on the basis of race; thus the normative legal system was clearly opposed to segregation or discrimination at all levels; there was no residential segregation or school segregation except insofar as social class distinctions (preventing 'poor' access to certain areas or schools) overlapped with race distinctions, etc. It seems that the Cuban white middle class normative system tended to frown upon open discussion of racial discrimination and related issues.⁴¹

As no formal studies of racial attitudes were conducted in pre-revolutionary society, it is not possible to complement the above discussion of indicators with information about the prevalence and forms of prejudice except from anecdotal records and other observers' reports. The latter usually agree in presenting a complex picture. There was undeniable racial discrimination, but frequently it was difficult to separate purely racial discrimination from discrimination on socio-economic grounds. There was widespread prejudice, especially among the middle and upper sectors but not exclusively within them. Discrimination was more severe in certain regions, such as Casagüey, than in Havana. Patterns of social discrimination along racial lines were more clear-cut in small towns and cities in the countryside than in larger cities.⁴²

except in Havana, where there were many private clubs and the beaches controlled by them. Also, the most prestigious private schools had exclusionary practices.

In general, the prevalence of prejudice and the patterns of institutionalized and non-institutionalized prejudice are described as less severe and blatant than in the U.S. However, it must be pointed out that white writers (the overwhelming majority) usually tend to present a far rosier picture of race relations during Republican times than black writers. Modern scholarship on nineteenth century Cuba, though, particularly the works of Manuel Moreno Friginals and Juan Perez de la Riva⁴³ makes one wonder, in view of the brutality of black exploitation under slavery and the persistence of black resistance during colonial times, how is it that black-white relations in Cuba (with the exception of the 1912 war) managed to escape violence as the norm.

The answer is again very complex. Race was only one element in the determination of status in pre-revolutionary Cuba. Further, as Booth has emphasized, the existence of a relatively large 'free coloured' population since colonial times⁴⁴ may have been a factor in avoiding a wide dichotomous division of the society. Other factors to be considered are the process of 'mulattoization' provoked by the scarcity of white women since colonial times, the significant role of blacks in the Cuban Liberation Army, and the role assigned to racial unity and integration by the most important leaders of the Cuban independence struggle such as José Martí (white) and Antonio Maceo (black).⁴⁵

In the Iberian variant of Caribbean race relations (Hoetink, 1967, p.187)⁴⁶ a characteristic process of homogenization through mingling usually took place. The progressive 'whitening out' of the Cuban population, documented in Table 1 above, is at least partially a function of the mixing process which continuously produced individuals acceptable as marriage partners to the white segment of the population. It is clear from studies conducted in other Caribbean societies similar to Cuba (such as Puerto Rico) that the upper social strata are almost by definition white but continuously absorbing light-skinned mixed bloods who could pass while blacks tend to be concentrated on the lowest social strata. Thus, pre-revolutionary Cuban society was not a 'caste society' rigidly divided along racial lines. Even in the nineteenth century, Cuban society was structured in such a fashion that 'in practice the hierarchy of social position was not a "simple gradation" where exclusively one criterion determined its order. The lack of complete correspondence between the various sets of distinctions meant the open nature of Cuban society . . . although ascription . . . was regarded as very important in determining an individual's place in society, personal achievement was approved of as a legitimate means of social advance.'⁴⁷ Thus, the Cuban social order, at least since the latter part of the nineteenth century, could be considered as primarily of a class nature.

It is not surprising, then, that black Cubans, even before the 1959 Revolution, would tend to see their problems in class rather than primarily racial terms. Thus, David Grillo Sáez, a black journalist who authored a book on *The Problem of Black Cubans (El Problema del Negro Cubano)* in 1953, sees the solution to the 'problem of black Cubans' in a change in the status of all oppressed groups and social classes, since the problem is seen as basically a class problem. Lest Grillo be taken as a

doctrinaire Marxist, it should be added that he was an apologist of the Batista régime in 1953 (after the *coup d'état*), and that his ideology tended to emphasize the solution of class conflicts through harmony rather than struggle. Thus, referring to the Declaration of Human Rights he states that '... such a democratic invocation... does not lead to the definitive achievement of the eradication of racial discrimination, unless we positively move towards the integration of all social classes based on common norms and common feelings.'⁴⁸ However, it is true that the tendency to see racial problems primarily in class terms has been stronger among writers of Marxist orientation.⁴⁹

Another role in promoting black social mobility was their role in the Independence Wars. Blacks participated very actively in the Cuban struggle for independence, and they constituted the bulk of the rank and file of the liberation forces. However, although the soldiers in the Cuban liberation struggle were in their overwhelming majority black, their officers were definitely not. Fermoselle y López⁵⁰ has estimated that about 40% of the generals and colonels in the Independence War (1895-1898) were black, but in the Civil administration of the Revolution and among the Revolutionary Government representatives in the U.S., less than 2% were blacks. Yet, a 40% of the highest ranking men gave the Liberation Army a definitely black look.

However, it is the opinion of this writer that Cuban home-grown racism, with the 'improvements' added to it by the strong U.S. penetration during Republican times, was more virulent and insidious than most writers on the issue have been willing to admit. The normative system of values at the core of the definition of nationhood was egalitarian, and integrationist but the practices were blatantly racist. The inconsistency was solved by banning the racial topic from polite conversation or public utterances; and by developing a predominantly racist but hypocritical set of attitudes, as well as systematic exclusionary practices which were usually rationalized on non-racial grounds. It is necessary to read works by black writers⁵¹ or American observers⁵² to find clear-cut testimonies about racism during Republican times. Otherwise one must dig into rare items of partisan literature⁵³ or the evidence which can be gathered from the picture of pre-revolutionary society given to us by testimonial literature, novels and short stories.

In a study by Casal of the images of Cuban society among pre- and post-revolutionary novelists,⁵⁴ there is evidence of strong racism expressed in a stereotype of blacks as lazy, stupid, inferior, highly musical and responsive to rhythm and endowed with extraordinary sexual prowess. Anti-black prejudice was found among representatives of all social classes although lower class attitudes towards blacks are generally presented as more positive than those of the upper strata.

In summary, the view of the status of blacks in pre-revolutionary Cuba is closely tied to the ideological commitments, social class and racial membership of the commentator one chooses to read. However, even the members of the Cuban Economic Research Project admit that 'It is not affirmed that the total integration of the black race was accomplished, particularly in the economic field, because the labour opportunities open to "coloured" people were generally in the low wage sectors.'⁵⁵ More radical Cubans take, of course, stronger stands on the matter of racial discrimination and black status.⁵⁶ However, there seems to be some areas of

consensus: blacks were not completely integrated into pre-revolutionary Cuban society; institutionalized discrimination existed, primarily in the areas of occupation and access to social clubs; racial discrimination was at times difficult to distinguish from socio-economic discrimination; blacks were overrepresented in the lower social strata of the population. Blacks and whites shared lower class residential areas, although corresponding to the greater black representation in the lower classes and their high degree of urbanization there was correspondingly greater concentration of blacks in the urban lower income *barrios* and the marginal housing areas.

In Havana, upper class social clubs excluded blacks and mulattoes systematically. (Even Batista, during his term as President of the Republic, was blackballed at the Havana Yacht Club, the most exclusive of the upper class clubs.) These clubs controlled private beaches in Havana which, therefore, excluded blacks. Middle class clubs, especially those organized around professional associations, admitted those blacks who belonged to the respective professional associations. In Cuban small towns and provincial capitals, segregation was rigidly enforced in formal social life and in the patterns of informal association related to courtship, etc., such as the *paseos*, parks and other gathering places for young people. However, the most far-reaching structure of segregation was again not purely race-based. Instead it divided the Cuban population along class lines. I am talking about the school systems. Public schools in pre-revolutionary Cuba were integrated but the upper and middle income sectors massively abandoned the public school system during the 1933-1958 period. Thus, by 1958, no less than 120,000 grade school students and roughly 15,000 high school students attended *private schools* — approximately 14% and 29% of the total number of students enrolled at the respective levels. The private school system was predominantly, although not totally, white. Elite schools practised racial discrimination but it was hardly necessary: very few blacks could afford the high tuition costs and other expenses.

Finally, it must be pointed out that during the years of the second Batista dictatorship (1952-1958), there was a concerted attempt to divorce the black masses from the revolutionary struggle and to divert its energies towards the development of facilities for blacks. In the words of José F. Carneado: '... there was an attempt to neutralize and to attract the black population towards the tyranny through the bastardly propaganda... that the struggle being fought in Cuba was "white stuff".'⁵⁷

But the campaign was only partially successful. When the rebel forces entered Havana during the first week of 1959, blacks were represented at all levels — from the officialdom to the rank and file. In Havana, they met racial exclusivism and incidents at the Havana Hilton and other facilities were reported.⁵⁸ The revolutionary government would confront the issue head on.

Race relations since the revolution

Masferrer and Mesa Lago have boldly stated that 'after the Revolution, a picture of black suffering caused by discrimination was painted that exaggerated the degree of actual prejudice existing on the island'.⁵⁹ Indeed, it must have seemed an exaggeration to them who minimized the degree of racial oppression in pre-revolutionary Cuba. However, if we take

a less sanguine view of racial discrimination in Cuba before 1959, the changes — immediately after the revolutionaries took power — were clear-cut and definite. Fidel Castro, in a very early speech after the rebels had defeated Batista (March 1959), denounced racial discrimination in the most sweeping terms ever heard in Cuba from a political leader holding major office. The speech was unambiguous and tough. It recognized that⁶⁰ 'people's mentality is not yet revolutionary enough. People's mentality is still conditioned by many prejudices and beliefs from the past...' And then Castro proceeded (against the traditional conspiracy of silence about racial matters so deeply ingrained in the Cuban dominant ideology), to tell the truth, which hit Cuban society like a bombshell.

'One of the battles which we must prioritize more and more every day ... is the battle to end racial discrimination at the work place ... There are two types of racial discrimination: One is the discrimination in recreation centres or cultural centres; the other, which is the worst and the first one which we must fight, is racial discrimination in jobs ...'

Thus, he finally addressed the issue which had irked black veterans of the Liberation Army during the first years of the Republic; the issue which had moved Estenez and Ironet to organize the *Partido de los Independientes de Color* and, ultimately, to the uprising of 1912; the issue which had motivated more frequently black protests and resentments until 1958: the unwritten barriers which prevented blacks from full equality of access to employment opportunities and which condemned them to the most menial and worst paid jobs; or to unemployment. But Fidel did not stop there. He attacked the best taboo: 'There is discrimination at recreation centres. Why? Because blacks and whites were educated apart. At the public grade school, blacks and whites are together. At the public grade school, blacks and whites learn to live together, like brothers. And if they are together at the public school, they are later together at the recreation centres and at all places.'

The speech had a tremendously popular impact because of the sections of it which had dealt with the discrimination issue.⁶¹ Depestre has summarized the impact:

'The speech ... was well received by the majority of the white revolutionaries among the people. ... On the other hand, all the white bourgeois and the majority of the white petty bourgeois elements (and the well-off mulattoes), even those which at that time would have still given their lives for the Revolution, became panic-stricken, as if the Prime Minister of Cuba had announced an atomic attack upon the island for the following morning. In the well-to-do neighbourhoods of Havana, Santa Clara, Camagney, Santiago de Cuba, etc., there was general uproar. The counter-revolution was horrified and it circulated the rumour that Fidel Castro had invited black men to invade the country's aristocratic sanctuaries to dance and revel with the vestal virgins who, until then, had managed to preserve themselves from the terrible radiations which emanate from black skin ... The volcano of negro-phobia was in eruption ... Very respectable white ladies left the country stating that, since Fidel Castro's speech, blacks had become impossible ...'⁶²

Depestre goes on to say that Fidel Castro gave a press conference on television three days later, 'to calm the racist fever'. Thus, he implies and later states that Castro softened his earlier stand on his televised appearance of March 25. Booth⁶³ follows Depestre's interpretation. I have examined carefully the transcript of the March 25 press conference⁶⁴ and I disagree with Depestre. Fidel Castro's March 25 statement was lengthier, more nuanced

and aware of the depth of the problem confronted, but even more firm and unambiguous in its condemnation of racial discrimination. Thus, Castro stated:

'The problem of racial discrimination is, unfortunately, one of the most complex and difficult problems which the Revolution must tackle ...'

He proceeded to explain why he had addressed the racial issue: 'I consider it to be my duty to talk about the problem of racial discrimination because it is, in my opinion, one of the greatest injustices which lurk within Cuban society.' And later on: 'I have not dealt with this problem to open wounds but rather to heal the deep wounds which have existed, since centuries ago, in the core of our nation.'

Thus, while it is true that Castro is emphasizing the healing and unitive intentions of his intervention, he is, at the same time, prioritizing the fight against racial discrimination and openly discussing its depth and pervasiveness in Cuban society:

'On this issue, to be fair, I must say that racial discrimination is not only a matter of the sons of aristocrats. There are poor people who also practise discrimination. There are workers which also suffer from prejudice ... the absurdity, what must force the people to think, is that (the speech) has irritated people who do not own large tracts of land, who do not receive housing rental income; people who only have prejudices in their heads ...'

Fidel Castro tried to allay the fears which the counter-revolution was agitating without moving a step back in his condemnation of racism. Thus, he clarified that 'I never said we were going to open private clubs so that blacks would go there to dance.'⁶⁵ But he immediately stated his position in very clear terms and examples:

'About this problem, I am completely convinced. I am an enemy of racial discrimination; I am convinced in my feelings and I am also convinced in my head ...'

And he told the story of his exchange with somebody who had asked him whether he thought that it was correct for a black man to *piropear*⁶⁶ a white woman. To which Fidel retorted: 'And do you think that it is correct for a white man to *piropear* a mulatta?'

Thus Fidel openly challenged the widely held belief in the rights of white males to enjoy the privileges of white women (with exclusivity) and, furthermore, to enjoy the use of black females. He closed his intervention by emphasizing the need for unity:

'We are a small country where we need each other, where we need the efforts of everyone ...' But this unity had to be based on justice and not on denial of the racial problem. 'I am aware that I help the Revolution when I try to unite the Cuban people; but the Cuban people can only be united on the basis of banning all injustices ...'

I have spent a considerable amount of space on these early pronouncements by Fidel Castro because they established in clear-cut terms what was going to become the revolutionary government's policies on racial matters. Carlos More, author of an anti-Cuban tract accusing the Revolution of racism,⁶⁷ did not even bother to mention these important speeches. Hugh Thomas,⁶⁸ as well as Masferrer and Mesa Logo,⁶⁹ have made an issue of the fact that Castro's 'History Will Absolve Me' speech did not include any reference to racial discrimination. Even Booth, although he correctly mentions that the Programme-Manifesto of the 26 July Movement did refer to racial divisions⁷¹ emphasizes the 'vagueness' of its statements on racial matters.

'History Will Absolve Me', as well as the Programme-Manifesto of the 26 July Movement are political documents, produced in concrete historical circumstances, with specific goals and objectives and their content cannot be analyzed in a disembodied, ahistorical way. 'History Will Absolve Me' was Castro's speech in his own defence at the trial after the attack upon the Moncada Barracks on 26 July 1953. It is a document which cogently argues the lack of legitimacy of the Batista régime. It further emphasized the basic socio-economic and political transformations which the revolutionary government would have undertaken if the attack on the Moncada Barracks had been successful.⁷²

The focus of the speech was on the revolutionary laws which would have been immediately enacted by the triumphant rebels. Thus, they emphasize the structural transformations which correspond to the first stage of the revolution. Issues of superstructural transformation, of transformation of *conciencia* (consciousness) are not emphasized in 'History Will Absolve Me'. They correspond to a different stage in the dialectics of the Revolution. The document proposed sweeping revolutionary laws which were addressed to the basic problems of Cuba's socio-economic structure and which, although not specifically formulated along race lines, would have benefitted the black masses of the population, concentrated as they were in the lower social strata. Already, in the introduction to Arredondo's *El Negro en Cuba* (1939) the issue is stated succinctly: 'Cuba's black problem is essentially the historical problem of giving the marginal masses an adequate and fair place in the life of the nation.'⁷³ Thus, 'History Will Absolve Me' was addressing the core of Cuba's black problem, even if it was not mentioning it by name.

The Programme-Manifesto of 26 July was a political document whose intended goal was to unify the largest coalition possible behind the fighting rebels. Its alleged vagueness is a consequence of the political objective of publicizing a *minimal* programme upon which a very broad and heterogeneous movement could be built. Furthermore, the programme was issued by the addressed to the members of the 26th of July Movement based outside Cuba; and the external forces which could have effectively prevented the success of the revolutionary forces which were still gathering strength. (1956)

✓ The actual changes

'The most significant change is that now I can go any place, get anywhere, aspire to any position and I do not have to think that being black is going to be a hindrance or that I may be turned away ... I can go to the best hotels or to the most expensive restaurant; I am now in the process of being considered for the Party ... and nobody, but nobody, can stop me from reaching my goals because of the colour of my skin ... The most important change is in my sense of trust. I have the same rights as anybody else ... And not just because it's written on a piece of paper. But because the Revolution guarantees it to be so ...'

—a black woman, Havana, 1977

It can be unhesitatingly affirmed that racial discrimination has been solidly eradicated from Cuban society. Nobody is barred access to jobs, education, social facilities of any kind, etc., for reasons of their skin colour. The egalitarian and redistributive measures enacted by the Revolutionary

government have benefitted blacks as the most oppressed sector of the society in the pre-revolutionary social system. This does not imply that all forms of prejudice have been banned; or that the consciousness of all the people has been thoroughly transformed. Privately, many white Cubans — even solid revolutionaries — employ the old racist language. The difference is that there is a tremendous cost in expressing such prejudiced opinions publicly. Also, the social system does not permit that these private opinions become translated into systematic discriminatory practices.⁷⁴

Even if that bastion of white inviolability (the rate of interracial marriages) is considered, all the persons — white and black — which I informally interviewed in Cuba in 1978 agree that the frequency of interracial marriage has increased markedly since the Revolution and particularly in the last seven or eight years. There are no published statistics on interracial marriages but the visible changes in terms of frequency of interracial couples seen strolling in Havana streets this summer of 1978 are remarkable. Booth already reported an increase in mixed couples as of 1975.⁷⁵ This is a matter of considerable importance because it is the 'most foolproof index of qualitative change in a colour-class system'.⁷⁶ Personal observations by this author during visits to Cuba in 1976, 1977 and 1978, and opinions expressed by many Cubans interviewed, strongly suggest that mixed marriages — particularly of the black male—white female variety⁷⁷ — are noticeably more frequent. Interracial couples do not tend to provoke the intense stares which they used to.

Attitudes towards interracial marriages, among Cuban youth, at least, had been found as relatively positive already in a survey of attitudes in Cuban students in 1962.⁷⁸ Nearly 60% (57.9%) of the young people interviewed by Torroella in 1962 said that they could marry someone of another race, while only 27.3% said that they would not, with the balance doubtful or not answering. Of course, interpretation of this survey result is made difficult by the lack of comparable data obtained in Cuba before the Revolution, or at a later point after 1962. However, 60% of pro-interracial marriage responses seems a high degree of positive responses, at least at the verbal level, suggesting an egalitarian normative system in the youth interviewed.

Evidence gathered by Geoffrey Fox in his dissertation,⁷⁹ where he interviewed Cuban emigrés recently arrived in Chicago (both black and white) suggests another dimension to the changes brought about by the Revolution. Some workers accused the Revolution of fostering racism. Upon investigation of what they exactly meant by that, it resulted that they felt the revolutionary leadership talked too much about race (violating the taboo which normally prevailed about the issue in polite Cuban society); that it had made blacks 'uppity' (in Spanish '*le habia dado ala a los negros*') and that now blacks oppressed whites. Even black emigré workers felt embarrassed by having their race spoken about so much. Concerning Fox's study, it must be kept in mind that he interviewed only emigré workers, which by definition are examples of disaffection with respect to the Revolution, the changes brought about by it, etc. Maurice Zeitlin's study of industrial workers in Cuba as of 1962 provides a balancing picture. From Zeitlin's data it is very clear that black industrial workers (80%), even more than white industrial workers (67%) in his example,

expressed support for the Revolution.⁸⁰ In Zeitlin's study, 'many of the workers alluded spontaneously to the question of negro-white relations'. Black workers frequently referred to the impact of the Revolution on race relations⁸¹ in spite of the fact that the interview schedule did not contain any question about this issue. Their comments referred to post-revolutionary equality of opportunity, the black Cuban freedom of access to all social facilities, their improvement in living conditions, etc.

Impact of general redistributive measures

There is clear consensus on the fact that the early redistributive measures of the Revolution (the two Agrarian Reform Laws, the Urban Reform Law, etc.) improved the status of blacks in particular, as they were overrepresented in the lowest sectors of the population.

Revolutionary measures tending to equalize access to health and educational facilities (developing a massive public health system with preventing emphasis, elimination of private schools, expansion and improvement of the state school system, expansion of higher education and school facilities associated with the work place) have had special impact upon blacks. However, the Cuban Revolutionary Government has been criticized because they have not enacted policies of 'positive discrimination' or 'affirmative action' to offset the residual differences in life chances, access to elite schools⁸² or top level appointments which are the legacy of hundreds of years of oppression and discrimination.⁸³

The Cuban Revolutionary Government's position has been clear on this issue. They see 'positive discrimination' measures as contrary to the egalitarian goals of the Revolution insofar as they tend to make the colour of the skin an issue. They have practised some form of 'positive discrimination' in terms of providing special facilities (i.e., rural communities) or programmes (scholarships, etc.) to all members of a formerly disadvantaged group, but these examples have always involved all members of a formerly oppressed group, regardless of race. Discussing this issue with a few Cuban social scientists during the summer of 1978, they tend to agree with the revolutionary government's position. If anything, they would favour more 'special programmes' particularly addressed to the urban marginal masses, but not programmes structured along race divisions, because they no longer perceive any Cuban specifically being discriminated because of the colour of his skin.

However, it could still be argued that unless some compensatory measures are taken, black Cuban children are going to find it very hard to compete, given the heritage of oppression.⁸⁵ Domínguez, after reviewing published public health surveys before and after the Revolution, has concluded that racial inequality in public health remains a feature in Cuban life and that 'Cuban blacks and mulattoes are demonstrably poorer; because they are poorer, they are sicker than whites to become sick. This was true before the Revolution, and it is still true in the 1970s.'⁸⁶ However, his conclusions are based on an alleged high incidence of disease among blacks, particularly among what he calls 'diseases of poverty'. The evidence, however, is not strong enough to support his conclusions. In the first place, what seems well established is an under-representation of blacks in

some of what Domínguez calls 'diseases of affluence' (heart attacks, cancer, etc.). With respect to the so-called 'diseases of poverty', most of the evidence presented by Domínguez refers to pre-revolutionary surveys. Table 4 summarizes his data with respect to post-revolutionary surveys. Only two of those (burns on children and tuberculosis) deal with 'diseases of poverty' according to his definition.

The second problem is that many of the surveys deal with small samples and the representativeness and reliability of their results are highly questionable. The third flaw in the argument is that Domínguez is judging overrepresentative (or underrepresentation) of blacks in terms of the proportions of blacks and mulattoes in the Cuban population as of the 1953 Census, which I maintain is totally inadequate for evaluating post-revolutionary data of the 1970s, given the estimated changes in the racial composition of the population (see section immediately below).

If the estimated black (including black and mulatto) population of Cuba as of 1970 was roughly 40% (which is an estimate), most of the health surveys (with the exception of one survey of tuberculosis patients) would have an underrepresentation of blacks, or merely approach the proportion of blacks in the general population. Of course, more specific estimates by province are missing. They would be necessary to make a definite comparison of rates. Thus, in my view, Domínguez's data does not justify his conclusions.

The most far-reaching (in terms of development of racial equality) measure taken by the revolutionary government was probably the elimination of private schools. On the eve of the Revolution, roughly 15% of the Cuban grade school children and 30% of the high school students attended private schools, which were primarily white. The crisis of the state school system, its lack of resources for effectively carrying out its teaching mission, its poor reputation, had led to a proliferation of private schools where the children of the bourgeoisie (and the middle sectors which could afford them) were educated with little contact with the black masses and other oppressed sectors of the population. This segregation of the elite had far-reaching consequences as it made difficult the development of social networks across racial lines.

The private school system disappeared in Cuba by 1961. Since then, a totally integrated school system has developed. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that the long heritage of segregation and the impact of differential social chances have been completely erased. Visitors (particularly black American visitors, highly sensitive to these issues) notice underrepresentation of blacks in high powered schools (such as the Lenin Vocational School, where a grade school average of 98% plus is a prerequisite for admission) and overrepresentation of blacks at the INDER (National Sports Institute) schools. However, the revolutionary government has already taken certain measures (i.e., the demand for a geographical distribution quota in admissions to the Lenin school) which although they are not specifically directed at achieving racial balance, will have an undeniable effect in preventing these schools from becoming enclaves of the Havana elite. The whole thing must be placed into perspective; these high-powered schools serve a very small number of students, comparatively speaking. The

TABLE 4

Diseases among Cuban blacks — post-1959

Survey	Dates	Illness	Place	% Black
Hernández Amador	1962-1972	Burns in children	Havana	36.0
Mir del Junco	1965-1971	Tuberculosis	Havana	56.7
Ronda Marisy	Early 70s	Foreign matter in esophagus	Camagüey	19.0
Triana Garcíá	1964-1971	Thyroid problems	Havana	37.0
Castro-López	1972	Psychiatric	Havana	38.3
Alfonso	1970-1972	Kidney transplant patients	Havana	31.2
Alfonso	1961-1972	Obstructive anuria	Havana	13.0
García Gutiérrez	1961-1972	Portal Hypertension	Havana	10.3
Alvarez Guilián	1966-1972	Heart attack	Camagüey	22.5
Lima Fdez.	after Nov. 1971	Coronary problems	Matauzus	13.8
De la Torre	1974	Cancer of the cervix	National and Santiago de Cuba	31.2
Carreras Ruiz	1962-1970	Cancer of the lip	Santiago	9.6
Cardevilla	1969-1971	Cancer of the lungs	Havana	20.0
Llobera and Bidart	1965-1969	Diabetic gangrene	—	30.0
Mateo de Acosta	1970	Diabetes	National	30.0
Taylor Hill	1970-1972	Varicose veins	Havana	31.0
Alea Goenaga	1969-1970	Varicose veins	Pinar del Rio	17.3
Hatim Ricardo	1962-1971	Hypertension	Camagüey	37.5

Source: Compiled from Domínguez, *op.cit.*, pp.521-526.

bulk of Cuban students attend completely integrated schools where the races effectively mingle — from day care centres to post-graduate education.

Other visible changes since the Revolution have occurred in the housing patterns. No clear-cut and rigid housing discrimination patterns existed in pre-revolutionary Cuba but blacks in Havana, for example, tended to be concentrated in dilapidated areas in the central city (Los Sitios, Jesús María, Atarés), the less desirable working class districts of Marianao and La Lisa, plus in the shanty towns such as 'Llega y Pon'. The Revolution brought an immediate reduction in rents (50%) and eventually ownership of the houses was granted to the former tenants. Thus, more blacks own their houses in Cuba than in any other country in the world. Yet the housing situation is very difficult for blacks and whites alike in contemporary Cuba because of the low priority given so far to construction of new houses — particularly in Havana — and because of the limited resources allocated to maintenance until now.⁸⁷ But new houses built by the micro-brigades⁸⁸ are being allocated on the basis of need and merit. The old mansions, abandoned by the fleeing bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie, were distributed to the remaining revolutionaries and now it is rather common to see black tenants in the formerly exclusive Havana neighbourhoods of El Vedado and Miramar.

Changes in the composition of the population

An indicator of the changes in race relations transpiring since the Revolution is the accelerated process of

'mulattoization' of Cuba. Publications to-date of the data of the 1970 Cuban Census — the only post-revolutionary Census — have not included any breakdowns of the population according to race.⁸⁹ The exact reasons for not analyzing the data by racial categories is not known, but it fits well with the general position taken by the revolutionary government on racial matters: that the revolution is colour-blind although the general impact of revolutionary changes (addressed to the improvement of the life of the masses and towards the elimination of class-linked inequities) should benefit black Cubans to a large extent, as one of the most oppressed sectors of the pre-revolutionary population.

However, in spite of the absence of published information on the racial breakdown of the Cuban population as of 1970, it is possible to speculate on the nature of the changes. It is my estimate that the percentage of 'non-whites' in the Cuban population should have increased from 26.9% in the 1953 Census to a figure no less than 40% in 1970, and segregation of the races (i.e., separate social clubs, separate 'walking routes' in the parks of Cuban small towns, the elimination of private schools, etc.) have meant increased opportunities for mingling of the races, which has accelerated the process of 'mulattoization' of Cuba.

Differential migration of Cuban social races

The differential migration of Cuban social races is in itself an indicator of the impact of the Revolution upon

the black Cuban masses. The fact of the underrepresentation of blacks in the post-revolutionary Cuban migratory wave is clear from U.S. census data and even casual observation of exiled communities. However, different interpretations have been proposed to explain the markedly different migration rates of blacks and whites: overrepresentation of blacks in the lower occupation strata of pre-revolutionary society and underrepresentation of these strata in the migratory waves (a 'class' explanation); differences in the black and white Cuban communities in terms of the existence of 'networks' within U.S. society to claim persons still in Cuba (which is really a modified 'class' explanation); social and political pressures exercised on blacks not to leave the island (a specifically 'racial' factor), etc.⁹⁰ But it seems obvious that another specific racial factor — the improved life chances of blacks in post-revolutionary society — has played at least a contributing role in the differential migration, together with the other above mentioned factors.⁹¹

Blacks in decision-making structures

Certain black critics of the Cuban revolutionary régime, such as More and Clytus,⁹² have argued that the scarcity of blacks in top level decision-making positions within the Revolutionary Government is a proof of racial discrimination. Booth falls into an explanation just as questionable, i.e., that it reflects 'the bourgeois or petty bourgeois social origin of the leading cadres of the July 26th Movement and the near-monopoly of top decision-making power still held by this group.'⁹³

A discussion of the social origins of the July 26th Movement cadres is clearly beyond the scope of this study. Furthermore, the decision-making structures of the Cuban Government have changed markedly since 1970 with the institutionalization process, and, except at the very top, the attempts to classify decision makers by their former allegiance to 26th of July or Popular Socialist Party, to Fidel's or Raul's entourage, etc., are becoming more and more obsolete: a whole new generation of cadres, too young to have participated in the anti-Batista struggle in any faction or group whatsoever, has acceded to political life in Cuba.

Domínguez⁹⁴ has estimated that the proportion of blacks in the 1965 Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party was 9%, which in his view does not represent any improvement over the roughly 9% representation of blacks in 'comparable' pre-revolutionary structures such as the House of Representatives and Senate, as of 1943. However, the general thrust of the post-1970 changes has been in the direction of broadening the top decision-making echelons and clear structures and functional differentiations. A new analysis of black participation in the top level structures is in order. These structures are not any more just the Political Bureau at the Party level and the Cabinet at the Government level. Within the Party, the Political Bureau, the Secretariat, the Central Committee and the Control Commission would have to be analyzed. Within the State apparatus, one must look at the composition of the National Assembly and particularly the Council of State. Within the Government, the composition of the Council of Ministers should be analyzed. The national leadership of the mass organiza-

tions, such as CDRs, labour unions, FMC, FEEM, FEU, Pioneers, etc., would also have to be considered. This study is yet to be done. However, one must challenge the view which would judge black political participation in the Revolutionary Government just in terms of these top structures.

Inevitably, the top structures are more likely than not to reflect historical differentials as well as particular factors (such as the Batista propaganda which tended to identify the struggle going on during 1952-1958 as a 'white man's problem'). Not even the worst critics of the Cuban régime have been able to present any evidence to the effect that blacks, because of their being black, have been excluded from decision-making positions. Blacks were well represented in the leadership of the PSP (Old Communist Party). Such blacks are still well represented in the Revolutionary régime (Lázaro Peña led the unions until his death; Blas Roca has been a key figure in the institutionalization process and he is now the President of the National Assembly; other blacks, such as Severo Aguirre, are members of the Council of State). Given the fact that the top leadership in the Cuban régime still reflects the composition of the anti-Batista leadership, its racial make-up reflects historical factors. Juan Almeida, the highest ranking black in Cuba, member of the Political Bureau of the Cuban Communist Party, head of the important Control and Revision Commission of the Party at the National level, member of the Council of State, and reputedly the third man in the Cuban hierarchy (immediately after Fidel and Raul Castro), occupies these positions not because he is black, but because he is one of the three surviving commanders of war fronts ('*jefes de frente*') during the revolutionary war.

However, since the mid-sixties and with the institutionalization process and its concomitant broadening of the decision-making structures, there seems to have occurred a significant increase in black representation. However, a quantitative study is yet to be conducted. But looking just below the top echelons, at the intermediate levels of various structures, from the Party to the Army, would reveal a massive incorporation of blacks into the basic revolutionary institutions. Hard evidence is still to be collected, though. The above statement is based on informal observations which would require substantiation by other means.

An as yet unpublished study by Casal on the ethnic composition of the National Assembly, conducted during the last ordinary period of sessions (December 1978) shows combined black and mulatto representation in the National Assembly at approximately 36%, a four-fold increase with respect to the level of black and mulatto representation in equivalent elected structures before the Revolution.

Domínguez⁹⁵ has attempted to estimate black representation among the soldiers and officialdom of the Cuban Army by means of examination of photographs published in *Verde Olivo*, the Army's weekly newspaper. He has concluded that there is overrepresentation of blacks among the rank and file and underrepresentation of blacks among the officialdom. The study is flawed on many grounds: first of all, the method of assigning race from observations of poor quality photographs (*Verde Olivo* is printed on poor paper) is questionable; interjudge reliability data is missing and use of non-blind judges (i.e., judges

aware of the hypotheses being tested such as the author himself) is definitely not commendable. Furthermore, over- and underrepresentation are established by comparison with pre-revolutionary census data, i.e., figures obtained from censal statistics. It seems to me that this method would tend to exaggerate overrepresentation, because as argued earlier, the proportion of blacks in the general Cuban population had probably increased to 40% approximately by 1970. Besides, the appropriate comparison rates, in terms of the pre-revolutionary Army, should be obtained by applying the same method (photographic inspection) to samples of pre-revolutionary rank and file and officers. However, by the same token, underrepresentation among officers is more likely to reflect a real phenomenon. The method is ingenious, and it may be one of the unobtrusive measures to study a topic about which there is no published data (nor is there likely to be in the future). However, one must be aware that the method, even if applied with all the controls, concern for reliability and validity, etc., suggested earlier, still is subject to manipulation. If the editors of *Verde Olivo* have read Domínguez, we might as well forget about the method!

'Afro-Cuban' religion and culture

The most virulent critics of the Cuban Revolution in terms of race have been exiled; black Cubans such as Betancourt⁹⁶ and More; and black foreigners such as John Clytus, Robert Williams⁹⁷ and Eldridge Cleaver.⁹⁸ Other black writers, such as Reckford and Sutherland⁹⁹, have drawn a more complex and realistic picture. (

Carlos More has decried Cuban government's practices with respect to 'Afro-Cuban' culture and religion, which he claims are relegated to the level of folklore and not accorded the proper respect and importance. A major problem in More's perspective, as well as in the other expatriate and foreign black writers of the Revolution, is the tendency to apply to the Cuban context formulations derived from the black experience in other contexts, particularly the U.S. But as Sutherland points out 'while similarities between the black Cuban and Afro-American experience existed, there must also be great differences.'¹⁰⁰ The major difference is that black Cubans cannot really be considered a national minority. The Cuban Communists, having committed that mistake once, when in 1934 they defined the black problem in Cuba as a national question¹⁰¹ and they proposed black self-determination in the so-called 'black belt' of Oriente province, have been very much aware of avoiding such a pitfall again.

Cuban culture, which has slowly been evolving during several centuries, is undoubtedly Afro-Hispanic. In spite of the efforts of the white dominant classes, in spite of their resistance, black cultural elements are integrated into Cuban music, Cuban popular lore (including proverbs and sayings), Cuban platic arts, poetry, etc., in such fashion that, without their component of black heritage, they would not be what they are; they would not be Cuban. And this must not be seen as the result of an assimilationist option, but rather as the consequence of a true *mestizaje*, of the complex interactions of two powerful cultural traditions. Even black religious and fraternal groups had, during the Republic, gradually

accepted whites within their ranks (i.e., the Abakúa secret brotherhood, as well as the most widespread of the syncretic religions, the Cuban version of the Yoruba religion, *santería*).

As we have seen, blacks were major protagonists of the Cuban struggle for national liberation in the nineteenth century. They did not only provide for the majority of the rank and file of the Liberation Army in its struggle against Spain, but they were also a significant percentage (40%) of the officialdom. No other Latin American Liberation Army could boast such level of racial integration. The Cuban nation was thus built on the blood of black and white, united in the struggle. But the Cuban bourgeoisie which failed in so many of its historical tasks, also failed in the enterprise of creating a true national identity which would have accepted *lo criollo como lo mulatto* (the true Cuban as mulatto). The final and definitive integration of blacks and whites in Cuban society had to wait for the demise of a mimetic and weak bourgeoisie, with *comprador* mentality, which looked North for its models and even for the defence of its class interests.

Cuba today has established the structural basis for full equality and total integration. Furthermore, the concept of the Cuban as basically Afro-Hispanic (with some Chinese elements thrown in) is taking root in the national consciousness (Jose Marti, Fernando Ortiz, and Fidel Castro would be building stones in the development of this consciousness). It was Fidel Castro's role to be the first Cuban white ruler to recognize openly the *mulatto* character of Cuban culture and nationhood. When in his speech of 19 April 1976 he quietly asserted 'We are a Latin African people', Fidel was making history.

Over 450 years had passed since the first slaves had been brought to Cuba's soil. It was perhaps fitting that the final stage in national integration was achieved by Cubans as it was moving beyond the boundaries of narrow nationalism. Because now, in this second half of the twentieth century, it has befallen the Cubans, black and white together, to play a major role in the monumental struggles characterizing our historical epoch: the burden and the glory of being the first nation in the Americas in the process of building socialism and, beyond the hemisphere, a significant role in aiding the struggle for national liberation in the African continent. An almost unbelievable role for a small, poor, oil-less nation. The final proof of the quite unique character of race relations in post-revolutionary Cuba and the significant strides which have been made is precisely that Cubans, black and white alike, have been able to give the last proof of brotherhood — shedding one's own blood, offering one's life — for the final liberation of the peoples of Africa.

Given the normal *decalage* between structural transformations and transformations at the level of consciousness (*conciencia*); given the lack of historical precedent for a truly integrated, *mulatto* culture; there is still some road to travel in the way to a society where the last vestiges of centuries of oppression and ideologies of racial division and superiority are finally eliminated. But of all the countries in the world it is Cuba, under socialism, where this appears as a historical possibility in the foreseeable future.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Fermoselle y López, Rafael. *Política y Color en Cuba*, Montevideo, Uruguay: Ediciones Geminis, 1974.
- ² Thomas, Hugh. *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom*, London, 1971.
- ³ Martínez-Alier, Verena. *Marriage, Class and Color in Nineteenth Century Cuba*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974.
- ⁴ Amaro, Nelson and Mesa Lago, Carmelo, 'Inequality and Classes'. In Carmelo Mesa Lago, ed. *Revolutionary Change in Cuba*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971, pp.341-374.
- ⁵ Fermoselle y López, Rafael. *op. cit.*, p.166.
- ⁶ Masferrer, Marianne and Mesa Lago, Carmelo, 'The Gradual Integration of the Black in Cuba: Under the Colony, the Republic and the Revolution', in Robert Brent Toplin, ed., *Slavery and Race Relations in Latin America*, Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn., 1974, pp.348-384.
- ⁷ *Ibid.* p.349.
- ⁸ *Ibid.* p.351.
- ⁹ Thomas, Hugh, *op. cit.*, Harper and Row, New York, 1971, p.1120.
- ¹⁰ Green, Gil, *Revolution Cuban Style*, International Publishers, New York, 1970.
- ¹¹ Booth, David, 'Cuba, Color and the Revolution', *Science and Society*, Vol.XI, No.2, Summer 1976, pp.129-172.
- ¹² *Ibid.* p.133.
- ¹³ Casal, L., *Images of Cuban Society in Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Novels*, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Graduate Faculty, The New York School for Social Research, 1975. Ch.6.
- ¹⁴ Booth, *op. cit.*, p.137.
- ¹⁵ See, for example, Cepero Bonilla's treatment of José de la Luz y Caballero, Felix Varele, etc., in Cepero Bonilla, Raul, *Azúcar y Abolición*, 4 ed., Ed de Ciencias Sociales, Inst. Cubano del Libro La Habana, 1971. Ch.1.
- ¹⁶ Booth, *op. cit.*, p.139.
- ¹⁷ See, for instance, C. IV 'El desdén del negro por el negro' (Black Self-Hatred) in Arredondo, *op. cit.*, pp.68-79.
- ¹⁸ Estimates vary, but a commonly quoted figure places the percentage of blacks among the rank and file of the Cuban forces around 75%.
- ¹⁹ Vote was restricted to males over 21 years of age which would either read and write; or prove real property valued over 250 pesos; or prove that they had fought in the Liberation Army.
- ²⁰ Portuondo Linares, Serafín, *Los Independientes de Color*, Publicaciones del Ministerio de Educacion, Direccion de Cultura, La Habana, 1950, p.13.
- ²¹ For a history of the Cuban armed forces during the republic see Louis A. Perez, *Army Politics in the Cuban Republic 1902-1958*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1976.
- ²² It was alleged that a reason for this policy was the desire to avoid clashes with white American soldiers from the South in the occupation forces.
- ²³ See Portuondo Linares, *op. cit.*, p.15.
- ²⁴ See Portuondo Linares, *op. cit.*, p.19.
- ²⁵ See Fermoselle y López, *op. cit.* For a general discussion of racial problems in the early Republic, as they affected political life, see Thomas T. Orum, *The Politics of Color: the Racial Dimension of Cuban Politics during the Early Republican Years, 1900-1912*, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of History, New York University, 1975.
- ²⁶ Booth, *op. cit.*, p.148.
- ²⁷ Domínguez, Jorge, *Cuba: Order and Revolution*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1978, p.49.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ Arredondo, *op. cit.*, pp.146-47.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.* pp.157-58.
- ³¹ For the text of the draft see Entralgo, Elías, *La Liberación Étnica Cubana*, La Habana, n.p. 1953, note on pages 264-66.
- ³² The Cuban Communist Party was always in the forefront of the struggle against racial discrimination in Cuba since its organization in 1925. However, their specific positions show significant changes which still await formal analysis. This task falls clearly beyond the scope of this present study. For example, very briefly during the early thirties (until 1936) the Party adopted a viewpoint which defined the black problem as a 'national question' cf. 'La Cuestión Negra en Cuba, Cuestión Nacional', *Masas*, Año, I., No.2, June 1934, pp.20-21). This followed the Comintern resolution about self-determination and the positions adopted by the U.S. Communists concerning the racial struggle in the U.S. around the same time.
- ³³ This section is a modified and expanded version of the corresponding chapter in the author's doctoral dissertation; L. Casal, *Images of Cuban Society Among Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Novelists*, Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, New School for Social Research, New York, 1975.
- ³⁴ Centro de Estudios Demográficos, *La Población de Cuba*, Edit. de Ciencias Sociales, La Habana, 1976, p.106.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.* p.1056.
- ³⁶ Casal, L., *op. cit.*, pp.217-227.
- ³⁷ Centro de Estudios Demográficos, *La Población de Cuba*, Edit. de Ciencias Sociales, La Habana, 1976, p.106.
- ³⁸ Computed from *Ibid.* pp.926 and 930.
- ³⁹ Masferrer and Mesa Lago, *op. cit.*, pp.365-66.
- ⁴⁰ Domínguez, J., *op. cit.*, pp.75-76, and Appendix B, pp.515-520.
- ⁴¹ For a general discussion of race inequality in pre-revolutionary Cuba see Amaro and Mesa-Lago, *op. cit.*, pp.346-349; Masferrer and Mesa-Lago, *op. cit.*, pp.360-373; Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp.1117-1126, and Booth, *op. cit.*, pp.132-154. Thomas and Booth tend to emphasize more the level of pre-revolutionary racism than Amaro and Mesa-Lago or Masferrer and Mesa-Lago.
- ⁴² Many Cuban towns could boast three *sociedades de recreo* or social clubs: one for whites, one for blacks, and one for mulattoes. I still remember my puzzlement as a youth, visiting my family's hometown, Alquizar (in Havana province) for the traditional patron saint (St. Augustine) festivities. My numerous extended family divided to go to the three *sociedades*, according to skin colour! In many Cuban towns, it was also customary to have different tracks or areas of each major park divided along racial lines. Frequently, this led to violence as some blacks challenged the customary division. For example, Arredondo (*op. cit.*, pp.64-65)

- narrates in detail an incident which took place in January 1934 at the Parque Céspedes in the city of Trinidad (Las Villas Province). It culminated in an anti-black riot where a black journalist, Felix Justo Proveyer, was assassinated.
- ⁴³ Moreno Fragnals, *El Ingenio*, 3 tomos, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, La Habana, 1977; and Pérez de la Riva, Juan, *El Barracón y otros ensayos*, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, La Habana, 1975.
- ⁴⁴ Booth, *op. cit.*, p.138.
- ⁴⁵ While the Spaniards agitated the 'black scare' to defuse the white creole aspirations towards independence, the Cuban independence movement emphasized the unity of the races. Regardless of race and/or individual attitudes towards blacks, Cubans have long recognized that black elements are undeniable components of whatever definition of 'Cuban culture' which might be attempted, from music to language, from religion to literature. So much so, that 'Afro-Cuban' can be considered a redundancy: 'Cuban' being already a blend of Afro-Spanish elements with some Chinese components and Indian remnants.
- ⁴⁶ Hoetink, H., *The Two Variants in Caribbean Race Relations: A Contribution to the Sociology of Segmented Societies*, London: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- ⁴⁷ Martínez Alier, *op. cit.*, p.132.
- ⁴⁸ Grillo Sáez, David, *El problema del Negro Cubano*, La Habana: n.p., 1953.
- ⁴⁹ Aguirre, S., El cincuentenario de un gran crimen, *Cuba Socialists*, Año 2, No.16, (Diciembre 1962), pp.33-51.
- ⁵⁰ Femoselle y López, *op. cit.*, pp.2-7.
- ⁵¹ Refer to the often quoted works by Arrédondo, *El Negro en Cuba*, and Portuondo Linares, Fernando, *Los Independientes de Color*.
- ⁵² A research group which conducted an analysis of the *Problems of the New Cuba* for the Foreign Policy Association in 1934 describe blacks as 'occupying the bottom of the social scale, and with little opportunity for social advancement' and therefore as providing 'numerous recruits for the Cuban underworld'; also as being engaged in extra-legal matrimonial bonds much more frequently than whites; the report reports racial prejudice increasing as a consequence of U.S. influence, and blacks as underrepresented in most prestigious or best paid occupations, although it maintains that 'There is no adequate evidence to show whether this is due to lack of opportunity or aptitude.'
- ⁵³ One extremely virulent anti-black collection of journalistic articles about the 1912 black uprising by Rafael Conte and José M. Capmany (*Guerra de Razas*, La Habana: Imprenta Militar de Antonio Pérez, 1912) is rare indeed in the candour of its undisguised racism.
- ⁵⁴ Casal, L., *op. cit.*, pp.227-240.
- ⁵⁵ Cuban Economic Research Project, *Stages and Problems of Industrial Development*, Coral Gables: The University of Miami Press, 1965, p.204. The Cuban Economic Research Project was a think-tank of emigré scholars which was organized at the University of Miami during the early sixties.
- ⁵⁶ Cfi, López Valdés, R.L., 'Discrimination in Cuba', *Cuba Resource Centre Newsletter*, 1973, Vol.2, No.6, pp.6-14.
- ⁵⁷ Carneado, Jose F., 'La discriminacion racial en Cuba no volvera jamas', *Cuba Socialista*, Year 2, No.5, January 1962, p.62.
- ⁵⁸ Cfi, Booth, *op. cit.*, p.155.
- ⁵⁹ Masferrer and Mesa-Lago, *op. cit.*, p.373.
- ⁶⁰ All quotations translated by the author from Fidel Castro, Discurso del 22 marzo de 1959, *Revolución*, March 23, 1959, pp.24-27.
- ⁶¹ It had been a lengthy speech in which Fidel Castro had openly disagreed with José Figueres, ex-president of Costa Rica who was then Cuba's guest and had occupied the podium just before Fidel Castro at the March 22 massive gathering of workers. The speech had dealt with the aggressive campaigns against Cuba — already underway — by the internal and external counter-revolutionary forces. It had discussed the international attacks against Cuba and internal problems such as unemployment, the issue of elections, labour unrest and the acid fights then being waged for control of the labour unions, but it seemed as if Fidel had only talked about racial discrimination, judging the speech by the reaction it provoked.
- ⁶² Depestre, René, 'Carta de Cuba sobre el imperialismo de la mala fe', *Casa de las Americas*, No.34, February 1966, pp.32-61.
- ⁶³ Booth, *op. cit.*, p.157.
- ⁶⁴ It was published in *Revolución*, March 26, 1959, pp. 1-2; 13-14, and *Revolución*, March 27, 1959, pp. 1-2 and 14. The question corresponding to the racial discrimination issue is in *Revolución*, March 26, 1959, pp. 1-2. All quotations are my translations from this source.
- ⁶⁵ However, the future of such private clubs was already written on the wall. Revolutionary actions were directed towards developing integrated social clubs and neighbourhood gathering places throughout the island. As the revolution progressed and the revolutionary laws hit the bourgeoisie and the economic basis for the power, the defeated upper classes left the country, the 'private clubs' disappeared and their facilities became open to all the people.
- ⁶⁶ A very deeply ingrained custom among Cuban males: to shower lavish praise (more frequently than not of a very vulgar nature, though) upon any woman which passes them by.
- ⁶⁷ More, Carlos, 'Le peuple noir a-t-il sa place dans la révolution cubaine?' *Présence africaine*, No.52, 1964, pp.177-230.
- ⁶⁸ René Depestre has commented on this omission: 'The fact that Carlos More has shamelessly omitted in his lengthy pamphlet any mention of this Declaration of the Black Man's Rights in Cuba, in an indication of the magnitude of the imperialism of bad faith (Depestre, *op. cit.*, p.42).
- ⁶⁹ Thomas, Hugh, *op. cit.*, p.1121.
- ⁷⁰ Masferrer and Mesa-Lago, *op. cit.*, p.373.
- ⁷¹ Booth, *op. cit.*, p.155. For the text of the Programme Manifesto see Bonachea, R. and Valdes, N., eds., *Cuba in Revolution*, Anchor Books, Doubleday, Garden City, 1972, pp.132-33.
- ⁷² There is a wide controversy in the literature about the nature of the Moncada Programme. We cannot enter that debate here. Suffice it to say that it was a progressive, populist, anti-imperialist programme which, if carried to its ultimate consequences (as it was) would have led unequivocally to the socialist alternative (as it did).
- ⁷³ Arrédondo, Alberto, *op. cit.*, p.13.
- ⁷⁴ Booth recognizes: '... in the climate prevailing since

1959, state-employed managers and functionaries have been unable to practise open racial discrimination' (Booth, *op. cit.*, p.158).

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* p.165.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ John Clytus, a black American who resided in Cuba in the mid-sixties, and later published a book about Cuban racism, reported 'I constantly saw black women strolling with white men, but I saw no white woman with black men' (Clytus, John, *Black Man in Red Cuba*, Coral Gables: The University of Miami Press, 1970, p.132). The situation has changed markedly in the last decade. John Clytus's book is a virulent attack on Cuba. Assuming good faith — not easy in this case — it is another example of judging Cuban realities through foreign eyes.

⁷⁸ Toroella, Gustavo, *Estudio de la juventud cubana*, La Habana: Comisión Nacional Cubana de la UNESCO, 1963, pp.105-106. See Domínguez, *op. cit.*, p.484.

⁷⁹ Fox, Geoffrey E., *Working Class Emigrés from Cuba: a Study of Counterrevolutionary Consciousness*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1975, pp.101-118. See also 'Cuban Workers in Exile', *Transaction*, Vol.8, No.11 (Sept. 1971) pp.21-30.

⁸⁰ Zeitlin, Maurice, *Revolutionary Politics and the Cuban Working Class*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967, p.77.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* pp. 75-76. Actually all of chapter 3 in Zeitlin's book is devoted to 'Race Relations and Politics', pp.66-68, and contains important material of relevance to the questions discussed here.

⁸² A U.S. black educator, member of a group which visited Cuba in 1977, commented to me that top notch schools such as the Lenin Vocational School were overwhelmingly white. An average of 98 is necessary for admission.

⁸³ See Clytus, *op. cit.*, pp.23-24; Booth, *op. cit.*, p.160.

⁸⁴ 'Positive discrimination' measures may provide a rallying point in organizing disenfranchised groups and in erecting some concrete advantages in advanced capitalistic societies. However, an evaluation of the true impact of such measures, in view of a) their divisive impact upon oppressed minorities, which then lead to fight one another for the minority slots; b) their negative impact upon the development of a class perspective as they tend to develop ethnic consciousness above class consciousness, seems necessary. This is a task obviously beyond the scope of this paper.

⁸⁵ Rockford, Barry, *Does Fidel Eat More Than Your Father?* London: Andre Deutsch Ltd., 1971, p.127.

⁸⁶ Domínguez, *op. cit.*, p.256.

⁸⁷ All this is rapidly changing as of mid-1978.

⁸⁸ Volunteer crews from different work-centres who build houses for workers at the centres. Houses are allocated by workers' assemblies.

⁸⁹ However, the basic form employed by enumerators, included a question (no.5) about colour of the skin and four categories to be checked: white, black, mulatto and yellow. See República de Cuba, Juceplan, *Censo de Población y Viviendas 1970*, Edición Orbe,

La Habana, 1975; Centro de Estudios Demográficos, *La Población de Cuba*, edit. de Ciencias Sociales, La Habana, 1976.

⁹⁰ See Prohías, R.J. and Casal, L., *The Cuban Minority in the United States. Preliminary Report on Need Identification and Programme Evaluation*. Boca Raton: Florida Atlantic University, 1973; Benigno Aguirre 'Differential Migration of Cuban Social Races: A Review and Interpretation of the Problem', *Latin American Research Review*, Vol.II, No.1, 1976, pp.103-124.

⁹¹ See Centro de Estudios Demográficos, *La Población de Cuba*, Edit. de Ciencias Sociales, La Habana, 1976, pp.157 and 147.

⁹² See More, *op. cit.*, pp.211-212; Clytus, *op. cit.*, pp.41-42.

⁹³ Booth, *op. cit.*, p.163.

⁹⁴ Domínguez, *op. cit.*, p.226.

⁹⁵ Domínguez, Jorge I., 'Racial and Ethnic Relations in the Cuban Armed Forces: A Non Topic', *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol.2, No.2 (February 1976), pp.273-290.

⁹⁶ Betancourt, Juan Reno, 'Castro and the Cuban Negro', *The Crisis*, Vol.68, No.5 (May 1961), pp.270-274.

⁹⁷ See Stearns, L., 'Fidel's tokenism', *National Review*, June 1969, 21, pp.596-597; also Geyer, Georgie Ann, 'The Odyssey of Robert Williams', *New Republic*, March 20, 1971.

⁹⁸ See, for example, *The New York Times*, June 26, 1969, p.4.

⁹⁹ For a highly nuanced picture, where many different black Cuban voices are allowed to speak, see Elizabeth Sutherland's *The Youngest Revolution: A Personal Report on Cuba* (New York: Dial Press, 1969), pp.138-168.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* p.155.

¹⁰¹ See footnote 32.

DOCUMENTARY FILMS

B-Broadcast, D-Distributor, P-Producer. -C after Telco number means colour film.

Telco Number

- 781949-C "*Black Rio*" (10 minutes 23"). K. Eckstein reports on the awakening self-awareness of the black Brazilians who are still at the bottom of the social scale. B-5 May 78 ZDF (in Auslandsjournal), P.O. Box 4040, 65 Mainz.
- 773749-C "*The Power of the Powerless*" (Gewalt der Gewaltlosen) (30 minutes) includes a coloured Brazilian who talks about human rights in his country. B-13 Aug. 77 Südwestfunk, Hans Bredow Strasse, Postfach 820, 7570 Baden Baden.
- 770462-C "*Brazil: Race Means Class*" (Brasilien: Rasse bedeutet Klasse) (17 minutes) makes the point that Brazil has a racial problem despite the outwardly happy and easy-going life. Interviews with Senator Nelson Carneiro, Florestan Fernandes of the University of São Paulo. B-13 Jan. 77 Swiss German TV (in Rundschau), P-Jim Giggans, Paris.
- X7653g-C "*This Year, Next Year*" Derek Wilson reports on racial discrimination in Brazil. B-1 Jan. 77 BBC.
- 750655-C "*Brazilians from Africa, Africans of Brazil*" (3 x 55 minutes). Series traces the influence Africa's culture has had on Brazilian life and vice versa. Part I traces the history of slavery in Brazil, part II looks at Dahomey to find the origins of many Brazilian traditions, part III visits the Island of Itaparica, where the Egouns have much in common with Port Novo in Africa. B-5 Oct. 74 French TV/ORTF-3. D-Institut National de l'Audiovisuel, 4, avenue de l'Europe, 94360 Bry-Sur-Marne, France.
- 734051-C "*The Black Enclave*" (25 minutes) focuses on a settlement of negroes in the highlands. They have survived as a pure race and live peacefully with their neighbouring Indians and half-castes. B-21 Sept. 73 French TV/ORTF-3. P-French TV, Rio de Janeiro. D-Institut National de l'Audiovisuel.
- X7235b "*Black Americas*". A series on the living conditions of black communities in the US, Brazil, British Guyana, Martinique, Cuba and Haiti by A. Pandolfi. P-RAI, Via del Babuino 9, Rome 00167.

The above film list was provided by Richard S. Clark, TELCO, 19 Gurnells Road, Seer Green, Beaconsfield, Bucks. HP9 2XJ, UK.

Enquiries regarding these films should be addressed to the broadcaster or distributor listed, and not to TELCO.

ANANI DZIDZIENYO was born in Ghana in 1941, and studied in Ghana, the United States, and the United Kingdom, before doing research in Brazil in 1970-71. After a period as Research Fellow at the Institute of Race Relations in London, he joined the Afro-American Studies Programme at Brown University, Rhode Island.

DR. LOURDES CASAL was born in Havana, Cuba. She has been a resident of the U.S. since 1961 and completed there her doctoral degree in Social Psychology at the Graduate Faculty, The New School for Social Research in 1975. Regularly on the faculty of the Psychology Department, Rutgers University (Newark, N.J.), Dr. Casal has been on leave during the academic year 1978-79, as the recipient of a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship at the Latin American Program of The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington. Dr. Casal is the author of several books, monographs and articles dealing mostly with Cuban affairs and/or with the Cuban community in the U.S., including The Cuban Minority in the U.S. (with R.J. Prohias); El Caso Padilla; Los fundadores : Alfonso (short stories); Contra Viento y Marea (with V. Dopico, R. de la Campa and M. Lejarza) and the still unpublished Black Cubans in the U.S. (with R.J. Prohias and J. Carrasco), and Images of Cuban Society among Pre- and Post-Revolutionary Novelists (her Ph.D. dissertation).

She is a member of the Editorial Board of the magazine Areito, and was a member of the Commission of the 75, a group of representatives from the Cuban community abroad which engaged in dialogue with the Cuban Government in Nov-Dec 1978 and secured the release of political prisoners, lifting of travel restrictions for Cuban nationals living abroad who wanted to visit the island, and new emigration and immigration policies which permit reunification of divided families. She is also a member of the Board of Directors of the Institute for Cuban Studies, of the Board of Advisors of the journal Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos (University of Pittsburgh) and a former member of the Executive Council and present Chairperson of the Subcommittee on Cuban Bibliography and Reprinting of the Latin American Studies Association.



Part I of this report was first published in December 1971:
updated, with Part II added, May 1979.



The cover photograph of *favelas* in Rio, Brazil,
is by Romano Cagnoni



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- No. 1 - Religious minorities in the Soviet Union (Revised 1977 edition)
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—'a rare accuracy and insight'⁴; 'lucid . . . without bias'⁵; 'pithy, well-informed . . . the best 24 pages on Ireland's contemporary political problems that have found their way into the permanent literature . . . excellent'⁶.
- No. 3 - Japan's minorities: Burakumin, Koreans and Ainu (New 1974 edition) (price 30p)
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- No. 6 - The Crimean Tatars, Volga Germans and Meskhetians: Soviet treatment of some national minorities (Revised 1973 edition) (price 30p)
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—'another important contribution . . . from this increasingly important group'¹.
- No. 8 - The Africans' predicament in Rhodesia (Revised 1973 edition) (price 30p)
—'important and topical'¹³; 'Outstandingly good and fairminded'³.
- No. 9 - The Basques and Catalans (New 1977 edition) (también en castellano) ('The Basques' aussi en français, auch auf deutsch)
—'Very valuable'¹⁵.
- No.10 - The Chinese in Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia (price 45p)
—'A well-documented and sensible plea'¹⁴.
- No.11 - The Biharis in Bangladesh (Revised 1977 edition)
—'A significant fusion of humane interest and objective clear-headed analysis'¹⁷; 'A moving and desperate report'¹⁸.
- No.12 - Israel's Oriental Immigrants and Druzes (price 45p)
—'Timely'¹⁸.
- No.13 - East Indians of Trinidad and Guyana (Revised 1979 edition)
—'Excellent'¹⁹.
- No.14 - The Rom: the Gypsies of Europe (Revised 1975 edition) (price 45p) (aussi en français)
—'The first comprehensive description and analysis of the plight'¹⁸; 'One of the worst skeletons in Europe's cupboard'¹⁴.
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—'A horrifying indictment . . . deserves a very wide readership'²⁰.
- No.16 - The new position of East Africa's Asians (Revised 1978 edition)
—'A comprehensive analysis'¹⁹.
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