

# Against Racism: In Search of an Alliance between Afro-Brazilians and Brazilian Jews in the early 1990s

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In late 1992, Black and Jewish organizations in Brazil formed an unprecedented alliance against racial hatred and discrimination, in response to singular expressions of overt intolerance based on race and ethnicity. During the transition from the 1980s to the 1990s, right-wing extremist groups and activities increased sharply in Europe, as illustrated by the rise of neo-Nazism. This neo-Nazi escalation also had an impact in Brazil.<sup>1</sup> "Carecas do Subúrbio" ("Suburban Skinheads"), "Carecas do Brasil" ("Skinheads of Brazil"), and "White Power" are Brazilian groups that emerged under the influence of 'punk' splinter groups, especially from North America and Western Europe. With the exception of the White Power, which boasts a White middle-class membership, Brazilian skinheads are young working-class people from large cities, such as São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro, who live in extremely violent and poor neighborhoods.

The somewhat incoherent ideology of these movements contains moralistic, chauvinistic, nationalistic, and anti-imperialist elements. These are groups of young people attempting to create an identity for themselves in the face of unsatisfactory working conditions, lack of employment opportunities and social injustice. They identify with neo-Nazi symbols, rhetoric and conduct as a form of protest and condemnation.<sup>2</sup> However, other motivations have been recorded for their allegiance to these groups: "Membership (...) is often based on the attraction of violence rather than political beliefs. There is little pattern to skinhead violence, and while attacks are often targeted at migrants from the northeastern states, those of African descent, and even Jews and homosexuals, they appear to be random rather than stemming from doctrinal belief and hatred of specific ethnic groups."<sup>3</sup>

Despite their random nature, these attacks were serious enough to prompt the formation of political alliances against neo-Nazism. In 1992, Afro-Brazilians and Brazilian Jews<sup>4</sup> joined forces against racism. For the first time in Brazilian history, these two groups attempted to work together in the political arena.

This study traces the development and activities of this political alliance. I will concentrate on the *Frente Contra o Racismo* (Front Against Racism), created in Rio de Janeiro in the last months of 1992 to confront attacks by Brazilian skinheads. First, I will present a brief history of the political conduct of Afro-Brazilians and Brazilian Jews and then focus on the history of this recent alliance, the nature of its activities, similarities and differences. I will also explore the consequences of this unusual coalition. The meetings and demonstrations organized by the *Frente Contra o Racismo* were effective enough to contribute to the decline of neo-Nazi activism, but the alliance failed to address the issues generated by ordinary, everyday racism in Brazilian society. In short, while the *Frente Contra o Racismo* succeeded in confronting an explicitly racist group, it was not able to combat racism as a day-to-day matter.

A possible explanation for this is that the *Frente Contra o Racismo* had a politically ambiguous conception of the struggle against racism. Since neo-Nazism was easily identifiable as a racist ideology, it was easier to fight it. However, everyday racism throughout Brazilian society remained "concealed" by the myth of racial democracy,<sup>5</sup> thus making the exposure and denunciation of racist acts more difficult. In other words, the movement incorporated the "assimilationist" public discourse of *brasilidade* ("Brazilian-ness"), which is exemplary not only because it minimizes racial conflict, but also because it allows all citizens to recognize themselves as Brazilians.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, the alliance between Blacks and Jews, based on the identification of a common enemy, helped to bring racism into the open in a country that traditionally has had great difficulty in dealing with this problem.

### **Jews, Blacks and Politics**

Afro-Brazilians and Jews have lived in Brazil since colonial times. Jews arrived in Brazil at the beginning of the 16th century, as refugees from the Inquisition. Africans also arrived early, but as slaves from a vast territory that today includes Congo, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea, Nigeria and Benin. For three and a half centuries Portugal's colonial policy made Black slavery the central component of Brazil's social and economic order. Slavery reforms (1888), the fall of the Monarchy and the establishment of the Republic (both in 1889), however, did not significantly change the situation of the Afro-

Brazilian people. At the end of the 19th century, according to Skidmore, "Brazil was still a predominantly agrarian economy (...). Its paternalistic system of social relations prevailed even in the urban areas. This system of social stratification gave the landowners (who were White — or occasionally light mulatto) a virtual monopoly of power — economic, social, and political."<sup>7</sup>

Industrialization and urbanization in the early 20th century created other mechanisms for perpetuating the social inequalities between Blacks and Whites. The entry of Blacks into the labor market was impeded by a continued European immigration, by the scientific brand of racism adopted by the Brazilian political and intellectual elites, and by an encompassing "whitening ideology." Between 1881 and 1914 more than three million immigrants entered Brazil, most of them Southern Europeans (Spanish, Portuguese and Italians).<sup>8</sup> Until the 1930s, Blacks were marginalized from the burgeoning process of modernization; as Andrews states: "Afro-Brazilians thus found themselves politically excluded by the Republic's limitations on suffrage and other forms of political participation (...) and economically excluded by employment and other preferences granted to European immigrants over their Black competitors."<sup>9</sup>

The strong flow of immigration to Brazil also affected the formation of an ethnic identity among Brazilian Jews. It was not until the 1920s and 1930s that Jews in Brazil began to organize as an ethnic community. The U.S., Canada and Argentina had absorbed the largest numbers of Jewish immigrants to the New World, mainly from Eastern Europe. However, with the application of restrictive immigration policies in these countries and Brazil well on the way towards capitalist modernization, it began to attract Russian, Polish, Romanian and German Jews fleeing anti-Semitism and/or poverty.<sup>10</sup> At this point, it must be noted that Jewish immigration to Brazil became significant only after the great immigration wave of other Europeans —between 1890 and 1910— had ended.

In the late twenties, more than ten percent of European Jewish immigrants chose to move to Brazil. In the early thirties, the Jewish population of Brazil approached 60,000. Such demographic growth, especially in the large urban centers such as Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Porto Alegre and Recife, made Jews even more conspicuous. Jews stood out because of their religion, language, traditions, habits, and the series of mutual help institutions that they ran. In addition, they excelled as traveling salesmen and textile merchants, occupations which led to swift upward social mobility.<sup>11</sup>

Although in general Jews did not compete with Blacks for jobs, they were part of a larger immigrant population which did. Consequently, they were regarded as foreigners by Brazilian society and pigeon-holed according to

preconceived stereotypes. This negative reaction stemmed in part from the wave of nationalist fervor that swept Brazil in the thirties, and which perceived immigrants as competing against Brazilian workers or as parasites who exploited Brazilian workers and wealth. The political elites believed that foreigners brought with them threatening ideologies, such as anarchism and communism, which were alien to the "nature of the Brazilian people." Jews, in particular, were considered cosmopolitan, capitalist, communist, urban, modern –in short, they were seen as dangerous foreigners who posed a threat to Brazilian identity. This view reflected itself in the actions of extreme rightist movements, such as the *Ação Integralista Brasileira* (Brazilian Integralist Action), influenced by Italian Fascism, and in the restrictive immigration policies aimed at preventing the entry of Jews and politicized foreigners in general. In the 1930s, increased anti-Semitism was manifest in the spread of Nazi propaganda and the spate of negative opinions expressed in the press and in intellectual and political circles.<sup>12</sup>

At the same time, the nationalist outburst of the 1930 Revolution, led by Getúlio Vargas, won the admiration of Afro-Brazilians, who hoped that Black people would participate in the new regime.<sup>13</sup> It was at this point that the *Frente Negra Brasileira* (Brazilian Black Front) was created. Active mostly in the state of São Paulo between 1931 and 1937, the *Frente Negra Brasileira* denounced racism and asserted the need to create a 'new Black' identity by striving for the moral uplifting of Black people through education and work. The *Frente Negra Brasileira* had an integrationist ideology that called for the incorporation of Blacks into the labor market. As a front, however, it contained incompatible "elements" (from the extreme right to socialists), a fact that contributed to its later decline. Moreover, it defended values close to those of the *integralistas* (Brazilian fascists), as shown by Andrews:

"The Frente Negra shared (...) a contemptuous disdain for liberal democracy and (...) an open admiration for European Fascism. In a 1933 editorial saluting Adolph Hitler's rise to power, Arlindo Veiga dos Santos congratulated him for rescuing Germany from the hands of 'Jewish cosmopolitanism' and 'the narcotic opiate of fourteen years of liberal-democratic republicanism'."<sup>14</sup>

The international context, the crisis of liberal democracy and the rise of totalitarian movements contributed to the intensification of xenophobic attitudes. Furthermore, the political radicalization between Communists and *integralistas* threatened Brazil's fragile democracy.<sup>15</sup> The frustrated Commun-

ist uprising of 1935 paved the way for authoritarianism, allowing the Vargas government in 1937 to establish the *Estado Novo* (literally "New State"), that lasted until 1945. This was an extremely centralized, authoritarian regime, highly intolerant of any social and political group with a strong identity. All cultural manifestations not in the native official language –Portuguese– were prohibited, and any possible threat to the formation of the officially sanctioned "Brazilian race" was suppressed. The *Frente Negra Brasileira* saluted the new regime as "the reaffirmation of *Brasilidade*" and pledged its full support.<sup>16</sup> Paradoxically, however, the organization folded due to the absence of democracy, the abolition of political parties, and other restrictions to organized action.<sup>17</sup>

President Vargas implemented policies aimed at restricting immigration and incorporating new social groups into the State, especially the urban-based, industrial working class, who benefited from new social welfare laws and institutions and labor legislation. These policies established corporatist controls and secured social acquiescence.<sup>18</sup> Urban Afro-Brazilians identified with Vargas during this period.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, outside the formal labor market, Jews faced the challenge of making their identity compatible with the condition of being Brazilian.

Fearing for their survival, Jewish leaders tried to devise strategies to mediate between their ethnic group and Brazilian society. The creation of centralized entities in the late 1940s, such as the *Federações Israelitas* (Jewish Federations) of the states of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, was an ethnic-institutional response to the legacy of the *Estado Novo*. Several other important factors fueled the need for centralization: the end of World War II, the revelation of the atrocities of the Nazi genocide, the Brazilian democratization process as of 1945, and the creation of the State of Israel.<sup>20</sup>

During the democratic interlude in Brazilian politics (1945-1964), the activities of the Brazilian Jewish polity were basically governed by two objectives: the fight against any manifestation of anti-Semitism and the defence of the State of Israel, a strategy determined chiefly by the international context. This period witnessed the entry of second-generation Jews into Brazilian universities and the liberal professions, stimulated by the new industrial and urban post-war dynamics that generated intense processes of social mobility and assimilation. Affluence and the absence of external pressures (such as anti-Semitism) characterized Jewish community life in Brazil in the 1950s and part of the '60s, causing the political commitment of the Jewish Federations to weaken.<sup>21</sup>

In this period, the majority of the Black population voted for the *Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro*, PTB (Brazilian Labor Party), created by Getúlio Vargas.<sup>22</sup> As a result of Vargas's policies, many Black workers had been

incorporated into the industrial labor force, reducing the political demands of Black organizations in the period between 1946 and 1964 to the extent that these became "almost exclusively cultural in their orientation, focusing on literacy and other educational projects, the fostering of Black literary, theatrical and artistic activities..."<sup>23</sup>

In 1964, a military *coup d'état* established a dictatorship in Brazil that obstructed democratic politics for more than twenty years. The new context subjected Jews to the same experiences affecting the urban middle classes during that period of unparalleled economic growth and unprecedented political authoritarianism. At the same time, the world witnessed an intensification of the Arab-Israeli conflict, evidenced by the 1967 and 1973 wars, that increased support for Israel among Brazilian Jews. The Jewish Federations attempted to mobilize this support. Conflicts in the Middle East during the 1970s and 1980s generated tensions both between the Jewish Federations and the Brazilian government because of improved economic relations between Brazil and the Arab countries, and also in their interaction with some sectors of civil society who held anti-Zionist or anti-Semitic views.

The Brazilian vote in the United Nations in 1975 condemning Zionism as a form of racism, the debate over the opening of a PLO office in Brazil, and the increasing sympathy of civil society for the Palestinian cause influenced the political behavior of the Jewish Federations. From then on, these political organizations became more aware of other social movements, using the media as well as maneuvering in the Brazilian Congress in defence of the State of Israel. These developments coincided with the transition from authoritarianism to democracy.<sup>24</sup>

During the dictatorship, a small, Black middle class, with university training, emerged, which gave rise to several Afro-Brazilian cultural movements during the late sixties and seventies, such as 'Black Soul', influenced by Black American culture and the music of Stevie Wonder, Aretha Franklin, James Brown, and others. Also, the *Centro de Estudos Afro-Asiáticos* (Center for Afro-Asian Studies) and the *Instituto de Pesquisas da Cultura Negra* (Research Institute for Black Culture) in Rio de Janeiro were created in the 1970s.<sup>25</sup>

In 1978 the *Movimento Negro Unificado contra o Racismo e a Discriminação Racial* (United Black Movement Against Racism and Racial Discrimination) was established following the torture and assassination of a Black worker and the dismissal of four young men from the volleyball team of the Tietê Yacht Club (São Paulo) because of their color. The new Black movement tried to differentiate itself from the cultural organizations of the 1950s and 1960s. At the beginning of the democratization process, the *Movimento Negro Unificado* "combined race and class problems as its foci of concern."<sup>26</sup> According to

Andrews, "this new movement was to a large degree the expression of frustration among upwardly mobile Afro-Brazilian denied admission to the middle-class status to which their education and qualifications entitled them."<sup>27</sup>

The return to political democracy that began in the late seventies had important repercussions within the Jewish community. The defensive political action of the Jewish Federations evolved into a more interactive relationship with other sectors in both civil society and the State. One of the chief indicators of these changes was the shift from indirect to direct voting in the election of the Executive Committee in the *Federação Israelita do Estado do Rio de Janeiro*, FIERJ (Jewish Federation of the State of Rio de Janeiro). This change was also influenced by the desire of Brazilian society to choose the President of the Republic through direct elections.<sup>28</sup>

The new context allowed for the expression of ethnic identities in the political arena. More specifically, for example, some presidents of the FIERJ began to run for legislative positions in local and national parliaments, proving the significant strength of their organizational bases. This revealed the existence of a "Jewish vote" in Rio de Janeiro, a fact which had always been doubted by the community. But the frequent interaction with society at large during democratic periods, which gave political overtones to the Jewish Federations, generated a series of controversies within the Jewish community. For instance, there was debate over the legitimacy of the Federation becoming an institution exclusively dedicated to elections, a kind of "Jewish political party," with some arguing that it would be at the expense of attention given to the internal issues of the community.<sup>29</sup>

Most Brazilian Black associations have tended to be cultural rather than political. The contemporary Black movement is vulnerable and faces difficulties in mobilizing Afro-Brazilian people. Nevertheless, in the 1980s, with the creation of new parties as a consequence of the democratization process – *Partido Democrático Trabalhista*, PDT; *Partido do Movimento Democrático Brasileiro*, PMDB; and *Partido dos Trabalhadores*, PT–, more sensitive attitudes with regard to the problems of Blacks could be discerned. Federal and state government agencies began to pay more attention to racism. In São Paulo, in 1982, Governor Franco Montoro of the PMDB created the *Conselho da Comunidade Negra do Estado de São Paulo* (Black Community Council of the State of São Paulo). With the emergence of the first civilian government after 21 years of military rule, President José Sarney created the *Fundação Palmares* (Palmares Foundation), linked to the Ministry of Culture and dealing specifically with Afro-Brazilian issues. The Constitutional Assembly of 1987-88 adopted the "Lei Caó," a new legal instrument against racial discrimination. In 1988, the commemoration of the centennial

of the abolition of slavery was a crucial moment for demonstrating the existence of racism in Brazil.<sup>30</sup> In 1990, Leonel Brizola (PDT), governor of the State of Rio de Janeiro, created the *Secretaria Especial de Defesa e Promoção das Populações Negras*, SEDEPRON (Special Secretariat for the Defense and Promotion of the Black Population).<sup>31</sup> Another recent change in the Brazilian political process is the increase in the number of Black candidates for political office, at all levels, although the number of elected Black officials remains quite small.<sup>32</sup>

Increased democratization in the 1990s has contributed to a rise in social awareness of racism. Although economic and social crises determine the fundamental problems faced by Blacks, some aspects of Brazilian racial reality are changing. "The Black upsurge," as named by Howard Winant, "was a combination of two factors: the reemergence of civil society, which necessarily opened up political terrain for social movement activities, and the politicization of racial identities upon that terrain."<sup>33</sup>

Nowadays, the media increasingly publicizes and condemns episodes of racial discrimination, and research reveals that Brazilians recognize the existence of racial inequalities in the country.<sup>34</sup> In 1990, three Afro-Brazilians were elected state governors.<sup>35</sup> In 1996, Celso Pitta was the first Black to be elected mayor of São Paulo, the most important city of Latin America. Benedita da Silva, an Afro-Brazilian and member of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores*, has been successively elected as Federal Representative, Senator, and vice-Governor of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

In 1995, observance of the death of the African leader Zumbi, a symbol of the Black movement, became a national holiday (November 20). In his speech on the Zumbi national holiday, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso admitted that racism exists in Brazil and that Blacks face problems of employment, education, health and justice. He further stated that the government must examine affirmative action policies in other countries which have improved the living conditions of Black populations.<sup>36</sup>

The most recent results of demographic and sociological research reveal how important a factor race is in terms of the cumulative disadvantages endured by non-Whites in relation to Whites in terms of infant mortality, life expectancy, education, and ranking in occupational hierarchies.<sup>37</sup> In general, Brazilian Jews, usually categorized as Whites, belong to the middle and upper middle classes, while Afro-Brazilians are predominantly poor, concentrated at the lower levels of society. Therefore, the alliance between Jews and Blacks against racism constitutes a new political phenomenon that came in the wake of Brazil's return to democratic institutions.



## Bridges and Boundaries: Jews and Blacks in Rio de Janeiro<sup>38</sup>

Traditionally, there has been little connection between Black and Jewish organizations and political activities in Brazil. However, some experiences brought the two communities together. One was the participation of Black personalities (Abdias Nascimento, political leader; Jacira Silva and Milton Gonçalves, actors; Januário Garcia, leader of the Black movement; Glória Maria, a famous TV journalist) in political-cultural trips to Israel. Black leaders also participated in Jewish or non-Jewish social, political and cultural events. Also, there was the visit by leaders of the Ethiopian Jewish community of Israel to several Black organizations in Rio de Janeiro in 1988. The most important experience, the *Seminário Israel* (Israel Seminar), is a program of the FIERJ which takes Brazilian public figures to Israel in order to neutralize negative perceptions of the Jewish State, common among Third World countries.

However, in 1992, when racist incidents occurred in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro,<sup>39</sup> several citizen groups of Rio de Janeiro decided to fight together against neo-Nazism. The leaders of the FIERJ and of institutions connected to the Black movement<sup>40</sup> met to discuss the possibility of joining forces in order to fight against racism. The first moves towards creating an alliance between the two groups took place immediately after demonstrations against neo-Nazism, in October 1992.<sup>41</sup>

The impeachment of President Fernando Collor in 1992 generated a degree of civic participation unprecedented in Brazilian history. In addition to this development, Ronaldo Gomlevsky, a councilman from the PMDB, had just been elected president of the FIERJ and wanted to gain immediate visibility for his new political work. Furthermore, Carlos Alberto Caó, the Black leader responsible for the organizational proposal of the *Frente Contra o Racismo*, had been a member of the *Partido Comunista Brasileiro* (Brazilian Communist Party), an organization with considerable experience in operating within political fronts. In the early eighties, Caó became a member of the *Partido Democrático Trabalhista* (PDT) and Secretary of State in the first Brizola administration in the State of Rio de Janeiro (1982-1986). As a Black Federal Representative elected by the PDT, he played an important role in the drafting of the 1988 Constitution, and was the author of the anti-discrimination law of 1988 known as *Lei Caó*.<sup>42</sup> Thus, the major leaders of the nascent *Frente Contra o Racismo* were experienced in political organization.

The birth of the alliance raised some questions about the mutual stereotypes that separate Blacks and Jews. The Black leadership's reasons for distrusting the Jews can be summarized as follows: Why would Jewish

political leaders, who historically never fought against anti-Black racism,<sup>43</sup> form an alliance with Afro-Brazilians? Why would Afro-Brazilians, who represent the majority of poor people in Brazil, organize a front with Jewish people, who are at the top of Brazilian social stratification? How would they be able to establish closer ties with Jews if Israel was seen as a representative of North American imperialist interests and of aggressive policies in the Middle East, especially in relation to Palestinians, and Black groups opposed these positions?

The Black leadership viewed Jews as a cohesive group with political and economic resources. This perception produced varying reactions within the Black movement. One group believed that an alliance with Jews could provide Afro-Brazilians with access to the benefits of "Jewish resources." For example, Afro-Brazilians would be able to study in Jewish schools and to work in Jewish companies. In addition, Afro-Brazilian university students could obtain grants for studying in Israel. In short, an alliance with Jewish people could provide opportunities for Black upward mobility.

A more skeptical group within the Black movement believed that the social and economic disparities between Blacks and Jews, in light of the enormous tasks facing the Black movement (such as political mobilization of the Black community, overcoming poverty and racism), constituted obstacles to any potential alliance. As Ivanir dos Santos, a Black leader, stated: "I spoke with the President of the FIERJ. He told me that the alliance was only to fight against racism and not intended to deal with economic issues. I disagree with him because one of the most important means of perpetuating racism in Brazil is the economic question."<sup>44</sup>

With regard to the Middle East, the Black leadership had been influenced by some sectors within the Black movement with a leftist, Third-World vision –I refer to the often conflicting ideas of African-Americans such as Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr. and Stokely Carmichael– and by the Afro-Marxism of theoreticians and African political leaders of national liberation movements against Portuguese colonialism in the '60s and '70s, such as Samora Machel, Agostinho Neto and Amílcar Cabral. Moreover, the acknowledgement of Blacks as permanent underdogs in Brazilian society denotes identification on the part of the Afro-Brazilian leadership with the similar plight of Palestinians in Israel. An alliance between Afro-Brazilians and Brazilian Jews, therefore, highlighted the different objectives within the Black movement.

The leaders of the Jewish community believed that an alliance with Afro-Brazilians was important in the fight against neo-Nazism. Ronaldo Gomlevsky, President of the FIERJ, stated:

We the Jews have always lacked allies. Now we are no longer alone. We must search for them. We are in good company with the huge masses of extremely impoverished Blacks. This is a historical moment in the making, one which has already proven its potential. Our own sense of political organization, combined with this wonderful yet suffering people, becomes an irresistible movement.<sup>45</sup>

Although Gomlevsky underscores the importance of forming a united front, he reveals old prejudices: White (organization, reason) versus Black (mass of people, passion). In other words, the leader of the Jewish community reasserted the racialist conception of mind (White) *versus* body (Black). In contrast, David Bogomoletz, member of the Executive Committee of the FIERJ, stated that "all references to the Jewish 'quality' (sense of political organization) and the Black masses (wonderful suffering people) have the risk of being interpreted, within the Black movement, as a 'white' acknowledgement [patronizing affirmation], and of damaging the dialogue with Afro-Brazilian leadership."<sup>46</sup>

Gomlevsky's ethnocentric view also assumed the superiority of Jewish political organization in comparison to that of the Blacks. The FIERJ, according to him, is a federate, central and unique political representative of the Jews of Rio de Janeiro. In contrast, he viewed the Black movement as relatively unorganized, which contributed to making its political action more difficult. The President of the FIERJ reinforced the myth of Jewish unity and homogeneity that had gained currency among other groups, especially among relatively decentralized, diverse and fragmented groups like Afro-Brazilians.

The FIERJ considered that the success of the alliance between Blacks and Jews to fight racism depended upon restricting its field of action exclusively to Brazil, since the FIERJ was not entitled to represent the interests of the State of Israel. Yet the leadership of the FIERJ became apprehensive about a possible negative image with respect to Israel and distributed publications about the Jewish State among Black leaders.

Both Afro-Brazilians and Jews had legitimate political aims. However, these goals were also influenced by mutual prejudice and conflicting expectations. Black leaders expected the Jewish leadership not only to fight against racism, but also to encourage solidarity in order to reduce the social and economic disparities between Whites and non-Whites. For the Jewish leaders, the most important issue was to build an alliance against a common evil: neo-Nazism. The absence of solidarity with the problems of Blacks was not limited to the Jewish community, but was a characteristic of Brazilian society. On the other hand, postponing the discussion about the Middle East

would prove to be fundamental to the formation of the Jewish-Afro-Brazilian alliance.

### **The Creation of the *Frente Contra o Racismo***

On December 21, 1992, the alliance between Blacks and Jews was formally created in Rio de Janeiro's Council Chamber. The ceremony was attended by Black and Jewish politicians and leaders of both communities. The speeches revealed bridges and boundaries between the two groups. In general, the Jewish leadership emphasized the political aspect of the struggle against neo-Nazism as a totalitarian ideology that would hurt all people, not just specific ethnic or racial groups. Moreover, the president of the FIERJ declared, by way of self-criticism:

We [the Jewish community] have coexisted for years and years with discrimination against Blacks and have often kept silent for a lack of awareness, or a lack of enlightenment. We were silent because, perhaps erroneously, we imagined that this problem was a remote one. We had not concerned ourselves adequately with this problem, which is perhaps one of the most serious and profound problems in Brazilian society. (...) And our desire [as it is for the] Black movement that is here so profusely and wonderfully represented, is to unite ourselves with all groups that at this time find themselves discriminated against (...).<sup>47</sup>

The Black leadership revealed two distinct discourses. The first emphasized the democratic and universalist aspect of the struggle, and was represented by Carlos Alberto Caó, who stated:

(...) There is among us (...) the democratic cause that unites everyone. (...) The true democrat is Black, is Jewish, is White, is from the northeast, is a gypsy, is a man of every culture, a man who coexists with all religions, and a man who coexists with all ideologies, because the democratic cause is the universal value that will one day make this nation change not into a nation of elites from this or that group, but into a nation of every color, of every religion and every race (...).<sup>48</sup>

A different discourse established connections between neo-Nazism and centuries of oppression, racial inequality and police violence. Marcelo Dias,

federal representative of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT) and a Black political leader, said:

We Afro-Brazilians denounce five centuries of slavery and the cultural and physical extermination of our people. The extermination of Black people is a daily experience. Yesterday six Black teenagers were killed. Last month seven Black teenagers were killed. (...) Hundreds of children exterminated. Millions and millions of Black women sterilized. But we need to come together to stop fascism, Nazism and racism in our country. For five centuries the Black community has suffered an extermination process like the genocide of the Jewish people in the World War II. (...) We have differences, but we must not allow these differences to cause a division in our movement.<sup>49</sup>

The speech by Ivanir Santos brought on the first political action of the *Frente Contra o Racismo*. He denounced the assassination of Black teenagers in the Mandala slum and challenged the Jewish leadership to fight against the violence of the police:

We know that the fight against racism and fascism requires legal action. The *Frente Contra o Racismo* must demonstrate that the invasion of our communities by the police is illegal. We demand that the Jewish community put together their best lawyers (...) to work with Black lawyers to protect our Black communities in the judicial system.<sup>50</sup>

In fact, the vice-President of the FIERJ, Sergio Niskier, visited the Mandala slum the day after the massacre and the legal department of the FIERJ began to work on the case. Moreover, the families of the victims were interviewed in the weekly TV program run by the FIERJ.

In early 1993, the *Frente Contra o Racismo* faced two challenges: 1) expanding the organization of the alliance and 2) creating an internal structure and elaborating an agenda of activities in order to make an impact on civil society. An organizational document was produced. There were five political objectives:

- 1) The Front will deal only with national issues; 2) The Front will not be connected with any existing political parties; 3) The Front exists to protect citizenship; 4) the Front will implement the concept of "Brazilian and Democratic Majority" as the great

link between all socially and racially discriminated groups; 5) the Front will fight all forms of discrimination stimulated by hate, intolerance and ignorance (...).<sup>51</sup>

Perhaps the most significant item is the fourth, as it reveals the central issue of the *Frente Contra o Racismo*. The concept of "Brazilian and democratic majority" was suggested by one of the leaders of the FIERJ in order to oppose the idea that the struggle would be limited to political action of ethnic or racial identities against discrimination, and especially against the neo-Nazis. In this sense, the *Frente Contra o Racismo* would represent the majority of society against neo-Nazis, a minority group. In the words of Sergio Niskier, vice-President of FIERJ:

It was not a struggle of minorities (Jews, Indians, Blacks) but a Brazilian democratic majority independent of color. (...) If it were the case of a religious question (Jewish, for example), perhaps it would have made sense to consider it a minority, but I am not a minority as an individual, I am Brazilian and a democrat, equal to the Blacks. It is possible that there are more Blacks than Whites in Brazil, but I must consider the Black as having the same condition as I. In other words, Blacks are in the same situation as the Jews in that they constitute a majority that was attacked by an ideological minority. This idea eliminated the possible exaggeration of the ethnic question. The proposal was extended to political parties, unions, any organization.<sup>52</sup>

If the central objective was to attract new segments of civil society, the "Brazilian democratic majority" strategy could be successful. Nevertheless, this proposal was contradictory because it diluted the ethnic or racial issue within the issue of national identity. Despite claims of majority status, the most important participants in the front were Blacks and Jews. The leadership of the movement was concerned about it being characterized as a front formed exclusively by ethnic or racial identities, a reflection of a fundamental issue in Brazilian society –that is, the difficulty of politicizing ethnic issues in Brazil. This contradiction demonstrates how difficult it is to combine ethnicity and citizenship in Brazil, and suggests that one's identity as a Brazilian is at odds with one's identity as a Black, Jew or any other social or ethnic grouping. In short, the movement started as an ethnic coalition, but its public objective was to eliminate ethnic issues.

Although faced with this dilemma, the leadership of the *Frente Contra o Racismo* declared that a major demonstration would take place on the

International Day Against Racial Discrimination (March 21), a date established by the United Nations in memory of the 1960 Sharpeville massacre in South Africa. Until then, the prime observers of this date had been the Black movement. Now the *Frente Contra o Racismo* transformed this date into the *Primeiro Encontro de Raças e Culturas Contra a Discriminação Racial* (First Meeting of Races and Cultures Against Racial Discrimination). Prior to this important event, the *Frente Contra o Racismo* took part in the demonstrations of International Women's Day, on March 8, 1993. The leaders of the alliance also appeared in "One Day in the Ghetto," an exhibition in memory of the 50th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising during World War II.

The importance attributed to the March 21 event sped up the process of political structuring of the *Frente Contra o Racismo*. Before the start of political and cultural organizational work, the meetings of the *Frente Contra o Racismo* had been held in civic institutions (the *Centro Israelita Brasileiro*/Jewish Brazilian Center, the FIERJ and the *Instituto de Pesquisa da Cultura Negra*/Black Culture Research Institute), but as they began organizing for the International Day Against Racial Discrimination, the headquarters of the Secretary of Labor and Public Assistance became the meeting place. This change was due not only to the Secretary of Labor's better material infrastructure, but to the Secretary's gradual takeover of the political leadership of the movement.

The transfer of the *Frente Contra o Racismo*'s coordinating hub to the Department of Labor created problems not only with the SEDEPRON but also among the Black leaders linked to the PDT and the PT. The Afro-Brazilian theme was becoming a source of internal dispute within the government. The creation of SEDEPRON during the second Brizola administration and its coexistence, inside the State apparatus, with the older Department of Labor, which had funding and was directed by a former union leader and politician (Caó) who was also concerned with racial matters, had been a source of conflict.

The dispute between the PT and the PDT involved different conceptions of the Black movement. The PT would look askance at the creation of any government agency in charge of dealing with Black issues, a possible link between the Black movement and the State, because of the risk of transforming the Afro-Brazilian struggle into a paternalistic and populist practice. Instead, the PT thought that the best option for the Black movement would be to organize in a civic manner, in order to pressure the State to implement public policies that took into account the demands of the Black population. However, the PDT took a stand closer to that of "compensatory policies," inspired by the North American model, which validated action by

the State in such matters. The dispute between the PDT and the PT was a new version of an old debate – reform *versus* revolution.

The International Day Against Racial Discrimination on March 21, 1993, was devoted to cultural and political activities. The most important events were the public performances by Afro-Bahian music groups (Olodum, Ilê Aiyê and others) and singers, and speeches by political leaders. The meeting drew 30,000 people,<sup>53</sup> most of whom were Afro-Brazilians. The participation of the Jewish community was limited. Only some folklore groups, singers and members of the FIERJ attended.

Although there was general consensus about the artistic success of the event and its success in reaching the public, there was disagreement over the event's political effects. For Secretary Caó and the leadership of the FIERJ, the meeting was a success because of the magnitude of the undertaking, but some leaders of the Black movement who were linked to the SEDEPRON, to the IPCN and the CEAP, thought the political content of the event had been diluted by the cultural activities. In addition, they felt that the emphasis given to the event had undermined the political structuring of the alliance. In this sense, there was criticism of the partisan character of the event and the fact that Secretary of State Caó was capitalizing on it. If nothing else, the alliance between Blacks and Jews was instrumental in revealing the complex relationships between the Black movement, political parties and the Brazilian State.

After the International Day Against Racism, the alliance between Blacks and Jews began to wear thin. There are four reasons for this. First, there was a significant decrease in the Brazilian skinhead attacks, the most important issue binding Blacks and Jews. This was partly due to police action, as well as pressure exerted by civil society, especially by the *Frente Contra o Racismo*. On the other hand, the organizational and ideological structure of skinhead organizations proved to be frail; besides, they had but shallow roots in Brazilian society. The second reason was the partisan disputes among Black leaders, not only within the PDT itself, but also with the PT. Their differing views as to the form that Black activism should take, discussed above, weakened the alliance with the Jewish leadership. The third reason was the significant reduction in the participation of the Jewish community in the activities of the *Frente Contra o Racismo*, especially during the events of March 21, which resulted in a weak role for the FIERJ. This again demonstrated the defensive nature of the FIERJ's actions, even in a democratic context. Where the leaders of the FIERJ were concerned, as the common enemy became less of a threat, it made less sense to continue the political work of the *Frente Contra o Racismo*. It should be stressed that after World War II, anti-Semitism in Brazil was only residual. This did not



stimulate Jewish organization based on ethnicity. Finally, there was a lack of organizational structure or a program of activities to sustain the alliance. This last issue is intimately linked to the problems of confronting racism in Brazil, with which we close this analysis.

## Conclusion

The alliance between Blacks and Jews was a new episode in Brazilian history. In the U.S., on the other hand, Jews and Blacks have a long history of alliances and conflicts, and it has been the object of intense and passionate debate. In the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, economic and social tensions were accompanied by cooperative processes in unions and in organizations such as the NAACP. The 1950s and 1960s saw the development of the Civil Rights Movement; but from the 1970s through the 1990s, we find more boundaries than bridges. Socio-economic differences, the conflicts in the Middle East, affirmative action, Jewish racism and Black anti-Semitism are some of the sources of current conflicts.<sup>54</sup>

At various times, the North American experience was cited by the leaders of the *Frente Contra o Racismo* as an example of cooperation between Blacks and Jews. Despite these references to the American situation made by Jewish and Afro-American leaders in some of their speeches, Brazilian reality is entirely different, not only because of the distinct historical and cultural politics that characterize the United States and Brazil, but also because of socio-economic and demographic differences<sup>55</sup> that separate Blacks and Jews in Brazil. The Jewish community of Rio de Janeiro has approximately 50,000 members.<sup>56</sup> The population of Afro-Brazilians in the state of Rio de Janeiro is approximately six million.<sup>57</sup> Why did the Jewish and Afro-Brazilian leaders join together against racism? Why is extemporary neo-Nazism so important when Brazil has day-to-day racism?

In the Brazilian case, political and intellectual elites developed the idea of harmonious and tolerant race relations in a setting devoid of racial prejudice and discrimination. This idea exerted a strong integrationist pressure and contributed to diffuse ethnic or racial identities and to widen the gap between ethnicity and citizenship. Nevertheless, civil society reacted against neo-Nazi attacks with three forms of political action: 1) promoting meetings and demonstrations; 2) pressuring State and Federal government agencies to enforce anti-discrimination laws; 3) forming political alliances against racism. The events promoted by the *Frente Contra o Racismo* caused the decline of neo-Nazism. The common enemy was defeated. Yet the alliance demonstrated its fragility. It solved the immediate problem of neo-Nazism, but it did not persist in combatting daily racism.

In reality, the main conception of the leaders of the *Frente Contra o Racismo* was ambiguous. On the one hand, they wanted to prove that the *Frente Contra o Racismo* was a Brazilian and a democratic movement. On the other, the organization, the political actions and the speeches of the *Frente Contra o Racismo* revealed that it was composed exclusively of Jews and Blacks. This shows the difficulties in asserting ethnic or racial identity within the political arena in Brazil.

Black leaders perceived that neo-Nazism could provide an easy way for politicizing racism in Brazil. Denouncing neo-Nazism could become a ready-made method for exposing everyday racism in Brazilian society. Moreover, the neo-Nazi ideology would facilitate the enforcement of anti-discrimination laws, because neo-Nazi attacks were explicitly racist.

For Jews, an alliance with the Black community, besides the immediate objective of defeating neo-Nazis, would be an important chance to demonstrate to Brazilian society the Jewish contribution to the construction of a real democracy in Brazil, in which civil rights would be guaranteed. From this perspective, the images or stereotypes of Jews as an inclusive group, with international connections and identified above all with Israel, would be substituted for another image of Brazilian Jews as actors involved in crucial and delicate national issues.

Although the alliance between Blacks and Jews was shortlived, it managed to give increased exposure to racism in Brazilian society. It also achieved two other significant results, one in São Paulo and one in Rio de Janeiro. At the beginning of 1993, a police section specializing in racial crimes was created by the government of the State of São Paulo. In addition to the regular police force, a special commission was formed, comprising the *Federação Israelita do Estado de São Paulo*, the *Conselho da Comunidade Negra do Estado de São Paulo* (Black Community Council of the State of São Paulo), the *Movimento Negro Feminista Geledés* (Geledés Black Feminist Movement) and the *Centro das Tradições Nordestinas* (Center for Northeastern Traditions).<sup>58</sup> The creation of this *Delegacia Especializada em Crimes Raciais* (Specialized Police Office for Racial Crimes) amounted to recognition by an important branch of government of the existence and relevance of racial crimes. It is interesting and ironic that only after the emergence of neo-Nazi ideology and practice in Brazil did the State recognize the reality of daily racism.

In Rio de Janeiro, Carlos Minc, a Brazilian Jew and state representative of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores*, as well as a participant in the *Frente Contra o Racismo*, put forward a bill, in September of 1993, which would reserve ten percent of the openings in the public universities of Rio de Janeiro for students belonging to racial or ethnic groups that had been historically discriminated against, such as Blacks and Indians. Minc was criticized by

members of his own party, who saw the measure as paternalistic and influenced by the North American experience.<sup>59</sup> This proposed "quota system" was supported by sectors of the PDT, and especially by Abdias Nascimento.<sup>60</sup> The trend was reinforced in February 1996, when the Brazilian government created the *Grupo de Trabalho para o Avanço das Populações Negras* (Working Group for the Advancement of the Black Population). At the time, the Coordinator of the Working Group, Professor Hélio Santos, "defended the creation of a mechanism that could guarantee a greater portion of Blacks in businesses and schools, such as in the system of racial quotas existing in the United States."<sup>61</sup>

The consolidation and expansion of democracy in Brazil throughout the 1980s and 1990s increased the politicization of ethnic issues. Although many of the issues involved are more symbolic than practical, two important changes have occurred: the myth of racial democracy is no longer the official discourse and Brazilians in general have become more conscious of racism in Brazil. However, ambiguous conceptions of racism still prevail, even in many informed and concerned circles. In the long run, democracy, Black consciousness and publicizing prominent cases of racism may help change Brazilian racial reality. The *Frente Contra o Racismo*, while not free of ambiguities, not only was effective in denouncing racial discrimination, but was also a step in the direction of real racial democracy in Brazil.

## NOTES

1. The height of neo-Nazi activism came in 1992. In Germany alone, neo-Nazi groups committed 2,276 violent attacks against various groups, resulting in 17 deaths. E. Sur, "A Propos de l'extrême droite en Allemagne. De la conception ethnique de la nation allemande," *Hérodote* 68 (1993), p. 18. Regarding the explosion of neo-Nazi activities, see: C.T. Husbands, "The other face of 1992: the extreme-right explosion in Western Europe," *Parliamentary Affairs* 45, 3 (1992), pp. 267-84. Husbands suggests a broad definition of militant neo-Nazism: it "encompasses groups (and sometimes individuals) who for the most part eschew electoral participation and indulge in activities celebrating various aspects of the Third Reich (although not necessarily Hitler himself) and/or engage in specific other activities (often acts of violence), usually within the confines of small local and highly exclusive groups of dedicated activists. Such other activities are often xenophobic, or anti-Semitic, or directed against left-wing opponents or what are regarded as examples of cultural antinomy (e.g., punks, gays, prostitutes, and fringe artistic groups)." Also, "Militant neo-Nazis in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1990's," in L. Cheles, R. Ferguson and M. Vaughan (eds.), *The Far Right in Western & Eastern Europe* (London, 1995), p. 349.
2. H. Salem, *As Tribos do Mal* (São Paulo, 1995); H.W. Abramo, *Cenas juvenis: punks e darks no espetáculo urbano* (São Paulo, 1994); M.C. Costa, "*Os Carecas do Subúrbio*": caminhos de um nomadismo moderno (Rio de Janeiro, 1994); J. Caiafa, *Movimento Punk na Cidade* (Rio de Janeiro, 1982).
3. See *Antisemitism World Report, 1997*, p. 18. Brazilians from the Northeast who migrate to the South of Brazil are commonly stereotyped in a pejorative manner.

4. Although Jewishness is identified by the Brazilian government as a religious trait, Jewish identity is more than religious; it includes also culture, ethnicity and so on. The present study adopts the categories Jews and Brazilian Jews. I follow the same kind of distinction when speaking of Blacks. With regard to the Brazilians of African heritage, I use the term Black or Afro-Brazilian as it is used by the Black movement. For the purpose of this paper, the term Afro-Brazilians describes those Brazilians who, according to the official categories of the Brazilian Census agency, fall under Black (*preto*) and brown (*pardo*). This unified category does not deny the continued existence of the racial/color spectrum traditionally associated with race in Brazil. See A. Dzidzienyo, "Brazilian Race Relations Studies: Old problems, New Ideas?," *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 19, 2 (1993), p. 11; T. Skidmore, *O Brasil Visto de Fora* (São Paulo, 1994), p. 152.
5. E. Viotti da Costa, "The Myth of Racial Democracy: a Legacy of the Empire," in *The Brazilian Empire: Myths and Histories* (Chicago, 1985), pp. 234-246; M.G. Hanchard, *Orpheus and Power - the movimento negro of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, 1945-1988* (Princeton, 1994), pp. 56-74.
6. T. Skidmore, *O Brasil Visto de Fora*, pp. 159-166; R. Ortiz, *Cultura Brasileira e Identidade Nacional* (São Paulo, 1986), p. 44.
7. T. Skidmore, *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought* (Durham, 1993 [1974]), p. 38.
8. C. Hasenbalg, "Race and socioeconomic inequalities in Brazil," in P.M. Fontaine (ed.), *Race, Class and Power in Brazil* (Los Angeles, 1985), p. 27; C. Hasenbalg, *Discriminação e Desigualdades Raciais no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, 1979), p. 155.
9. G.R. Andrews, "Black Protest in São Paulo," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24, (1992), p. 156. See also J.M. Carvalho, *Os Bestializados: o Rio de Janeiro e a República que não foi* (São Paulo, 1987).
10. J.H. Lesser, *Welcoming The Undesirables: Brazil and the Jewish Question* (Berkeley, 1995), pp. 23-24.
11. Lesser, *Welcoming*, pp. 19, 30-45.
12. On anti-Semitism in the 1930s, see: Lesser, *Welcoming*, M.C. Maio, *Nem Rotschild Nem Trotsky: o pensamento anti-semita de Gustavo Barroso* (Rio de Janeiro, 1992); R. Cytrynowicz, *Integralismo e Anti-semitismo nos textos de Gustavo Barroso na década de 30* (São Paulo, 1991); M.T.C. Carneiro, *O Anti-semitismo na Era Vargas* (São Paulo, 1988).
13. G.R. Andrews, "Black Protest," p. 157; M.J. Mitchell, *Racial Consciousness and the Political Attitudes and Behavior of Blacks in São Paulo, Brazil* (Indiana, 1977), p. 130.
14. G.R. Andrews, *Blacks and Whites in São Paulo* (Wisconsin, 1991), p. 153.
15. R. Levine, *The Vargas Regime: the Critical Years, 1934-1938* (New York, 1970).
16. Andrews, "Black Protest," p. 160.
17. Mitchell, *Racial Consciousness*, p. 139.
18. T. Skidmore, *Politics in Brazil* (Oxford, 1976 [1969]), pp. 34-41.
19. M. Conniff, *Urban Politics in Brazil: the Rise of Populism, 1925-1945* (Pittsburgh, 1981), pp. 177-178.
20. M. Grin, *Etnicidade Judaica e as armadilhas da contingência* (Rio de Janeiro, 1991), pp. 115-119.
21. See R. Grun, "La imagen y la vida de los judíos en Brasil: cuestiones e inferencias," *Estudios Migratorios Latinoamericanos* 29 (1995), pp. 5-28.
22. A. Souza, "Raça e política no Brasil Moderno," *Revista de Administração de Empresas* 11, 4, (1971), p. 64. See G.A.D. Soares & N.V. Silva, "O Charme Discreto do Socialismo Moreno," *Dados* 28, 2 (1985), pp. 253-273.
23. Andrews, "Black Protest," p. 162. A good example of Black organization in this period was *O Teatro Experimental do Negro* (The Black Experimental Theater), led by Abdias Nascimento. This theater group was composed primarily of Black professionals, artists, and activists. It was founded in 1944 with the primary goal of becoming a theatrical production company, but

- it took on other cultural and political functions soon after its inception. In 1950, it promoted the *1º Congresso do Negro Brasileiro* (First National Congress of Brazilian Blacks) and published a periodical called *Quilombo* (1948-1950). See A. Nascimento & E.B. Nascimento, *Africans in Brazil: A Pan-African Perspective* (New Jersey, 1992), pp. 26-38.
24. Grin, *Etnicidade judaica*, chapter 4.
  25. M. Mitchell, "Blacks and the Abertura Democrática," in P. M. Fontaine (ed.), *Race, Class and Power in Brazil* (Los Angeles, 1985), p. 108; J.R. Santos, "IPCN e Cacique de Ramos: dois exemplos de movimento negro no Rio de Janeiro," *Comunicação ISER* 7, 28, p. 13.
  26. L. González, "The Unified Black Movement: A New Stage in Black Political Mobilization," in Fontaine (ed.), *Race, Class and Power in Brazil*, pp. 120-121.
  27. Andrews, "Black Protest," p. 165.
  28. M.C. Maio, "The Black-Jewish Alliance: The Brazilian Reality." Paper delivered at the 1996 Rocky Mountain - Pacific Coast Joint Conference on Latin American Studies, Santa Fe, New Mexico, April 20-24.
  29. M.C. Maio, "Bridges and Boundaries: Postmodernity and the case of Brazilian Jewish Polity." Paper delivered at the workshop on "The World Jewish Polity," Jerusalem Center For Public Affairs, Jerusalem, 1994, p. 13.
  30. I. Maggie (ed.), *Catálogo: Centenário da Abolição* (Rio de Janeiro, 1989).
  31. In Brizola's first term as governor of Rio de Janeiro (1982-1986), three Afro-Brazilians occupied cabinet level positions: Edialede Salgado Nascimento (Secretary of Social Work, the first Afro-Brazilian woman to hold such a position), Carlos Alberto Caó (Secretary of Labor) and Colonel Magno Cerqueira (Secretary of Security). At the same time, the Partido Democrático Trabalhista (PDT) elected two Afro-Brazilian federal representatives (Abdias Nascimento and Agnaldo Timóteo), but also one Indian Brazilian federal representative, Mário Juruna, an unprecedented occurrence in Brazilian history.
  32. Dzdizienyo, "Brazilian Race Relations Studies," pp. 114-117.
  33. H. Winant, *Racial Politics: Politics, Theory, Comparisons* (Minneapolis, 1994), p. 141.
  34. C. Hasenbalg, "Entre o Mito e os Fatos: racismo e relações raciais no Brasil," *Dados* 28, 2, pp. 366-368.
  35. The elected governors were: Albuino Azevedo (Partido Democrático Trabalhista, in Espírito Santo); Alceu Collares (Partido Democrático Trabalhista, in Rio Grande do Sul); João Alves (Partido da Frente Liberal, in Sergipe).
  36. F.H. Cardoso is a sociologist who, early in his career, wrote a study of slavery and race relations. See *Capitalismo e Escravidão no Brasil Meridional* (São Paulo, 1962); see also, "Discurso do Senhor Presidente da República Fernando Henrique Cardoso na Solenidade de Assinatura do Decreto da População Negra," (Brasília, Palácio do Planalto, 1995), pp. 1-5.
  37. C. Hasenbalg, "As pesquisas das desigualdades raciais no Brasil," in C. Hasenbalg & N.V. Silva, *Relações Raciais no Brasil Contemporâneo* (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), pp. 9-16.
  38. Most of the information and documentation about the *Frente Contra o Racismo* (Front Against Racism) was obtained in the course of the author's interviews with Black and Jewish leaders, such as Ronaldo Gomlevsky, Sergio Niskier, Milton Nahon, Ivanir dos Santos, Amauri Mendes Pereira, Carlos Alberto Medeiros, Eustáquio Lawa, Carlos Alberto Caó, José Ricardo D'Almeida.
  39. The incidents occurred in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre. See T. Kahn, "Dossier Neonazismo," *Núcleo de Estudos da Violência da USP* (São Paulo, 1992). A Black teenager was murdered in São Paulo by the White Power group, (*Jornal do Brasil*, April 7, 1993).
  40. *Instituto de Pesquisa da Cultura Negra* (IPCN), *Irmãdade Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Homens de Cor*; *Centro de Articulação de Populações Marginalizadas* (CEAP); *Instituto Palmares de Direitos Humanos* (IPDH), *Secretaria Estadual de Trabalho e Ação Social*, *Jornal Maioria Falante*, *Secretaria Extraordinária de Estado para Defesa das Populações Negras* (SEDEPRON).
  41. The major demonstration, called "Brasil sem discriminação," took place in São Paulo and

- brought together 80,000 people against neo-Nazism, (*Shalom Notícia*, December 19, 1992, p. 14). In Rio de Janeiro, a demonstration with 1,200 people took place in the Teatro Casa-Grande. In Porto Alegre, 500 people participated in a demonstration against racism, (*O Globo*, October 9, 1992).
42. Author's interview with Carlos Alberto Caó, Rio de Janeiro, September 29, 1993.
  43. This position, though not so different from that of other groups in the country, is all the more visible to Black people because of persecutions suffered by Jews, specifically the Nazi genocide in World War II.
  44. Author's interview with Ivanir dos Santos, Rio de Janeiro, October 10, 1993.
  45. *Boletim Fierj* 164, January 10, 1993.
  46. Letter from David Bogomoletz to Ronaldo Gomlevsky, February 13, 1993 (copy sent to the author by Bogomoletz).
  47. *Anais da Criação da Frente Contra o Racismo*, in Câmara Municipal do Rio de Janeiro, December 21, 1992, pp. 4-5.
  48. *Anais da Criação*, p. 17.
  49. *Anais da Criação*, pp.19-20.
  50. *Anais da Criação*, pp. 44-45.
  51. *Aos Companheiros da Frente Contra o Racismo*, February 4, 1993, p. 1.
  52. Author's interview with Sergio Niskier, Rio de Janeiro, September 18, 1993.
  53. Information based on police estimates, according to Carlos Alberto Caó. (Author's interview with Carlos Alberto Caó, Rio de Janeiro, September 31, 1993.)
  54. On the relations between Blacks and Jews in the U.S., see: C. West, *Race Matters* (New York, 1994); H. Perry & R.B. White, "The Post-Civil Rights Transformation of the Relationship Between Blacks and Jews in the United States," *Phylon*, Vol. XLVII, nº 1 (1986); N.L. Green, "Juifs Et Noirs Aux États-Unis: La Rupture D'Une 'Alliance Naturelle'," *Annales Économies Sociétés Civilisations* 2, mars-avril (1987), pp. 445-464; H. Diner, *The Almost Promised Land* (Westport, 1977); R.G. Weisbord & A. Stein, *Bittersweet Encounter: The Afro-American and the American Jew* (Westport, 1970); R.G. Weisbord & R. Kazarian Jr., *Israel in the Black American Perspective* (Westport, 1985); M. Lerner & C. West, *Jews & Blacks: A Dialogue on Race, Religion and Culture in America* (New York, 1995); N. Glazer, *Ethnic Dilemmas: 1964-1982* (Cambridge, 1983).
  55. In the 1980 Brazilian Census, Afro-Brazilians represented 44.4 percent (53,280,000) of the Brazilian population, while Brazilian Jews numbered only 0.2 percent (200,000, approximately).
  56. The Census of 1980 (IBGE) recorded 30,000 Jews in Rio de Janeiro. However, FIERJ figures are higher: 50,000 (approximately).
  57. *PNAD/IBGE* /1989.
  58. *Folha de São Paulo*, June 10, 1993. From January 1993 to May 1997, 275 complaints were filed at this new police office. See A.S.A. Guimarães, *Preconceito e Discriminação: queixas de ofensas e tratamento desigual dos negros de São Paulo* (Salvador, 1998), p. 43.
  59. At this time, there were divergences inside the PDT concerning the adoption of a policy of affirmative action. Those who were for Minc's project—for example, Secretary Caó—believe that tactically it was a good opportunity to debate racial issues in the country, even though the American racial reality is significantly different from that of Brazil. At the same time, other leaders of the Black movement, such as Ivanir dos Santos and Marcelo Dias from the *Partido dos Trabalhadores*, disagreed with Minc's project, but consider it an interesting instrument of politicization of racism in Brazil. In São Paulo, Black leaders created a movement in favor of a quota system that would reserve ten percent of the yearly 5,000 new openings of the University of São Paulo for Black students, (*Veja*, May 22, 1996, p. 94).
  60. A. Nascimento, "Por uma política compensatória," *Jornal do Brasil*, November 2, 1993, p. 11.
  61. *Correio Braziliense*, February 28, 1996.